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Before the

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

**UNITED STATES SENATE**

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON  
UNITED STATES POLICY IN IRAQ AND SYRIA

Thursday, May 21, 2015

Washington, D.C.

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U.S. Senate  
Committee on Armed Services  
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:32 a.m. in Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John McCain, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Committee Members Present: Senators McCain [presiding], Inhofe, Ayotte, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Sullivan, Graham, Cruz, Reed, Nelson, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Donnelly, Kaine, and King.

1           OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN McCAIN, U.S. SENATOR  
2 FROM ARIZONA

3           Chairman McCain: Now that Senator Ernst is here, we  
4 can begin.

5           [Laughter.]

6           Chairman McCain: The committee meets today to receive  
7 testimony on U.S. policy in Iraq and Syria.

8           And I want to thank each of our expert witnesses for  
9 appearing before us today on this critical and complex  
10 topic.

11          Before I go any further, the Secretary of Defense and  
12 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs were invited to appear.  
13 Admittedly, very short notice. And we will be asking them  
14 to appear after the recess is over, depending on whether the  
15 bill is on the floor, or not. But, we certainly would like  
16 to hear from the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of  
17 the Joint Chiefs.

18          Today, we have General Jack Keane, former Vice Chief of  
19 Staff for the Army and chairman of the Institute for the  
20 Study of War.

21          And, General Keane, we're pleased you could take time  
22 from your duties on FOX News to being with us today.

23          Dr. Fred Kagan, who is -- that's a joke -- Dr. Fred  
24 Kagan, director --

25          [Laughter.]

1 Chairman McCain: Dr. Fred Kagan, the Director of the  
2 Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise  
3 Institute; Colonel Derek Harvey, U.S. Army (Retired),  
4 Director of the Global Initiative for Civil Society and  
5 Conflict at the University of South Florida; and Brian  
6 Katulis, who is a Senior Fellow at the Center for American  
7 Progress.

8 Could I point out, for the benefit of my colleagues,  
9 that General Keane and Dr. Kagan were key elements and  
10 individuals who went over to the White House in 2006 to talk  
11 to then-President George W. Bush concerning the need for a  
12 surge, that -- the strategy in Iraq was failing at that  
13 time, and they were two of the major architects -- and I  
14 know they'll give credit to many others, but two of the  
15 major architects of the surge, which turned out to be, at  
16 great sacrifice of American blood and treasure, a success.

17 The black flags of ISIL are now flying over yet another  
18 major Iraqi city, Ramadi, the capital of Iraq's Anbar  
19 Province, and reports overnight suggest that ISIL now  
20 controls the Syrian city of Palmyra, as well. This hearing  
21 does not -- is not about the fall of any one city, as  
22 important as those losses are, but, rather, what these  
23 defeats have revealed about the limitations of an overly  
24 constrained American air campaign, the weaknesses of Iraqi  
25 forces, the growing malign role of Iran, and the

1 ineffectiveness and inadequacy of U.S. military support of  
2 -- for our Iraqi and Syrian partners. But, most concerning,  
3 it highlights the shortcomings of the administration's  
4 indecisive policy, inadequate commitment, and incoherent  
5 strategy. This misguided approach has failed to stop, if  
6 not fostered, the expansion of ISIL to a dozen countries.  
7 The loss of Ramadi, once the symbol of Iraqis working  
8 together with brave young Americans in uniform to defeat al-  
9 Qaeda, must be recognized as a significant defeat. ISIL's  
10 victory gives it the appearance of strength and boosts its  
11 ability to recruit more fighters while reinforcing Iran's  
12 narrative that only it and its proxies can rescue Iraq.

13       The fall of Ramadi and capture by ISIL of American-  
14 supplied military equipment is another setback for the  
15 United States and further undermines our credibility as a  
16 reliable strategic partner in the region.

17       And yet, the Obama administration seems unwilling or  
18 unable to grasp the strategic significance. As ISIL  
19 terrorists ransacked Ramadi -- by the way, the Pentagon's  
20 news page ran a story with the headline, quote, "Strategy to  
21 Defeat ISIL is Working." Secretary of State John Kerry said  
22 Ramadi was a mere, quote, "target of opportunity." And 2  
23 days ago, when a review should have been well underway to  
24 correct an incoherent strategy that is woefully under-  
25 resourced, the White House Press Secretary, Josh Ernst,

1 said, "Are we going to light our hair on fire every time  
2 there's a setback?" I would point out for my colleagues  
3 that maybe his hair isn't on fire, but there are bodies on  
4 fire in the streets of Ramadi as we speak.

5 The disaster of Ramadi should lead to a complete  
6 overhaul of U.S. Strategy. The President has stated, quote,  
7 "Our goal is degrading and ultimately destroying ISIL," but  
8 neither strategy nor resources support this goal. Our  
9 efforts in Iraq may actually be aggravating the conditions  
10 that gave rise to ISIL in the first place by relying on  
11 brutal Iranian-backed Shi'a militias and insufficiently  
12 empowering Sunni Iraqis. At best, this increases Iran's  
13 malign influence. At worst, it reinforces ISIL's rhetoric  
14 that it is the only force standing against violent sectarian  
15 Iranian-backed militias.

16 President Obama has cleverly maneuvered us into the  
17 position that Sunni Iraqis that we -- think we support Iran,  
18 and Shi'a Iraqis think we support ISIL. But, the situation  
19 is far worse in Syria. The Iran-backed Assad regime,  
20 together with Iranian proxies like Hezbollah, continues the  
21 slaughter that has killed more than 200,000 Syrians and  
22 displaced 10 million more. Despite this tragedy, the  
23 administration has defined its policy in Syria more by what  
24 it will not do rather than the -- by the end state we aim to  
25 achieve. Although the U.S. military's train-and-equip

1 program for moderate Syrian forces is now finally providing  
2 assistance to vetted fighters, the administration still has  
3 not decided whether it will defend Syrian opposition against  
4 Assad's barrel bombs upon their return to Syria. Refusing  
5 to support the forces we train is not only ineffective, it  
6 is immoral.

7         While it is still unclear what President Obama is  
8 willing to do in Syria, it is clear our partners do not draw  
9 confidence from statements of what we will not do. Ramadi's  
10 fall should lead our Nation's leaders to reconsider its  
11 indecisive policy and incoherent strategy that has enabled  
12 ISIL's expansion, undermined regional stability,  
13 strengthened Iran, and harmed America's credibility. What  
14 we desperately need is a comprehensive strategy, the  
15 decisive application of an increased, but still limited,  
16 amount of U.S. military power, and a concerted effort by the  
17 Iraqi government to recruit, train, and equip Sunni forces.

18         This will require disciplined thinking, clear priorities, a  
19 strategy supported by adequate resources, and, most of all,  
20 the leadership and resolve of the President to succeed.

21         I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today on  
22 these important questions.

23         Senator Reed.

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1           STATEMENT OF HON. JACK REED, U.S. SENATOR FROM RHODE  
2 ISLAND

3           Senator Reed: Well, first, let me thank the Chairman  
4 for calling this timely and very, very important hearing,  
5 and also thank Senator Nelson for acting as the Ranking  
6 Member today. I have two Appropriations Committee -- one  
7 Appropriations Committee and one Bank Committee markup, and  
8 I apologize, I cannot be here.

9           And, with that, with your permission, Mr. Chairman, I'd  
10 like to yield to Senator Nelson.

11          Chairman McCain: Senator Nelson.

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1           STATEMENT OF HON. BILL NELSON, U.S. SENATOR FROM  
2 FLORIDA

3           Senator Nelson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4           And what I'm going to do is just put my statement in  
5 the record so we can get on to it.

6           But, what you underscore is certainly accurate. The  
7 fall of Ramadi -- what is the Abadi government going to do?  
8 Do they have the capability of getting Sunnis to come in and  
9 take up the fight against ISIS? And so, we need, as you all  
10 testified to us -- How far are we along in implementing the  
11 counter-ISIS campaign in Iraq? And what has the Abadi  
12 government done to empower the Sunni tribes to resist ISIS?  
13 And what does Ramadi mean about retaking Mosul? And will  
14 these events force Iraq's political leadership to overcome  
15 their differences in their attempts at government?

16           So, with those questions, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17           [The prepared statement of Senator Nelson follows:]

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1 Chairman McCain: Thank you, Senator Nelson.

2 And, you know, Palmyra is one of the historic places on  
3 Earth, and, as it's being threatened now, we know what ISIS  
4 does to these antiquities. We're about to perhaps,  
5 unfortunately, see another destruction of an obviously  
6 irreplaceable historic heritage sites that -- it would be  
7 another great tragedy along the lines of the destruction of  
8 the Buddhist statues at Bamiyan, years ago.

9 Welcome the witnesses.

10 And, General Keane, we'll begin with you. Thank you,  
11 sir.

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1           STATEMENT OF GENERAL JOHN M. KEANE, USA (RET.), FORMER  
2 VICE CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMY

3           General Keane: Thank you, Chairman McCain and Ranking  
4 Member Reed and Senator Nelson, distinguished members of the  
5 committee. Appreciate you inviting me back to testify.

6           I was here a few months ago dealing with global  
7 security challenges facing the United States. And I must  
8 say, I was pretty impressed with the bipartisan support for  
9 the challenges our country is facing and the way you're  
10 willing to work together to come to grips with it.

11           I'm honored to be here with my distinguished  
12 colleagues. Obviously, I know Fred Kagan and Derek Harvey  
13 very well. They're long and close associates. As much as  
14 Fred and I may have had some impact on the previous  
15 administration in changing their strategy -- and there were  
16 others who were working towards that end, as well -- Derek  
17 Harvey, sitting here, was the catalyst for understanding the  
18 enemy. He was pushing against the intelligence group think  
19 that existed at the time. And he defined that enemy better  
20 than anybody did in this town. And that was the beginning  
21 of understanding what was happening to us, why it was  
22 happening, and what Fred and I thought we could  
23 realistically do about it. So, I'm honored to be here with  
24 all of them.

25           I've got some maps up there that you may want to use to

1 get a reference. It's always good to see where things are  
2 happening, to understand the scale and magnitude.

3 You know, approximately 9 months ago, the President  
4 announced the United States public policy --

5 Chairman McCain: General, could you give me a second?  
6 I don't think we have --

7 General Keane: We've got to get the Chairman maps.  
8 Okay.

9 Approximately 9 months ago, the President announced the  
10 United States public policy that, along with our coalition  
11 partners, the United States would degrade and ultimately  
12 destroy ISIS. Weeks later, he changed "destroy ISIS" to  
13 "defeat," a more appropriate term.

14 A strategy was crafted to accomplish this objective,  
15 which consisted among some things as humanitarian  
16 assistance, undermining the ISIS ideology, countering the  
17 finances, providing military assistance to our Iraqi  
18 partners, to include airstrikes into Syria, and assisting  
19 the Iraqi government politically to move toward a more  
20 representative government, which actually, obviously, led to  
21 a change in governments. I cannot address undermining the  
22 ideology and the finances in this testimony. It's beyond my  
23 expertise.

