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BEFORE THE

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE

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SEPTEMBER 22, 2016

U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES AND ONGOING MILITARY OPERATIONS

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2016

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:32 a.m. in Room SD–G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator John McCain (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators McCain, Inhofe, Sessions, Wicker, Ayotte, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Sullivan, Lee, Graham, Cruz, Reed, Nelson, McCaskill, Manchin, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Donnelly, King, and Heinrich.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN, CHAIRMAN

Chairman MCCAIN. Good morning.

Since a quorum is now present, I ask the committee to consider a list of 40 pending military nominations. Including in this list is the nomination of General John E. Hyten, U.S. Air Force, for Reappointment to the grade of General and to be Commander, United States Strategic Command. All of these nominations have been before the committee the required length of time.

Is there a motion to favorably report these 40 million—40 military nominations to the Senate?

Senator REED. So move.

Chairman MCCAIN. Is there a second?

Senator SESSIONS. Second.

Chairman MCCAIN. All in favor, say aye.

[A chorus of ayes.]

Chairman MCCAIN. The motion carries.

The Senate Armed Services Committee meets this morning to receive testimony on U.S. national security challenges and ongoing military operations.

I'd like to welcome our witnesses, Secretary Carter and Secretary Dunford. Thank you for your service, and thank you to the men and women you lead and their families for their service and sacrifice during these challenging times.

This committee has conducted regular hearings on U.S. national security strategy and ongoing military operations, and we have devoted special attention to the chaos engulfing the Middle East and the United States military campaign against ISIL [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant]. It will be up to future historians to render a final judgment on this administration's stewardship of United States interests in the broader Middle East. But, in the opinion of

this one Senator, it's been an unmitigated disaster. President Obama sought to pivot away from one of the most strategically vital regions of the world out of a misplaced hope that, "the tide of war" was receding and that we should focus on, "nation-building at home." That withdrawal of United States power created a vacuum that was filled by all of the worst actors in the region: Sunni terrorist groups such as al Qaeda and ISIL, the Iranian regime and its proxies, and now Putin's Russia.

Just consider, over the past eight years, this administration has overseen the collapse of regional order in the Middle East into a state of chaos where every country is either a battlefield for regional conflict, a party to that conflict, or both. The rise of ISIL and the threat it poses has made al Qaeda appear modest by comparison. But, both terrorist networks have expanded their influence from West Africa to South Asia and everything in between.

The administration may have postponed Iran's nuclear programs, but this has come at the cost of unshackling Iranian power and ambition, both of which will grow in the coming years as billions of dollars in sanctions relief is transformed into advanced military capability and support for terrorism. Then there is Putin's Russia, which has reclaimed a position of influence in Middle East it has not enjoyed in four decades.

The best that can be said about this devastating legacy is, over the past year, in part thanks to our witnesses today, President Obama has at least begun to unleash America's fighting men and women against ISIL. They are fighting with skill and encourage, despite enormous risks, as reports of ISIL's use of mustard agent against United States and Iraqi troops remind us. As a result, we are gradually eroding ISIL's territorial control in removing key personnel from the battlefield. This military campaign has too often been slow, reactive, and excessively micromanaged by the White House. Indeed, we read this morning of plans for yet another incremental increase of 500 troops in Iraq, one more step down the road of gradual escalation. But, thanks to the tremendous talent and dedication of our men and women in uniform, we are making progress.

I have no doubt that ISIL will eventually be expelled from its strongholds in Mosul and Raqqa. The day of liberation will come later than it should have, but it will come. This will be a tactical success, but it is unlikely to lead to strategic gains, because the administration has failed to address, and at times exacerbated, the underlying conflict. The struggles for power and sectarian identity now raging across the Middle East, ISIL is merely a symptom of this deeper problem.

In Iraq, Mosul may be retaken eventually, but that will only likely reignite the battle for the future of Iraq, a battle in which we have an important stake. The biggest problems still lie ahead: combating the malign influence of Iran and its militias, addressing the future of the Kurds and their place in Iraq, and attenuating the disenfranchisement of the Sunni Iraqis that gave rise to ISIL in the first place.

Libya, we've had success in degrading ISIL's stronghold in Sirte, but what remains is a divided nation littered with independent militias, flooded with arms, and searching in vain for legitimate gov-

ernance and political unity, conditions that will remain fertile grounds for extremism and anti-Western terrorism.

We've also begun targeting ISIL in Afghanistan, but a resurgent Taliban, backed by Afghanistan's neighbors, continue to destabilize and terrorize the country while Afghan National Army casualties remain unsustainably high. It was in this environment that President Obama chose to withdraw another 1,400 troops.

Nowhere, however, is America's strategic drift clearer than in Syria. After more than 400,000 dead and half the population driven from their homes, after the worst refugee crisis in a century which now threatens the project of European unity, the administration still has no plausible vision of an end state for Syria. Instead, while Russian and Syrian regime aircraft bombed hospitals, markets, and aid warehouses, and other civilian targets, President Obama sent his intrepid, but delusional, Secretary of State to tilt yet again at the windmill of cooperating with Vladimir Putin, even committing to share intelligence with Russia for coordinated military operations. This agreement would be deeply problematic even if it were implemented. It would mean that the United States Military would effectively own future Russian airstrikes in the eyes of the world. It would also strengthen Assad's military position in the country, thereby undermining our own strategic objective of a political transition.

It appears that none of this will ultimately matter, because, once again, Assad and Putin are not holding up their end of the deal, as nearly everyone predicted. Assad has declared an end to the cease-fire. Barrel bombs are falling again on civilians in Aleppo. An airstrike reportedly carried out by Russia has killed 12 members of a U.N. [United Nations] humanitarian convoy. Nonetheless, administration officials are desperately trying to salvage this agreement, likely because they realize that, without this diplomatic fig leaf, the abject failure of their Syria policy will be evident, and because they know, as does everyone else, that there is no Plan B.

This should be yet another lesson, as if we needed it, that diplomacy in the absence of leverage is a recipe for failure. Our adversaries will not do what we ask of them out of the goodness of their hearts or of—out of concern for our interests or the suffering of others. They must be compelled, and that requires power. Until the United States is willing to take steps to change the conditions on the ground in Syria, the war, the terror, the refugees, and the instability will continue.

Such will be the unfortunate inheritance of our next President, a Middle East aflame, where American influence has been squandered. America's adversaries neither respect nor fear us. America's friends are increasingly hedging their bets. America's policy options have been significantly narrowed and worsens. What's worse, America's military will confront these daunting challenges with constrained budgets, aging equipment, depleted readiness, and a growing set of operational requirements driven by other escalating challenges in Europe and Asia. We are simultaneously asking our military to wage a generational fight against Islamist terrorism while rebuilding a ready and modernized force to deter and, if necessary, defeat great-power or rogue-state competitors in full-spectrum combat.

I would be the first to admit that Congress is failing in—to match resources to requirements, but the failure of the President is worse. After all, it is the duty of the Commander in Chief to be the strongest advocate for the needs of our military. But, President Obama has been more interested in using the defense budget as a hostage to extract political concessions for greater nondefense spending.

Secretary Carter, this may be one of your last appearances before this committee. I hope you will use the opportunity to offer some clear answers to these troubling questions.

Senator Reed.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Senator REED. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to join you in welcoming Secretary Carter and General Dunford.

Giving the security challenges that face the United States, your appearances before the committee are always deeply appreciated and very timely, particularly this moment.

While significant work remains to defeat ISIL, the United States and coalition military operations have resulted in important gains in both Iraq and Syria. Most notably, ISIL has been driven out of a significant amount of the territory the group once held. In just the last few weeks alone, ISIL lost its hold on the city of Manbij, a number of key border crossings in Syria in several key towns in advance of the Mosul offensive in Iraq.

The cumulative effect of these operations has been to cut off key lines of communication for ISIL, thereby restricting their ability to bring in additional fighters and move equipment and personnel across the battlefield. As a result, it appears that ISIL is under more pressure now than at any other time in the campaign.

Unfortunately, in Syria it appears that the cessation of hostilities is not going to hold. We look forward to your assessment of the progress and the military aspects of this campaign and whether there is a possibility of a renewed cessation of hostilities in the future.

Our military commanders are also rightly focused on ensuring our military operations support the efforts of our diplomats and other policymakers to address the continuing political challenges in Iraq and Syria. Even after the coalition retakes Mosul and Raqqa, the work of our diplomats, military, and intelligence community will not be over. Ensuring ISIL is dealt a lasting defeat will require not only continued military support, but also assistance in achieving the political reforms necessary to address the underlying causes of ISIL's rise. This will require that the civilian agencies of our Government are provided the critical resources necessary to perform this work.

With regard to Afghanistan, I support the President's position to maintain approximately 8400 troops in the country into next year. This decision sent an important message to the Afghans, our allies, the Taliban, and others in the region, that the United States remains committed to ensuring a stable Afghanistan. We look forward to your assessment of this year's fighting season and what

more we can do to support the development of the Afghan national defense and security forces.

Despite a challenging security and political environment, the Afghan National Unity Government continues to be a reliable partner for the United States and our allies. However, I remain concerned about continuing reports of corruption in Afghanistan and the slow political progress on the broader reform agenda. Both these issues present a strategic threat to continued international support of Afghanistan. In light of these challenges, I hope you will also discuss the efforts of the United States and our allies to build institutional capacity and enable necessary reforms in Afghanistan.

In Eastern Europe, Russia continues its pattern of confrontation and antagonistic behavior. They persist in the use of hybrid tactics to foment discord and political gridlock throughout the region. Their aviators have harassed U.S. ships and aircraft deployed to the region. They continue to provide support and training to Separatists in Eastern Ukraine, in violation of the Minsk cease-fire agreements. EUCOM [European Command] and NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] have undertaken robust efforts to deter such behavior. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on the progress of, and future plans for, such efforts.

North Korea remains one of the most dangerous and difficult national security challenges that this country faces. Earlier this month, North Korea conducted its fifth nuclear test, demonstrating that the North Korean regime has little interest in resuming Six-Party Talks. While we have made significant efforts to put strong and effective sanctions in place to curb North Korea's nuclear development, China's unwillingness to enforce those sanctions to the full extent of its ability has undermined United States and international efforts to bring North Korea in line.

Finally, our long-term military strategy depends on a budget that focuses at least five years into the future. Last year, Congress passed a 2015 Bipartisan Budget Act, which provided the Department with budget stability in the near term. However, there is no budget agreement for fiscal year 2018 and beyond. Without another bipartisan agreement that provides relief from sequestration, the Department will be forced to submit a fiscal year 2018 budget that adheres to the sequestration-level budget caps and could, and indeed would, undermine our defense strategy, including the investments made to rebuild readiness and modernize platforms and equipment. We must not let that happen.

Thank you, again, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, gentlemen.

Chairman MCCAIN. Welcome, Mr. Secretary. This is the last time for this year. We appreciate your—you and General Dunford's appearances before the Armed Services Committee. We look forward to your and General Dunford's testimony. Thank you for—both of you, for your service to our Nation.

Secretary Carter.

STATEMENT OF HONORABLE ASHTON B. CARTER, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Secretary CARTER. Thank you very much. Chairman, Ranking Member Reed, all the members of this committee, thank you for having us here.

Chairman and Senator Reed, thanks for taking the time to talk with me before this hearing—I much appreciate it, as always—and for hosting General Dunford by my side, where he is all the time. I'm very pleased, and our country is very fortunate to have him.

Similarly, I want to thank you for hosting the Service Chiefs last week. I appreciated your comments to them about the inefficiencies and the dangers of continued budget instability and gridlock, as well as the risk of sequestration's looming return. I look forward to addressing those topics more today with you.

I also appreciate your support for our men and women serving around the world, military and civilian alike. You always provide it. They are the finest fighting force the world has ever known. They're the—no one else in the world is stronger, no one is more capable, more innovative, more experienced, and has better friends and allies than they. That's a fact, and a fact that Americans ought to be proud of.

As you know, DOD [Department of Defense] is currently addressing each of the five challenges that Chairman Dunford and I described to you in our budget testimony this spring and that the Chairman and Senator Reed have already touched on, namely Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, and terrorism. On the last, in the wake of this week's attacks in New York, New Jersey, and Minnesota, we remain as determined as ever to continue countering terrorists around the world who seek to do harm to our country and our personnel. More on that shortly.

As Chairman Dunford and I testified this spring, we've been planning for our activities to be paid for by the 2017 budget that we have submitted and that we developed. That budget adhered to last fall's bipartisan budget deal in overall size. While in shape, it marked a strategic turning point for DOD, making breakthrough investments in new operational concepts, in pioneering technological frontiers, in reforming the DOD enterprise, and in building the force of the future. It also put a high premium on continuing to rebuild the readiness of our forces, requiring not only stable resources, but also time. Nothing is more important than readiness to me or to the Service Chiefs.

Yet today, just eight days away from the end of this fiscal year, that budget has yet to be funded by Congress. I want to discuss that with you today. But, because this hearing is partly about ongoing military operations, let me begin with an operational update on our campaign to deliver ISIL a lasting defeat.

Now, each time Chairman Dunford and I have appeared before this committee since back last October, I've described to you our coalition military campaign plan, which is focused on three objectives. The first is to destroy ISIL's—the ISIL cancer's parent tumor in Iraq and Syria, because the sooner we end ISIL's occupation of territory in those countries, that is the sooner we destroy both the fact and the idea of an Islamic State based on ISIL's barbaric ideology, the safer all of the world will be. That's necessary, absolutely necessary. It's not sufficient. Our second objective is to combat ISIL's metastises everywhere they emerge around the world—in Afghanistan, Libya, and elsewhere. Our third objective is to help protect the Homeland. This is mainly the responsibility of our partners in the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], the Justice De-

partment, Homeland Security, the intelligence community, and State and local law enforcement, but DOD strongly supports them. I'll address how, momentarily.

Since last fall, we've taken many steps to continually accelerate this campaign, all consistent with our strategic approach of enabling capable, motivated local forces, for that's the only way to ensure ISIL's lasting defeat. While we have much more work to do, the results of our effort are showing.

In Iraq, we've been enabling Iraqi Security Forces and the Kurdish Peshmerga. After retaking Ramadi and establishing a staging base at Makhmour, the ISF went on to retake Hit, Rutbah, Fallujah, and the important airfield and town of Qayyarah, setting the stage to complete the envelopment of Mosul and the collapse of ISIL's control over it. In the last few days, the ISF became—began operations to retake Sharqat and other towns surrounding Mosul. The final assault on Mosul will commence, as with previous operations, when Prime Minister Abadi gives the order.

In Syria, our coalition has also enabled considerable results by our local partners. They retook Shaddadi, severing a key link between Raqqa and Mosul, and then Manbij city, clearing a key transit point for ISIL's external operations and plotters, and providing key intelligence insights. Additionally, our ally Turkey is helping local Syrian partners clear their border region with ISIL. We're working shoulder-to-shoulder with the Turks, supporting these efforts from the air, on the ground, and with intelligence. As we do so, we're managing regional tensions, tensions that we've foreseen, and keeping everyone focused on our common enemy: ISIL.

Meanwhile, we're systematically eliminating ISIL's leadership, with the coalition having taken out seven members of the ISIL senior Shura, including its chief of external operations, Al-Adnani. He was one of more than 20 ISIL external operators and plotters we removed from the battlefield.

We're also continuing to go after ISIL's attempts to develop chemical weapons as we continue to ensure that United States, coalition, and Iraqi troops are vigilantly protected from that threat. Just last week, in one of the single largest airstrikes of our campaign, we destroyed a pharmaceutical facility near Mosul that ISIL tried to use as a chemical weapons plant.

We also continue to aggressively attack ISIL's economic infrastructure—oil wells, tanker trucks, cash storage, and more—and we continue to take the fight to ISIL across every domain, including cyber.

With all this, we're putting ISIL on the path to a lasting defeat in Iraq and Syria, particularly as we embark on a decisive phase of our campaign, to collapse ISIL's control of Mosul and Raqqa.

With respect to the Syrian civil war, I want to commend Secretary Kerry for working so tirelessly to seek an arrangement which, if implemented, would ease the suffering of the Syrian people and get Russia pushing at last for a political transition, which is the only way to end the Syrian civil war. There remains a way to go to see if the terms of that arrangement can be implemented. Unfortunately, the behavior we've seen from Russia and Syria over the last few days has been deeply problematic.

Let me turn to our second objective, combating ISIL's metastases.

In Libya, thanks to United States precision airstrikes undertaken at the request of the Government of National Accord, ISIL's territory in Sirte has now been reduced to a single square kilometer, and I'm confident ISIL will be ejected from there.

Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, we worked with our Afghan partners to conduct a large operation against ISIL over the last two months, dealing the organization severe blows, killing its top leader, and degrading its infrastructure, logistics base, and recruiting. There'll be more coming.

Next, to help protect our Homeland and our people, DOD continues to provide strong support to our law enforcement, Homeland security, and intelligence partners. This is the number-one mission of our Northern Command. The U.S. military is supporting our partners in three critical ways. First, we're ensuring the protection of our personnel and the DOD facilities where they work and reside. Second, we're disrupting ISIL's external operations. More on that shortly. Third, we're also disrupting the flow of foreign fighters both to and from Iraq and Syria. This is part of a broader effort within our coalition to not only stem the flow of foreign fighters, but also counter ISIL's online messaging, recruitment, and spread of its loathsome ideology.

Going forward, the collapse of ISIL's control over Raqqa and Mosul, which we're confident our coalition will achieve, will indeed put ISIL on an irreversible path to lasting defeat. But, after that, to take up a point that both the Chairman and Ranking Member Reed made, there will still be much more to do. Political challenges will remain. For that reason, the international coalition's stabilization efforts cannot be allowed to lag behind our military progress. That's critical to making sure that ISIL, once defeated, stays defeated. Truly delivering ISIL a lasting defeat requires both strategic patience and persistence. We can't predict what will come after our coalition defeats ISIL, so we must be ready for anything, including any attempts by ISIL to remain relevant even if only in the darkest corners of the Internet.

Let me now address issues DOD faces in institution, and how you can help. We have three grave concerns related to processes here in Congress. One, budget gridlock and instability. Two, micromanagement and over-regulation. Three, denial of needed reforms. As you've heard consistently from me and DOD senior leaders, all three are serious concerns. But, here today, because of how close we are to the end of the fiscal year, I want to focus just on the first.

We need Congress to come together around providing normal, stable, responsible budgets, because the lack of stability represents one of the single biggest strategic risks to our enterprise at DOD. That's why I've been talking about the major risk posed by budget instability for over a year and a half. You heard the same from the Service Chiefs last week. Such budget instability undercuts stable planning and efficient use of taxpayer dollars, often in ways taxpayers can't even see. It baffles our friends, emboldens our foes. It's managerially and strategically unsound. It's unfairly dispiriting to our troops, to their families and our workforce. It's inefficient for our defense industry partners, too.

We're now 8 days away from the end of the fiscal year. But, instead of stability, we're going into fiscal year 2017 with yet another Continuing Resolution [CR]. This, for the eighth fiscal year in a row. That's a deplorable state of affairs. Chairman McCain, I appreciate your comments to our Service Chiefs about the damage the CR can do to our institution.

As you know, the longer a Continuing Resolution lasts, the more damaging it is. It's not just a matter of money, but where the dollars are. For example, a CR that goes past December would undermine our plan to quadruple our European Reassurance Initiative at a time, as the Chairman already noted, when we need to be standing with our NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] allies, and standing up to deter Russian aggression. I know you will return here in November to pass defense appropriations and a National Defense Authorization Act. I look forward to working with you then.

However, I cannot support any approach to the defense budget that moves us towards sequestration or away from bipartisanship and not at the expense of stability that comes with it, not if it shortchanges the needs of our warfighters, not if it means funding lower priorities instead of higher priorities, not if it undermines confidence in the ability to pass bipartisan budget deals which could lead to the imposition of sequestration's $100 billion in looming automatic cuts to us, and not if it adds extra force structure that we can't afford to keep ready in the long term, which would only lead to a hollow force. I'm confident and hopeful that we can come back together again.

Today, America is fortunate to have the world's greatest military. I know it. You know it. Our friends and allies know it. Critical—critically, our potential adversaries know it, too. Only with your help can we ensure that my successors can say the same and that what is today the finest fighting force the world has ever known remains that way for years to come.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Secretary Carter follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ASH CARTER

Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for hosting me and Chairman Dunford today, and also for hosting the Chiefs of the military services last week. I particularly appreciated your comments to them about the inefficiencies and dangers of continued budget instability and gridlock, as well as the risk of sequestration's looming return. I look forward to addressing those topics and more during today's hearing.

I also appreciate your support for our men and women serving around the world, civilian and military alike, who are the finest fighting force the world has ever known. There's no other military that's stronger, or more capable, or more innovative, or more experienced, or with better friends and allies. That's a fact—one that every American ought to be proud of.

As you know, the Department of Defense is currently addressing each of the five major, immediate, evolving challenges we face, which Chairman Dunford and I discussed with you during our budget testimony this past spring—challenges from Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, and terrorism. On that note, in the wake of this week's attacks in New York, New Jersey, and Minnesota, we remain absolutely determined, as ever, to continue countering terrorists around the world who would seek to do harm to our country and our people.