24 While there has been some progress and some success,  
25 looking at this strategy today, we know now that the

1 conceptual plan is fundamentally flawed. The resources  
2 provided to support Iraq are far from adequate. The timing  
3 and urgency to provide arms, equipment, and training is  
4 insufficient. And, as such, we are not only failing, we  
5 are, in fact, losing this war. Moreover, I can say with  
6 certainty that this strategy will not defeat ISIS.

7 As to the concept, ISIS, who is headquartered in Syria,  
8 recruits, trains, and resupplies in Syria, controls large  
9 swaths of territory in Syria -- and you can look at your map  
10 there to take a look at that -- to include the entire  
11 Euphrates River Valley in Syria from Iraq to the Turkish  
12 border. It connects now to the Euphrates River Valley in  
13 Anbar Province, which leads to the suburbs of Baghdad. And  
14 it's currently expanding to the west as far as Damascus.  
15 And they just seized, as the Chairman mentioned, Palmyra  
16 City and Palmyra Air Base in Central City -- in central  
17 Syria, aligning the central east-west corridor from Iraq all  
18 the way to homes in the west in Syria.

19 And yet -- and yet -- we have no strategy to defeat  
20 ISIS in Syria. We have no ground force, which is the defeat  
21 mechanism. Yes, we have airpower. And, despite the success  
22 at Khobani -- and yes, we have degraded ISIS command and  
23 control in Syria, their logistics, and we have killed many  
24 ISIS fighters -- but, airpower would not defeat ISIS. It  
25 has not been able to deny ISIS freedom of maneuver and the

1 ability to attack at will. Syria is ISIS's sanctuary. We  
2 cannot succeed in Iraq if ISIS is allowed to maintain that  
3 sanctuary in Syria. We need a strategy now to defeat ISIS  
4 in Syria.

5 As you can see on the map that deals with the global  
6 rings -- take a look at that -- many ISIS -- on that ISIS  
7 map -- ISIS is expanding beyond Iraq and Syria into Sinai,  
8 Yemen, Libya, and Afghanistan. This is where they actually  
9 have people on the ground, and they have actually provided  
10 resources, and they have -- actually have a contract written  
11 and signed with the people on the ground who are affiliated  
12 with them. And they're also inspiring and motivating  
13 radical sympathizers throughout the world, which are  
14 depicted in that map on yellow, as we are painfully aware of  
15 in Europe and in the United States and Australia. Yet,  
16 there is no strategy with our allies to counter that  
17 expansion. I would go further to say there is no strategy  
18 to counter the destabilization of the Middle East.

19 As to Iraq, it certainly makes sense to assist Iraq in  
20 reclaiming lost territory and avoid deploying U.S. ground  
21 combat units. However, ISIS, despite some setbacks, is on  
22 the offense, with the ability to attack at will anyplace,  
23 anytime. And, particularly, the fall of Ramadi has exposed  
24 the weakness of the current Iraq strategy. It is more than  
25 just a setback.

1           Politically, the administration deserves credit for  
2 helping to usher out the Maliki government and bring the new  
3 Abadi government in. However, Abadi is isolated, is  
4 undermined by Maliki, who is still and remains a nefarious  
5 character, and others within Abadi's own party. Abadi is  
6 unduly influenced by Iran. And the United States is not  
7 nearly as consequential as it should be. A U.S. objective  
8 should be, politically, to reduce Iran's influence. We need  
9 a focused diplomatic and political effort with the Abadi  
10 government, with the best people we have available to do it.

11           Militarily, clearly the Iraqi army is a serious  
12 problem. While some have fought heroically, many have not.

13       There are serious leadership, discipline, morale, and  
14 competence issues. This will take time to fix. But, if we  
15 believe that Iraq is important to U.S. security, then we  
16 must help them fix it. And it will take many more trainers  
17 and a much more concerted effort to put in the best leaders  
18 available.

19           The Sunni tribal force is almost nonexistent, yet we  
20 cannot reclaim the Sunni territory that has been lost,  
21 particularly Anbar Province and Mosul, and we cannot hold  
22 the territory after we have reclaimed it if we do not have a  
23 Sunni tribal force. The Abadi government must authorize  
24 this force, and the United States should arm, equip, and  
25 train it. They must know that the Iraqi government and the

1 United States is behind them. Right now, they know the  
2 Iraqi government is not. Their families are being killed by  
3 the hundreds, eventually by the thousands. And they are  
4 disillusioned by the United States, in terms of its lack of  
5 support.

6 The Peshmerga. They're skilled, they're willed, they  
7 will fight. They need arms, and they need advisors, down at  
8 the fighting level, to assist them with planning, execution,  
9 and to call in airstrikes.

10 The Shi'a militia are largely protecting Baghdad. Most  
11 of what ISIS owns is Sunni territory. If we use the Shi'a  
12 militia to reclaim that territory and hold it, Iran has  
13 undue influence, politically, in Iraq as a result of it, and  
14 the Sunni people will suffer under the hand and the gun of  
15 the Shi'a militias. We must, in fact, reduce their  
16 influence.

17 The role of advisors. Advisors are only at brigade  
18 headquarters and above, currently. This is flawed. Advisor  
19 teams must be with the units that are fighting, at least at  
20 the battalion level, which is what we did in the past so  
21 successfully. Advisors, as the name implies, helps units  
22 plan and execute, and it also builds their confidence in  
23 themselves. They are also forward air controllers and can  
24 direct airpower as well as attack helicopters. The war in  
25 Iraq is largely close-combat urban warfare, which demands



1 the bombs be guided from our airplanes to the ground by  
2 people on the ground. Seventy-five percent of the sorties  
3 that we're currently running with our attack aircraft come  
4 back without dropping bombs, mostly because they cannot  
5 acquire the target or properly identify the target. Forward  
6 air controllers fix that problem.

7 Special Operation Forces direct-action teams should be  
8 employed, not as an exception, which is what we successfully  
9 saw this last weekend in Syria with the raid, but routinely  
10 in Iraq and Syria against the ISIS leadership and critical  
11 infrastructure. Similar to what we have done in Iraq and  
12 Afghanistan in the past during the surges, when Fred and I  
13 were there, as well as Colonel Harvey, we averaged -- the  
14 surges in Iraq and Afghanistan, we averaged somewhere  
15 between eight to ten of these operations a night. In fact,  
16 when the UBL raid was taking place in Pakistan, there were  
17 nine of these going on in Afghanistan that very night.

18 We should also do large-scale raids. What does that  
19 mean? We should use elements like Rangers to conduct  
20 attacks at night over critical infrastructure to kill ISIS  
21 fighters who are difficult to dig out with airpower at  
22 altitude. These are surprise attacks. They're not intended  
23 to stay. They're in and out maybe one night. We stay, at  
24 the most, a couple of days, depending on how much of a fight  
25 we're getting into.

1           We desperately need enablers to assist the Iraqi  
2 Security Forces. This is crucial support that helps them  
3 succeed on the battlefield. What is it? Robust  
4 intelligence capability. We have some, but we've got to  
5 ramp it up more than what we have. Increased UAVs, not to  
6 assist airpower, which we're currently doing in terms of  
7 surveillance, but to assist ground forces. That's a  
8 different application, and it's a different type of UAV. We  
9 need attack aviation. That's Apache helicopters. And we  
10 need other helicopters to assist the ground forces. C-130  
11 transports to move troops and supplies and other logistics  
12 support. And we need increased U.S. command-and-control  
13 headquarters to help control the increase of trainers,  
14 advisors, and others that I'm suggesting here.

15           Obviously, what I am suggesting is increased U.S.  
16 political and military involvement in Iraq, which begins to  
17 shore up many of the weaknesses of the current strategy.  
18 While I believe we can still do this without U.S. and allied  
19 combat brigades, it is much more difficult now than what it  
20 was 9 months ago. I believe we have to do some serious  
21 contingency planning for the introduction of ground combat  
22 brigades, both U.S. and allied.

23           Finally, we need to get past our political psychosis on  
24 Iraq which is defined by the questions: Should the United  
25 States have gone into Iraq in 2003? Should the United

1 States left Iraq in 2011? While they were crucial U.S.  
2 policy decisions, there is -- and there is much to learn  
3 from them, and we have -- we've got to get past it. ISIS is  
4 much more than Iraq. Our forces should be what the -- our  
5 focus should be what the President started out with:  
6 defeating ISIS. That will take political will. And war is  
7 a test of wills. It will take accepting risk. It will take  
8 accepting casualties. It will take focus. And it will take  
9 increased U.S. resources. And it will take honest  
10 evaluations as -- and assessments.

11 What I fear is this. I hear a disturbing and  
12 frightening echo of the summer of 2006, when administration,  
13 senior government -- when a different administration, senior  
14 government officials, and military senior generals came  
15 before this committee and, in the face of compelling  
16 evidence that our strategy in Iraq was failing, these  
17 officials looked at you and defended that strategy and told  
18 you that, overall, the strategy was succeeding. You and  
19 your predecessors took a strong bipartisan exception to  
20 those opinions. Many, as a result of it, wanted to give up  
21 on Iraq. Others wanted to do something about fixing the  
22 problem.

23 I hope you choose the latter and get on with helping to  
24 fix the problem. And I look forward to your questions.

25 Thank you.

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[The prepared statement of General Keane follows:]

1 Chairman McCain: Dr. Kagan.  
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1           STATEMENT OF DR. FREDERICK W. KAGAN, CHRISTOPHER  
2           DELMUTH CHAIR AND DIRECTOR, CRITICAL THREATS PROJECT,  
3           AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE

4           Dr. Kagan: Mr. Chairman, Senator Nelson, thank you  
5           very much for calling this hearing. And thank so many of  
6           you for attending. It shows a sense of urgency about the  
7           problem on the part of this committee that it's hard to  
8           detect in the rest of the administration. So, I'm very  
9           grateful to the committee, as always, for the opportunity to  
10          speak, but for the attention that it's trying to focus on  
11          this problem.

12          I receive, every day, a superb daily rollup of  
13          activities in the region produced by my team in the Critical  
14          Threats Project and the team at the Institute for the Study  
15          of War. I can't read it all anymore. It's too long. It's  
16          too long because the region is engulfed in war. It's sort  
17          of hard to tell that from the isolated headlines that pop up  
18          and fade away. But, we -- this is the regional war. This  
19          is the beginning of the regional war. It could get a lot  
20          worse, but this is a war that is becoming a sectarian war  
21          across the region. It is a war between Saudi Arabia and  
22          Iran, fought largely by proxies, but now, dismayingly, also  
23          directly. There are some people who think that it's a good  
24          thing that the Saudis and others are acting independently.  
25          I would suggest that they take a look at the historical

1 efficacy of Saudi military forces and ask themselves if they  
2 think that that's really a reed we want to rest our weight  
3 on.

4         And I think we can focus too heavily on what the Iraqi  
5 Security Forces are doing, or not doing, as we have in the  
6 past. They're not doing enough. Prime Minister Abadi is in  
7 a box. We have helped put him there with our policies. So,  
8 it's not sufficient just to look at and criticize what the  
9 Iraqis are doing. We really do need to look in a mirror and  
10 look at what we are doing or not doing.

11         As I follow the daily reports, I see a coherent enemy  
12 strategy across the region. I see deliberate enemy  
13 operations, which you can actually depict on a map. And I  
14 commend to you a terrific report by the Institute for the  
15 Study of War called "ISIS Captures Ramadi," which actually  
16 has a military -- old-fashioned military-style map showing  
17 the ISIS maneuvers, because they are maneuvering. This is  
18 not a terrorist organization. This is an army that is  
19 conducting military maneuvers on an operational level with a  
20 great deal of skill. It is not an accident that Ramadi fell  
21 over the weekend and Palmyra fell yesterday. It is not an  
22 accident that there were ISIS attacks in Beiji and at the  
23 refinery, that there was a prison break in Diyala, that  
24 there were threats against the -- not the Hajj -- a  
25 pilgrimage in Baghdad, and then Ramadi was decisively

1 attacked and taken. This was a coherent campaign plan, and  
2 a very intelligent one, very well executed. This is a  
3 serious threat. What I can't discern from the daily  
4 operations, let alone from the statements of the  
5 administration, is any coherent American strategy to respond  
6 to this threat.

7         And I want to talk about the threat for a minute. ISIS  
8 is one of the most evil organizations that has ever existed  
9 in the world. We really have to reckon with that. This is  
10 not a minor annoyance. This is not a group that maybe we  
11 can negotiate with down the road someday. This is a group  
12 that is committed to the destruction of everything decent in  
13 the world. And the evidence of that is the wanton  
14 destruction, uncalled for even by their own ideology,  
15 frankly, of antiquities thousands of years old that  
16 represent the heart of the emergence of human civilization  
17 in the West. This is a group that sells captives into  
18 slavery. It's a major source of financing for them,  
19 actually. This is a group -- a group that engages  
20 deliberately in mass rape. This is a group that conducts  
21 mass murder. And this is a group that is calling for and  
22 condoning and supporting and encouraging lone-wolf attacks,  
23 and it will soon, I think, not be just lone-wolf attacks, in  
24 the United States and the West. This is a group of  
25 unfathomable evil. And, unfortunately, they are extremely



1 effective. And they have a degree of military capability --  
2 not terrorist capability -- that we have not seen before in  
3 an al-Qaeda organization. This is not something where we  
4 should be spectators. This is not something where we should  
5 just say, as some people do, "Well, just let them kill each  
6 other." This is unacceptable, from a moral perspective and  
7 from a U.S. national security perspective, to just watch a  
8 group like this succeed in this way.

9 I want to make the point that, of course, any criticism  
10 of the White House today is received -- at least from our  
11 side -- is received as a partisan attack. And I want to  
12 make the point that if that was the case, then I must have  
13 been a Democrat in 2006, because we were attacking the Bush  
14 administration with the Senator -- with the Chairman and a  
15 number of other members of the committee, as aggressively,  
16 or, in fact, more aggressively, than we've ever critiqued  
17 this White House. The fact is that what matters is that the  
18 strategy is failing, as it was failing in 2006, only we are  
19 in a much worse strategic position today than we ever were  
20 in 2006, because it's not just Iraq.

21 I note that, to speak of the issue of urgency, the  
22 Iranians seem to feel a certain sense of urgency about this,  
23 as well. And their Minister of Defense, General Dehghan,  
24 was in Baghdad over the last few days, signing defense  
25 cooperation agreements, ostensibly, but surely working to

1 coordinate Iranian support on the ground. The Foreign  
2 Policy Advisor to the Supreme Leader, Velayati, was in  
3 Damascus and Beirut, talking with Bashar al-Assad and Hassan  
4 Nasrallah, no doubt coordinating plans to, I assume,  
5 maintain and increase the military deployment of Hezbollah  
6 forces in Syria and possibly ask Assad what his plan is,  
7 given the circumstances. Those are very senior leaders. I  
8 don't notice that we have sent senior leaders of that rank,  
9 or anything close to it, to speak with Prime Minister Abadi.  
10 And, of course, we have no one to speak with, effectively,  
11 in Syria.

12 Senator Nelson asked about what this means for the  
13 counter-ISIS campaign. It means that the campaign that has  
14 been described by the administration and our general  
15 officers is completely derailed. I do not believe that  
16 there is any reasonable prospect that it will be possible to  
17 retake Mosul this year. I think the fight for Ramadi will  
18 be hard enough. I think that these operations in and around  
19 Ramadi demonstrate that the Iraqi Security Forces, at  
20 current levels of U.S. support, are not capable even of  
21 defending their territory against determined ISIS attack,  
22 let alone clearing a major ISIS safe haven.

23 So, we are -- our campaign strategy is completely  
24 derailed, in my view. I think it was a campaign strategy,  
25 as the Chairman pointed out, that was of limited likelihood

1 to be successful, in any event, because it addressed only  
2 part of the problem and left a major safe haven effectively  
3 untouched. But, such as it was, it's over.

4 My colleague, Derek Harvey, will speak in some more  
5 detail about what kinds of troops and enablers are required.

6 I agree with General Keane -- I'm even willing to put a  
7 number on the table -- I think that we need to have a total  
8 of 15- to 20,000 U.S. troops in Iraq in order to provide the  
9 necessary enablers, advisors, and so forth. I think  
10 anything less than that is simply unserious.

11 And I think we really need to do that, because, I  
12 think, otherwise, we're looking at an ISIS state that is  
13 going to persist. We're looking at an ISIS state that is  
14 going to continue to govern territory, that is going to  
15 continue to have resources that we simply cannot afford to  
16 let an evil enemy of this variety have. And I think it is a  
17 major U.S. national security priority to respond to this,  
18 especially as it's become clear that it's beyond the  
19 capabilities of the Iraqis.

20 And lastly, I want to make two larger points that are  
21 directly relevant to this committee. One is, you cannot  
22 argue for a forceful strategy in Iraq and defend the  
23 sequester. Our Armed Forces have been seriously damaged by  
24 the sequester. It needs to be removed immediately. In  
25 fact, the Armed Forces budget needs to be increased

1 significantly. We are at war, whether we like it or not,  
2 and the longer this President refuses to address it, the  
3 worse it's going to be when we become engaged. We need to  
4 be preparing for that now.

5         And lastly, we need to be strengthening our abilities  
6 to collect intelligence, and not weakening them. This is  
7 not the moment to dismantle our capabilities to see what the  
8 enemy is doing. This is the moment to be engaged in wise  
9 reform of oversight of the intelligence community. And so,  
10 It is ironic that one of your colleagues spent yesterday  
11 arguing for the elimination of a program important to our  
12 national security.

13         So, I think there are things that the administration  
14 can do and things that Congress can do, but it's going to be  
15 a tough fight.

16         I thank the committee for listening to me this morning.

17         [The prepared statement of Dr. Kagan follows:]

18         [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman McCain: Colonel Harvey.  
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1           STATEMENT OF COLONEL DEREK J. HARVEY, USA (RET.),  
2           DIRECTOR, GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY AND CONFLICT,  
3           UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

4           Colonel Harvey: Mr. Chairman, Senator Nelson, and  
5           members of the committee, thank you for having me here. I  
6           appreciate the opportunity.

7           I want to begin with focusing on the Islamic State and  
8           the trends in Iraq. I believe that, even before the fall of  
9           Ramadi, the best that could be said is that Baghdad was  
10          holding the line. Even with the success in Tikrit, there's  
11          great difficulty in holding that terrain. And even in areas  
12          that have been cleared earlier in northern Diyala Province  
13          in eastern Saladin, ISIS has worked their way back in. They  
14          just changed their profile, went to ground, and now they're  
15          infiltrating back in and conducting attacks and rebuilding  
16          their capabilities.

17          Over the past month, they've continued to do shaping  
18          operations in the Baghdad area, western Baghdad. In one  
19          day, just a couple of days ago, there were eight IEDs, two  
20          VBIEDs, and several small-arms skirmishes in Baghdad itself.

21          That's to say nothing about what's going on in Abu Ghraib  
22          and other areas around the belts of Baghdad.

23          They continue to hold the line along the Kurdish front,  
24          north in the Nineveh area around Mosul, and they've expanded  
25          successfully in other areas, particularly in Syria. They

1 are very good at doing shaping operations. They are taking  
2 advantage of their interior lines of communication. They  
3 are well armed, well resourced, and well led.

4 I think the fall of Ramadi should lead to questions  
5 about the progress asserted by the Pentagon and the  
6 administration. There are two strategically important Sunni  
7 Arab cities in Iraq: Mosul, the second largest city, which  
8 was a former Ottoman capital, and, of course, Ramadi, which  
9 is the capital of the largest geographic province. And ISIS  
10 controls Raqqa, which is another provincial capital, but  
11 it's in Syria. The fall of Ramadi renews the sense that  
12 ISIS has momentum, which is important for rallying Sunni  
13 Arabs who may be on the fence in this fight, and also could  
14 aid with foreign fighter recruitment and some funding.

15 without an alternative, Sunni Arabs, tribes, and the  
16 peoples in the region, without someone to protect them and  
17 lead them, are going to fall into the camp of the Islamic  
18 State, particularly as this campaign becomes increasingly  
19 polarized. And the movement of Shi'a militias, Popular  
20 Mobilization units, into Anbar Province is going to  
21 contribute to this polarization. And I fully expect that  
22 the Islamic State, in the near future, will try to conduct  
23 operations in Karbala and Najaf to further inflame this  
24 fight. That is part of their major strategy, to polarize  
25 this fight between the different communities.

1           Now, I would note that ISIS has many challenges and  
2 weaknesses, but the problem is that ISIS is not losing. I  
3 believe that the U.S. has continued to underestimate the  
4 Islamic State, which I suspect shows a lack of understanding  
5 about the Islamic State, its capabilities, strengths, and  
6 weaknesses and how it sees the fight and a path to victory.

7           We've seen this story before. It's like deja vu, for  
8 me. We focus too much on our own activity, our own  
9 programs, our own budgets, but we're not focusing on the  
10 impact on the enemy. And the enemy has a vote.

11           From public statements, we're not looking at the right  
12 things, and the metrics and measures that are asserted by  
13 the military, the Pentagon, are not really appropriate. The  
14 number of airstrikes is interesting, but irrelevant. What  
15 is the effect on the enemy and its capacity to fight?  
16 Stating that ISIS has lost 25 percent of the territory it  
17 conquered is interesting, but it's really not relevant,  
18 because ISIS did not control eastern Saladin or northern  
19 Diyala or some of the other areas, but they're still there.  
20 They're contesting, and they're rebuilding, and they're  
21 shaping. So, that is a false metric that's been put out.