We don't have the luxury of choosing between these challenges, which is why American soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines are working with partners from our worldwide coalition in more ways and with more power every day to accelerate the

lasting defeat of ISIL, which we will surely do and want to do soon. They're also training and operating with our NATO allies in Europe to deter Russian aggression. They're sailing the waters of the Asia-Pacific as part of a principled and inclusive network of nations—ensuring that the most consequential region for America's future remains stable, secure, and prosperous for all nations. They're standing guard 24/7 on the Korean Peninsula, helping strengthen our deterrent and defenses in the face of North Korea's nuclear and missile provocations. They're countering Iran's destabilizing influence against our friends and allies in the Middle East. All the while, they're helping protect our people here at home and helping to make a better world for our children. They're preparing to contend with an uncertain future—ensuring we continue to stay the best and stay ahead in a changing and competitive world.

As Chairman Dunford and I testified not only to this committee, but to all four of our defense oversight committees in the spring, we've been planning for these operations to be paid for by the fiscal year (FY) 2017 defense budget we developed. This budget not only adhered to last fall's bipartisan budget deal in overall size; in shape, it marked a strategic turning point for DOD—making and sharpening breakthrough investments in supporting new operational concepts, in pioneering and dominating technological frontiers, in reforming the DOD enterprise, and in building the force of the future. That budget also put an extremely high premium on continued funding to rebuild the readiness of our forces—requiring not only stable resources, but also time—the importance of which you heard about from the Chiefs last week. Nothing is more important than readiness to me or them. Yet today, just eight days away from the end of this fiscal year and the beginning of the next, that budget has yet to be funded by Congress—another topic, and a challenge, that I'll address in greater detail shortly.

Because this hearing is focused in part on ongoing military operations, let me begin with an operational update focusing specifically on our campaign to deliver ISIL a lasting defeat.

COUNTER-ISIL OPERATIONAL UPDATE

In each of the four times that Chairman Dunford and I have appeared before this committee since last October, I walked you through how we were continually accelerating this campaign—starting with outlining our coalition military campaign plan, which is focused on three objectives that I've stressed consistently.

The first objective is to destroy the ISIL cancer's parent tumor in Iraq and Syria. ISIL's occupation of territory in those countries threatens not only the lives of the Iraqi and Syrian peoples and the stability of that vitally important region, but also the security of our own citizens and those of our friends and allies. That means the sooner we defeat ISIL in Iraq and Syria—the sooner we destroy both the fact and the idea of an Islamic state based on ISIL's barbaric ideology—the safer all of us will be. That's why we're applying simultaneous pressure on ISIL from multiple directions and across domains—on the ground, from the air, and in cyberspace. We're doing all this consistent with our strategic approach, which is to enable capable, motivated, local forces—for that is the only way to defeat ISIL and keep them defeated, ensuring a lasting defeat.

Now, while defeating ISIL in Iraq and Syria is necessary, it's not sufficient.

Indeed, we know this cancer can metastasize, and in some cases it already has. This brings me to the second objective of our coalition military campaign plan, which is to combat ISIL's metastases around world. That's why U.S. and coalition forces are engaged in supporting capable, motivated local forces in operations against ISIL in Afghanistan, in Libya, and elsewhere, and in countering ISIL across the intangible geography and terrain of the Internet.

Our third objective is to help protect the homeland. Here, recent events continue to emphasize the importance of this mission. This is mainly the responsibility of our partners in the FBI, the Justice Department, the Department of Homeland Security, the Intelligence Community, and state and local law enforcement. But DOD strongly supports them in a number of important ways that I'll describe in more detail later in this testimony.

Now, as I noted, Chairman Dunford and I have seen you several times since last October, when we first described to you our plan to accelerate the campaign against ISIL. Since then, we've taken a great many steps to do just that. As we take advantage of new opportunities generated by new intelligence, newly trained partners, and strikes against ISIL leaders, infrastructure, and finances, we're generating more new opportunities, and then seizing those opportunities to repeat this cycle—reinforcing success. I should note that every time Chairman Dunford and I have recommended additional accelerating actions to President Obama, he has approved them.

Let me briefly remind you of the initial steps we took beginning last fall to start accelerating the campaign. First, we deployed additional strike aircraft to Incirlik to support an expanded air campaign against new targets and new categories of targets illuminated by refined intelligence. We deployed an initial contingent of special operations forces to Syria. We expanded efforts to equip Syrian Arab Coalition forces engaged in the fight against ISIL. We began enabling capable, motivated local forces in southern Syria as well, and enhancing Jordan's own border control and defenses. We leveraged air power and advisors to help the Peshmerga take Sinjar, cutting the Iraqi side of the main line of communication between ISIL's power centers in Raqqa and Mosul. We introduced an expeditionary targeting force to go after ISIL leaders wherever they may be attempting to hide. We worked to improve our ability to target ISIL's leadership and presence beyond Iraq and Syria. We started to expand the military campaign against ISIL to every domain, including cyber. We stepped up our homeland defense and force protection measures to counter any additional threats to our facilities and our personnel at home and abroad. We began precision strikes against ISIL senior leaders and training camps in Libya—removing ISIL's leader there, Abu Nabil, for instance. We went after ISIL in Afghanistan.

These were followed this past spring and summer with even more accelerants. In Iraq, in close coordination with the Iraqi government, I announced we would be adding additional personnel there to enable the Iraqis to make faster progress in Anbar and Ninewa Provinces. I also announced that we would be placing advisors with the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) down to the brigade and battalion level; leveraging Apache attack helicopters to support the ISF's efforts to envelop and then retake Mosul; sending additional High-Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) batteries to support the Iraqi ground offensive there; and, providing financial assistance to the Peshmerga, up to $415 million, to bolster one of the most effective fighting forces against ISIL. Meanwhile, in Syria, we announced a six-fold increase of U.S. forces there, from 50 to 300, to help expand ongoing efforts to identify, train, and equip capable, motivated local anti-ISIL forces inside Syria, especially among the Sunni Arab community. In addition to initiating training inside Syria, we've also continued to refine our train-and-equip efforts of other vetted Syrian forces outside of Syria, using the important authorities and funding provided to us by Congress under the Section 1209 program—and here, as I've described to you before, we're keeping our focus on battle-hardened, proven anti-ISIL leaders whom we could make more capable as enablers and amplifiers of our effects.

At the same time, in addition to accelerating the campaign with more U.S. capabilities, we renewed our outreach to coalition members, including in Europe, in the Middle East, and in Asia. Over the last nine months, I've convened my counterparts several times—in Paris, Brussels, Riyadh, Stuttgart, and here in Washington this past July—not only to rally them behind the campaign plan and the next steps in its execution, but above all to urge them to contribute more, and in more meaningful ways. As we've done more, so have our partners. That collaboration will continue.

In sum, we steadily executed the campaign plan and first set of plays we devised and I described to this committee many months ago. Now we're on to the next plays in our campaign, which you'll recall Chairman Dunford and I previewed for you in April, and are now underway—more on that in a moment.

Because the acceleration of our campaign has continued since then, I'd like to now update you on the latest results of the coalition's military campaign, as well as what we will need to do going forward.

Destroying ISIL's Parent Tumor

Let me begin with our first objective, destroying ISIL's parent tumor in Iraq and Syria. Here, since last fall—town after town, from every direction, and in every domain—our campaign and operations have accelerated, pressuring and squeezing ISIL, and rolling it back towards Mosul in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria. While we have much more work to do—including to collapse ISIL's control over Mosul and Raqqa—the results of our efforts are showing.

In Iraq, we've been enabling the Iraqi Security Forces led by Prime Minister Abadi and the Kurdish Peshmerga commanded by Iraqi Kurdistan Regional President Barzani. After retaking Ramadi and establishing a staging base at Makhmour, the ISF went on to retake Hit, Rutbah, Fallujah, and the important airfield and town of Qayyarah—setting the stage to complete the envelopment and isolation of Mosul and collapse ISIL's control over it. In the last few days, the ISF began operations to retake Sharqat and other towns surrounding Mosul. The final assault on Mosul will commence—as with previous operations—when Prime Minister Abadi gives the order. In the meantime, the coalition has been actively laying the groundwork with the generation of necessary Iraqi Security Forces and Kurdish

Peshmerga, preparation of staging areas, and positioning of our strike assets to cover the assaulting Iraqi and Kurdish forces. In close coordination with the Iraqi government, these efforts are being bolstered by the addition of 560 U.S. troops I announced in July. We stand ready to contribute even more, in consultation with our Iraqi partners.

In Syria, our coalition has also enabled considerable results by our local partners. There, local forces retook Shaddadi—severing a key link between Raqqa and Mosul, and thereby ISIL in Iraq and ISIL in Syria—and then Manbij City—clearing a key transit point for ISIL's external operators and plotters, and letting us gain intelligence insights that have helped us map ISIL's network of foreign fighters. Additionally, our ally Turkey is helping local Syrian partners clear the Turkish-Syrian border region of ISIL. We're working shoulder-to-shoulder with the Turks, supporting those efforts from the air, on the ground, and with intelligence, and we will continue to coordinate with them as we have with all of our partners so far. In that regard, I welcome the Turkish government's comments about the importance of working with local partners.

As we do all this, we are managing challenges that we've foreseen, including friction between some of our partners and also political instability. That's why our forces and commanders on the ground and in the region remain laser-focused on overcoming these challenges, so we can continue to accelerate our campaign.

Indeed, even with the considerable results achieved so far, we are not letting up. Across both Iraq and Syria, our coalition continues to pressure ISIL in several key ways.

We're systematically eliminating ISIL's leadership: the coalition has taken out seven members of the ISIL Senior Shura—including ISIL's Minister of War, Omar al Shishani; ISIL's Finance Minister, Hajji Iman; ISIL's Minister of Information, Dr. Wa'il; and ISIL's Chief of External Operations, Abu Muhamad al Adnani, who was one of ISIL's most lethal leaders and was actively plotting to kill civilians abroad. We also removed key ISIL leaders in both Libya and Afghanistan. Wherever our local partners have advanced, we've taken out ISIL field commanders. We've removed from the battlefield more than 20 of ISIL's external operators and plotters, including Jihadi John and Junaid Hussein, among others.

Beyond key ISIL personnel, we're continuing to go after key ISIL capabilities, including its attempts to develop chemical weapons. As you know, we previously captured one of the principals of ISIL's chemical warfare enterprise, and just last week, in one of the single largest airstrikes of our campaign, we destroyed a former pharmaceutical facility near Mosul that ISIL tried to use as a chemical weapons plant. Meanwhile, we're also continuing to aggressively attack the economic infrastructure that ISIL uses to fund its operations—from oil wells and tanker trucks to cash storage sites and key financial centers. We continue to take the fight to ISIL across every domain, including cyber.

All of this together underscores how we are putting ISIL on the path to a lasting defeat in Iraq and Syria. We are now launching a decisive phase of our campaign, as the plays we're currently executing culminate in the isolation and collapse of ISIL's control over Raqqa and Mosul.

Now, we aren't yet releasing the full operational details of these plays in public. That's because—as I told troops from the XVIII Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg in July before they deployed to lead our operations in Iraq and Syria under the command of Lieutenant General Steve Townsend—we don't want the enemy to know too much about what we're doing, what we're thinking, and where we're going and when. But I do want to broadly describe the basic elements to you, as I did with our troops in July.

In Syria, operations are focused on shutting down the last remaining paths for ISIL fighters to move into and out of that country—particularly when it comes to their external operators—and then on generating forces and preparing them for the envelopment of Raqqa. We're seeking to expand on recent gains of our local, capable partners in Manbij City, along the Mar'a Line, and elsewhere in Northern Syria to help them ensure ISIL cannot control that key terrain. In addition, we will aggressively pursue opportunities to build pressure on ISIL in Syria from the south, complementing our existing robust efforts from northeastern Syria.

In Iraq, our actions in the western part of the country are focused on enabling the ISF to pursue mopping-up operations along the Euphrates River Valley—in order to clear the remaining pockets of ISIL presence, push the ISIL threat farther away from Baghdad, and help the government of Iraq reassert not only full control over its borders, but also control over some of its main lines of communications. In the north, we're continuing to help the ISF clear the remaining pockets of ISIL control along the Tigris River Valley leading up to Mosul. We've been helping the ISF and Kurdish Peshmerga to refit and generate the forces and logistical footprint nec-

essary for their joint efforts to isolate and pressure Mosul, approaching from both the north and the south.

Meanwhile, as this isolation and pressure on Raqqa and Mosul continues to build from the outside in, our partners will continue to reach deep inside those cities to pressure ISIL from the inside out.

It's already becoming clear that with the simultaneity of operations and pressure coalition forces are applying across Iraq and Syria, ISIL will simply no longer be able to resist. While ISIL is still a dangerous adversary and its lasting defeat will take time, we will continue to gather momentum until ISIL is defeated.

Finally, with respect to the Syrian civil war, I commend Secretary Kerry for working so tirelessly to seek an arrangement which, if implemented, would ease the suffering of the Syrian people and get Russia pushing for a political transition, which is the only way to end the Syrian civil war. There remains a ways to go to see if the terms of that arrangement will be implemented—unfortunately the behavior we've seen from Russia and Syria over the last few days is deeply problematic.

Combatting ISIL's Metastases

This brings me to the results in our campaign's second objective, combatting ISIL's metastases everywhere they appear around the world—particularly in Libya and Afghanistan. I will address these in turn.

A few months ago, Chairman Dunford and I expressed concern that if left untended, Libya could be the next ISIL headquarters, as ISIL's control over the city of Sirte was seen as their contingency plan for where they would go when they lost Raqqa and Mosul. But because the President authorized us to act, ISIL is now under tremendous pressure there, with its territory in Sirte reduced to a single square kilometer. Indeed, after some 50 days of supporting capable, motivated local forces fighting ISIL in its safe haven of Sirte, coalition operations—including with airstrikes at the request of Libyan Government of National Accord Prime Minister Sarraj—have shrunk ISIL's territory to a single neighborhood. I'm confident ISIL will be ejected from Sirte, and that we will keep looking for opportunities to combat ISIL in Libya; however, it is important to note that these are the military results. As we've known from the beginning, political progress will have to follow, including reconciliation, to deliver ISIL a lasting defeat in Libya.

Let me now turn to Afghanistan, where we continue to counter terrorists—both ISIL and al Qaeda—as well as help support and strengthen the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), which has the lead in fighting the Taliban and other terrorists within Afghanistan's borders.

Working with our Afghan partners, we conducted a large operation against ISIL in Afghanistan over the last two months—dealing it severe blows, including killing its top leader, Hafiz Sayed Khan, and 11 other ISIL leaders, as well as degrading the organization's infrastructure, logistics base, and recruiting. There will be more to come in short order.

Meanwhile, more broadly, the U.S. military continues to execute its two missions in Afghanistan—countering terrorism, and helping train, advise, and assist the ANDSF as part of NATO's Resolute Support Mission. As you know, President Obama approved our requests earlier this year to retain a more substantial U.S. force presence into 2017, to enhance the authorities of our ground commanders, and to maintain our financial commitment to the ANDSF through 2020. This will lead to positive effects. Indeed, while challenges remain—including political challenges—we're increasingly seeing the ANDSF undertake unilateral missions against ISIL and other targets on their own accord, with U.S.-provided equipment.

Helping Protect our Homeland and our People

Meanwhile, DOD continues to provide strong support to our partners in the FBI, the Justice Department, the Department of Homeland Security, the Intelligence Community, and state and local law enforcement to help protect our homeland and our people. This is the number-one mission of our Northern Command. Here the U.S. military is supporting our partners in three critical ways.

First, we're ensuring the force protection for our troops and the DOD facilities where they work and reside—both on base, and the thousands of off-base installations we operate. Last summer's tragedy in Chattanooga underscored how ISIL seeks to target U.S. troops and DOD civilians, which is why we're putting in place stronger physical security systems, including stronger entry controls, better alarm systems, reinforced doors, additional ways to safely exit our facilities, and more. We continue to look for more ways to improve and strengthen our force protection.

Second, we're disrupting ISIL's external operations and its ability to conduct such operations. As I discussed earlier, our operations to destroy ISIL's parent tumor directly support this effort, where we've removed dozens of ISIL external operators

from the battlefield—including, as I mentioned earlier in this testimony, ISIL's Chief of External Operations, Abu Muhamad Al-Adnani. We have entrusted this aspect of our campaign to one of DOD's most lethal, capable, and experienced commands, our Joint Special Operations Command, which helped deliver justice not only to Osama Bin Laden, but also to the man who founded the organization that became ISIL, Abu-Musab al Zarqawi.

Third, we're also disrupting the flow of foreign fighters both to and from Iraq and Syria. Here, as I discussed earlier, we've not only been supporting capable, motivated local forces in Syria that have retaken cities that were key transit hubs for foreign fighters in northern Syria, but we've also been supporting Turkish military operations intended to seal the border with Syria and prevent foreign fighters from exploiting that border to conduct attacks against our European allies and our homeland. In recent months especially, our support of these operations has allowed us to gain new intelligence insights into ISIL's networks of foreign fighters—networks we are determined to destroy. In addition, we've worked with our coalition partners in a standing task force located in the region that looks at publically-available information and crosschecks it against our government's various databases to identify potential ISIL cells and foreign fighter facilitation networks. This is part of a broader effort within our coalition to not only stem the flow of foreign fighters, but also to counter ISIL's online messaging, recruitment, and the spread of its loathsome ideology.

Going Forward in the Counter-ISIL Campaign

Looking to the future, the collapse of ISIL's control over Raqqa and Mosul—which we're confident our coalition will achieve—will put ISIL on an irreversible path to a lasting defeat. But, even when the coalition wins this fight—and let there be no doubt that we will—there will still be much more to do. There will be towns to rebuild, services to reestablish, and communities to restore. Political challenges will remain. So when that time comes, the international community must ensure that the Iraqi and Syrian people have what they need to hold, stabilize, and govern their own territory. For that reason, the international coalition's humanitarian, stabilization, and governance efforts cannot be allowed to lag behind our military progress.

Additionally, we must ensure that ISIL isn't able to take root in other parts of Iraq, and that the ISF and the Peshmerga are able to sustain the gains we've made with them. Such progress is critical to making our partners' gains enduring, and ensuring that ISIL, once defeated, stays defeated.

Truly delivering ISIL a lasting defeat requires both strategic patience and strategic persistence. Even when ISIL is defeated militarily, our coalition will still have work to do. We can't predict what will come afterward, so we must be ready for anything—including for any attempts by ISIL to remain relevant, even if only on the darkest corners of the Internet. We will continue to support our law enforcement, homeland security, and intelligence partners in helping protect our homeland and our people.

HOW CONGRESS CAN HELP—AVOIDING THE BIGGEST STRATEGIC DANGERS TO DEFENSE

Let me now turn to some issues that we in DOD face as an institution—not only in addressing the challenge posed by ISIL, but in addressing all of the five challenges I mentioned earlier, and ensuring our military's continued unrivaled breadth and strength into the future—and how you can help.

These issues are grave concerns to us that we see manifested in processes here in Congress, and they are threefold: the first is budget gridlock and instability; the second, micromanagement and over-regulation; and the third concern is the continued denial of needed reforms. Instead of these, we need budget stability achieved through bipartisanship. We need relief from over-regulation and micromanagement. We need more regard and respect for the considered judgment of DOD's most senior military and civilian leaders.

As you've heard from me and DOD senior leaders in meetings, messages, and conversations, these are serious concerns. I could spend a lot of time focusing on each one, and I look forward to doing so when you return in November to work on passing an NDAA—hopefully one the President can sign. But here, at this hearing, I want to focus on the first concern, since the fiscal year ends in eight days.

Avoiding Budget Instability and Gridlock

We need Congress to come together around providing normal, stable, responsible budgets—that is, appropriations—because lack of stability represents one of the single biggest strategic risks to our DOD enterprise. I've been talking to you for over a year and a half about the major risks posed by budget instability. That was why I supported last fall's bipartisan budget deal, and why DOD's budget for fiscal year

2017 reflected that deal. Now the time has come to begin that fiscal year, and I can only tell you the same thing: that budget instability is the greatest risk we face. You heard the same from our Service Chiefs last week.

Such instability is exactly the kind of dysfunction that undercuts stable planning and efficient use of taxpayer dollars—often in ways taxpayers can't even see. It makes planning for the fight extremely difficult for our warfighters and commanders, including in our campaign to deliver ISIL a lasting defeat. It baffles our friends, and emboldens foes. It's managerially and strategically unsound, not to mention unfairly dispiriting to our troops and their families, and our workforce—all of whom deserve better, and deserve more predictability, to say the least. Not only our people; our defense industry partners, too, need stability and longer-term plans to be as efficient and cutting-edge as we need them to be. Even with the modicum of stability we got in last fall's budget deal, we still face the greatest risk of all to DOD in the eyes of all of us in the leadership—a return to sequestration funding levels, with $100 billion in looming, automatic cuts beginning next year if this isn't fixed. Those cuts, as you heard last week, are a major concern for our Service Chiefs, and for me as well. I am concerned that the gimmickry we are seeing around defense funding this year will invite the return of sequestration rather than make it less likely—because it signals that bipartisan compromises are not respected.

We're now eight days away from the end of the fiscal year, but instead of stability, we're going into fiscal year 2017 with yet another continuing resolution (CR). This will be the eighth fiscal year in a row that's started with a continuing resolution. That's a deplorable state of affairs in itself, as this committee has made clear—and Chairman McCain, I appreciate your comments to our Service Chiefs about the damage a CR does to our institution, as I appreciate that this committee has been among the leaders in advocating for both the resources needed for defense and the timely appropriations we need to execute our mission.

As you know and as you heard from the Chiefs last week, the longer a continuing resolution lasts, the more damaging it is—it makes the obvious mistake of having us do this year exactly what we did last year, despite the fact that we're trying to evolve and innovate to stay ahead in a changing world. It's not just a matter of money, but where the dollars are. For example, even a short-term CR slows our shipbuilding program, which is line appropriated, thereby preventing the Navy from moving forward on key programs and capabilities. It gets worse after three months—for example, the fiscal year 2017 defense budget quadrupled funding for our European Reassurance Initiative in order to help deter Russian aggression, but a continuing resolution extending past December would undermine our ability to build up prepositioned stocks of equipment and warfighting gear in the countries of our NATO allies. That would have great strategic consequences.

If that weren't enough, the risk of instability is only half my concern for DOD's budget—the other is that our budget stability is also being subjected to risk through diversions of funds.

As you know, last fall's bipartisan budget deal set the size of our budget for fiscal year 2017. While there was a difference between what we got in the budget deal and what we had proposed in the year prior, we determined we could mitigate that difference and still meet our needs, so we accordingly submitted our defense budget to reflect the bipartisan budget deal. Within a matter of months, however, some in Congress reintroduced instability by departing from the bipartisan budget deal and trying to come up with ways to go around it. I cannot support these approaches, and I'd like to tell you why.

In the first approach, the House is diverting $18 billion from our overseas operations funds at a time when we have troops deployed in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and using the money for things DOD didn't ask for and in many cases cannot afford to maintain and keep ready over time. To do this—diverting warfighting funds at a time of war—is highly objectionable. It harms the readiness of our troops in order to buy more force structure that we can't afford to keep ready in the first place. It could overtax DOD by up to $30 billion over the next five years, at the same time that we may be facing $100 billion in sequestration cuts. It risks exacerbating our readiness challenges and creating hollow force structure. It threatens to unravel last fall's bipartisan budget deal, again raising the specter of sequestration.

If this is allowed to happen, there is no way I can tell a soldier, sailor, airman, or Marine who's accelerating ISIL's lasting defeat or deterring Russian aggression that we're doing all we can for them here in Washington. Not when Congress can't pass timely appropriations. Certainly not when Congress diverts defense dollars from what should be inviolable: American troops deployed in harm's way. Those troops need to know that they're getting every resource they need to accomplish their mission. To take away from them goes too far—especially when emerging oper-

ational demands may soon require more resources than DOD initially budgeted for, not less.

The backers of the House approach say they're doing it to help our readiness, but it would actually have the opposite effect on readiness. As you heard from the Service Chiefs last week and as you heard from me earlier in this testimony, nothing is more important to us than readiness, which is why it was the highest priority we had in preparing the 2017 defense budget—partly to rebuild full-spectrum readiness after 15 years of counterinsurgency operations, and partly to restore damage done to readiness over the last several years that was caused by the effects of sequestration cuts. As the Chiefs made clear to you, the problems we're fixing are different in each service—the Army needs time to put soldiers through full-spectrum brigade-level training rotations at its Combat Training Centers; for the Marine Corps, the issue is principally restoring readiness in aviation; for the Navy, it's ship depot maintenance; and for the Air Force, it's about maintaining readiness while remaining at a high operational tempo. Each of these shows how restoring readiness is not just about money; it also requires time, which the Chiefs told you as well. All of this underscores why what the House seeks to do would actually hurt readiness: because it risks the stability provided by last fall's bipartisan budget deal, and it would actually give us higher end-strength for one year—that is, more people—whom we cannot afford to keep ready in the long-term.

Others in Congress took a different approach, but I cannot support theirs either. In this case, one of the defense appropriations committees cut high-priority investments that we should be making in high-end capabilities, and then spent more money on lower-priority things we didn't ask for and already have enough of.

While these cuts are less than $18 billion and do not take away from our warfighting funds, they still add up in ways that could seriously imperil our future strength. For example, this committee chose to gut funding for undersea drones—crippling our efforts to leverage unmanned technology to ensure our forces' global freedom of action and delivery of new payloads despite other nations' attempts to deny access to certain operating areas. They cut proven programs like the submarine-hunting P–8, a maritime patrol aircraft that prevents adversaries from using modern undersea technologies against us. They made significant cuts to some of our highest-priority electronic warfare systems, the Next-Generation Jammer and the Surface Electronic Warfare Improvement Program—handicapping our planes' future airborne electronic attack capabilities, and leaving our surface ships more vulnerable to advanced missile threats. They cut the critical core out of advanced munitions programs needed to increase our Navy's lethality—both the maritime-strike version of the Tomahawk cruise missile, and the new, highly-lethal anti-ship mode for one of our most modern and capable munitions, the SM–6 missile. On top of that, committees in both the House and Senate made cuts to critical defense innovation spearheads that we need to maintain our military's technological edge and counter some of the most vexing threats we face—taking away funding from our Strategic Capabilities Office, our partnership with In-Q–Tel, and our tech startup, the Defense Innovation Unit-Experimental (DIUx).

Now, I don't believe there was ill-will here, but these were cuts to investments highly prioritized by DOD's senior military and civilian leaders, substituting lower-priority spending we didn't ask for. We oppose each of them, because they undermine our preparations to counter and stay ahead of our competitors' technological advances. I've seen the constant temptation over the years to starve new and future-oriented defense investments in favor of more established and therefore well-entrenched programs. In a rapidly changing and competitive world, we must resist this temptation.

Rather than funding these investments in lethality and innovation that were among our highest priorities for sharpening our military edge and staying ahead of our adversaries, Congress wants instead to buy things like an extra Littoral Combat Ship (LCS), which we didn't request. These ships have important uses, but we already bought 26, with 14 more on the way, and we do not need more. We have much greater needs: we need the undersea drones, advanced munitions, electronic warfare capabilities, P–8s, and innovation initiatives these measures would cut.

Of course, there are other proposals which again do not comport with last fall's bipartisan budget deal. Having rejected the two approaches I just discussed, I also have to say—as you've heard me emphasize for the last year and a half—that I cannot support any third approach that moves us toward sequestration, or that moves us away from bipartisanship. Not at the expense of budget stability. Not if it shortchanges the needs of our warfighters. Not if it means funding lower priorities instead of higher priorities. Not if it undermines confidence in the ability to pass bipartisan budget deals, which could lead to the imposition of sequestration's $100 bil-

lion in looming, automatic cuts. Not if it adds extra force structure that we cannot afford to keep ready in the long-term and that would only lead to a hollow force.

CONCLUSION—THE NEED FOR BIPARTISAN BUDGET STABILITY

I appreciate that this committee didn't follow either of those two approaches, but as conference negotiations continue, I must emphasize that what we need most is stability—it's critical in order for DOD and our people to address all the national security challenges we face.

I am confident, and hopeful, that we can come back together again. Today, America is fortunate to have the world's strongest, most capable, most innovative military. I know it, you know it, our friends and allies know it, and critically, our potential adversaries know it too. Only with your help can we ensure that my successors can say the same, and that what is today the finest fighting force the world has ever known remains that way for years and generations to come.

Thank you.

Chairman MCCAIN. General Dunford.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL JOSEPH F. DUNFORD, JR., USMC, CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

General DUNFORD. Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to join Secretary Carter this morning.

Before offering a brief assessment of ongoing operations, I'd like to associate myself with the comments made by the Service Chiefs who testified before this committee last week. As you'd expect, they offered their candid assessment about the readiness and the modernization challenges that affect each of the services. I fully concur with their assessment of the operational tempo and the budget challenges faced by each of the services and across the Department.

But, due in large part to this committee's support, the joint force remains the most capable and professional military in the world. We can defend the Nation, we can meet our alliance responsibilities, and today we have a competitive advantage over any adversary. I think that's an important point that should not be lost on our allies, it should not be lost on our enemies, and it should not be lost on the men and women of the joint force, our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coastguardsmen.

I say all that, mindful that we remain confronted with challenges from traditional state actors and violent extremism. Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea continue to invest in military capabilities that reduce that competitive advantage. They are also advancing their interests through adversarial competition that has a military dimension that falls short of armed conflict. Examples include Russian actions in the Ukraine, North Korea's nuclear saber-rattling, Chinese activities in the South China Sea, and Iran's malign activities across the Middle East. In different ways, each of these nations leverage economic coercion, information operations, cyber capabilities, unconventional warfare and force posture deliberately seeking to avoid a U.S. military response.

Meanwhile, nonstate actors, such as ISIL and al Qaeda, remain a threat to our Homeland, the American people, our partners, and our allies. As evidenced by this past weekend's attacks, such extremist groups seek to inspire and radicalize others, and, in doing so, they're attempting to fundamentally change our way of life.

The joint force is engaged in responding to each of these strategic challenges. We're focused on deterring potential adversaries, and we're prepared to respond, should deterrence fail.

We also remain firmly committed to defeating ISIL and its affiliates wherever they may emerge. Since my last appearance before the committee, I've made additional trips to the Middle East, and I'm encouraged by the coalition's progress in Iraq and Syria. We've also degraded the Islamic State's capabilities in Libya, West Africa, and Afghanistan. Coalition operations supporting indigenous ground forces—and the Chairman mentioned this, Ranking Member Reed mentioned, the Secretary did—have disrupted core ISIL's ability to mount external attacks, reduce its territory of control, limit its freedom of movement, eliminate many of their leaders, and reduce the resources that they have available. Most importantly, the coalition has begun to discredit ISIL's narrative and its aura of invincibility. While more work remains to be done, and we're by no means—by no means are we complacent—it's clear we have the momentum in the military campaign.

As the joint force addresses each of our strategic challenges, we also recognize the need to invest in the future. As the Secretary said, we don't have the luxury of choosing between the challenges that we face today or the challenges that we most assuredly will face tomorrow.

To meet tomorrow's requirements, we must take action today. Our nuclear deterrent remains effective, but it is aging and requires modernization. At the same time, we must develop and enhance the capabilities that—in the increasingly contested domains of space and cyber. We must also do all that while we preserve the edge in our conventional capabilities. In the end, we must maintain a balanced inventory of joint capabilities and capacities to meet the full range of challenges that we will confront.

In closing, I am concerned about readiness today, but I'm more concerned about maintaining a competitive advantage in the future. If we fail to modernize the joint force, we will be at a disadvantage in the future. I know the committee shares my belief that we should never send our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, or coastguardsmen into a fair fight.

Thank you, Chairman, members of the committee.

[The prepared statement of General Dunford follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY GENERAL DUNFORD

Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to join Secretary Carter in appearing before you.

Our thoughts are with those affected by this weekend's terrorist incidents in New York, New Jersey and Minnesota. We also remember the sacrifice of Lt. Col. Steven Eadie, who was killed in a U–2 mishap on Tuesday. our prayers are with the Eadie family and we wish his fellow airman a speedy recovery.

Before offering a brief assessment of on-going operations, I would like to associate myself with the comments made by the Service Chiefs who testified before you last week. As you would expect, they offered their candid assessments about the readiness and modernization challenges confronting each Service. I continue to appreciate the operational tempo and budgetary challenges faced by each Service and across the Department.

Due in large part to this committee's support, the Joint Force remains the most capable and professional military in the world. We can defend the nation, we can meet our alliance responsibilities, and today we have a competitive advantage over

any potential adversary. That's an important point that should be understood by our allies, our enemies and by those most responsible for our competitive advantage, our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and coast guardsmen.

I say all of that mindful that we remain confronted with challenges from traditional state actors and violent extremist organizations. Russia, China, Iran and North Korea continue to invest in military capabilities that reduce our competitive advantage. They are also advancing their interests through competition with a military dimension that falls short of traditional armed conflict and the threshold for traditional military response. Examples include Russian actions in Ukraine, North Korea's nuclear saber rattling, Chinese activities in the South China Sea and Iran's malign activities across the Middle East.

In different ways, each of these nations leverage economic coercion, information operations, cyber capabilities, unconventional operations and force posture while deliberately seeking to avoid a direct U.S. Military response.

Meanwhile, non-state actors such as ISIL and al Qaeda remain a threat to the Homeland, the American people, our partners and our allies. As evidenced by this past weekend's attacks, such extremist groups seek to inspire and radicalize others, and in doing so, they are attempting to fundamentally change our way of life.

The Joint Force is engaged in responding to each of these strategic challenges. We are focused on deterring potential adversaries and are prepared to respond should deterrence fail. We also remain firmly committed to defeating ISIL and its affiliates wherever they may emerge. Since my last appearance before this committee, I have made additional trips to the Middle East. I am encouraged by the coalition's progress in Iraq and Syria. We have also degraded the Islamic State's capabilities in Libya, West Africa and Afghanistan.

Coalition operations supporting indigenous ground forces have disrupted core ISIL's ability to mount external attacks, reduced its territorial control, limited its freedom of movement, eliminated many of its key leaders, and reduced its sources of revenue. Most importantly, the coalition has begun to discredit ISIL's narrative and its aurora of invincibility. While more work remains to be done, and we are by no means complacent, it is clear that we have the momentum.

As the Joint Force addresses each of the strategic challenges I just described, we also recognize the need to invest for the future. As the Secretary said, we do not have the luxury of choosing between the challenges we face today or the challenges we will face in the future. To meet tomorrow's requirements, we must take action today. Our nuclear deterrent remains effective, but it is aging and requires modernization. At the same time, we must develop and enhance our capabilities in the increasingly contested domains of cyber and space . . . and we must do so while preserving our edge in conventional capabilities.

In the end, we must maintain a balanced inventory of joint capabilities and capacities to meet the full array of challenges that we will confront in the future. In closing, while I am concerned about readiness today, we have a competitive advantage over any adversary. However, if we fail to modernize the Joint Force, we will be at a disadvantage in the future. I know that the committee shares my belief that we should never send our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and coast guardsmen into a fair fight.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this morning and I look forward to your questions.

Chairman MCCAIN. Thank you very much, General.

Thank you for your comments about the testimony of the Service Chiefs. We appreciated it, too. We were shocked to—or at least surprised to learn that none of the Service Chiefs have had a conversation with the President of the United States. That's the first time I've ever heard of it in my years of service and membership of this committee.

General Dunford, in your professional military opinion, is Russia in a quagmire in Syria?

General DUNFORD. It's not clear to me that Russia is in a quagmire in Syria at this time, Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. In your professional military opinion, is the cessation-of-hostilities agreement being effectively implemented on the ground in Syria?

General DUNFORD. That would not appear to be the case over the last 48 hours, Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. This is not the first time we've had one of these agreements. In fact, it's beginning to fit the definition of insanity, of doing the same thing over and over again. Suppose this fails again, General Dunford. What do we do then? Try another cease-fire? What do we do then? We just saw, as you know, evidence that a chemical weapon—and we knew that a chemical weapons factory was functioning in Raqqa. What's Plan B? Is there a Plan B, here, or do we just keep going back to the five-star hotels in Geneva and have meetings with our—with Mr. Lavrov, and come out with various declarations? What do we do if this one fails?

General DUNFORD. Chairman, we have a wide range of military options——

Chairman MCCAIN. Give us one.

General DUNFORD. Chairman, if I could finish. We have a wide range of military options that we would provide to the President, should our policy change in the wake of this recent cessation——

Chairman MCCAIN. Is the present policy working?

General DUNFORD. Against ISIL, the present policy is working.

Chairman MCCAIN. In Syria, with 400,000 people killed, 6 million refugees, is our strategy in Syria working—succeeding?

General DUNFORD. With regard to political transition in Syria, at this time, I would——

Chairman MCCAIN. In regards to the whole situation in Syria, is our policy working?

General DUNFORD. Chairman, I'd let others address the policy. Our focus, from a military perspective, is——

Chairman MCCAIN. I'm asking——

General DUNFORD.—our counter-ISIL campaign.

Chairman MCCAIN.—Is the military strategy succeeding in Syria?

General DUNFORD. Our military strategy is focused on a counter-ISIL campaign. In my judgment, we are succeeding in that campaign.

Chairman MCCAIN. As far as you're concerned, we ignore the 400,000 dead and the 6 million refugees. That's caused by Bashar Assad. Do you believe that, right now, it's very likely that Bashar Assad will leave power?

General DUNFORD. I can't really judge that right now. It doesn't appear that he will in the near term, Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. You can't judge that.

General DUNFORD. I can't judge the long-term prospects for Assad, was my point, Chairman. I'm——

Chairman MCCAIN. In the——

General DUNFORD.—sure he's not——

Chairman MCCAIN.—short term?

General DUNFORD.—leaving in the short term.

Chairman MCCAIN. In your professional military opinion, is it a good idea to set up an intelligence-sharing operation with the Russians?

General DUNFORD. Chairman, we don't have any intention of having an intelligence-sharing arrangement with the Russians.

Chairman MCCAIN. That is part of Secretary Kerry's proposal, that we set up an intelligence-sharing operation in Syria with the Russians.

General DUNFORD. Chairman, the United States military role will not include intelligence-sharing with the Russians.

Chairman MCCAIN. Do you support such an idea, that they should share intelligence—military intelligence information with Russia and Syria?

General DUNFORD. Chairman, what the President has directed us to do is establish a joint implementation——

Chairman MCCAIN. I asked for your professional military opinion, not what the President has told you to do. I'm asking, as in your confirmation hearings, if you would give your professional military opinion to this committee in response to questions. I expect you to hold to that.

Is it your professional military opinion that it would be a good idea to have an intelligence-sharing operation with Russia in Syria?

General DUNFORD. Chairman, I do not believe it would be a good idea to share intelligence with the Russians.

Chairman MCCAIN. I thank you, General.

On the issue of sequestration, could—I just mentioned—I hope it got the attention of all of my colleagues—that every one of the Service Chiefs said that, presently, sequestration puts our men and women who are serving in military in greater risk. At the same time, the President of the United States is demanding—is putting the risk to American servicemen and women on the same level as funding for the EPA. It is just remarkable to a lot of us that we don't take care of the compelling argument of caring—of reducing the risk to the men and women who are serving in the military, demanding that there be nondefense increases in spending at the same time.

All I can say is, I thank you, Secretary Carter and General Dunford, but this latest information concerning a chemical shell obviously shows that, in Raqqa, they're doing a lot of things, including a chemical weapons factory, which adds a new dimension to the threat to the lives of the men and women who are serving in the military.

I still look forward to hearing from Secretary Carter and General Dunford, What is the strategy if the present strategy continues to utterly fail? Frankly, I haven't heard that.

Senator Reed.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Secretary and General Dunford, one of the factors that appears to be—influence the timing of the Mosul operation is to—how do you govern Mosul after you militarily succeed—Iraq Security Forces succeed, with American and coalition assistance? That triggers the issue of, not only the role of agencies outside Defense, like the State Department, USAID [United States Agency for International Development], and others, but the resources they have. It would be—is it necessary, in your view, that these agencies be robustly funded, in addition, because without them, you can have a military victory and essentially just wait around, because they'll

come back because you haven't put the politics and the capacity together?

Secretary CARTER. It is necessary. I had the Defense Ministers of the key coalition contributors here to Andrews a little while ago, and we went through, as we always do, the campaign, their role, including the moves to envelope Mosul, which we've now taken. Their biggest concern with the campaign, at this point, in Iraq is exactly the one you note. Namely, is the political and the economic lagging so far behind the military that there's going to be an issue, once Mosul is—once ISIL is ejected from Mosul?

I'm just very specifically—if I may, Senator, I'll take the political part and then the stabilization/reconstruction part.

On the political part, this is a question that recurs, actually, everywhere we go. Everywhere we enable forces to defeat ISIL, the people who live there say, "Well, what's going to happen afterwards?" That's something we have dealt with in Hit, Fallujah, Rutbah, and some of—they're all complicated, all different. Mosul's going to be different, too.

My understanding—and that's just not mine, but the Chairman's and the—our commanders there, and also the President's—with Prime Minister Abadi, President Barzani, who are contributing forces—the Peshmerga from the north, a couple of brigades, and the ISF [Iraqi Security Forces] from the south, for the envelopment and collapse of control on—of ISIL's control on Mosul. Our understanding with them, which they are both adhering to, is that neither of the forces that will participate in taking Mosul should be the hold-and-govern force there. They should be local police—Sunni, in many cases, but it's actually a mixed-ethnicity city. The governor of Ninawah Province is the one that they are working with and we're working with. That's a daily exercise for General Townsend, General Votel, and for us, is to keep everybody aligned and focused on the job at hand, which is defeating ISIL.