22           Striking oil infrastructure in Syria is a good thing,  
23 and it's been degraded. But, the enemy has a vote. It's --  
24 their efforts there have been complicated. They've reduced  
25 their production. But, they've adapted, and, creatively,



1 they have developed miniature mobile refinement  
2 capabilities, even using blow-dryer air heaters to make  
3 refined product. It is crude, yet it is a sophisticated  
4 adaptation. And crude is still going to Turkey. And they  
5 are producing enough fuel for their own requirements.  
6 They're still earning millions of dollars every month from  
7 oil in Syria. It's been degraded, but I think the lower  
8 cost of oil on the markets has had just as much of an impact  
9 as any operations we've conducted. And again, they have  
10 adapted.

11 The same for funding and foreign fighter flow. They  
12 are still very resilient and adaptive in working around the  
13 actions that have been taken. And the actions that have  
14 been taken on foreign fighter flow and going after finances  
15 have been weak and not very assertive, not well resourced.  
16 And I'll talk more about that.

17 ISIS is excelling at a hybrid war. They're fighting  
18 conventionally, as needed, they're adapting, and they're  
19 employing terrorist techniques -- coercion, assassination,  
20 subversion -- as necessary, depending upon the terrain. It  
21 is showing that it can hold key terrain, fight hard, and  
22 synchronize operations across space and time. And they  
23 respond with agility to secure tactical and operational  
24 advantages and overmatch, as we saw in Ramadi. They are  
25 very effective, they are well led. They are skilled, and

1 they have professional-quality leadership and command-and-  
2 control. And they know the geography, they know the  
3 terrain, and they know the human terrain in these areas  
4 very, very, very well. They are ruthless, and they are  
5 committed and determined. And they're exhibiting the will  
6 to fight. And they're fighting for power, they're fighting  
7 for ideological reasons, but, for many Sunni Arabs who are  
8 frustrated and angered about their condition in life and how  
9 they have been treated by Baghdad, they're fighting for  
10 their land, their families, and their future. And they are  
11 not motivated by a hardline Salafist Takfiri annihilationist  
12 agenda, but they're fighting anyway, because they're  
13 fighting for their own lives and their own future, and  
14 they're fearful.

15 There are many Sunni military-aged males, to date, that  
16 have not taken sides in this fight. It's just a matter of  
17 time, if this polarization continues and we let this drag  
18 on, that ISIS will gain more and more recruits from the  
19 Iraqi population base. The Iraqi fight with ISIS is not  
20 dominated by foreign fighters. This is a homegrown fight,  
21 and we have to keep that in mind. ISIS, as Fred mentioned,  
22 maintains operational freedom in most of the Sunni Arab  
23 provinces, and they appear stronger because, importantly,  
24 relatively, their opposition is very weak.

25 Now, the Sunni Arab political and tribal leaders are

1 weak and divided, and seen as illegitimate by many within  
2 these Sunni Arab provinces. And too many Sunni Arabs are on  
3 the fence. They've been given no reason to come onto the  
4 side of the Baghdad government or to come to us. Prime  
5 Minister Abadi's government is weak and divided, and is  
6 increasingly undermined by Shi'a opposition. Same with the  
7 Iraqi Security Forces that are small, weak, poorly  
8 resourced, and not well led. And it will take far too long  
9 to train and rebuild them to make a difference this year.

10 Moreover, I assess that there is a concerted effort to  
11 undermine the efficacy of the Iraqi Security Forces by Shi'a  
12 militias, Iranian proxies, and some members within the  
13 government, including the Dawa Party, particularly some  
14 members in the Ministry of Interior. They seek to weaken  
15 the Iraqi Security Forces and provide alternative  
16 institutions of power that they control.

17 And again, the coalition is weak. And we could talk  
18 about that. But, there's not a lot of allied cooperation  
19 and resources put into this fight.

20 And lastly, the U.S. lines of operation, for the most  
21 part, have been poorly resourced, both in theater and at the  
22 interagency level right here in Washington, D.C. I do not  
23 see the urgency or the resourcing within Treasury or the  
24 intelligence community or others to really energy and  
25 aggressively go after this fight in this region.

1           So, although U.S. airstrikes, I believe, have  
2 complicated the ISIS operations, the air campaign has not  
3 been decisive. It's been relatively small and limited. And  
4 the Islamic State, as I mentioned, has been adaptive and  
5 creative. Importantly, they remain well armed and well  
6 resourced. And our lines of operation, be it counter-  
7 finance, counter-foreign-fighter flow, delegitimizing the  
8 brand, the training, building of the ISF, and the military  
9 campaign, at best, appear disjointed, poorly resourced, and  
10 lack an effective framework to bring it all together. I  
11 think we need to relook this.

12           And, with that, I'll look forward to your questions.

13           [The prepared statement of Colonel Harvey follows:]

14           [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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Chairman McCain: Thank you.  
Mr. Katulis, thank you for being here.

1           STATEMENT OF BRIAN KATULIS, SENIOR FELLOW, CENTER FOR  
2 AMERICAN PROGRESS

3           Mr. Katulis: Great. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and  
4 Senator Nelson and all of your distinguished colleagues.  
5 It's a real honor to be here today.

6           Mr. Chairman, your efforts, over the last few months,  
7 to elevate our national security debate have been incredible  
8 and very important, the hearings that you held earlier this  
9 year and everything that the members of the committee have  
10 been doing have been very important for our country as we  
11 look at the world and not just the Middle East.

12          Mr. Chairman, I prepared written testimony. With your  
13 permission, I'd like to submit that for the record --

14          Chairman McCain: Without objection.

15          Mr. Katulis: -- this afternoon.

16          And it's really an honor, here, to be with the  
17 copanelists, who I have great respect for, not only their  
18 expertise, but their service to country. And what I wanted  
19 to do this morning with my remarks is to try to complement  
20 their insights with what I focus on in my own work, which is  
21 looking at dynamics within the region and the strategic  
22 dynamics, and nesting the problem of Iraq, Syria, and ISIS  
23 within that. And, Mr. Chairman, you said, at the outset,  
24 beforehand, that you'd like to discuss concrete steps. So,  
25 while I give my analysis of what I think is happening in

1 Iraq, Syria, the region, and more broadly, I will offer some  
2 ideas that I hope we can discuss, some of which I think  
3 members of the panel have proposed in legislation.

4 The way I see the challenge -- and I don't disagree  
5 with much of what was said here earlier -- the challenge of  
6 ISIS, I think, operates on three different levels, or three  
7 concentric circles:

8 The first is Iraq and Syria, quite obviously. That's  
9 where the devastation has been astounding over the last few  
10 years. And many of the steps, I think, that have been  
11 proposed here, in terms of security measures and security  
12 cooperation measures, is something that I, frankly -- it's a  
13 little outside of my expertise to evaluate. I look at the  
14 political and strategic dynamics. But, I do think, inside  
15 of Iraq, no matter what we've done or what we do in the  
16 coming years, every type of security assistance should be  
17 implemented with a close eye to internal political and power  
18 dynamics. And, at this stunning moment -- and what happened  
19 in Ramadi, I think, should shock everybody -- we should keep  
20 an eye on these measures of what we need to do to help our  
21 Iraqi partners on the security front, but understand what we  
22 have learned over the last 10 years plus, is that the  
23 political dynamics are terribly important.

24 In those regards, what I think we need to do and the  
25 Obama administration needs to do is to hold the Iraqi

1 government accountable for a lot of the ideas that have been  
2 discussed, in terms of arming Sunni tribes, building a  
3 national guard. If you look at what the Obama  
4 administration did last summer -- and I was a supporter of  
5 this measure of using security assistance as leverage to  
6 help the Iraqis create a different type of Iraqi government  
7 -- we need to continue that process. When the police in  
8 Ramadi were not being funded, when concepts like the  
9 national guard still remain stuck in parliament, it makes it  
10 hard for any number of U.S. trainers to actually do their  
11 job if those mechanisms are in place.

12 A second thing I think we need to start to entertain --  
13 and I know people are discussing this -- is the notion of  
14 greater decentralization inside of Iraq, decentralization of  
15 authority, in some of the proposals that people have  
16 discussed about mechanisms for giving arms directly to Sunni  
17 tribes or to Kurdish forces. Again, I think we should  
18 consider that and balance it against the overall objective  
19 of trying to keep Iraq together.

20 The second component, obviously, is Syria. And this,  
21 in my view, is the weakest link in the overall approach in  
22 this first circle. And Mr. Chairman, Senator Kaine, many  
23 others, have highlighted this, but we need to do something  
24 about this. The gap between the Obama administration's  
25 stated goals and what we're actually doing to shape the



1 environment on the ground is alarming. In my view, we need  
2 to accelerate that which the administration proposed and you  
3 funded, the training and equipping of third-way forces. We  
4 need to link these efforts to the broader regional dynamics.  
5 What's happening in Syria right now is a very complicated  
6 engagement by actors in the region. If you see not only  
7 ISIS's gains, but the gains of Jabhat al-Nusra, al-Qaeda's  
8 front, this -- these gains don't come from nowhere. They're  
9 being offered support from various actors in the region.  
10 And the main point is that the end state in Syria, which is  
11 often described by the administration in ways that our  
12 tactics don't link up with what we want to achieve.

13 But, the overall point in this first circle -- Iraq and  
14 Syria -- which I hope you take away and I think we need to  
15 discuss some more, is, How do you link these problems and  
16 how we address them? What worries me is that, quite often,  
17 we look at a challenge in Iraq, or a corner of Iraq, but we  
18 don't link it to the broader problem of Iraq and Syria.  
19 Last summer, ISIS effectively eroded the borders between  
20 these two countries. And what we've had over the last year  
21 or so is a debate about a series of different tactics, some  
22 of which have been implemented, and some have not. And I  
23 think if we can all bring our thinking together to talk  
24 about, How do we actually have an integrated strategy that  
25 focuses on ISIS, both in Iraq and Syria?

1           On the second level, the regional level -- and here I  
2           hope we can think a little bit more about this -- but, for  
3           essentially the last 4 or 5 years, the Middle East has  
4           slipped into this period of fragmentation. Not only has  
5           Iraq and Syrian state structures collapsed, we've seen Libya  
6           and Yemen feel these strains. And a big part of what is  
7           going on -- and this challenge of ISIS and where it comes  
8           from -- is the struggle between the regional powers: Iran  
9           and Saudi Arabia, but there are other actors, too. Much of  
10          it is sectarian, but the conflict is multidimensional. It  
11          is multifaceted. Our resources matter, but Iran, Saudi  
12          Arabia, others, have been funding their own proxies. And  
13          what I think is missing, in terms of the U.S. leadership on  
14          all of this, is accounting for all of these efforts. How do  
15          we actually better organize and come up with a better  
16          strategic conception?