With respect to stabilization and reconstruction, we don't know what the collapse of ISIL's control over Mosul will look like. We've had a different experience in different cities. Obviously, no one wants to see street-to-street fighting in Mosul, but you don't know. There could be a large number of refugees, and we're preparing for that. Not USAID. You mentioned U.S. Government funding. That's essential. But, also the U.N.——

Senator REED. Right.

Secretary CARTER.—and other international aid agencies.

I should say, by the way, that's one of the things I ask our coalition partners. I say, "If you don't want to make a military contribution, or you don't have a strong military contribution to make, or it's problematic, for some historical or political reason, for you to make a contribution, a check is good to"——

Senator REED. But——

Secretary CARTER.—"the local people to help them reconstruct."

Senator REED. But, essentially, you cannot—you can conduct kinetic operations, but the real, long-term effort is political/economic relief, refugee support, et cetera. Those are funds outside Department of Defense. A comprehensive approach to all these problems requires relief, not just from Department of Defense spending, but for other Federal agencies.

Secretary CARTER. It——

Senator REED. Is that correct?

Secretary CARTER. It is. The whole counter-ISIL thing is whole-of-government and——

Senator REED. Okay. Let me—going back also to your question about Northern Command. Northern Command is critical to defense of the United States, but, without a robust Department of Homeland Security, without adequate resources—the FBI and for other domestic agencies—then you could be performing at peak efficiency, but the job would not get done. Is——

Secretary CARTER. We——

Senator REED.—that correct?

Secretary CARTER. It—that is true. We count on their support. We support them, as well. It's a whole-of-government effort, defeat of ISIL and——

Senator REED. General Dunford, do you concur, from your perspective?

General DUNFORD. I do, Senator.

Senator REED. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Inhofe.

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me start off by saying that we have rules in this committee that, when we have witnesses coming in, we're to get their written statement 48 hours in advance. We didn't get both of yours until 8:30 this morning. Now, we did a lot better with the chiefs last week. In fact, General Hayden was in, 72 hours in advance. I just think it's a good idea to pass on to others, before they come in, that we really do need to have that to conduct the—a hearing that's meaningful.

When General Goldfein was here, he described what's needed for defense funding, and he talked about sufficient, stable, predictable funding. In your statement, Secretary Carter, you left the word "sufficient" out. I am concerned about this.

Back during the Clinton administration, when they were actually trying to cut 400 out of the budget, we, in this committee, sitting in this—in these—in this dais here—were able to put 100 back in. You remember the famous bathtub chart that we used at that time. General Milley said, last week—and I think that he said it best—he said, "The only thing more expensive than deterrence is actually fighting a war. The only thing more expensive than fighting a war is losing a war. We're expensive. We recognize that. But, the bottom line is, it's an investment that's worth every nickel."

I guess the question, just for a short answer of each one of you, is, Have our defense funding levels kept pace with the realities of the—our environment out there?

General Dunford?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I don't believe they have. That's why we've articulated an increased requirement in fiscal year 2017, and we'll continue to reinforce those areas that we identified in 2017 for 2018. Of course, those—well, turn it over to Secretary——

Senator INHOFE. I appreciate that.

Do you agree?

Secretary CARTER. Yeah. I wanted to say——

Senator INHOFE. All right.

Secretary CARTER.—that I agree with General Dunford, and what the Chief said, as well, and I'm—insufficiency belongs with instability. I'm sorry if we left that word out. Nothing intended there. The point that they were making, and that I would strongly echo, is, the effects of eight straight years of ending a fiscal year without an appropriation——

Senator INHOFE. Yeah. You——

Secretary CARTER.—for the next—that is—has had a serious effect. We've tried to manage through it.

Senator INHOFE. Right.

Secretary CARTER. We've done our best. But, it—that's just not——

Senator INHOFE. I understand, Secretary.

Secretary CARTER.—the way to run an——

Senator INHOFE. Now, you've been—let me compliment you—you've been a real stalwart on your—in support of each leg of the nuclear triad. Had stated that the nuclear mission is the bedrock of our security. Today, we're spending about 3 to 4 percent of our budget. However, the long-term plan shows that we're going to move up, within the decade, or sometime in the decade, to 6 to 7 percent. The question I would ask is—you know, General Dunford, with Russia and China actively modernizing their nuclear weapons and delivery system, we know what's happening in North Korea—do you think we should accelerate this so that we would reach the 6 to 7 percent much earlier, like now?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think, as you know, many of those programs, it's not just the function of accelerating the funding, it's how much time it takes for development. I'm confident, having looked at this very closely, that the path that we're on and the timing for the introduction of our new programs is about right. It balances both the budget, but it, more importantly, balances the operational readiness of those systems to be introduced at the——

Senator INHOFE. Well, I think what you're saying is, even if you had more now, you could not spend it wisely. You need the—the course that we're on is adequate, in your opinion.

General DUNFORD. Senator, that's exactly my——

Senator INHOFE. All right.

General DUNFORD.—assessment.

Senator INHOFE. That's fine.

The—I was in Ukraine right after their parliamentary elections, and I was—I've never seen Poroshenko or any of them as happy as they were at that time, how proud they were, for the time in 96 years, not having one Communist on the—in Parliament. As soon as that happened, Putin started killing the Ukraines and the—I would ask you this, Secretary Carter. If—is deterrence of Russia in Europe a policy priority?

Secretary CARTER. It absolutely is. That's why we quadrupled the European Reassurance Initiative.

Senator INHOFE. But, what would that—I would ask the question, then, Why are we not providing defensive lethal assistance to the Ukraine?

Secretary CARTER. Well, that is still on the table. It's been on the table for quite some time. And——

Senator INHOFE. Well, it's more than on the table——
Secretary CARTER.—I want to emphasize, we do——
Senator INHOFE.—with us, because it's in our——
Secretary CARTER. Well, it's going to depend upon what the Russians do with respect to Minsk. I just met with my Ukrainian counterpart a couple of weeks ago. A great guy, by the way. He's been doing this for a long time and is very dedicated, a good guy to work with. We talked about everything that are doing with them. We have training now. We've moved from their national——
Senator INHOFE. Okay. And——
Secretary CARTER.—guard to their regular——
Senator INHOFE. I don't want to be rude, Mr. Secretary, but my time is just about expired.
Secretary CARTER. Okay.
Senator INHOFE. I just want to know if this—well, let me ask you, General Dunford. If we were to change our policy, what type of weaponry would be the—appropriate right now? You know, we have the Javelin anti-armor weapons. What would be the right weapon? You're both fully aware that, in our defense authorization bill, we address this issue, because we support lethal defense weapons. General Dunford?
General DUNFORD. The critical capability areas the Ukrainians have identified include fire support, their artillery capability, as well as their anti-armor capability.
Senator INHOFE. Yeah, and do you agree with that?
General DUNFORD. That's a capability gap, I agree with that.
Senator INHOFE. Thank you.
Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Blumenthal.
Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.
I want to join in thanking both of you for your extraordinary service and for your very forthright answers to our questions here.
General Dunford, is there any question in your mind, any doubt, that Russian planes were responsible for attacking the United States—the U.N. convoy that was trying to deliver aid to Aleppo?
General DUNFORD. Senator, I don't have the facts. What we know are, two Russian aircraft were in that area at that time. My judgment would be that they did. There were also some other aircraft in the area, that belonged to the regime, at or about the same time; so, I can't conclusively say that it was the Russians, but it was either the Russians or the regime.
Senator BLUMENTHAL. Well, it sounds to me like you're saying that their responsibility was demonstrated beyond a reasonable doubt.
General DUNFORD. Senator, there's no doubt in my mind that the Russians are responsible. I just don't know whose aircraft actually dropped the bomb. I would certainly associate myself with the comment that you made earlier, that, yes, it is the Russians that were responsible.
Senator BLUMENTHAL. Which is a war crime. I'm not asking for your legal judgment, knowing that you would probably disclaim your expertise as a lawyer, but you would agree with me, as a layman, as a military person, that that act constituted a war crime.
General DUNFORD. It was an unacceptable atrocity, Senator.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Would you agree with Secretary Kerry in contending that what ought to be done is a grounding of all aircraft in certain areas of Syria, including that one?

General DUNFORD. I would not agree that coalition aircraft ought to be grounded. I do agree that Syrian regime aircraft and Russian aircraft should be grounded.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Would you agree with—apparently, the growing strain of thought in the administration, that the Syrian Kurds should be armed?

General DUNFORD. Senator, we're in deliberation about exactly what to do with the Syrian Democratic Forces right now. We have—providing them support. They are our more—most effective partner on the ground. It's very difficult, as you know, managing the relationship between our support for the Syrian Democratic Forces and our Turkish allies. We're working very closely with our Turkish allies to come up with the right approach to make sure that we can conduct effective and decisive operations in Raqqa with the Syrian Democratic Forces and still allay the Kurdish—the Turkish concerns about the Kurds' long-term political prospects.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. If those concerns can be allayed, and even if they can't be allayed, would you agree that arming the Syrian Kurds presents an opportunity for us, as a military option, to be more effective in that area?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I would agree with that. If we would reinforce the Syrian Democratic Forces' current capabilities, that will increase the prospects of our success in Raqqa.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. In terms of the Russian responsibility for what you have absolutely correctly termed "an atrocity," a war crime in that area, what can the United States do? What are some of those military options that the Chairman asked about?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I'd prefer to talk to you in private about military options that might be being discussed as future options the President may have. I think right now managing the Russian problem is largely a political/diplomatic problem, and that's what Secretary Kerry and the President are dealing with.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Let me turn—Mr. Secretary, you mentioned that there are three areas—the fiscal, the over-regulation or micromanaging, and much needed reforms, as you characterized them. Could you give us your priorities as to what those reforms would be?

Secretary CARTER. I have spelled—I have a number of concerns, which I spelled out at great length in a letter to the committee. I really look forward to working with you to resolve them. There are a number of them. They're serious concerns that I have for provisions in the bill. I'd like to work all of these—I think where we have common intentions, work them to a place where I can support an NDAA that the President would sign. That's where I'd like to get with you all by the time you return, in November.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I would welcome that opportunity. I'm just about out of time. This topic is immensely important, because it involves effective use of resources. We talk a lot about what the levels of resource should be, but managing them effectively is very important.

As to the Syrian conflict, to both of you, I don't need to emphasize how desperately serious the humanitarian catastrophe is in Syria. The Chairman has rightly referred to the numbers killed and displaced. It is, as Secretary Kerry right termed it, probably the biggest humanitarianism catastrophe since World War II, and the United States bears a responsibility to use its military forces to stop the bloodshed and the needless and senseless killing of innocent civilians there.

Thank you very much for your testimony today.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Sessions.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would share that thought. The situation in Syria is a colossal disaster. I do not believe it had to happen. I believe a wise statesman could have foreseen some of the difficulties we're facing today. We should have been more cautious and careful in our declarations of how we expect Syria to develop over the years. It hasn't developed like President Obama projected. Disaster has been the situation.

With regard to the sequestration issue, Mr. Secretary, I'm trying to contain spending on all our accounts. I've come to believe that we have to have more defense spending. We've exceeded sequestration, I guess, for the last two years. But, I guess my question to you is—Senator McCain has proposed an increase in defense spending. All the items that he proposed are things the Defense Department have said they need. Is it your position that the—and is it the President's position—that we will not spend that additional money for the Defense Department unless at least an equal amount of money is spent on the Commerce Department, the EPA, and other Government agencies?

Secretary CARTER. Well, what—I'll speak for myself—what I can't support, and won't support, is anything that moves towards instability. That means towards sequestration. That means away from bipartisanship. We submitted a budget that was consonant with the bipartisan budget agreement. That's what we did.

Senator SESSIONS. Well——

Secretary CARTER. Eight months——

Senator SESSIONS. Okay. I understand.

Secretary CARTER. We did that——

Senator SESSIONS. It——

Secretary CARTER.—a few months into the bipartisan budget——

Senator SESSIONS. All right.

Secretary CARTER.—agreement. I—the—I can't—I don't control this. I simply approve it.

Senator SESSIONS. It's the President's decision, ultimately. I understand that. What he's saying, in leading the Democrats, and they're saying, not only do we have to bust the budget for the Defense Department, we have to bust it an equal amount for nondefense spending. That's the problem we have today. That's why we don't have a bipartisan agreement.

If we can go on to the next subject——

Secretary CARTER. Well, there is a bipartisan—if I may say so, there is a bipartisan budget agreement, and that is what we——

Senator SESSIONS. Well——

Secretary CARTER.—submitted our budget in accordance with, whatever, eight months ago. Now——

Senator SESSIONS. Well——

Secretary CARTER.—the fiscal year ends, and there's no——

Senator SESSIONS. Well, we'll have to——

Secretary CARTER.—there's no budget on that basis.

Senator SESSIONS.—to avoid a Government shutdown. The leadership of the President and his determination to compromise has bitterly been reached. I wish we could have supported Defense without going further.

Mr. Secretary, Secretary Rumsfeld, Secretary Gates, and you have criticized our allies in Europe about their unwillingness to even meet their minimum commitments to defense. I suppose you still believe they should meet those minimum standards, do you not?

Secretary CARTER. Yeah. Yeah, I absolutely do. They said that——

Senator SESSIONS. You've said that before. But, this European Reassurance Initiative—a European official told me, "Why did not the United States demand that Europe increase their defense spending at the same amount we're increasing our defense spending for Europe in the European Reassurance Initiative?"

Secretary CARTER. Well, all I can tell you is, yes, I am, in a long tradition—and it actually goes back before——

Senator SESSIONS. My question is, Why did you not tell the Europeans——

Secretary CARTER. I did.

Senator SESSIONS.—and——

Secretary CARTER. I did. We've been talking——

Senator SESSIONS. Well, we don't have a commitment from them to match that amount of money, do we?

Secretary CARTER. Well, it's complicated, because some—each of them has made a contribution to European Reassurance, but you're—in terms of aggregate spending, they have a commitment, which not many of them have met, Senator, but a few have——

Senator SESSIONS. Four out of——

Secretary CARTER.—which is to meet——

Senator SESSIONS.—twenty-eight countries are at the minimum.

Secretary CARTER.—which is to spend two percent of their GDP. Important major countries in Europe aren't even doing that. That's unacceptable.

Senator SESSIONS. With——

Secretary CARTER. It means that Europe—too many European militaries have made themselves incapable of independent——

Senator SESSIONS. Well——

Secretary CARTER.—military activity——

Senator SESSIONS.—I'll just say this. For the last 8 to 12 years, they've continued——

Secretary CARTER. Okay.

Senator SESSIONS.—on this, and we've said it, and nothing's happened. It's time for something to happen from Europe.

Let me ask you, really, about the Syrian situation. It's such a disaster. I mean, we've got hundreds of thousands dead, six million refugees, and I don't see an end in sight. General Dunford just said

that Assad is not leaving anytime soon. Five years ago, the President said, "Assad has to go, and is going." He did not go. This is all a result of that. Now we're making some progress, I understand, against ISIS [Islamic State in Iraq and Syria]. What kind of agreement—what kind of end do you see, Mr. Secretary, for this disastrous conflict? How can we see an end to it? What do you foresee, and what's our goal?

Secretary CARTER. We are making progress in the counter-ISIL campaign in Iraq and Syria. In western Syria, where the civil war rages——

Senator SESSIONS. No, no, no. I'm asking, What is the goal of the United States——

Secretary CARTER. The goal of——

Senator SESSIONS.—of America——

Secretary CARTER. The goal——

Senator SESSIONS.—for Syria?

Secretary CARTER. The goal of United States policy in Syria is to end the Syrian war—civil war. It has been that for a long time. That means a end to the violence there. That's—and also a political transition from Assad to a government that includes the moderate opposition and that can run the country. Our approach has been a political one——

Senator SESSIONS. The problem is—let me ask you this. It seems to me that the problem is that, with our support, ISIS is being damaged, but they're not utterly destroyed. If some sort of peace agreement is reached, some sort of cease-fire, and the United States and others reduce their presence there, can you assure us that ISIS, the toughest, meanest group in Syria, won't be able to destabilize any government that might be put together?

Secretary CARTER. Well, let me be clear about something, which is, our counter-ISIL campaign is not on the table or part of the discussions of Secretary Kerry with the Russians. That is about the Russian activity, Syrian activity in western Syria. Our counter-ISIL campaign, we are conducting, and will conduct. You're right, we are making progress in it. That's——

Senator SESSIONS. Well——

Secretary CARTER.—going to go on.

Senator SESSIONS. I don't see——

Secretary CARTER. But, what Secretary Kerry's trying to do—and again, as we sit here today, it's very problematic—but, what he's trying to do is exactly what you're calling attention to, namely to end the humanitarian disaster occasioned by the civil war in Syria, and to promote a political transition.

Senator SESSIONS. Well——

Secretary CARTER. He's trying to work with those——

Senator SESSIONS.—let me wrap up and——

Secretary CARTER.—who have influence——

Senator SESSIONS. My time's over——

Secretary CARTER.—there, and they're not——

Senator SESSIONS.—Mr. Secretary.

Secretary CARTER.—and they're not exercising that influence.

Senator SESSIONS. I believe we could have done a better job with safe zones. I'm worried about the area in Iraq. I've talked to you previously and personally about it. We need a active American pol-

icy, a leadership in the world. But, we cannot establish all these governments, and run them, and assure how they'll come out in the end. We can't occupy these countries for decades to try to assure that. That's just not realistic.

A wise statesman would have seen the danger in Syria. A wise statesman would have seen the danger in Libya. A wise statesman should have seen what could have happened in Egypt. Except for 30 million Egyptians going to the public square and driving out the Muslim Brotherhood, we could have a disaster there.

We've got to be more realistic in our foreign policy. We've got to know what we can do to affect, positively, the world and what we cannot do. We're not able to ensure democratic governments throughout this region of the world. We're now facing colossal humanitarian disaster, and it's been bubbling for a number of years. There's no easy solution to get out of it. I wish it were, but there's not.

Thank you.

Senator REED [presiding]. On behalf of Chairman McCain, let me recognize Senator King.

Senator KING. Thank you.

An observation about the budget. A year and a half ago, we had a bipartisan agreement on the budget number. Then allocations were made to the Appropriations Committee, and they went through their process. I thought, "Finally, some stability. We can have appropriations." But, I'm reminded of an old saying in Maine, "He's so dumb, he could screw up a two-car funeral." We had the numbers, we had the allocations, we had the agreement, and yet, here we are at a Continuing Resolution.

I think we ought to be clear about what it is that's gotten us here. There is a dispute, as Senator Sessions pointed out, on the numbers. But, that's the kind of thing that can be negotiated. If there's an $18 billion been added to Defense, and there are people that feel that, on the domestic side, there also needs to be increases in areas like the FBI, for example, that's a legitimate area that reasonable people in an afternoon should be able to figure out.

What's really holding things up, as I understand it, are riders that have nothing to do with the budget, that have to do with policy preferences of various individuals. A perfect example is the National Defense Authorization Act, which, my understanding is, is now being held up by the sage grouse. The sage grouse is what is stopping the finalization of the National Defense Authorization Act. A very important issue to a lot of people, I'm not denigrating it. I know it's very important in the West. But, it should not be the thing that holds up the National Defense Authorization Act and the support of our men and women all over the world.

I think we ought to be clear about what the problem is, here, that trying to load on a lot of political baggage to both the appropriations bills and the national defense bill is what has gotten us to this place. The numbers have been agreed on by a year—for a year and a half. If we want to increase them, let's discuss that and work out an agreement. That should be easy. But, to be holding up this— and the—similar to the sage grouse, other kinds of those issues are why, my understanding is, is holding up the appropriations process.

We're doing a Continuing Resolution even though we've had a number agreed on for two years—for a year and a half. It's just—you know, this institution, as Senator Lindsey Graham pointed out last week, is one of the greatest threats to American security. He went through a litany of how we've taken more troops off the battlefield, more airplanes out of the air, more ships out of the ocean than any enemy has done by our inability to work out what ordinary people on the street would think people ought to be able to figure out in a relatively short period of time.

If you can find a question in there, you're welcome to it.

Secretary CARTER. I would like to say one thing, which is just to repeat that it is on the basis of that bipartisan budget agreement, and the stability it promised, that we submitted our budget.

Senator KING. Right.

Secretary CARTER. Now—and that—we figured that was the best the country could do on a bipartisan basis. That's the only way we've had stability in the past.

Now, I'm asked about this proposal and that proposal that would depart from that, and my answer is, in all seriousness, with responsibility for trying to shepherd this institution, is—I have to look at what I think can be delivered——

Senator KING. Sure.

Secretary CARTER.—on a stable basis. That was what the bipartisan budget agreement is, and that is the—that has been the foundation, and remains the foundation, for our budget submission. We did a very good job, in my judgment—and this is the senior leadership of the Department—to manage responsibly within that budget. We've done that. That's the budget we submitted, months ago——

Senator KING. Mr. Secretary, I——

Secretary CARTER.—for this fiscal year. Now the fiscal year ends, and—so, we've played it very straight.

Senator KING. My point is, we had a budget agreement, we had a number, and we still can't get it done.

Let me ask an entirely different question.

Next week, we are probably going to be dealing with a veto of the bill that would allow people to sue Saudi Arabia, the so-called Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act. General Dunford, do you have—or both of you—do you have concerns about what the effect on our troops, our liability around the world, would be if that bill becomes law?

Secretary CARTER. Let me—if I may, I'll say something first——

Senator KING. Sure.

Secretary CARTER.—and then General Dunford, if he wishes to.

The—first of all, I completely associate myself with the intention of this, which is to honor the families of the 9/11 perished. That is the origin of this. That's—is a worthy one.

I—it is a law enforcement matter, and, I have to say, we're—we—we're not the ones who are dealing with it, nor are—am I, at least, an expert on it. But, you did raise one thing that I am aware of, which is a complication from—that would be a complication, from our point of view, namely that were another country to behave reciprocally towards the United States, that could be a problem for some of our servicemembers. That is, I'm told, a—some-

thing that we, in the Department of Defense, should be concerned about. You're referring to that. That's my understanding, as well.

Let me ask the Chairman if he wants to add anything.

General DUNFORD. Senator, the potential second-order effect the Secretary has raised is one that was—been brought to my attention. That's my concern, as well.

Senator KING. I think it would be helpful if you could give us more detail on that issue, because we're going to be having to make a decision, probably next week. I, for one, want to be sure I understand the full implications of that decision, not only on the victims' families, but also on other United States interests around the world. I'd appreciate it if that could be made available in the next few days.

Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[The information referred to follows:]

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

SEP 2 6 2016

The Honorable William M. "Mac" Thornberry
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter of September 23, 2016, regarding the President's veto of S. 2040, the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (JASTA). I support the President's position. We appreciate the opportunity to provide views on this important issue.

As I stated in my testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee on September 22, 2016, I agree with the intent of the bill, which is to honor the families of 9/11 victims. While we are sympathetic to the intent of JASTA, its potential second- and third-order consequences could be devastating to the Department and its Service members and could undermine our important counterterrorism efforts abroad.

In general terms, JASTA would allow lawsuits in U.S. Federal Courts against foreign states for actions taken abroad that are alleged to have contributed to acts of terrorism in the United States, notwithstanding long-standing principles of sovereign immunity. Under existing law, similar lawsuits are available for actions taken abroad only by designated state sponsors of terrorism. JASTA extends the stripping of immunity to states that are not designated sponsors of terrorism, potentially subjecting many of the United States' allies and partner nations to litigation in U.S. courts.

JASTA has potentially harmful consequences for the Department of Defense and its personnel. Adoption of JASTA might result in reciprocal treatment of the United States and other countries could create exceptions to immunity that do not directly mirror those created by JASTA. This is likely to increase our country's vulnerability to lawsuits overseas and to encourage foreign governments or their courts to exercise jurisdiction over the United States or U.S. officials in situations in which we believe the United States is entitled of sovereign immunity. U.S. Service members stationed here and overseas, and especially those supporting our counterterrorism efforts, would be vulnerable to private individuals' accusations that their activities contributed to acts alleged to violate a foreign state's law. Such lawsuits could relate to actions taken by members of armed groups that received U.S. assistance or training, or misuse of U.S. military equipment by foreign forces.

First, whether the United States or our Service members have *in fact* provided support for terrorist acts or aided organizations that later commit such acts in violation of foreign laws is irrelevant to whether we would be forced to defend against lawsuits by private litigants in foreign courts. Instead, the mere allegation of their involvement could subject them to a foreign court's jurisdiction and the accompanying litigation and intrusive discovery process that goes

along with defending against such lawsuits. This could result in significant consequences even if the United States or our personnel were ultimately found not to be responsible for the alleged acts.

Second, there would be a risk of sizeable monetary damage awards in such cases, which could lead to efforts to attach U.S. Government property to satisfy those awards. Given the broad range of U.S. activities and robust presence around the world, including our Department's foreign bases and facilities abroad, we would have numerous assets vulnerable to such attempts.

Third, it is likely that litigants will seek sensitive government information in order to establish their case against either a foreign state under JASTA in U.S. courts or against the United States in a foreign court. This could include classified intelligence data and analysis, as well as sensitive operational information. While in the United States classified information could potentially be withheld in certain narrow circumstances in civil lawsuits brought by private litigants against our allies and partners, no legislation specifically protects classified information in civil actions (unlike protections afforded in criminal prosecutions) or under JASTA. Furthermore, if the United States were to be sued in foreign courts, such information would likely be sought by foreign plaintiffs, and it would be up to the foreign court whether classified or sensitive U.S. Government information sought by the litigants would be protected from disclosure. Moreover, the classified information could well be vital for our defense against the accusations. Disclosure could put the United States in the difficult position of choosing between disclosing classified or otherwise sensitive information or suffering adverse rulings and potentially large damage awards for our refusal to do so.

Relatedly, foreign lawsuits will divert resources from mission crucial tasks; they could subject our Service members and civilians, as well as contractor personnel, to depositions, subpoenas for trial testimony, and other compulsory processes both here and abroad. Indeed, such personnel might be held in civil or even criminal contempt if they refused to appear or to divulge classified or other sensitive information at the direction of a foreign court.

Finally, allowing our partners and allies – not just designated state sponsors of terrorism – to be subject to lawsuits inside the United States will inevitably undermine the trust and cooperation our forces need to accomplish their important missions. By damaging our close and effective cooperation with other countries, this could ultimately have a chilling effect on our own counterterrorism efforts.

Please let me know if there is any additional information the Department can provide.

Sincerely,

Ash Carter

cc:
The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member

Senator REED. On behalf of the Chairman, Senator Ayotte, please.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, Chairman.

I want to thank you both for your service and leadership for the country.

You know, just to briefly weigh on this funding issue, what's been most disappointing to me, as someone who supported the bipartisan budget agreement, is that the defense appropriations bill passed within that cap set by the bipartisan budget agreement unanimously out of the Appropriations Committee. Both parties agreed with the funding on defense. Then it came to the Senate

floor, and it's been blocked multiple times because it's being held hostage to other issues.

Just to be clear, what you're asking for, it's there. It's just disappointing to people like me and others here, because the priority of defending this Nation and having the funding for our troops and what you need to do should be our priority, no matter what.

You know, as I hear this kabuki dance, it's obvious. We passed an appropriations bill. It was completely bipartisan, within the budget caps. Why is it being blocked? I was proud to vote for it. I'd vote for it again tomorrow. I just wish we'd get it done for you and our men and women in uniform.

I wanted to shift gears here and ask about Iran. General Dunford, does Iran continue to be one of the lead sponsors of terrorism around the world?

General DUNFORD. They are, Senator. I describe their major export as malign influence.

Senator AYOTTE. Are they continuing to test ballistic missiles that is quite troubling to both us and our allies and, I think, in violation of U.N. resolutions?

General DUNFORD. They are, Senator, as well as provocative behavior in the Gulf.

Senator AYOTTE. Exactly, that our military has encountered in the Gulf just recently.

General DUNFORD. That's right, Senator.

Senator AYOTTE. One of the things that I wanted to ask about is—recently, we learned that the $1.7 billion in cash relief has actually gone—that the administration has provided Iran—has actually gone directly to the Revolutionary Guard Corps. I don't know if you were aware of that. In fact, the Iranian parliament, or their equivalent of our—their legislative body passed a law that essentially said if there was a settlement, a legal settlement from a foreign country, which is how this $1.7 billion has been characterized, it would go directly to the military. Does that trouble you, that they're taking the proceeds that we're giving them and funding their military?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I wasn't aware of it. It doesn't surprise me that the Republican Guard would have a high priority for funding inside of Iran. But, it certainly is troubling. The more funds that they have available, obviously, the more effective they'll be in spreading malign influence.

Senator AYOTTE. One of the things, as I look at this—this is our—you know, this relief that we're giving them, they're testing ballistic missiles, they—the money that they're getting—this isn't going to the Iranian people, it's going to their Revolutionary Guard Corps, that we know promotes terrorism and undermines stability around the world. As I see this situation, I don't see us taking any steps that we should, in terms of being aggressive in coming back, especially on the ballistic missile program and their terrorism issues. What should we be doing, General?

General DUNFORD. Senator, there's two things that I'd draw your attention to. First is our posture in the Central Command, which is, in fact, their—both to deter Iran, but also to respond to Iran, should a response be required. Also, in the fiscal year 2017 budget—and I expect you'll see similar requests in the fiscal year 2018

budget—much of what we are focused on is dealing with what we describe as anti-access area denial. That's Iran's desire to keep us from moving into that area, and then operating freely within that area. Many of the programs, from a cyber perspective, from ballistic missile defense capability, strike capability, are all designed to deal with the threat of Iran in the region.

Senator AYOTTE. Let me just ask you. They're still testing ballistic missiles. Would you agree that's a grave threat and something that needs to be addressed, in terms of our security? This is all post-agreement, that they're doing this, agreed?

General DUNFORD. Absolutely, Senator, and that's why we've identified them as one of the four state challenges that we benchmark our joint capabilities against.

Senator AYOTTE. One of the things I wanted to ask your thoughts on, General, is that we've learned about this $400 million in cash that Iran got, that would be included in the $1.7 billion that I referenced, for release of the American hostages. Did you think that was a good idea? Were you consulted about that?

General DUNFORD. Senator, that would, in the normal course of events, not be something that would be in my lane, so I was not consulted.

Senator AYOTTE. Well, do you think it's a good idea that we should exchange cash to a country like Iran, that you've already confirmed is one of the largest state sponsors of terrorism, in exchange for hostages? Because, as I look at this situation, they've now taken at least three more American hostages.

General DUNFORD. Senator, I just don't know the details of the agreement that was made with Iran and what the nature of that money was. I—you know, on principle, I would prefer that we not provide additional resources to Iran.

Senator AYOTTE. On principle, you'd rather them not have more money. I mean, doesn't it worry you that, as we think about exchanging cash with a country like Iran—obviously, it was funneled through the European countries—and that, in fact, we're going to encourage more bad behavior from Iran, and we've seen some of it? Isn't that something we should be concerned about?

General DUNFORD. Senator, before whatever arrangement was made, and after whatever arrangement was made, I'm under no illusion of what Iran is intending to do, nor are we not—nor are we—we are mindful of the capabilities that they're developing, as well.

Senator AYOTTE. Well, I hope—you know, I've introduced sanctions legislation on—to address their ballistic missile program. I think this ransom payment issue is just deeply troubling, and it's just causing further bad behavior from Iran. We know they've taken further hostages. I just hope that this administration will step up and finally address Iran's bad behavior.

Senator REED. On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator Ernst, please.

Senator ERNST. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being with us today and joining in the discussion.

I'd like to start with just a few quick yes-or-no questions; very brief, please, gentlemen.

For Secretary Carter, did you know that Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, and Ramzi Yousef, who masterminded and planned the 1993 World Trade Center attacks, utilized the Philippines as a safe haven for their planning and training? Yes or no?

Secretary CARTER. Senator, it's—I'll just say it to be—I'll try your questions yes or no. It depends on whether they lend themselves to that. In this case, no, I was not aware.

Senator ERNST. Okay. Yes, he did use it as a safe haven during that planning and training.

General Dunford, did you know that Operation Enduring Freedom covered the Philippines in order to train and assist those local forces in the Philippines against al Qaeda-linked terrorist organizations?

General DUNFORD. Yes, I did, Senator.

Senator ERNST. Okay, thank you, General.

For both of you, are you both aware that ISIS released a video this year encouraging fighters that can't get into Syria to head to the Philippines?

Secretary CARTER. I am, yes.

General DUNFORD. I am, as well. I was in Manila last week, Senator.

Senator ERNST. Wonderful. Thank you, General.

Just like we're witnessing in the Middle East, and we have heard much of the discussion today focus on the Middle East. General, I appreciate you've spent time in Africa, as well, dealing with Islamic extremist groups. They are also in Southeast Asia. We are not spending much time talking about that. Groups like Abu Sayyaf, they're bonding together beneath the flag of ISIS. Yet, we really, like I said, don't seem to be focusing on this. The Philippine forces lost 44 of their special police in a single battle to these terrorist groups last year. Fifteen soldiers were killed in a single battle just last month. It's clear that this is a very real threat.

President Obama admitted that we have underestimated the rise of ISIS in the Middle East. What I fear right now is that we are completely underestimating the rise of ISIS in Southeast Asia.

Before the President went to Asia last month, I did send a letter to him and encouraged him to visit about how we can counter terrorism and counter ISIS in that region. I did urge him to bring up this issue with the President. Shortly after that, ISIS claimed another attack, killing 14 civilians.

Secretary Carter, are you concerned with what we see as the rise of ISIS in Southeast Asia?

Secretary CARTER. I am. I'll say something, and then I'll ask the Chairman also if he'd chime in.

When I talked about the metastasis of the cancer of ISIL, you're absolutely right that South Asia clearly is a place they aspire to spreading. I talk to our counterparts there who are concerned about it. We work with them. Just next week, I'm—I'll be convening them in Honolulu on a number of issues of Pacific security, but one of them is going to be counterterrorism and countering ISIL. I'd say Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore—you mentioned the Philippines, and other places, but those four come to mind. I've spoken to the Defense Ministers in each of those four countries. They

have concerns, particularly about the possibility that ISIS could establish a foothold there. In some places, it's already troubled, in some way. There are places in all those countries. It could grab hold there.

Senator ERNST. Absolutely.

Secretary CARTER. It is very much on our agenda.

Chairman, please.

General DUNFORD. Senator, I agree with your assessment and concerns. Last week, I met with 29 Chiefs of Defense in the Pacific, in Manilla, hosted by the Chief of Defense of the Philippine Armed Forces, and we discussed, broadly, the threat of extremism in Asia and what we need to do to deal with it.

To your point, there's 1,000 foreign fighters, alone, we estimate have come from Indonesia into Syria and Iraq. There are hundreds that came from the Philippines. Other countries, as well, are dealing with that issue.

I think, although it's not very visible, there's a significant amount of activity going on to build the capacity of our partners in the Pacific. We're trying to work with them to develop a framework within which they can share information, share intelligence. We have a significant maritime domain awareness initiative, which will help them understand the movement into the sea. We see, for example, significant cooperation between the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia in the Sulu Sea associated with the movement of people and so forth, you know, in—as part of this violent extremist problem.

It is a different fight. I call it a requirement for a regional approach in Southeast Asia, as opposed to a coalition, which is required in Syria and Iraq. But, we are absolutely putting pressure on ISIL in South Asia. We are absolutely working very closely with our partners. Frankly, the limit of the support we provide is often what they are willing to accept politically. We're very keen, and we will bring to the President any requests for support. I think, as you know, Senator, we are providing some support now to the Philippines—intelligence support and——

Senator ERNST. Absolutely.

General DUNFORD.—other support, to help them to deal with the extremist problem that they have in the south.

Senator ERNST. Thank you, General.

Thank you, gentlemen.

I just really want us to ensure that we are not taking our eyes off of that region. We seem to focus very heavily, as we should, on the Middle East and Africa, but we do have other footholds for ISIS. We do have five new bases going into the Philippines, and I think it's important that we really focus on these counter-ISIS opportunities.

Thank you, gentlemen, very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator REED. On behalf of the Chairman, let me recognize Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Secretary Carter and General Dunford, for being here today and for your service to the country.

General Dunford, at one point before this committee, you indicated that you believe Russia poses the greatest threat to the United States. Do you still feel that way? If so, can you identify where you think those threats are most concerning?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I can. Thank you. I raised that issue—I was asked before the committee, what did I think the most significant challenge to the United States was. Of course, we talk about all four state challenges and one violent extremist. But, when I look at Russia's nuclear capability, when I look at their cyber capability, when I look at their developments in undersea warfare, when I look at their patterns of operation—how often they've operating, the locations they're operating—it's a pattern of operations that we haven't seen in over 20 years. When I look at Mr. Putin's activities in the Ukraine, in Crimea, in Georgia, that causes me to say that a combination of their behavior as well as their military capability, again, in some high-end areas, would cause me to believe that they pose the most significant challenge, potentially the most significant threat to our national interests.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you.

I very much appreciate, Secretary Carter, your raising the European Reassurance Initiative as one of the programs that's threatened if we can't get agreement in Congress on funding, and share that concern, especially because of the potential threat that Russia poses on—in Eastern Europe.

One of the things that Secretary Kerry said yesterday was that we should consider grounding all military aircraft in key areas of Syria in response to what appears to be a blatant Russian bombing of the humanitarian aid that was scheduled to go into Syria. They have denied, of course, but, I think, as we've seen in the past, we can't really believe what they say.

I would ask you, Secretary Carter, do you agree that that is one avenue that we could take? What would be the followup position if they continue to fly aircraft?

Secretary CARTER. Well, I can't speak for Secretary Kerry. He is trying to get on the—for the Syrian and Russian air force, exactly that, a cessation of hostilities and a—which means a grounding of their aircraft, and not continuing to use them, particularly in a clumsy way—it's a nice word—in the Syrian civil war.

There's no question—can be no question of grounding U.S. aircraft that are conducting strikes against ISIL. We do that. We do that with exceptional precision and care and concern for civilian casualties that no other country can match. That's true of our whole coalition in all the strikes we conduct.

They're not in the same category at all. We need to continue with our air campaign to defeat ISIL.

Let me ask the Chairman if he wants—anything to add.

General DUNFORD. Senator, the most significant concern I would have—and I don't know what the proposal is—but, I would not—first of all, there's no reason to ground our aircraft. We're not barrel bombing civilians, we're not causing collateral damage. We have momentum, as we've all discussed here earlier today, against ISIL right now. I think what the Secretary is saying, I fully associate myself with. We need to keep the pressure on ISIL. The number-one priority that we have is disrupting their ability to plan and

conduct external operations from Syria. The cost of taking pressure off of ISIL right now exposes us to risk that I think is not acceptable.

Senator SHAHEEN. In the absence of some other action that we take, along with our allies in that area, do you see anything changing the dynamic of the civil war in Syria? I mean, I—I believe it's going to take some other outside—some other intervention in order to change the direction of this war. Right now, there's nothing happening that would do that.

Either one of you.

Secretary CARTER. Well, I'll start.

The direction in which Secretary Kerry is trying to get the Russians to move, which I understand fully, is the direction they always should have been in Syria, which is towards putting an end to the civil war, not pouring gasoline on it, and not emboldening Assad to be intransigent——

Senator SHAHEEN. But——

Secretary CARTER.—let alone conducting an air campaign, which is—doesn't adhere to the standards that ours does.

Senator SHAHEEN. But—I'm sorry to interrupt, Mr. Secretary, but I guess—I appreciate what you're saying, and that that should have been Russia's position all along, but clearly——

Secretary CARTER. That's what Secretary Kerry's trying to get them to.

Senator SHAHEEN. Right. But, we have had no success, after five years of civil war. What I'm asking is, What other options do we have that might change the trajectory of what's happening in Syria?

Secretary CARTER. Well, I'm—again, I'm not going to try to get in the middle of these negotiations, but I think that Secretary Kerry is trying to find a way to achieve those objectives. They're—those are the right objectives to have. As we sit here today, the Russians do not, and the Syrians do not, seem to be moving in that direction, as he said yesterday.

Chairman, you want to add anything?

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN [presiding]. Senator Cotton.

Senator COTTON. Thank you.

Mr. Secretary, I share your regret about the Department starting the fiscal year with another Continuing Resolution. I also regret that the Democrats have filibustered the Defense appropriations bills three times. Do you share my regret over that fact?

Secretary CARTER. I can't speak to the internal deliberations of the Congress. The only thing I'd say——

Senator COTTON. Well, that's a public vote. That's not an internal——

Secretary CARTER. Well, let me just say, we know that the only way to get budget stability is with everybody coming together. I see proposals from this side and that side, and this committee and that committee, and they're all different. We submitted a budget, in accordance with the bipartisan budget agreements just months after a two-year bipartisan budget agreement was agreed. That's what

we did. That is, in my judgment, the only way we can get true stability.

I'm—I am continuing to support the position of the bipartisan budget agreement. Anything that comes out of the Congress that is supported, an appropriation, at last, for fiscal year 2017 would be good for the Department of Defense. I hope we get such a thing——

Senator COTTON. Do you——

Secretary CARTER.—in November.

Senator COTTON. Do you——

Secretary CARTER. But, the reality is that these things have to be supported by both parties, both houses, and signed by the President. I'm the Secretary of Defense. I can't make all that happen. But, I know that's what has to happen in order for us to get an appropriation. Eight years in a row, straight, that hasn't——

Senator COTTON. Okay.

Secretary CARTER.—happened.

Senator COTTON. I understand. My time is limited here.

Do you believe, if a bill is passed out of the House of Representatives that has a larger increase for defense spending than it does for nondefense discretionary spending, that the President should sign that legislation?

Secretary CARTER. I can't speak for the——

Senator COTTON. Mr. Secretary, you are the——

Secretary CARTER. I'm going to give you——

Senator COTTON.—Secretary of Defense.

Secretary CARTER. You asked the question——

Senator COTTON. You are not the Director of the National Endowment of the Arts. You're not the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. You are the——

Secretary CARTER. That's where I was——

Senator COTTON.—Secretary of Defense.