17           Essentially, since 2003 and the Iraq War, when we made  
18          the decision to move from a strategic posture of dual  
19          containment of Iran and Iraq, I think we've been struggling  
20          for: What is our overarching strategy in the Middle East?  
21          We made some gains at certain periods, as was noted, in the  
22          surge in Iraq in 2007-2008, but the broader picture of "What  
23          is the United States trying to do in the region?" -- I  
24          think, still that question has not been answered.

25           I think the Obama administration, rightfully, has taken

1 some positive steps in the right direction. The building of  
2 an anti-ISIL coalition that has 62 countries in it,  
3 including key stakeholders in the region, is an important  
4 opportunity, one that I don't think has been fully seized  
5 yet by the administration. Its engagements in that  
6 coalition effort has been episodic. In February, for  
7 instance, we had a Countering Violent Extremism Summit. And  
8 the questions of "What then, after the summit?" I think  
9 remain unanswered, to a large extent.

10 Just last week was a very important summit with the GCC  
11 nations and, I think, an important communique. As with  
12 everything in life, and with this administration, the  
13 followup is going to be very important. Those commitments,  
14 not only to Iraq and the fight in Syria, but the broader  
15 fight against ISIS, there needs to be implementation.

16 And finally, one last point on the equilibrium point,  
17 because I know it's a big debate up here, is the question of  
18 equilibrium in the broader region. The Obama administration  
19 often speaks of its engagement with Iran and the diplomatic  
20 engagement on the nuclear front as an opportunity to achieve  
21 some new type of equilibrium in the region. And I share  
22 that aspiration. But, we need to be clear-eyed about how  
23 hard that will be at a time when Iran, when other actors in  
24 the region, are actually investing in a number of different  
25 proxy wars. We need to be clear about how realistic that is

1 and what we're trying to do.

2 And on the final point, on the international level --  
3 and I'll close here -- quite clearly, this problem of ISIS  
4 is connected in ways that the problems that Derek and  
5 General Keane and Dr. Kagan dealt with in the previous  
6 decade -- it's much more complicated by the fact that you  
7 have more than 15,000 foreign fighters flooding into -- and  
8 perhaps the number is higher. And what I would suggest, at  
9 the international level and our analysis, is that the debate  
10 about ISIS is terribly important, but it's moving very  
11 quickly. The debate that many people are having on Syria  
12 right now is the fight between Jabhat al-Nusra, ISIL, and a  
13 number of different actors. And I would say that 14 years  
14 after 9/11, nearly 14 years, if you look at this broader  
15 landscape, beyond Iraq and Syria, and Iraq and Syria as the  
16 epicenter, this new trend toward Salafist jihadism, and the  
17 growth of it, is something that we actually haven't wrestled  
18 with, that we need to widen the landscape and keep focused  
19 on it to assess what we're doing and whether we're applying  
20 resources to meet those threats.

21 So, in conclusion, I hope the events of the last week  
22 or so and, I hope our discussion today, is a constructive  
23 wake-up call about what we can do to move from what I think  
24 has been a largely reactive crisis management and somewhat  
25 tactical approach to the problem set, not only over the last

1 year or two, but over the last decade. And I hope that the  
2 events can motivate all of us, including you, with your  
3 leadership, to drive towards the sorts of unity that we need  
4 in things like an Authorization for the Use of Military  
5 Force, a national conversation that reinvigorates our sense  
6 of purpose. Because, as Derek and others have described,  
7 this is a very dangerous adversary. We've not yet created  
8 that strategy, the holistic strategy to actually defeat  
9 them. And we can.

10 Thank you.

11 [The prepared statement of Mr. Katulis follows:]

12 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman McCain: Well, I thank you.

2 Could I mention to my colleagues that a vote is on,  
3 and, if you'd like to go and come back, please do so. I'll  
4 try to continue the hearing. I may have to pause. But, I  
5 know that you have questions for the panel, so maybe we  
6 could work it that way, however you'd like.

7 And I'd like to begin by picking up a little bit on  
8 what Mr. Katulis just said. And this is this whole idea of  
9 the perception of Iran and what the prospects are. Because  
10 it seems to me that -- and the necessity to be clear-eyed  
11 about it -- because it seems to me that one of the reasons  
12 why we were not acting more aggressively against Bashar  
13 Assad has got to do with this idea -- or, in my view,  
14 illusion -- that once we conclude the nuclear agreement,  
15 there will be a whole new relationship with Iran in the  
16 Middle East, which, in my conversations with our friends in  
17 the Sunni Arab states, scares the heck out of them.

18 And so, I -- maybe I could ask the panel about -- it  
19 seems to me, in my view, that it is a real impediment to any  
20 real significant action in Syria. For example, the Free  
21 Syrian Army, what little there is that we are training, we  
22 have not told -- or, the administration has said there is no  
23 policy yet about, when we send these young men that we are  
24 training back into Syria, that -- whether we would protect  
25 them from Bashar Assad's barrel bombing. It seems to me

1 that that -- that there's a degree of immorality associated  
2 with telling people you're going to train and equip them,  
3 and then not protect them from being killed when they go  
4 back in, and that they are only to fight ISIS and not Bashar  
5 Assad, the father of ISIS.

6 So, I'd maybe begin with you, General Keane, and --  
7 because it -- I don't think that Americans are fully aware  
8 of this contradiction, here.

9 General Keane: Yeah. Well, Senator, I agree, in  
10 principle, here, with what you're saying.

11 Just a -- so, our audience and the committee can  
12 understand, we may forget that, early on in the rebellion  
13 against Assad, the momentum was actually on the opposition-  
14 forces side. Many people in this town were predicting that  
15 the regime was going to fall. I think we can all recall  
16 that.

17 Chairman McCain: That was testimony before this  
18 committee by the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of  
19 the Joint Chiefs of Staff, yes.

20 General Keane: And that opposition force came to town  
21 here and got many on their dance card to -- they needed  
22 additional arms and ammunition -- specifically, antitank  
23 weapons and antiaircraft weapons -- to deal with a  
24 conventional military. They were stuck with rifles, machine  
25 guns, RPGs, and the like. That early encounter in 2012 was

1 denied -- late 2011, early 2012. And then the CIA became  
2 convinced that we could actually vet the Free Syrian Army --  
3 and I will say that the Institute for the Study of War had  
4 some impact on providing them information that assisted them  
5 with that conclusion. And General Petraeus would have met  
6 that, when he -- as the Director at the time. And he  
7 presented a briefing to Secretaries Clinton and Panetta and  
8 Dempsey -- General Dempsey -- and they agreed with him that  
9 it was -- this force could, in fact, be armed, equipped, and  
10 trained robustly. But, the administration did not do that.  
11 And, tragically, as a result of that, the Free Syrian Army  
12 now is a mere shadow of its former self. There's, frankly,  
13 not much of it left.

14 Chairman McCain: And could I add --

15 General Keane: Go ahead.

16 Chairman McCain: -- in desperation, isn't it true that  
17 they have now joined forces with al-Nusra, an al-Qaeda-  
18 affiliated organization. Is that true?

19 General Keane: Well, organizations that were a part of  
20 their organization, you know, have broken from them. They  
21 were Islamic organizations, not radicalized, and they have  
22 joined with Jabhat al-Nusra, who is -- who has gained more  
23 territories, more aggressive, and has had more success  
24 against the regime than any force out there. So, that is  
25 true.



1           And what we're doing is -- and I know the committee's  
2           been briefed on this -- we're attempting to train 5,000  
3           people that would become part of the Free Syrian Army. But,  
4           what organization are they going to plug into? And it's  
5           totally disconnected, because the Free Syrian Army is not  
6           fighting ISIS. They don't have the wherewithal to fight  
7           ISIS and the regime. They're fighting the regime. So,  
8           we're training forces that will join Free Syrian Army, in  
9           theory. And, indeed, they will fight the regime forces,  
10          which has nothing to do with ISIS, at the moment. So,  
11          that's how flawed the strategy is in Syria. It makes no  
12          sense. We don't have ground forces.

13          And, as the Chairman suggests, Does it make any sense  
14          to train these forces, arm them and equip them and provide  
15          them some leadership, and then put them back into the fight  
16          against Assad's conventional military, which will bomb them  
17          and attack them with conventional artillery, mortars, and,  
18          obviously, barrel bombs and the like?

19          So, that strategy in Syria is flawed. And obviously,  
20          the only way that ISIS will eventually be defeated in Syria  
21          is with some kind of a ground force. Our allies in the  
22          region are suggesting to us -- and we having -- we're not  
23          agreeing with them -- is that what we should do is deal with  
24          Assad, change the momentum against Assad by shutting down  
25          his airpower, using no-fly zones and buffer zones to achieve

1 that end, and that change in military -- in momentum,  
2 militarily on the battlefield can shift the political  
3 equation to get some kind of a settlement.

4 Now, listen, that's arguable whether that's achievable,  
5 or not. But, sitting here and doing nothing, and permitting  
6 this to go on, I think that's quite irresponsible, in terms  
7 of the humanitarian catastrophe that's taking place there,  
8 and also that ISIS is expanding and gaining in strength in  
9 Syria every single week and month.

10 So, the Syrian strategy needs to be thought out. It  
11 needs to lead to a situation where we have our Arab -- where  
12 we have a coalition of Arabs in the region, and possibly the  
13 Turks participating also. And they would likely ask us to  
14 participate in a coalition to deal with ISIS in Syria. And  
15 I do think we should listen to them about dealing with Assad  
16 and that regime first, in some limited capacity, to change  
17 the political equation.

18 Chairman McCain: I'm going to have to go vote. I'd  
19 like to hear the -- from the other witnesses. I'm going to  
20 have to go vote.

21 Senator Ernst.

22 And if someone isn't back yet after you, we will take a  
23 brief pause until my return.

24 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

25 Thank you, gentlemen, for being here today. I really

1 do appreciate it very much. And I apologize that I had to  
2 step out.

3 But, I do agree with the panel, that we need a  
4 comprehensive strategy. Right now, there is no strategy.  
5 As an element and -- really, just as an element, I do want  
6 to talk a little bit more about arming the Kurds. Of  
7 course, this is a passion of mine. So, over the past couple  
8 of months, I have been advocating for the administration to  
9 increase its support to the Kurdish regional government in  
10 Iraq to fight ISIS. And I believe that this is a  
11 commonsense proposal, considering the Peshmerga's  
12 willingness to fight -- they are willing to fight -- in  
13 close combat. And it is truly unmatched by any other group  
14 in that region in the fight against ISIS.

15 The Kurdish people have been vital in supporting our  
16 coalition efforts to defeat ISIS and in providing support to  
17 around the 1.6 million displaced persons from Iraq and  
18 Syria. And also, for the past quarter century, Iraqi Kurds  
19 have proven to be reliable partners by supporting U.S.  
20 interests every time that we have sought their assistance.  
21 And I have spoken with many of the men that have served up  
22 in that region, and they always state what great allies the  
23 Kurds have been to them in our fight. So, they are proven  
24 to be great allies of ours.

25 Earlier this week, former CIA and NSA Director, General

1 Michael Hayden, once again spoke for the need to increase  
2 U.S. support to the Kurds in the fight against ISIS. And,  
3 on Tuesday, General Hayden said, "I would double down on the  
4 Kurds. Their military has the virtue of showing up when it  
5 comes to a fight, and they've been our friends in the area  
6 for decades."

7 I would tend to agree with him. But, I would love to  
8 ask each of you to please explain that, if you do agree with  
9 General Hayden's assessment or if you disagree, and maybe  
10 why. So, please, to the panel -- General Keane, if we might  
11 start with you.

12 Thank you.

13 General Keane: Yes, certainly I agree with that. The  
14 problem we have is -- and they've told you, and they've told  
15 others, that they're not getting the kinds of arms that they  
16 need, the quantity of those arms are not there. We're  
17 passing that through the Iraqi government. We probably  
18 should have continued the covert problem -- program we did  
19 have with -- passing it through the Central Intelligence  
20 Agency, and we probably would have had them armed by now if  
21 we did it robustly. But, they also need advisors. Because,  
22 when they're fighting, they need coordination with airpower  
23 to make their ground operations that much more effective.

24 And I would say this. As good as the Kurds are, they  
25 have, also, a limited interest in what they're willing to

1 fight for inside Iraq. And they certainly are not going to  
2 participate in reclaiming Anbar Province and other parts of  
3 Iraq. So, yes, we have to do what we should for the Kurds,  
4 but we also need to recognize that a lot more needs to be  
5 done with others, as well.

6 And I'll leave it to my colleagues, here, who have more  
7 information than I do.

8 Senator Ernst: Right. Thank you.

9 Dr. Kagan.

10 Dr. Kagan: Thank you, Senator.

11 I agree with General Keane, especially about the last  
12 point. We certainly should help the Kurds defend Kurdistan.  
13 There's no question about that. And we could be doing more  
14 than we are. But, the Kurds cannot retake Arab Iraq for --  
15 on behalf of the Arabs. And I think, in -- although the  
16 Kurds are not remotely -- I don't want to put the Kurds in  
17 the category of Shi'a militias, because they absolutely are  
18 not, and they don't behave that way. Nevertheless, I think  
19 if you saw large Kurdish forces in Mosul for a long period  
20 of time, you would find that you would have an ethnic war on  
21 your hands that would not be in our interest and would make  
22 room for ISIS or its successor to come in. So, I don't  
23 think the Kurds could actually do what we need them to do,  
24 even if they wanted to.

25 I would only add that, although I agree that we should

1 -- that the Kurds have been very reliable allies, fighting  
2 on the ground against our common enemies, they have been  
3 less than helpful in Baghdad, repeatedly, and they still are  
4 being somewhat less than helpful than they might be, on a  
5 number of issues, including demands for oil revenues and  
6 various other things.

7 I do believe that we should assist them in their  
8 defense, but I also think that we should use that assistance  
9 as leverage to try to get the Kurds to think a little bit  
10 more about the interests of Iraq as a whole, from a  
11 political standpoint, than they sometimes do.

12 Senator Ernst: Thank you.

13 Colonel Harvey.

14 Colonel Harvey: I agree with what has already been  
15 said on this issue. I would add that the Sunni Arab  
16 communities along the green line, the fault lines, are  
17 tremendous numbers of friction points there, about  
18 territory, about past grievances. So, we would have to be  
19 very careful about how we -- how they would be employed.  
20 And I think, you know, that's about making sure that there  
21 are red lines about how far they could go in coordination,  
22 where they are willing to fight along the frontiers where  
23 the Islamic State controls land. We do not want to further  
24 polarize these communities more than they are already. But,  
25 arming them effectively and developing a mechanism to

1 accommodate Baghdad's interest about knowing what's being  
2 delivered, but making sure that it gets delivered -- we have  
3 to figure a way to just get that done and coordinate that,  
4 but deliver those weapons that are going to be very  
5 important to the defense of those Kurdish lands.

6 Senator Ernst: Thank you.

7 Mr. Katulis: Very quickly, Senator, three points.

8 First, in principle, I think it's an idea worth --  
9 worthy of consideration. The first point, though -- in my  
10 recent visits to Kurdistan, the divisions that still exist  
11 inside of the Kurdish Peshmerga, and some of the political  
12 divisions -- the KDP and the PUK having separate lines of  
13 control -- to actually implement that effectively, they'll  
14 need to deal with those divisions.

15 The second is that you have actors in the region,  
16 including us, beyond us, regional actors who have offered  
17 some of this support. And sometimes it's been blocked by  
18 Baghdad, itself. There are sensitivities to even the  
19 proposal, because it leads to questions of, "Oh, are you  
20 trying to break up Iraq?" And I think we need to be careful  
21 in the presentation of that.

22 Which leads to a third point relevant to Iraq, to  
23 Syria, to the region more broadly. The more that the United  
24 States or other actors within the region invest in  
25 subnational actors or nonstate actors for the benefit of

1 trying to defeat terrorist organizations like ISIS, there's  
2 advantages to that, because oftentimes they're more capable,  
3 as we've seen with the Kurdish Peshmerga. There's a  
4 potential long-term disadvantage to it, in that the  
5 fragmentation of states, the -- could accelerate if -- if  
6 we're working in the short term to defeat a threat and to  
7 deal with a counterterrorism issue, but the building blocks  
8 that we're putting into place actually then contribute to  
9 what I've seen, especially in Syria -- and again, I'm not  
10 arguing against it; it's just the potential downside risk in  
11 the long term, the notion that we could further  
12 inadvertently accelerate the fragmentation of these state  
13 entities.

14 Senator Ernst: Well, thank you. I appreciate that  
15 very much. And the idea, I believe, and where I am coming  
16 from, is that we simply have no strategy in that region, not  
17 one that has been communicated clearly to any of us. So, I  
18 think establishing at least a safe zone -- I do agree that  
19 the Peshmerga -- their interest is only in Kurdistan, it is  
20 not moving out into the rest of Iraq. I understand that.  
21 But, at least establishing a safe zone within Iraq that is  
22 free of ISIS is a step in the right direction. I think we  
23 need to think about that, we need to pursue that.

24 But, any thoughts on where -- just your idea of where  
25 the administration needs to go, at this point? I still see



1 some reluctance coming from the administration on admitting  
2 that ISIS continues to expand, not just within Iraq, but  
3 also globally. I -- any thoughts on what we need to do or  
4 how we can work with the administration on developing a  
5 strategy, one that will work?

6 Yes, please.

7 Mr. Katulis: I would stress, again, where I focus on,  
8 which is the regional aspects. I think what the U.S. can do  
9 more of -- my colleagues have talked about, militarily and  
10 other things -- it's beyond my expertise. The fact that the  
11 anti-ISIL coalition has five working groups -- a military  
12 one, one on countering violent extremism, on  
13 counterterrorism funding, on foreign fighters and  
14 stabilization -- I would suggest that those mechanisms are a  
15 great template, but also that they've not been used  
16 effectively.

17 And, going back to the point I was trying to make, in  
18 the region, that I think it's wise to actually try to  
19 channel the resources and the efforts of others to much more  
20 constructive ends. We often debate about what we do. And I  
21 think we need to do more. That's clear. And I think we  
22 need to lead. But, using these mechanisms in the anti-ISIL  
23 coalition more effectively, having more followup on things  
24 like -- we often think it's soft, but it's not -- the  
25 countering-violent-extremism efforts, it's not sufficient to

1 me to have a 1- or 2-day conference without any clear,  
2 precise followups. And I -- I mean, I think they're talking  
3 about it, but we need to have great clarity to our regional  
4 partners in knowing -- those in the coalition -- of, "Okay,  
5 this is what we're going to do." In the way that General  
6 Keane and Derek and Dr. Harvey have talked about -- Dr.  
7 Kagan have talked about -- in the military steps, we also  
8 need a campaign that is multifaceted on those regards, that,  
9 again, nests at its core what we do, but in partnership with  
10 others.

11 Senator Ernst: Thank you.

12 Yes, sir.

13 Colonel Harvey: I think that, given the President's  
14 strategy and the lines of operation that they have had, I  
15 don't think those were ever given an opportunity to succeed,  
16 because, even though I thought that they were insufficient  
17 to the task last summer, in September, when he declared  
18 them, they have not been adequately resourced, organized, or  
19 executed, to date. And again, as I said in my opening  
20 statement, that's here in Washington, D.C., at the  
21 interagency level, as well as in theater.

22 So, if we're not going to be determined to achieve  
23 results and have leadership that drives the interagency and  
24 makes this a matter of urgency and criticality to the United  
25 States, then we're not going to get where we need to go.

1 So, you need to, first, be determined to achieve results.

2 Two, we need to think about some core objectives here.

3 One, we can fight ISIS and still contain Iran and seek to  
4 achieve an independent Iraq that is not a client of Tehran.

5 In order to do that, we need to support Sunni Arab  
6 engagement and political inclusion. Without adequate force  
7 structure on the ground, and commitment, you cannot get out  
8 there and engage with the Sunni Arabs, you can't move around  
9 the battlespace. And they won't believe you're serious  
10 unless you put enough skin in the game.

11 And to do that, we're going to need, in my judgment,  
12 about 15,000 or more enhancement of U.S. force structure in  
13 theater. And to go to what General Keane said, we need  
14 probably two brigades, we need aviation -- a mixed aviation  
15 brigade, you need some artillery, you need enhanced direct-  
16 action SOF operational capabilities to -- for direct action.  
17 Direct action brings you the intelligence, which you then  
18 share and allows you to go after those networks.

19 The Islamic State has not been stressed across its  
20 large perimeter that it has, from the Syrian border up along  
21 the Kurdish green line. They have tremendous  
22 vulnerabilities. But, they have had the initiative, because  
23 they have not been pressed along that large frontal area  
24 that they have.

25 Senator Ernst: Sir, so, just to be clear, you are

1 stating that you believe 15,000 additional troops and  
2 aviation assets to directly engage ISIS as a combat --

3 Colonel Harvey: No, I want them to be there to provide  
4 the enablers, support for the Iraqi Security Forces for  
5 direct action of the Special Operations Forces for indirect  
6 fires, advisors embedded with Iraqi Security Forces or  
7 Ministry of Interior elements, in a way that gets us on the  
8 ground, can bring in our capabilities. I'm not advising  
9 that we put troops on the ground in combat outposts in  
10 Ramadi, clearing streets, you know, and communities and  
11 neighborhoods in a direct-action way. But, we need to be  
12 out there enabling and providing support and protection for  
13 Sunni Arab tribal militias, helping them grow and develop,  
14 and then that gives us influence that can reach into the  
15 political domain in the -- these provinces, but also in  
16 Baghdad. It's hard to have influence if you don't have skin  
17 in the game.