Secretary CARTER.—headed. That's exactly where I was headed. I'm not. Therefore, I can't speak for the needs of those departments. I do know that some of the national-security-related departments, which are outside of the defense appropriation——

Senator COTTON. You stated that——

Secretary CARTER.—with which I am——

Senator COTTON.—stated that testimony up to here——

Secretary CARTER.—need their funding——

Senator COTTON.—and others——

Secretary CARTER.—as well. It's not a matter of indifference to me whether the government as a whole is funded. It's certainly not a matter of indifference to me whether an appropriation that can be supported by everyone up here so that it passes, and passed by the President, is done, or not. That's what I have to be for. Because I'm for getting a budget and for budget stability. I just observe—I'm not a participant, I'm an observer—that the only way that happens is not with this proposal and that proposal, it's with a bipartisan budget agreement. That's the line we tried to hew to. We're just playing it as straight——

Senator COTTON. I——

Secretary CARTER.—as we can.

Senator COTTON. I understand. You were the Deputy Secretary of Defense for Secretary Panetta. Is that correct?

Secretary CARTER. Yes.

Senator COTTON. On page 374 of his memoirs, he states, "In fact, as my efforts to fight the sequester began to get some attention, a few congressional Democrats urged me to emphasize the danger of cuts to domestic programs, not just defense. To my amazement, the rest of the Cabinet, including members responsible for those parts of the budget, largely stayed out of the debate. That left me to argue for all of us, which I tried to do, even when I found myself frustratingly alone."

Have congressional Democrats urged you to advocate for increased domestic spending in addition to defense spending?

Secretary CARTER. Well, first of all, I should say, you know, few had the experience with bipartisan budget management than Secretary Panetta. I don't remember that passage of his memoirs, but that sounds—it sounds like his——

Senator COTTON. Do you remember——

Secretary CARTER.—his voice. But——

Senator COTTON. Do you remember——

Secretary CARTER.—I've not found myself in the same circumstance, except I am in the same circumstance he was, namely—and I guess that was 2013—facing the prospect of sequester. He didn't like it. I didn't like it. I don't think any Secretary of Defense liked it. I think it's awfully unfair to our troops to do this again and again and again and again. That's what we've been warning about. That's where I have been. That's what our chiefs did last week. I'm just hoping that, when everybody comes back in November, Congress reconvenes, that we get an appropriation that everybody can stand behind and that moves the country forward.

Senator COTTON. General Dunford, are we in great-power competition with China?

General DUNFORD. We are, Senator.

Senator COTTON. Secretary Carter, are we in great-power competition with China?

Secretary CARTER. We are, absolutely right.

Senator COTTON. Thank you.

One final question. Are you engaged in any planning, deliberations, internal consultations of any kind to transfer control of the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay to the Department of Justice?

Secretary CARTER. No. I'm not.

Senator COTTON. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator McCaskill.

Senator MCCASKILL. I'm going to take a deep breath. I'm always proud to serve on this committee, because it's an oasis of bipartisanship in the Senate. I hope we keep our eye firmly on our ability to lead in a bipartisan way to get the funding for our military that we really need, including being honest about budgeting, not putting base budget items in OCO [Overseas Contingency Operations] so that we can pretend that we're not spending money because OCO is off the budget books. I think that the Chairman has done a remarkable job to try to keep us in an honest place as it relates to budgeting. I respect him for his effort in that regard. I know I

speak for many on our side of the aisle, including, I hope—I know, the Ranking Member, that we're going to continue to try to work as hard as we can in a bipartisan way to get your budget done and make sure we're not trying to come back in six months and fund the war effort because we've played budget games at the eleventh hour with OCO.

My question today—we've got $1.3 in the fiscal year 2017 budget for train-and-equip for local opposition forces and for the Iraqi Security Forces. I'd like some kind of brief update, if I could, on the screening process. How are we determining who—I mean, one of our challenges has always been in Syria. Who do we help? Are they really the good guys? Obviously, we had one massive failed attempt to try to put together a force on the ground through train-and-equip. Now I know we've gone back. I was in Jordan and visited with our leaders over there about the effort that's ongoing, working with smaller groups and testing them first and making sure they're doing the right thing. But, if you could briefly talk about how we are doing the screening process for those resources, I'd appreciate it.

Secretary CARTER. Sure, Senator. I'll start. Thank you. Basically, it is as you say. Namely, we have the same vetting process going on—and I'll as the Chairman to describe that—but, the train-and-equip program that was a disappointment when it started is now—we have a—changed completely our approach to it. It is as you describe; namely, not trying to create de novo forces that will go in and oppose ISIL, but identifying forces that are, and then enabling them. That has been successful. We're going to continue to do that. It does involve vetting to our standards, which is required of us. But, the program has changed. It needed to change. It did change, and is now on a much successful footing.

I should also thank the committee, in the spirit of what you said earlier, about—for their budgetary support in a timely way to our requests for that. Much appreciate that, as well.

If—I'd ask the Chairman, also.

General DUNFORD. Senator, just some of the mechanics. First, individuals who we are working with are vouched for by their tribal leadership. We do biometrics. We do a detailed interview process. We watch closely their behaviors. I would say our leaders over the last several years have been very, very good at literally separating wheat from the chaff as we go through the process of growing Syrian opposition—Syrian or, as the case may be, forces in Iraq—tribal forces in Iraq.

The vetting process, I think, is fairly sophisticated. Again, it's built on 15 years of lessons learned right now. A combination of the technology that we have available with biometrics, but also some intangibles that include, again, tribal leadership, behavior identification, those kinds of things.

Senator MCCASKILL. I also wanted to—to both of you, I appreciate your continued commitment in the area of sexual assault. I know we have put a lot on the military. I think we have counted up—literally, there are hundreds of changes we have made over the last few years to the Uniform Code of Military Justice. I did want to hone in on one area, because, as we looked at all of the reports in the last year, lots of good news—incidents down, report-

ing up—but that retaliation thing is an issue. You issued a report in April which highlighted standardizing the definition of "retaliation," which is tough, because, you know, sometimes it's in the eye of the person who's being retaliated upon. Getting a standard definition, I think, is really important. We put, in this year's NDAA [National Defense Authorization Act], a provision to make retaliation its own offense. I wanted to find out, What kind of progress are you making on trying to come up with a standardized definition of "retaliation" in this context?

Secretary CARTER. Thanks very much, Senator. Let me just begin by saying—by thanking you and all the members of this committee for bearing down on this problem. You know, I'm really proud of the way our forces conduct themselves, but there always—there are people who don't conduct themselves up to that standard. We can't have it. It's objectionable anywhere in society, but, in the profession of arms, it's particularly objectionable. I very much appreciate your efforts.

You're right, retaliation is something that we have begun to realize is a dimension of this problem that was under-attended. We had done good work, I think, at the law enforcement part, attending to victims, and at prevention. Retaliation—the reason why, definitionally, it's complicated, but we'll get there, is that there are a number of different ways that retaliation takes place, some of them quite subtle, but serious. One is, you know, a superior who holds it against somebody that they reported a sexual——

Senator MCCASKILL. Right.

Secretary CARTER.—assault, which is——

Senator MCCASKILL. Failure to promote.

Secretary CARTER.—completely unfair. A little more indirect is people who are getting taunted——

Senator MCCASKILL. Social——

Secretary CARTER.—via social——

Senator MCCASKILL.—retaliation.

Secretary CARTER.—media and so forth. We need to define these in such a way that they're legally appropriate, which you would understand, but that also cover the full gamut of things that a commonsense definition of "retaliation" would include. We are working towards that. It is complicated, but we'll get there. I very much——

Senator MCCASKILL. How soon——

Secretary CARTER.—appreciate——

Senator MCCASKILL.—do you think you'll get there?

Secretary CARTER.—your effort. I believe that the update on that is due by the end of the year—of this year. I did—the report that I submitted to you was earlier in this year. We should be able to get that done. Of course, we'll communicate that to the committee and get your views. But, I appreciate your sticking with us on this issue.

Senator MCCASKILL. Thank you both.

Chairman MCCAIN. Secretary, I'd just like to point out that, if it were not for the work of the women on this committee in a bipartisan basis, we would not have achieved the results that we have. I am deeply appreciative for the bipartisan effort that's gone on, and continues to go on, in this committee to address an issue that

you know is still with us. It may be to a lesser degree, but is still with us.

Senator Tillis.

Senator TILLIS. Good morning, gentlemen.

Secretary Carter, I want to go back to the comments that Senator Ayotte made about—I was someone else who supported the bipartisan budget agreement. Very disappointed that, on three different occasions, the defense appropriations bill has been filibustered. What—not talking about any other discussions about appropriations. You're familiar with our defense appropriations bill, right? The one that's been filibustered on three different occasions. Do each of you think that passing that bill would be helpful with respect to completing your mission within your lanes?

Secretary CARTER. Well, I'm going to go back to where I started, which is, there's no particular bill. I—I'm aware of three or four different versions——

Senator TILLIS. Are you familiar with the measure that we've tried to get on——

Secretary CARTER. Well, let me——

Senator TILLIS.—in the chamber on three different occasions——

Secretary CARTER. I'm aware of——

Senator TILLIS.—that were filibustered?

Secretary CARTER.—several different measures, both in the Senate and the House.

Senator TILLIS. No. Secretary Carter, this is a specific thing that we're trying to get on in the chamber of the Senate. Are you familiar with a bill that passed out of appropriations—the defense appropriations bill—that we've tried to get on in the chamber?

Secretary CARTER. I am. I've—am aware of the one that came before, yes.

Senator TILLIS. Are you—is anyone on your staff familiar with an appropriations bill that we're trying to get on in the Senate chamber?

Secretary CARTER. I'm sure they are.

Senator TILLIS. Okay. What would they generally say about the passage of that bill with respect to you being able to complete your mission? In your lane. I'm not talking about any of the other appropriations bills.

Secretary CARTER. Well, I think what they'd say is that if the Senate and the House pass an appropriations bill that comports—that the President can sign, we will get an appropriations bill. I fully——

Senator TILLIS. Let me——

Secretary CARTER.—hope we can get exactly that——

Senator TILLIS. Let me go to General Dunford.

General Dunford, are you——

Secretary CARTER.—after the election.

Senator TILLIS.—familiar——

Secretary CARTER.—in November when people——

Senator TILLIS.—with the defense——

Secretary CARTER.—return here and——

Senator TILLIS.—appropriations bill that's been filibustered on three different occasions?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I'm not familiar with the details.

Senator TILLIS. Do you know, generally, from your Service Chiefs or anyone else, that they think it would be helpful to pass that bill? Have you received any feedback on—this is a specific measure. This isn't a concept, this is something that's gone through the appropriations process, it's something that we want to pass that gives you certainty, that's within the constraints of the bipartisan budget agreement.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator, we do not ask the uniformed military for their opinion on issues that are political in nature.

Senator TILLIS. Fair enough.

Let me go to something else.

Well, it just seems odd to me that we can't get a straight answer on something—at least on the political side, Mr. Chair, I understand that—from the Secretary on something that's specific to helping provide the certainty that we want to provide the Department.

I want to ask a—go a completely different direction. General Dunford, maybe I'll ask you.

Back in January, we had Iranians fire missiles within about 1500 yards of the Harry S. Truman. Later in the same month, we had patrol boats captured. I'm sure you're familiar with Article 2 of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Armed Forces. Do you think the commander who surrendered met the dictates of the Code of Conduct under Article 2, or where there other mitigating factors that prevented him from doing that?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I believe that's being adjudicated right now in accordance with the UCMJ [Uniform Code of Military Trustee], so it wouldn't be appropriate for me to comment publicly. But, the fact that it's going through the UCMJ, obviously, I think, answers your question.

Senator TILLIS. Another subject. This has to do with ISIL. You said that we need to keep the pressure on ISIL. I know that that was being answered in the context of Syria, and probably Iraq. But, do you feel like we have adequately addressed putting—keeping pressure on ISIL globally when you talk about Libya, you talk about Egypt and other areas where they seem to be—and Senator Ernst talked about the Philippines—do you feel like that we have an adequate global strategy for keeping pressure on ISIL?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I want to assure you that we have a military strategy to deal with ISIL globally. We look very carefully at ISIL, wherever they are. We have ongoing—and we don't have an opportunity often to talk about it—but, we have ongoing operations in West Africa. We have ongoing operations in Libya. We have ongoing operations in East Africa. Of course, Syria and Iraq, we've spoken much about that today. We have ongoing operations in Afghanistan. We're involved in a wide range of capacity-building exercises and initiatives in Southeast Asia. We're also working—and I've just spent this weekend with a large group of my counterparts to look at counter-ISIL. I'll have almost 50 Chiefs of Defense here in October to discuss this. This is, in fact, what you're suggesting, a transregional problem that will require a global response. One of the key drivers of our success will be a broader intelligence and information framework within which we can harness all of these other nations who have information that would be helpful to us.

But, am I satisfied or complacent with where we are? No. Do I believe we have a strategic framework within which to deal with ISIL transregionally? Yes.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Nelson.

Senator NELSON. Gentlemen, thank you for your public service.

Would either one of you like to characterize the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan?

Secretary CARTER. I'll start.

It is the fighting season in Afghanistan. The Afghan Security Forces have done well this season. The Taliban has been strong. But, the Afghan Security Forces are much stronger this year than they were last year. They continue to gather strength. General Nicholson's doing a great job of helping them with that. We made some decisions—the President made some decisions which gave General Nicholson some wider scope to advise, assist, and so forth, the Afghan Security Forces. The President made a decision to adjust upward our presence there next year. We're continuing to go forward with the aviation and other enablers for the Afghan Security Forces.

The process, which has been under some—underway some—for some years to try to build the Afghan Security Forces to the—to a point where they can maintain the security of their country and Afghanistan doesn't become again a place from which terrorism arises in the United States, that is our program. That is what we've been trying to accomplish.

I should turn to—because we—that progress, we owe, in very important measure, to General Dunford, when he was the commander there. He knows that very well, so let me ask him to join in.

General DUNFORD. Senator, there is no doubt that the Afghan National Security Forces have had some challenges over the past 18 months, when they've been in the lead and we have gone to a train-and-advise-assist mission. Our assessment is that they continue to control about 70 percent of the country. They've taken far more casualties than we're comfortable with, and they still have capability gaps in their Special Operations capability, their aviation enterprise, their intelligence, logistics, and, of course, broadly at the Minister of Defense, Minister Interior level. That's our focus right now, is to further develop those capabilities so we can mitigate the casualties that they're suffering, which is of great concern, as well as some of the tactical setbacks that they've had.

But, on balance, I would call what's going on right now between the Afghan National Defense Security Forces and the Taliban as roughly a stalemate. The Taliban have not been successful in achieving the goals that were outlined in their campaign plan, which they typically make public in the spring of each year. On balance, the Afghan forces are holding.

In my judgment, if we commit to continue to support the Afghan forces, and continue to grow their capability, they will be able to provide security in Afghanistan. As Secretary Carter said, as importantly, we'll be able to maintain an effective counterterrorism presence and platform in South Asia in conjunction with our Afghan partners.

Senator NELSON. Thank you, gentlemen.

Thank you.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Lee.

Senator LEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thanks, to both of you, for all you do to keep us safe and to keep our country free. Your service and sacrifice are deeply appreciated.

Late last week, there was a video that surfaced, a video that appeared to show the Free Syrian Army—personnel from the Free Syrian Army—threatening and insulting American servicemembers and forcing them to leave the town of al Rai, where they had been providing assistance to the FSA. Analysts who have studied the video believe the incident occurred because the United States is also supporting Kurdish forces in Syria.

Secretary Carter, first, have you seen this video, and can you confirm reports that it appears to have taken place in al Rai?

Secretary CARTER. I've not seen the video. I've read reports about it. Let me ask Chairman Dunford, who has followed that closely, to answer you.

General DUNFORD. Senator, it took place in northern Syria. I'm familiar with it. I didn't watch the video. I have spoken to our commanders about it.

What I can assure you is that that—the group that was taking some action against our forces, at least verbally, was a very small minority of the forces we're supporting. That incident was policed up by our other partners. We view that to be an isolated incident and not reflective of the relationship that our forces have with the vetted Syrian opposition forces. In fact, I think the progress along the northern border between Syria and Turkey is indicative of the relationship we have, which is very effective.

Senator LEE. Okay. I think that goes a certain distance toward answering what was my next question, which was, you know, What's the level of tension that you're seeing between some of the Sunni Arab rebel groups that we're assisting, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the Kurdish groups that we're also supporting in Syria? Is that—is there tension there? Could that tension and the resentment that it engenders possibly threaten the security of our U.S. personnel?

General DUNFORD. Senator, it is incredible tension in that region. I would offer to you, I think it's a testimony to the professionalism of our forces that are there, because they have actually been managing this tension for months and months. The fact that we've been able to continue to support the Syrian Democratic Forces and have them make the significant progress they made, and continue to support the vetted Syrian opposition forces while we politically manage the relationship between Turkey and the Syrian Democratic Forces and the United States, is all—it's—it is all part of a pretty complicated situation on the ground over there that we are managing on a day-to-day basis.

I'm not dismissive of the challenges. But, frankly, to date, we have been able to mitigate them.

Senator LEE. Okay. Thank you.

Yesterday, as I'm sure you're both aware, the Senate debated a resolution of disapproval related to the sale of United States weapons to Saudi Arabia. There was some discussion of our broader support of Saudi Arabia's intervention in Yemen. This is a headline

from November 2014, "Houthis Gain Ground Against Yemen's al Qaeda, Say They Will Continue Their Fight Until al Qaeda Is Defeated in Their Strongholds."

Secretary Carter, you stated, on April 8th, 2015, regarding new gains being made by al Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula [AQAP], "AQAP is a group that we're very concerned with as the United States, because, in addition to having other regional ambitions and ambitions within Yemen, we all know that AQAP has the ambition to strike Western targets, including the United States,".

Now, your quote was made, I believe, roughly one month after the U.S. supported intervention against other Houthi rebels, who, 4 months before, had been pushing back against AQAP, before that began in earnest.

Now, I understand the complexity of the conflict in Yemen. I completely appreciate the fact that there are no easy answers when it comes to that conflict in Yemen. But, Mr. Secretary, do you—do AQAP and other Sunni extremist groups operating in Yemen still pose the greater threat to U.S. security?

Secretary CARTER. I absolutely stand by what I said. We continue to watch very closely AQAP and to take action where we need to, to protect ourselves. No question about it.

Senator LEE. Okay. Does our support of the fight against the Houthis, who are also AQAP's enemy, does that threaten, potentially, however inadvertently, to strengthen or take the focus off of AQAP or ISIS?

Secretary CARTER. We've not taken our focus off of AQAP, no.

Senator LEE. General Dunford, you look like you wanted to add something.

General DUNFORD. No, I just—I fully agree with the Secretary on that. We are singularly focused on AQAP. We have the resources dedicated to AQAP that we think are appropriate.

Senator LEE. Okay.

I see my time's expired. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. Mr. Secretary, are the Houthis sponsored by the Iranians?

Secretary CARTER. They are certainly assisted in some respects by the Iranians, Chairman, yes.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Donnelly.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, would you like me to proceed?

Chairman MCCAIN. Please proceed.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you.

Mr. Secretary, General, I want to get your input on something I asked each of the Service Chiefs about last week. In the Fiscal Year 2015 NDAA, we passed a requirement from the Jacob Sexton Act for every servicemember to receive a robust mental health assessment every year. Can you give me an update on where the Department is with implementation of the Sexton Act requirement on mental health assessments?

Mr. Secretary? General?

Secretary CARTER. I'll need to get back to you specifically on the—that assessment.

Secretary CARTER. I would like to say something more generally about mental health and the priority——

Senator DONNELLY. That's fine.

Secretary CARTER.—if I may, Senator. I appreciate your interest in it.

As it happens, it is Suicide Prevention Month this month. I only mention that because we do have suicide in our services, and we do believe that suicide is preventable. That's what the doctors tell us. All the specialists tell us this is something that is preventable. Therefore, it belongs in the family of things that we do to take care of our troops and ensure their welfare.

We're spending more—and I can get you the numbers on that, but I——

Secretary CARTER. We have, over the last few years, increased severalfold our spending on mental health treatment specifically aimed at suicide, and trying to remove the stigma associated with seeking mental health care, and also emphasizing the need for other servicemembers to watch out for one another. Because one of the things we know is, there's usually somebody who spotted the behavior that's—looks—that can lead to suicide.

Senator DONNELLY. Right.

Secretary CARTER. Self-isolation, depression, odd things on social media, and so forth. We're trying to tell everybody to watch out for their fellow servicemembers.

Chairman?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I know each of the services has the tools. I don't know, in application, what the percentage is of the force that has received the evaluation yet, but we can certainly get that.

General DUNFORD. That's largely a service-chief responsibility, not something I pay attention to on a day-to-day basis, although, as you know, I've been—have been very involved in the mental health issues over the last several years.

Senator DONNELLY. I do. This was signed into law in December 2014. It's about two years now. Do you expect, General Dunford, to see this fully implemented in the next year?

General DUNFORD. I do, Senator. I guess what I was alluding to is the percentage of the force that actually has it right now, because——

Senator DONNELLY. No, I understand that. Yeah.

General DUNFORD. Right. You know, my—and I'll get back——

Senator DONNELLY. I know it takes time to ramp up. I was just wondering if you think 2017 is the year that this can get fully implemented.

General DUNFORD. I think that's—based on my previous experience as a Service Chief, I think that's a realistic timeline.

Senator DONNELLY. Okay.

Mr. Secretary?

Secretary CARTER. I absolutely concur. We'll meet that timeline.

Senator DONNELLY. To both of you, I wanted to talk a little bit about broader counterterrorism strategy. In four months, we're going to have a new Commander in Chief, and preventing the next attack on our Homeland and addressing the persistent conflict and instability in the Middle East is going to be one of the most pressing and complex challenges. How would you advise this concern about our counterterrorism strategy? How would you inform that

next Commander in Chief as to how to move forward at this time? Obviously, there's a number of areas, but, looking forward, how would you talk to them about our counterterrorism strategy as we head into a new administration?

Secretary CARTER. I'll start and then turn it over to the Chairman.

We need to continue to press on all fronts. We can't let up, whether it's in the counter-ISIL campaign, in Syria and Iraq, elsewhere, or here at home. AQAP was mentioned a moment ago. That's a serious one. Our capabilities—our military capabilities, our law enforcement capabilities, our Homeland security capabilities, all of this, which we've honed now in the years since 2001, this is not going to go away, this phenomenon. We'll defeat ISIL, but there will be terrorism in our country's future.

Senator DONNELLY. If I could ask you another question and——

Secretary CARTER.—it'll be part of the national security landscape——

Senator DONNELLY.—I apologize, I'm running out of time here. You may have answered this earlier. I had to come in and go out. But, Raqqa. When do you—or—and not, obviously, a single date, but how is this moving forward? Are we cutting off—I know closing Manbij has cut off a significant amount of the flow. Where do things stand in Raqqa? Are we moving forward on that? Do you see progress every day? What are you looking at as a time when Raqqa's liberated?

Secretary CARTER. I do see progress. We're working in that part of Syria with the Syrian Democratic Forces. They're the group with which we worked in—as you indicated, successfully in Manbij. They and others associated with them will be the force that envelopes and collapses ISIL's control over Raqqa.

At the same time, I emphasized—and the Chairman already stressed this—we're working with the Turks also, the Turkish military, our good ally, very strongly, also in northwest—in the northwestern part—portion there. Obviously, the have difficulties with one another, but, in each case, we support them against our common objective——

Senator DONNELLY. Mr.——

Secretary CARTER.—which is counter-ISIL.

Senator DONNELLY.—Mr. Chairman, if you'd give me just 15 seconds.

On behalf of everyone in Indiana, the family and others, too, when we go to Raqqa—we lost some young men and women there who were killed by ISIL. We want to have them come home. We don't want to leave anyone behind. We would ask for your cooperation and assistance. My young man, Peter Kassig, Kayla Mueller, so many others, not to leave any names out, but all the parents and all the folks back home, we want them all to come home. We'd sure appreciate your assistance in making that happen.

Secretary CARTER. Noted, Senator.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you.

Secretary CARTER. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAIN. Thank you, Senator, for bringing that issue up. They should come home.

Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, thank you.

Thank you both for your service to the country.

I'm going to try to get through as much as possible here.

Do you support the arms sale to Saudi Arabia that's being proposed?

Secretary CARTER. I do, yes.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you, General?

General DUNFORD. I do, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. JASTA [Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act]. Are you concerned that we could be creating an environment where something like this bill could be used against our troops down the road?

Secretary CARTER. That is—the law—it is a law enforcement matter, but we are watching it closely, for the very reason——

Senator GRAHAM. Do you support the President's veto of——

Secretary CARTER. Well, I'm very—I'm concerned about the——

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

Secretary CARTER. I'm concerned——

Senator GRAHAM. Fair enough.

Secretary CARTER.—about exactly what you're talking about.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. Fair enough. We'll talk. I'll write you a letter and go into it more in detail. But, I understand your concerns.

Do you support arming the Syrian Kurds?

Secretary CARTER. I do support working—continuing to work with them, yes.

Senator GRAHAM. I mean, no, I didn't say "work with them." Providing them arms.

Secretary CARTER. Yeah. Well, we are—we have provided them with some equipment already, and providing them arms, yes. They are part of the—they are——

Senator GRAHAM. I gotcha.

Secretary CARTER.—part of the Syrian Democratic Forces.

Senator GRAHAM. Right.

Secretary CARTER. Now, we haven't taken any specific——

Senator GRAHAM. I gotcha. Well——

Secretary CARTER.—decisions about——

Senator GRAHAM. I gotcha.

Secretary CARTER. And—but——

Senator GRAHAM. Right

Secretary CARTER.—they are——

Senator GRAHAM. The answer is yes, you support arming the Kurds more——

Secretary CARTER. I support——

Senator GRAHAM.—in Syria.

Secretary CARTER.—whatever is required to——

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

Secretary CARTER.—help them move in the direction of Raqqa——

Senator GRAHAM. Which could be providing them more arms.

Secretary CARTER. Yeah.

Senator GRAHAM. What about you, General Dunford?

General DUNFORD. Senator, it's important—I can't answer this yes or no. It's important that I——

Senator GRAHAM. I gotcha.

General DUNFORD.—say a couple of things about this.

Number one, they're the most effective force that we have right now, and a force that we need to go in Raqqa. We do have sufficient forces——

Senator GRAHAM. Can I ask this?

General DUNFORD.—to be able to secure and——

Senator GRAHAM. I——

General DUNFORD.—seize Raqqa.

Senator GRAHAM. Yes, sir. I appreciate that.

We—they—do they support removal of Assad?

General DUNFORD. Today, that is not their stated political objective.

Senator GRAHAM. Wait a minute.

General DUNFORD. They're focused——

Senator GRAHAM. Slow down. Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa.

We have two objectives—to destroy ISIL, right?—and to remove Assad. Is that correct? Both of you.

General DUNFORD. We have a military objective to destroy ISIL. I do not have a military objective to——

Senator GRAHAM. Do you——

General DUNFORD.—remove Assad.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, the President has an objective of——

General DUNFORD. He has a political objective——

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

General DUNFORD.—to remove Assad.

Senator GRAHAM. All right. Do you agree with me, Assad is winning right now?

General DUNFORD. I think Assad is clearly in a much stronger place than he was a——

Senator GRAHAM. All right.

General DUNFORD.—year ago.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, thank you. You've always have been very honest with this committee.

Do you agree that Obama will leave office and Assad will still be in power, January 2017?

General DUNFORD. I don't see a path right now where Assad would——

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

General DUNFORD.—not be in office in——

Senator GRAHAM. Let's talk about how you change the political equation. Do you agree with me that the only way Assad's ever going to leave, if there's some military pressure on him that makes the threat, militarily, more real to him?

General DUNFORD. I think that's a fair statement, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. If the main fighting force inside of Syria is not signed up to take Assad out, where does that force come from?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I can't identify that force, but I do want to distinguish between what you're suggesting with Assad and Raqqa. The reason why I support the SDF [Syrian Democratic Forces] is, my number-one priority is to——

Senator GRAHAM. Yeah, I——

General DUNFORD.—stop the planning and conducting of external operations.

Senator GRAHAM. Totally——

General DUNFORD. Moving forward——

Senator GRAHAM. Totally——

General DUNFORD.—against Raqqa with the SDF——

Senator GRAHAM. Yes, sir.

General DUNFORD.—is the way to do that.

Senator GRAHAM. Let's look at it this way. ISIL's Germany and Assad's Japan, we're focusing on Germany. Will this force, which is mainly Kurd, but not all—can they liberate Raqqa, and hold it?

General DUNFORD. This force is not intended to hold Raqqa, no.

Senator GRAHAM. What is the plan to hold Raqqa?

General DUNFORD. We currently have 14,000 Arabs that have been identified. When we——

Senator GRAHAM. Is that the holding force?

General DUNFORD. That may consist of part of the holding force.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, do we have a plan to hold Raqqa?

General DUNFORD. We have a plan. It is not resourced——

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

General DUNFORD.—Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. All right. I just want everybody to know where we're at in Syria. We're making gains against ISIL. The main force that we're using are Kurds, who can't hold Raqqa. The Arabs have to. You're absolutely right about that. The Kurdish force, which is the main center of gravity inside of Syria, at this moment is not interested in putting military pressure on Assad. Other than that, we're in a good spot.

Now, I'm not blaming y'all. You didn't create this problem. Years ago, most of you recommended we help the Free Syrian Army when it would have mattered. We are where we are. I just want to make sure that the country knows what's going on in Syria is going to be inherited by the next President. If there's not a change in strategy to create a ground component that not only can hold Raqqa and put military pressure on Assad, this war never ends.

Russia. Did they bomb this convoy—U.N. convoy?

General DUNFORD. Senator, we—that hasn't been concluded, but my judgment would be that they did. They're certainly responsible.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you agree with me, Secretary Carter—and we've been friends for years, and I'm sorry it's so contentious—I——

Secretary CARTER. That's all right.

Senator GRAHAM. You're a good man. What should we do about Russia, who was given notice about this convoy, if they, in fact, bombed a U.N. convoy delivering humanitarian aid? What should we do about that?

Secretary CARTER. Well, I—if—let me put it even a little more harshly. The Chairman said this earlier. The Russians are responsible for this strike, whether they conducted it or not, because——

Senator GRAHAM. I totally agree.

Secretary CARTER.—they have taken responsibility for the conduct of the Syrians by associating themselves with the Syrian regime. What they're supposed to do, and what Secretary Kerry has been indefatigably pursuing diplomatically, is to get a true ces-

sation of hostilities and get Assad to move aside in a political transition.

Senator GRAHAM. They're not doing their part.

Secretary CARTER. I'm—that is what Secretary Kerry is trying to achieve. Is that difficult? Absolutely. Does it look, in the last few days, like that's the direction it's headed? No. He's said as much. But, that's what he's trying to accomplish.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you think the Russians are being helpful? My time is up. Have they been more—do you think the Russians bombed this convoy? Most likely?

General DUNFORD. I do, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Last question. Is there a Plan B, in terms of—if diplomacy fails, a Plan B for Syria that has a military component?

General DUNFORD. Senator, we have——

Senator GRAHAM. Regarding Assad.

General DUNFORD.—we have done, and will continue to do, a wide range of planning. Should the President change the policy objectives, we'll be prepared to support those.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Fischer.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, for your service. It is appreciated by all of us.

Secretary Carter, you stated that the United States will not ignore attempts to interfere with our democratic processes, which I believe is in reference to the recent cyberattacks on political parties, candidates, and election systems. By that, do you mean that costs will be imposed on those responsible for these attacks?

Secretary CARTER. It's—sadly, the reference is a very broad one. I made it in Europe, and was speaking to that audience, very broadly, to include the issue you stated, but which is a concern they all have, and we have, at NATO. The broader category is called hybrid warfare. It ranges from little green men to people interfering in democratic process. That's a concern that I was discussing with allies when I was over there.

Senator FISCHER. But, when——

Secretary CARTER. It's part of the way NATO's going to have to adapt to the world as it really is. Yes, we're going to have to defend ourselves against——

Senator FISCHER. So costs——

Secretary CARTER.—that kind of thing.

Senator FISCHER.—would be imposed for cyberattack.

Secretary CARTER. That is—like any other attack.

Senator FISCHER. Do you think that—with regards to cyber, that this should be done in a public way so that the penalties are clearly visible and—to other potential attackers in the future?

Secretary CARTER. Well, I certainly think that we need to defend ourselves and then take action against perpetrators when we identify them, and that in—is in appropriate ways. I simply mean that because the perpetrators are—of cyberattacks range from—and cyberintrusions—range from nation-states to cutouts to hackers to criminal gangs.

Senator FISCHER. Correct.

Secretary CARTER. It's quite a variety. It's why our highest priority in cyber, and including in our Cyber Command, is defense of our own networks.

Senator FISCHER. Right.

Secretary CARTER. It's something——

Senator FISCHER. It has been widely reported that Russian hackers are responsible for the penetration that we've seen at the Democratic National Committee [DNC], those computer systems, when we look at leaks of the DNC emails and documents. I guess the questions continue to persist regarding the strength of that connection between the hackers and Russian officials. It is generally accepted that the affiliation exists.

If this is true, that there is this connection out there, what is clear is that it's a—to me, another very public instance, this time using cyber, where Russia continues their aggression towards this country and towards our interests. When we have an adversary who so brazenly strikes at the heart of our democratic process, I think that indicates how low they believe the cost of that behavior is going to be. In other words, I think we've possibly lost the deterrence factor when it comes to cyberattacks.

Would you agree with that?

Secretary CARTER. We can't lose deterrence effect, ever. With respect to Russia, it is—one of the reason—one of the emphases, stresses we made in our budget—and, by the way, this is one of the reasons why we would appreciate having our budget passed, as is, to get back to an earlier question—is because it prioritize something we haven't had to do, Senator, as you're stressing, for a quarter——

Senator FISCHER. But, do you——

Secretary CARTER.—of a century, which is—we—it used to be—we haven't had, as a major component of our defense strategy, countering the possibility of Russian aggression.

Senator FISCHER. But, now we do.

Secretary CARTER. That's why we're making——

Senator FISCHER. And——

Secretary CARTER.—investments. It ranges from cyber to the European Reassurance Initiative, which is one of the things that we hope doesn't get affected in——

Senator FISCHER. Am I——

Secretary CARTER.—budget——

Senator FISCHER. I apologize for interrupting you. The Chairman's strict on time.

But, dealing with—dealing with cyber, when we look at cyber, do you have plans that you have given to this administration or are plans available to provide the administration with flexibility in dealing with cyber? Specifically, how do we address such attacks, whether they are from a nation-state, whether they are from organized crime, or whether they are from individuals? Are there plans out there on how these attacks are going to be addressed, whether through deterrence or actual actions? Are those plans updated as we continue to see the expansion of cyberattacks on this country?

Secretary CARTER. That's a very good question. We're just discussing here, because there are many aspects to the answer to this,

but, yes, we have a lot of cyber capabilities that we are building, developing in all the services and at Cyber Command.

More generally, for the Russians, let me ask the Chairman to add something.

General DUNFORD. Senator, for exactly the reason you're raising, we're in the process of rewriting, at the Secretary's direction, a more broad framework for dealing with Russia in contingencies associated with Russia. It's also the reason why our national military strategy now will be a classified document, because what we are trying to do is provide a strategic framework to deal with the full range of behavior that we may see from a state like Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran. In some cases, a cyberattack may not beget a cyber response. We want to make sure our national command authority has a full range of options to deal with something that has been determined, in fact, a violation of our sovereignty and an attack in cyberspace.

There's really two things. One, the strategic framework working on, and we're also working on a full range of tools—cyber tools—so that we have both the ability to protect our own network and to take the fight to the enemy in cyberspace, as required, our offensive cyber capability.

I would tell you that the issue that you're outlining really is being addressed in both a strategic framework as well as physical tools that we're developing. But, again, it's not just focused on cyber, it's focused on providing the Secretary and the President a full range of options with which to respond in the event of an attack—again, whether it be cyber or anything else.

Senator FISCHER. I thank you for that. I think the deterrence aspect of cyber response is very, very important, that we keep that, and also that public responses make an impression, as well. Thank you, sir.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Sullivan.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, last week, as you know, we had the Service Chiefs testify. I began my comments commending you, Mr. Secretary, and the President for the selection of such men and women of high caliber, high integrity, leading our military, including the current Chairman. One of the reasons is that they typically give this committee and the American people honest testimony.

An example of that was last week. I asked what the risk level was our Nation faced in being able to conduct a full spectrum of operations, including one conventional conflict. Each Service Chief said that this would entail, "high military risk" for their service. Each Service Chief. Which I found remarkable. Distressing.

General Dunford, do you know if that's ever happened before, where all four Service Chiefs have stated that we currently exist at a state of high military risk for our forces? General Milley described what that meant, which is a lot of death for our military if they have to go into this kind of spectrum of ops. Is this unprecedented?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I don't know if it's unprecedented, but, over the last several years, I think all the chiefs, to include me when I was the Commandant, and the chiefs before I assumed that responsibility, have been articulating the risk associated with

the readiness challenges that we've had, really, now that date back as far as 2005.

Senator SULLIVAN. Do you—you agree then, I assume, with the assessment of each Service Chief, that we face high military risk, in terms of a——

General DUNFORD. Senator——

Senator SULLIVAN.—spectrum of ops that includes——

General DUNFORD. Senator, I don't agree that we have—I agree that each of the services has high risk, and they've articulated it.

The one thing I think I want to—I would like to say and then answer your question is, we, today, can defend the Homeland. We, today, can meet our alliance responsibilities. We, today, have a competitive advantage over any of those four-plus-one we spoke about. But, I fully associate myself with the chiefs when they talk about the time and the casualties that we would take as a result of readiness shortfalls that we have today.

Senator SULLIVAN. You think high military risk is acceptable?

General DUNFORD. I did not say that, Senator, for one minute.

Senator SULLIVAN. So——

General DUNFORD. What I want to do is, I want to communicate, to those who are listening, both in the force and our potential adversaries, to make it clear that my judgment is that the U.S. military, today, can, in fact, dominate any enemy in a conflict. I——

Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Secretary, the four Service Chiefs talked about high military risk. Again, I thought that was remarkable. I don't know if that's ever happened, Mr. Chairman, before this committee before. But, it begs the question that we've been talking about in this hearing today, is how—if that's what they're saying, how can we not—how can the President not support increased military spending? Right now, there's a new Gallup poll out, saying, "First time since 2002, the American people support more military spending." If the Service Chiefs are each saying we face high military risk, how can we not be supportive of additional military spending? I just don't—I just don't understand that at all.

Secretary CARTER. Well, first of all, let me thank you and associate myself with your commendation of the senior leadership of our Department. We're blessed as a country to have such people serving us. They told it to you straight. I, too, associate myself with what they said.

There is risk in the force. The risk——

Senator SULLIVAN. It's actually high risk.

Secretary CARTER. Let me just tell—let me unpack that, because they each did that for you. There are—it's different in each of the services, but there are a few common denominators.

One has been budget instability, which is why I am and will continue to hew to the idea that we need budget stability. That means everybody coming together. Not this idea and that idea and that idea, but one that everybody can agree to. We haven't seen that yet, and it's the end of the fiscal year.

Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Secretary, just to—just real——

Secretary CARTER. Eight—let me finish—eight——

Senator SULLIVAN.—a quick point on that——

Secretary CARTER.—eight times in a——

Senator SULLIVAN.—just a quick point on that——

Secretary CARTER.—eight times in a row. That's going to have an effect——

Senator SULLIVAN. You've had the minority leader——

Secretary CARTER.—on risk.

Senator SULLIVAN.—of the United States Senate filibuster the defense appropriations bills, not three times, as my colleagues have said—six times in the last year and a half year. So——

Secretary CARTER. Let me——

Senator SULLIVAN.—we're trying to make that happen.

Secretary CARTER. Thank you. Let——

Senator SULLIVAN. We're all trying to make that happen.

Secretary CARTER. Thanks. Let me go on. There's another thing that's so substantive of importance, other than the budget instability the last few years. That is the services—and, I think General—I think you mentioned General Milley—he, in particular—and I want to associate myself with this—is trying to move to full spectrum, exactly the words you used, from an Army that we dedicated almost wholly, in terms of force structure, to the COIN [counter insurgency] fights that we had to conduct in Iraq and Syria. The Army's been resourcing them heavily. Now he is trying to get his forces trained for full-spectrum combat.

As—I think, as he said to you, that's a matter of budget stability, yes, but it's also going to—it also is a matter of time. He's working on it. That's his highest priority. I agree with him, for the U.S. Army. He's trying to get all his Brigade Combat Teams to go through the Nellis, the CTC at Nellis. That's going to take some time.

If we go to the Marine Corps—and I know General Neller spoke to you about that—their highest readiness priority, which I also want to foot-stomp, as I'm sure he did, is in their aviation. There are a lot of different dimensions to that. One is the recap of their aviation, both rotary wing and with the F–35 joint strike fighter coming down the line.

With the Navy, it's mostly a matter of ship maintenance, depot maintenance. Admiral Richardson's working on that.

In the Air Force, for General Goldfein, the Air Force continues to have readiness challenges which are associated partly with budget instability, but mostly with the high OPTEMPO of the Air Force. We're working the United States Air Force really hard in that air campaign over in Iraq and Syria. It's essential. It's important. But, it means that air wings are constantly rotated in and out, and, when they come back, they have to go back in for readiness training.

In the budget we submitted for fiscal year 2017—and we said this—readiness and resourcing are—the readiness plans of each of the services was our highest priority. There's no question about it, there's risk there. It has accumulated over the years. We need stability and we need priority in order to work through it. We need stability from you. We'll give it priority. I totally support the chiefs in what they told you last week.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Cruz in just a second.