18 Senator Ernst: I would agree with that. I would also  
19 state, though, that anytime you do engage more of those  
20 types of troops on the ground, you may say that it is a  
21 train-and-assist mission, and that may be heavier on the  
22 assist mission, but we are engaging in combat at that point.  
23 I don't think there's any way that you avoid that. And I  
24 don't want to mislead the American people, because certainly  
25 there is danger anytime that we put troops on the ground.

1 So, I'm not saying I would support, or not support, that  
2 measure, but I do believe that you are correct, sir, in that  
3 we do need to engage if we expect others to engage. We know  
4 that the airstrikes are not doing it. So, thank you for  
5 that perspective.

6 Dr. Kagan: Senator, I want to second what Derek said,  
7 and agree with him about the need to deploy forces. I agree  
8 with you, and I know that Derek also does, that it's -- the  
9 purpose of talking about train, advise, and assist, in this  
10 context, is not to imply that American troops are not going  
11 to be in combat. Of course they are, if we're doing our  
12 job. But, I think the point that Derek was trying to make,  
13 which is very important, is that we're not anticipating  
14 putting American brigades in Ramadi and having them clear,  
15 house to house, the way we have done previously.

16 Senator Ernst: Thank you.

17 Dr. Kagan: That's not what we're looking at.

18 I have to say, we, as a Nation, are defeated as long as  
19 we do not have the will to fight this war. And I would  
20 assess right now, we seem to be showing that we do not have  
21 the will to fight this war. And until and unless the --  
22 beginning with the President, there is a demonstration that  
23 we have the will to fight, we are going to lose this war.  
24 And so, what Congress has to do, what we all have to do, is  
25 find any way that we can to persuade the President to own

1 this fight, to recognize that it's a war, to recognize that  
2 we must win, and to help develop the will among the American  
3 people to fight this.

4 Senator Ernst: Thank you very much.

5 General Keane: The thing -- the only thing I would add  
6 is that you do have to look at this strategically. When you  
7 think -- the World Trade Center in '93 was the introduction  
8 of radical Islam directly against the United States, not  
9 using proxies that the Iranians did since 1980. And that  
10 was followed by Embassy bombings in Africa, the U.S.S. Cole,  
11 and 9/11. And, to date, we've gone through three  
12 administrations, and we've never developed a comprehensive  
13 strategy to deal with it. We're sitting here today without  
14 one, despite all of that killing, despite all of the  
15 aggressiveness and assertiveness that this enemy has showed.  
16 We have always looked at this narrowly. And it's tragic  
17 that we do. And we're more sophisticated than that.

18 Yes, the solution is right in front of us. When you  
19 look at this map -- look at -- this is just ISIS. If I put  
20 al-Qaeda on the map, it would be worse. This is a regional  
21 and global problem that can only be solved by those  
22 countries who are being affected by this, either directly or  
23 indirectly. This is not about the United States dealing  
24 with all of this; this is about the United States, when  
25 we're hosting a conference, like we just did, as opposed to

1 shaking hands and slapping everybody on the back, which we  
2 did, we should have hosted a conference that came out with a  
3 strategy on what to do with this, plans on what to do with  
4 this. What is the level of contribution that's going to  
5 deal with this? We don't develop that strategy. Together,  
6 we can design a comprehensive strategy that does undermine  
7 the ideology, that does take their finances away, and that  
8 does meet this threat, militarily, where it needs to be met.

9 We cannot do this by ourselves. We have no  
10 comprehensive strategies to deal with radical Islam, to  
11 include ISIS. We have no strategy in the region to deal  
12 with the morphing of radical Islam, as defined by ISIS and  
13 al-Qaeda. And we certainly -- as we've all been saying, we  
14 have no strategy immediately to deal -- effective strategy  
15 to deal with this issue in Iraq and Syria.

16 So, I agree with you, that is the start point that we  
17 should have to deal with this problem. And then you start  
18 to put underneath that those things that make sense. And  
19 we've got to bring our allies into this in a very cohesive  
20 way. Listen, they've -- we have their attention. The  
21 Iranians are forcing their attention, ISIS is forcing their  
22 attention, and the spread of al-Qaeda. We have to help them  
23 organize to do this effort, and bring the means to deal with  
24 that. And not all of that is kinetic. And certainly most  
25 of it is not United States military power.

1           Senator Ernst:  Yes.  Thank you very much.

2           And, General Keane, you brought up Iranian influences.  
3   And since I have come into the Senate, I have been very,  
4   very concerned about the Iranian influence with the Shi'a  
5   militia.  And here we have the Shi'a militia pushing back  
6   against ISIS.  And I would love to hear a little bit more  
7   about that Iranian influence with the Shi'a militia.  Where  
8   do we go from here?  Assuming that we do take care of ISIS,  
9   the Shi'a are controlling areas, but their intent, I think,  
10  could easily turn against American influences, American  
11  soldiers that might be on the ground there.  So, as we look  
12  at arming the Shi'a militia, if we talk about that, engaging  
13  with them, just remembering that they are being influenced  
14  heavily by the Iranians, and -- what would your thoughts be  
15  on that?

16          Dr. Kagan:  Senator, I'd like to say I don't think the  
17  Shi'a -- the Iraqi Shi'a are the problem.  And there are  
18  elements in the Popular Mobilization Forces and so forth  
19  that I think are not pro-Iranian and do not desire to be  
20  governed by Iran.  We've seen this repeatedly.  And, of  
21  course, this is the view of Grand Ayatollah Sistani and his  
22  -- the people who follow him, is that Iraq is an Arab  
23  country, it's not a Persian country, and they don't want to  
24  be dominated by Persians.

25          However, the most effective Shi'a militia forces are



1 part of the Iranian military, de facto. The Badr Corps, run  
2 by Hadi al-Amiri, reports to Qassem Suleimani, the commander  
3 of the Quds Force. Kata'ib Hezbollah, run by Muhandis,  
4 reports to Qassem Suleimani, commander of the Quds Force.  
5 And we have seen this repeatedly. So, we have -- it's not a  
6 Shi'a problem. It is a specific problem of Iranian --  
7 they're no longer even really proxies. They're now really  
8 extensions of the Iranian irregular military forces, and  
9 those are the elements that are now leading the charge into  
10 Ramadi, which is unacceptable.

11 They also helped to get us off track by launching the  
12 attack on Tikrit on their own, spontaneously, which then  
13 failed, and we had to bail them out, which was an enormous  
14 positive turning point for us, because it demonstrated the  
15 limitations of the ability of those Iranian-controlled Iraqi  
16 militias to take this fight to the enemy. We have just not  
17 only undone that benefit that we gained from that, but moved  
18 many steps back. And if, in fact, these groups are  
19 successful in retaking even part of Ramadi, when the troops  
20 that we backed failed, it will demonstrate the viability of  
21 these elements within Iraq in a catastrophic way that will  
22 undermine Prime -- any independence Prime Minister Abadi  
23 might have, any independence the ISF might have, and be a  
24 significant extension of Iranian military power, not just  
25 political influence, in the region.

1           Senator Ernst: Thank you.

2           Chairman McCain: I'd just --

3           Senator Ernst: Yes, I -- my time is way over, Senator.

4           Chairman McCain: I was going to say, I'm glad you were

5   able to have --

6           Senator Ernst: I could go all day.

7           Chairman McCain: -- this encounter. I hope you'll

8   have them over to your house for dinner.

9           Senator Ernst: I would love that.

10          Thank you very much, gentlemen.

11          Chairman McCain: Before I turn to Senator Kaine -- and

12   I apologize for this disjointedness of the votes on the

13   floor -- I -- maybe, General Keane and Colonel Harvey,

14   particularly you two, can respond to this. I don't know if

15   there's a real logical argument to the -- that would counter

16   what has been said here today, as far as the assessment of

17   the overall situation is concerned, because I think the

18   facts on the ground are -- would indicate that there's

19   strong support for the argument or the position that you

20   have stated. But yet, we have members of the military, who

21   many years of experience, who have fought in Iraq and

22   Afghanistan, and yet, as military spokesmen, or even

23   military leaders, make statements that are totally divorced,

24   if not -- I won't say "reality," but certainly is directly

25   counter to the testimony that you have given here today. I

1 do not understand it.

2 Maybe, Colonel Harvey, could I begin with you?

3 Colonel Harvey: Sir, what I find is, quite often our  
4 commanders and leaders are misreading the operational  
5 environment that they're dealing with. They don't  
6 understand the enemy well enough. And part of the problem  
7 there is, the intelligence that they get is reporting of  
8 information, it's not being put in context in a very  
9 insightful and deep way to understand how they are  
10 organized, how they really think, tactically, operationally,  
11 and strategically. It's reporting history rather than  
12 thinking about who they really are and what the enemy's  
13 doing.

14 Chairman McCain: Does that account for statements  
15 like, "We're winning"?

16 Colonel Harvey: Because they're looking at the wrong  
17 metrics. As I said in my opening statement, sir, you know,  
18 in order to get the context, you really need to deep -- have  
19 the deep dives and focus in on this, and quit looking at  
20 this on a day-to-day basis. And you have to have an  
21 operational construct. You have to understand who the enemy  
22 is and how they're going to win. You -- and probably we  
23 need better alternative analysis about this, and be truthful  
24 to ourselves about how we're doing in our lines of  
25 operation.

1 Chairman McCain: So, this is an argument for Team B.

2 Colonel Harvey: In part, yes, sir. We had group-think  
3 before, in 2005 and 2006. In May have 2006, we were being  
4 told that everything's on track --

5 Chairman McCain: I --

6 Colonel Harvey: -- we're doing fine.

7 Chairman McCain: I remember it well.

8 Colonel Harvey: Yes, sir.

9 They get built-in assumptions and they're focused in  
10 what their mission set is. Where is the order to actually  
11 impose our will and defeat the enemy? How are we going to  
12 align our force structure and all of our national  
13 capabilities, in partnership with allies and folks on the  
14 ground that we can count on, to build momentum, to impose  
15 our will, to establish security? We don't think in those  
16 terms anymore. We talk about management rather than  
17 breaking the will of the enemy.

18 Chairman McCain: General Keane.

19 General Keane: Yes, sir. I mean, it -- I share your  
20 frustration. I know we all share it. We talk about it  
21 among ourselves quite a bit. We just had a spokesperson,  
22 last week -- I think that's probably what you're referring  
23 to -- who made a report, you know, to the American people at  
24 large, that we, in fact, were succeeding against ISIS, that  
25 we're pushing back against them, and that they're only

1 capable of conducting small attacks against us.