Mr. Secretary, the impression that was given by the Service Chiefs was: it comes down to readiness, training, spare parts, all the things that go when you have budget cutbacks. We've seen the

movie before. As you pointed out, each individual service has some specific needs, it all comes back to funding for operational readiness and training, which is always the first to go. That's—obviously, when we have United States pilots flying less hours per month than Chinese or Russian pilots, there's something fundamentally wrong. I know you agree with that.

Senator Cruz.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Carter, General Dunford, thank you for being here today. Thank you for your testimony on the critical national security threats facing our country.

The last seven years, we've had an administration that has, in many ways, neutered itself and ignored one transgression after another from our enemies. As a result, our adversaries are continuing to increase their belligerence.

Iran has received no meaningful repercussions for illegally seizing American sailors and endeavoring to humiliate them, and has since increased their aggressive tactics and harassment of United States Navy vessels operating in the Arabian Gulf.

For months, Russia has been ramping up the pressure on our military, previously flying within 30 feet of a United States Navy warship, and most recently flying within 10 feet of a U.S. Navy surveillance aircraft. Instead of treating these as escalatory acts from an adversary, Secretary Kerry rewarded Russia by agreeing to share intelligence in Syria.

These examples don't even touch on Iranian and North Korean efforts to develop their ICBM programs, nor the expansion of ISIS beyond the Middle East.

Sadly, this week's terror attacks in New York, Minnesota, and New Jersey once again demonstrated that radical Islamic terrorism continues to threaten our safety. By any reasonable estimate, we can conclude that our national security interests are at serious risk. I want to thank both of you for your service during such a pivotal and dangerous time in our Nation's history, and for your leadership of our men and women in uniform.

I want to ask you, starting with Iran, What is and what should be our response to escalating Iranian belligerence and threats?

Secretary CARTER. Well, first of all, thank you very much, Senator, for that. You hit them all, the five parts of our military strategy that are reflected in what we're trying to get in our budget, namely counter-ISIL, Iran, North Korea, Russia, and China. All of those are—present very different, but serious, challenges that have a serious military dimension to them.

With respect to Iran, notwithstanding the nuclear deal, which was good, in the sense that it removed—if implemented faithfully, which it is being, so far—removed nuclear weapons from our concerns about Iran. It did nothing to alleviate other concerns we have—their malign influence, their support for terrorism, malign influence in the region. This is why, to give you one answer to your question—and I'll ask the Chairman to pitch in—why we have a strong, ready presence in the Gulf. Gets back to our readiness discussion. It's not just about ISIL. We have a big OPTEMPO to defeat ISIL. We're going to do that. Takes a lot of force structure, but also readiness consumed doing that, consumed in a good thing be-

cause we're defeating ISIL. But, we are also standing strong in the Gulf. That means defending our friends and allies there, defending our interests, and countering Iranian malign influence. It is an enduring commitment of ours.

Let me ask the Chairman to join in.

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think there's—from a military perspective, there's three things that we need to do. Number one is, we need to make sure that the inventory of the joint force can deal with Iranian challenges that do range from ballistic missile defense to the malign influence that you spoke about earlier. Number two, we need to make sure, in our day-to-day operations, we make it clear that we're going to sail, fly, and operate wherever international law allows us to, and we'll continue to do that. Number three, as the Secretary said, we need to have a robust presence in the region that makes it very clear that we have the capability to deter and respond to Iranian aggression. Those would be the three elements that we need to have for—from a military perspective, to give our President whatever options he may need to have.

Senator CRUZ. General, in your judgment, was flying $1.7 billion in unmarked cash to give to the Iranian Government incentivizing positive behavior from Iran?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I'm not trying to be evasive, but I don't know the details of that arrangement. It really was a political decision that was made to provide that money. I don't think it's appropriate that I comment on that.

Senator CRUZ. Well, let me ask it this way. I spoke, yesterday, to Pastor Saeed Abedini, who was one of the American hostages held in Iran. Pastor Saeed described how, when he was preparing to fly out, that his captors told him they were going to wait until the planeload of cash landed. If the planeload of cash didn't land, he wasn't flying out. When $400 million touched down in cash, they allowed him to fly out.

Now, under any ordinary use of language, that would seem to be payment of a ransom. Does it concern you if the United States is now in the business of paying ransom to terrorist governments for releasing Americans, the incentive that we face for future terrorists and future terrorist governments to attempt to kidnap and hold for ransom Americans?

Secretary CARTER. It—Senator, let me just jump in here for the Chairman.

We weren't involved in this. This was the settlement of a legal case. It's longstanding. I don't know all the details of it. The Chairman and I were not involved in that. It is a decision that was taken by the law enforcement and the diplomatic——

Senator CRUZ. Mr. Secretary, I appreciate——

Secretary CARTER.—community. I think we have to refer you——

Senator CRUZ.—that, but——

Secretary CARTER.—refer you there.

Senator CRUZ.—I would like an answer from General Dunford to the military question, whether, in his professional military judgment, it concerns him, the precedent of paying ransom for Americans, to terrorist governments.

General DUNFORD. Senator, without commenting on whether or not that was ransom, again, because I don't know the details, our

policy in the past is that we don't pay ransom for hostages. I think that's hold us—held us in good stead in the past. But, again, I don't know the arrangements that were made in this particular case, and I can't make a judgment as to whether or not that's what we did. All I've done is read the open-source reporting on that.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Wicker, if you would give Senator Sullivan a chance to ask one more question.

Senator WICKER. Indeed.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, I just wanted to turn to the issue of the South China Sea. The international ruling in the Hague put China on the defensive. Mr. Secretary, as you know, a number of us at the Shangri-La Dialogue have been supportive of your efforts. I certainly want to give the administration credit for sending two carrier battle groups to the region together recently. But, I think a number of us remain concerned about the likelihood of reclamation at the Scarborough Shoal and the ongoing—and it's definitely ongoing, from all reports—militarization at Fiery Cross, Subi, and Mischief Reef, which was also declared as not, you know, being within China's territorial realm. What's the strategy to deter future Chinese reclamation activities in the South China Sea, especially at Scarborough Shoal? Equally, if not more important, what's the plan to respond to ongoing militarization of the land that they've already claimed?

Secretary CARTER. Thanks, Senator. I'll start and then—Chairman can join in.

I'm actually glad you raised the issue. We haven't talked much about the Asia-Pacific, but you know a great deal about it, and I appreciate that Chairman McCain always leads a delegation out there to Shangri-La, because it shows the persistence of the American presence in that region and the centrality of our continued presence there.

Now, the—what we have stood for there now for many, many years, and continue to stand for, and the reason why so many countries there associate their—themselves with us, and increasingly so, is, we stand for principle. One of those principles is the rule of law. The decision did come down, and our—we didn't take the position the disputes themselves—we do support the decision of the court.

China's rejection of that is having the effect—you asked, sort of, What's the reaction to all this?—the effect of causing countries there to express their concern by wanting to do more with us. We like building the security network there. We're not trying to do that against China, but, if China chooses to exclude itself in this way, this is the development that occurs. We're working more with each and every country there. We find them increasingly coming to us. We are continuing to operate there, as we always have and always will.

Last, I guess I should say, in terms of investments, in addition to putting a lot of our force structure there, which you're very familiar with, and I'm grateful that your State hosts some of that, including some of our most modern stuff, we're making a number of qualitative investments in—and that's one of the things that's

reflected in our budget, and one reason why we hope that, in addition to funding our budget, we—nobody shuffles around in our budget stuff that we—new stuff that is oriented toward the high end for old force structure. We've seen a tendency towards that.

We're reacting in a number of ways, in terms of our own activities and investments. But, the most important thing that's going on is in the region, itself.

Let me ask the Chairman to add.

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think a response to the challenge you identified clearly is going to require diplomatic action, economic action, and military action. I'll talk to the military piece of this, which, right now, is actually, I don't think, the most prominent piece in dealing with the challenge of China. But, I think, from my perspective, we need to do a couple of things:

Number one, militarily, we need to recognize the implications of the militarization of the South China Sea, and our plans need to be adjusted accordingly.

Number two, we need to continue to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows, and make it very clear that we're doing that on a routine basis

Number three, we need to make sure that our posture in the Pacific assures our allies and deters any potential aggression by China, and makes it absolutely clear that we have the wherewithal, both within the alliance as well as United States capabilities, to do what must be done, vis-a-vis China.

I think if we provide the President with clear options, I think we will have done our job. But, primarily, right now, I think the President is—has some diplomatic and economic areas where—also will contribute to moderating China's behavior.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Wicker.

Senator WICKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me say that I hold both of these witnesses in high regard. I appreciate their distinguished career of service.

I do have a statement for Secretary Carter, followed by a question.

Mr. Secretary, in his farewell speech to the U.N. General Assembly on Tuesday, President Obama stated, "There is no ultimate military victory to be won in Syria." As a member of this committee for many years, I find this assertion to be astounding. Our Chairman and I, along with other members of this committee, have made repeated admonitions over the years that decisive action needs to be taken against President Assad.

In August 2012, the President delivered his now infamous redline statement in which he said, "We have been very clear to the Assad regime that a red line for us is, we start seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons moving around or being utilized. That would change my calculus. That would change my equation."

Now, Mr. Secretary, a year later, disregarding the counsel of your predecessor, Secretary Hagel, the President canceled airstrikes against Assad, who had unleashed sarin gas on his own people outside of Damascus and continued his gruesome use of barrel bombs on civilians. This dramatic demonstration of weakness by

the President left a vacuum in the region that was quickly seized by President Putin. We are now faced with an enduring quagmire.

Sadly, President Obama's stunning remark that there is no ultimate military victory belies the reality of the Obama foreign policy that has ignored and belittled the advice of our leaders in the Department of Defense.

To add insult to injury, the President issued a memo yesterday ordering you and General Dunford to consider climate change during our military planning process. Last weekend, we dealt with a multiple—with multiple terrorist attacks on our shores. Last night, we heard that ISIL may have launched a chemical attack on our troops. It boggles the mind that the President would issue such an order during this critical time in our history. Four-hundred thousand civilian deaths in Syria. I wonder what the carbon footprint of these barrel bombs would have been that we could have prevented, had we acted decisively.

Mr. Secretary, I have the highest regard for you as an individual, as I've already stated, and I thank you for your service. I just wish you had been given the appropriate authority by the President to turn this administration's misguided policy around.

Now, I was here when this hearing began, at 9:30 a.m. You've all been very patient with your answers. I know you've discussed this already, Mr. Secretary, but it—at this point, toward the end of this hearing, is there anything else you'd like to add in response to what I've said?

It seems the President is now—is more resolved now than ever to forget his 2012 promises. What's your recommendation as to the future of the Assad regime? What about the President's—what about your statement during confirmation that, as the President has said, Assad has lost his legitimacy and cannot be a part of the long-term future of Syria? Is that statement still operative?

Secretary CARTER. I think it is. I—and I'll just give a general answer to your general question. You're right, it was discussed earlier. Even though we are going to be, I'm confident, militarily successful against ISIL, insofar as the Syrian civil war is concerned, the violence can't end there until there's a political transition from Assad to a government that is decent and that can govern the Syrian people and put that tragically broken country back together. That doesn't look in sight now. It was we talked earlier about Secretary Kerry's trying to make arrangements to promote, but it is—that's necessary for the resolution of what is, as you say, a very tragic situation.

Let me see if the Chairman wants to add anything.

Senator WICKER. Well, let me just ask this, if you don't mind, Secretary Carter. It would help if the barrel bombing ended. I spoke to a Democratic colleague of mine today. I've been calling for a no-fly zone to stop the barrel bombing, and I asked this colleague of mine on the other side of the aisle if he would support that. He said, "Yes." He said, "I want to call it something else, rather than a no-fly zone," but that this particular Senator—it is a fact that this particular Senator has now changed his position and would like us to take action to present—to prevent the barrel bombing.

What is your position about that? Wouldn't it help if we took decisive action and ended this carnage?

Secretary CARTER. I don't know the specific proposal which you're discussing with your colleague. I'll make one comment and see if the Chairman wants to add anything.

Senator WICKER. I think he was talking about a no-fly zone——

Secretary CARTER. Well, okay.

Senator WICKER.—but described in more palatable terms.

Secretary CARTER. There are—a number of different proposals have been made, but I—the one that I think it—the focus on right now is the one Secretary Kerry's trying to promote, namely a no-fly zone for the Russians and the Syrians who are attacking the Syrian people. If they're talking about a no-fly zone for American aircraft fighting ISIL, needless to say, that—that's not going to get any enthusiasm, get strong opposition from me.

Senator WICKER. I'm speaking about a——

Secretary CARTER. But, I think that's what a—but—it's not called that, but Secretary Kerry is trying to get a standdown of the Syrian and Russian air force. If he's successful, that would be a good thing.

Let me ask the Chairman if he has anything to add.

General DUNFORD. Senator, the only thing I'd say is, you know, as the situation on the ground changes, I think I have a responsibility—we, the joint force, has a responsibility—to make sure the President has a full range of options. We have discussed that issue in the past under certain conditions. The conditions on the ground will change, and we'll continue to look at those options and make sure they're available to the President.

Senator WICKER. What about the option of controlling the airspace so that barrel bombs cannot be dropped?

General DUNFORD. All options——

Senator WICKER. What do you think of that option, sir?

General DUNFORD. Right now, Senator, for us to control all of the airspace in Syria, it would require us to go to war against Syria and Russia. That's a pretty fundamental decision that certainly I'm not going to make.

Chairman MCCAIN. To impose a no-fly zone——

General DUNFORD. Chairman, could I, for a second, say——

Chairman MCCAIN. No. No.

General DUNFORD. That's not what I said, Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. Go ahead.

Senator WICKER. Well, yeah, I do think that's——

General DUNFORD. What Senator—what the Senator asked me was "to control all of the airspace"——

Chairman MCCAIN. No, what he asked was, Should we have a no-fly zone so we can protect these people from being slaughtered? What's what he's talking about.

General DUNFORD. I answered that first.

Chairman MCCAIN. That's what we're all talking about.

Senator WICKER. That would not require going to war, full-scale, would it?

General DUNFORD. Not necessarily, Senator. I—I'm sorry, but I tried to answer the first question first, and then I was responding to the second part of your question.

But, that—I did not mean to say that imposing a no-fly zone would require us to go to war. That's not the question I was answering.

Senator WICKER. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Gillibrand.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you both for testifying today.

I want to continue some of the issues that Senator Fischer brought up about cyber. In the past year, we've learned, obviously, about a number of cyberattacks, whether it was against the DNC or against NSA [National Security Agency] or the Office of Personnel Management. These attacks have demonstrated the integrated nature of our networks and how our—how targeting one system can have a broader effect. Whether it's critical infrastructure, private companies, or political party networks, we need to have a much more integrated response to these attacks.

How can we create an integrated framework for response to hacks and cyberattacks? What is DOD's role? Are the processes and authorities now in place for DOD to respond in a systemic way rather than ad hoc to each attack?

Secretary CARTER. I'll start.

You're—you used the phrase, Senator—and thank you—that I would use, as well, which is "an integrated approach," because you don't necessarily know, at the beginning, who the perpetrator is. There's this whole spectrum of possible and actual perpetrators, ranging from criminals and kids right up to nation-states. You're right, it's—it is—the Defense Department shares this responsibility with law enforcement and Homeland Security and intelligence. But, we aim to play a big role—a big supporting role.

Our first job is the defense of our own networks. That's our highest priority within the DOD cyber system, because we depend so abjectly upon those systems for the performance of our military, overall. All our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, ships, planes, and tanks, and so forth are networked together. In order to function as excellently as they do, those networks need to be secure. That's our first job.

We also do develop cyber offense. We've acknowledged that in the last year. And——

Senator GILLIBRAND. Yeah, and I really appreciate the work you're doing on innovation. I think the Defense Innovation Unit Experimental that you started in Silicon Valley and now have expanded to both Boston and Austin is really exciting. I actually would invite you to look at New York for your next site, because we have so many venture-capital high-tech developing there. It's becoming sort of this new Silicon Alley.

Secretary CARTER. I appreciate that. I appreciate the committee's support for DIUX. It's one of many things we're trying to do to continue to connect our Defense Department to the most innovative parts of American society, get good people to want to join us or our defense companies—good scientists and engineers—and let them feel the meaning of contributing to national defense. We've got to work extra hard at that, simply because, generationally, a lot of young people haven't served—they may be cyber experts, they

haven't served, they've never worked with or for our Department before. We're really working hard to draw them in.

I just opened up the DIUX branch in Austin, and there'll be more. I appreciate——

Senator GILLIBRAND. I'd be grateful——

Secretary CARTER.—what you said about New York.

Senator GILLIBRAND.—if there's any further authorities or resources you need to continue to develop the strongest cyberforce we possibly can, if you could give that to me so I can put it in the NDAA. Because I think this effort you're doing needs thoughtful and continual investment of thinking and resources. So——

Secretary CARTER. Thank you. We'll give——

Senator GILLIBRAND.—things that you need further, you——

Secretary CARTER.—we'll give you more. I should say, it's strongly represented in our fiscal year 2017 budget, because——

Senator GILLIBRAND. Yeah.

Secretary CARTER.—because we gave it a lot of priority. The reason why it was possible to give it priority is not just because of its importance, but because—it's not just a matter of money, it's—as you indicated, it's a matter of good people.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Right.

Secretary CARTER. They're the hard thing to find in cyber. And——

Senator GILLIBRAND. Lastly, I just want to continue on Senator McCaskill's line of questioning. We've been really looking at this issue of retaliation very hard. We've made it a crime for several years. But, the 62 percent of retaliation being reported over and over again is very challenging. Those being reported, their view is that it's from above them in the chain of command, more often than not. That's just what we're working with. It's a perception, not necessarily a defined, enumerated crime. I fully understand that. But, have you done any prosecutions of retaliation this year? Have you actually taken any cases to court-martial yet?

Secretary CARTER. I can't answer that question. I believe the answer to that is yes. I'll get back to you on that, Senator.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Yeah.

Secretary CARTER. But, can I just thank you for—I think you, among others on this committee, were the ones who really tuned us in to retaliation as another dimension of the sexual assault problem we needed to combat. We are trying to—you're right, sometimes it's higher up, but sometimes it is laterally, also.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Yeah. All of those reasons, whether it's lateral or higher up, is one of the reasons why survivors don't report. It's one of their enumerated reasons. They feel it will end their career. We still only have two out of ten survivors reporting. We're not where we need to be. It's not good enough. And——

Secretary CARTER. Right.

Senator GILLIBRAND.—I'm grateful for your continued efforts.

Secretary CARTER. Thank you. Likewise.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. I can assure the Senator from New York, as long as I'm Chairman of this committee, we will not take away the

responsibility of the commanding officer, the chain of command, as hard as she may try to remove that.

Senator King, did you have anything else?

Senator KING. Just one quick question, to follow up on this line of questioning about cyber.

Gentlemen, do you believe that we should separate—or, I'm sorry—that Cyber Command should be elevated to a independent combatant command?

Secretary CARTER. Senator, that's not a decision we've taken yet, but I think that's going to be a natural evolution for us and is going to be part of the natural evolution of our cyberforce in giving this new priority. We are looking at the various managerial aspects of cyber. Chairman and I discuss that frequently. We discuss it with our colleagues around Washington and the intelligence community with which we share a lot of it—of responsibility.

I mean, ultimately, something that involves combatant commanders would be a presidential decision. But, this committee will have a big role in that, as well. We look forward to working with you as we make that evolution. But——

Senator KING. I——

Secretary CARTER.—we're thinking about it, absolutely.

Senator KING. I just hope the evolution takes a little less time than the evolution of human beings.

[Laughter.]

Secretary CARTER. I think it will.

Chairman MCCAIN. Mr. Secretary, it's been a long morning for you and General Dunford, but I would just like to ask one additional question.

This news of this chemical—what appears to be a chemical weapon yesterday, can you tell us what you know about that and what—any conclusions you may have reached on that?

Secretary CARTER. Absolutely, we can.

Go ahead, Chairman.

General DUNFORD. Chairman, it's a—we assess it to be a sulfur mustard blister agent. We don't assess that ISIL has the—has a very rudimentary capability to deliver that. It went on one of our bases. We have effective detection equipment there. We have effective protection equipment. We can also decontaminate. But—and we also are tracking a number of targets. One, we struck last week, which was a pharmaceutical plant, which is part of the chemical warfare network that ISIL has. We have been tracking this. We've had a number of strikes—I think 30 over the past year—against emerging chemical capability. In this latest strike, again, we assess was sulfur mustard. None of our folks were injured by this particular incident. It wasn't particularly effective, but it was a concerning development.

Chairman MCCAIN. It is concerning, because we have known that they had some kind of chemical weapons facility there in Raqqa. As you say, we have struck it, but it is concerning, particularly on those people who don't have the protective equipment, as well.

I thank the witnesses. I know it's been a long morning. I appreciate their being here. We will look forward to, perhaps in the lameduck session, trying to get them the authorization that they require in order to carry out their responsibilities. I am not proud

of the fact that the Congress of the United States has not carried out ours.

I thank the witnesses.

This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:25 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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