2 Chairman McCain: Right --

3 General Keane: That hasn't --

4 Chairman McCain: -- before Ramadi fell.

5 General Keane: That hasn't been true since we started,  
6 and certainly isn't true now. So, one, how do we -- this  
7 committee members, when I provided testimony in 2006 and we  
8 were pushing against the narrative at that time by senior  
9 generals and Secretaries of Defense, et cetera, we were  
10 asked the same question. How could that be? How could  
11 capable people, well-intentioned, be so wrong, in general  
12 sense, is the issue. And I think once we make up our minds  
13 that we're going to do something inside this military  
14 culture, we drive towards it. And we have a tendency, to a  
15 fault, to see those indices that contribute to what that  
16 mission success is, and to disregard -- not wholly, but to  
17 minimize those things that are really pushing against it.  
18 That's inside our culture.

19 How do you fix that? One way, and one way only:  
20 competent leadership fixes that. You don't permit that to  
21 happen, because you are driving honest, tough, deep-dive  
22 assessments of what's taking place, "This is what we're  
23 trying to do. These are the four things we said we were  
24 going to do. How are we doing that?"

25 How could you ever come to the conclusion that ISIS is

1 losing if it enjoys freedom of maneuver, a principle of  
2 warfare, and it can attack, at will, any place of its  
3 choosing at any time of its choosing? If a force has that  
4 capability to do that, and gets results as a -- as a  
5 manifestation of that, then that force, in fact, by  
6 definition, is winning.

7 And so, the leader should say to those subordinates  
8 below him, say, "What are you talking about? You're -- what  
9 you're telling me, none of that makes any sense. This is  
10 what this force is doing. This is what they're capable of.  
11 We have got this wrong, and how are we going to fix it?"  
12 That is about competent leadership.

13 Chairman McCain: Senator Kaine.

14 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

15 And I'm jealous of my colleague's 13 minutes, and I  
16 hope my other colleagues don't come back, and then I may try  
17 your patience and go over time.

18 Dr. Kagan, you said something that I wrote down, just  
19 like a bolt of lightning, "We should not just be  
20 spectators." You were going through the atrocities that  
21 ISIL is committing, and who they are, and how dangerous they  
22 are, "We should not just be spectators." We are spectators.  
23 Congress -- Congress has been a spectator. Since August 8,  
24 we've been a spectator.

25 Absent the one vote, in September, that we took to arm

1 Syrian moderates, there is no evidence that Congress is  
2 concerned at all about ISIL. None. Our allies have no  
3 evidence that Congress is concerned -- as an institution;  
4 I'm not talking about individuals -- our allies have no  
5 evidence that Congress is concerned about ISIL. ISIL has no  
6 evidence that Congress is concerned about ISIL. But, most  
7 tragically, the thousands of people -- U.S. men and women in  
8 service who are deployed and fighting this battle every day,  
9 they have no evidence that Congress is concerned about ISIL,  
10 in the least.

11 We've been at war since August the 8th. Everybody  
12 calls it a war. The President calls it a war. Within 2  
13 weeks, the Article 2 mission to defend the Embassy and the  
14 Consulate in Arbil were pretty safe. And he said, "We've  
15 got to go on the offense against ISIL." And Presidents  
16 since Jefferson have basically said that was the dividing  
17 line between an Article 2 power of the Commander in Chief  
18 and an Article 1 power, where Congress has got to declare  
19 war or authorize military action.

20 But, now, for 9 and a half months, we have failed to do  
21 what is our fundamental job, what only we are supposed to do  
22 -- there's not been a declaration of war, there's not been  
23 an authorization for use of military force, there's been no  
24 House committee action, there's been no House floor debate  
25 or vote. There was one committee vote, in the Senate

1 Foreign Relations Committee in December, but there's been no  
2 meaningful floor debate and no meaningful Senate floor  
3 action.

4 How strange it is. We're in a Congress that loves to  
5 punch this President as an imperial President, and threaten  
6 lawsuits against him when he does stuff without  
7 congressional approval. In the most solemn responsibility  
8 under Article 1 that Congress has, we have been silent, when  
9 we've got all these people overseas who are risking their  
10 lives every day, we have been silent. It's Congress that's  
11 the spectators. We've got opinions. You know, we'd call  
12 the play differently. But, we're spectators when we ought  
13 to be decisionmakers.

14 This is now a war, into the 10th month, without a clear  
15 legal basis. I call it extralegal or even illegal. The  
16 President, himself, has, in his own words, acknowledged that  
17 he's gone past the Article 2 power of imminent defense. The  
18 claim that the 2001 or 2002 authorizations cover an  
19 organization that didn't form til 2 years after 9/11, that  
20 doesn't make any sense. It doesn't make any sense  
21 whatsoever.

22 And yet, Congress has come up with one excuse after  
23 another to avoid taking action. The first excuse was this.

24 The leaders -- both parties, both houses -- the four  
25 leaders went to the White House in June and said, "Do not



1 make us take action on this war. You do what you want. Do  
2 not make us take action in Congress before the midterm  
3 elections." And Congress adjourned, with an ongoing war, 6  
4 weeks before a midterm election. The earliest adjournment  
5 since 1960 before a midterm election with an ongoing war,  
6 and we haven't done anything about it.

7 After the midterm election, then it was, "Well, but now  
8 the Senate's going to change hands, so we shouldn't do  
9 anything gas a lameduck Senate, because there will be a new  
10 Senate." So, we waited til January.

11 Then we came in, and a lot of folks said, "Well, you  
12 know, we shouldn't do our Article 1 job, because the  
13 President hasn't sent us a draft authorization." I harshly  
14 criticize the administration for not sending in a draft  
15 authorization over right when they started this legal  
16 action. But, the fact that they didn't doesn't excuse  
17 Congress for not doing the job we're supposed to do.

18 And now there's been an authorization pending before  
19 Congress since the 17th of February, more than 3 months, and  
20 we still haven't done anything. And I don't know what the  
21 excuse is now.

22 I think you can only conclude that we don't want to  
23 take it up because we're either indifferent to this threat  
24 -- and I don't think that's true. I think the real reason  
25 is, we don't have the backbone to take it up and do the job

1 that Congress is supposed to do. And what that means is,  
2 while we're not doing our job, there are others who are  
3 doing their job. We deployed thousands into the theater of  
4 battle, two folks who are pilots, off the deck of the  
5 Theodore Roosevelt, which was -- which is home-ported in  
6 Virginia, crashed a plane on takeoff the other day. We're  
7 deploying thousands, and they're risking their lives. We  
8 have had deaths of American servicemen in connection with  
9 Operation Inherent Resolve. We had -- have had deaths of  
10 American civilians who were held hostage. ISIL didn't start  
11 executing American hostages until after we started bombing  
12 them on the 8th of August. So, we've had American deaths as  
13 a result of this war. We still haven't done anything.  
14 We've had over 3,000 airstrikes that the U.S. has -- and we  
15 still haven't done anything. And now the costs passed the  
16 \$2 billion mark in April, and we still haven't done  
17 anything.

18 It's just -- I never would have contemplated, before I  
19 came to this body, that there would be a situation in which  
20 Congress would tolerate an ongoing war and just stand back  
21 and say, "Well, I guess the President can just do whatever  
22 the President wants to do." It's just not supposed to be  
23 that way.

24 And one of the reasons I'm glad that the Chair called  
25 this committee today, as I'm hoping that the challenging

1 events of last weekend -- not only the fall of Ramadi, but  
2 if you go into the details of that Special Forces operation  
3 in Syria -- very, very serious. We were lucky that we  
4 didn't lose U.S. lives in that operation. It was very well  
5 done. But, this is complicated and detailed, and it's going  
6 to go on for a very long time. And I just wonder how much  
7 longer Congress is going to just be a spectator.

8 I mean, we can criticize the White House and the  
9 administration strategy -- and I'm going to, and we ought to  
10 keep doing it if we don't like it -- but, we really haven't  
11 earned the right -- we haven't earned the right to be  
12 critics as long as we stand back and don't do the one thing  
13 that Congress is supposed to do.

14 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

15 Chairman McCain: I know there's a question in there  
16 somewhere.

17 Senator Graham.

18 Senator Graham: Well, thank you.

19 Here's my question. Does the current strategy in Iraq  
20 and Syria have any chance to succeed?

21 General Keane: Well, Senator, that's really been the  
22 basis of our testimony. And --

23 Senator Graham: Well, I didn't hear it, so just --

24 General Keane: I know.

25 Senator Graham: -- say no.

1 General Keane: We'll gladly say it again.

2 Senator Graham: Yeah, say it again.

3 General Keane: And respect you asking the question,  
4 quite frankly. The answer is no. It's --

5 Senator Graham: Does everybody agree the answer is no?  
6 Does everybody agree that, in the current configuration,  
7 that the problems in Iraq and Syria present a direct threat  
8 to the homeland?

9 General Keane: Yes.

10 Dr. Kagan: Yes.

11 Colonel Harvey: Yes.

12 Senator Graham: I had a conversation with the CIA  
13 Director, yesterday, who echoed that sentiment. So, the  
14 average American needs to understand that failure in Iraq  
15 and Syria is putting the homeland at risk because so many  
16 foreign fighters are flowing in, and they have the ability,  
17 potentially, to hit us here at home. Is that all correct?

18 General Keane: Yes.

19 Senator Graham: And I think, General Keane, you've  
20 described this strategy as not enough. Is that correct?

21 General Keane: Yeah. Absolutely. It's far from it.  
22 And we all, collectively, laid out some details to support  
23 that.

24 Senator Graham: Do you see any way to defeat ISIL in  
25 Syria without a substantial Arab army involved?

1           General Keane: I don't know how you get there. I  
2 mean, obviously, if we deployed tens of thousands of troops,  
3 ourselves, we could defeat ISIS in Syria. I don't think  
4 anybody here would recommend such an event. I think the  
5 people who have vested interests there should be involved,  
6 and I think they would get involved. I mean, you know that  
7 they've said as much, but we have to do something to change  
8 the momentum of the Assad regime.

9           Senator Graham: Dr. Kagan, is it fair to say that no  
10 Arab army is going into Syria unless part of the -- one of  
11 the objectives is to take Assad down?

12          Dr. Kagan: Absolutely, Senator. That's going to be a  
13 precondition for --

14          Senator Graham: Because they're not going to just  
15 fight ISIL and leave Assad in power, therefore giving the  
16 place to Syria. Is that correct?

17          Dr. Kagan: On the contrary, sir.

18          Senator Graham: I mean, to Iran.

19          Dr. Kagan: On the contrary, sir. What we're seeing, I  
20 think, is increasing levels of support of various varieties  
21 to Jabhat al-Nusra as an alternative to the --

22          Senator Graham: So, I want people to understand that  
23 our strategy is to empower a radical Islamic Sunni group to  
24 fight Assad rather than having an army on the ground that --  
25 made up of allies. Is that fairly accurate?

1           We're choosing to work with terrorists --

2           Dr. Kagan: I think --

3           Senator Graham: -- or somebody's -- the Arabs are  
4 choosing to work with terrorists, because there's a vacuum  
5 created by us.

6           Dr. Kagan: I think some people are choosing to work  
7 with terrorists because of the vacuum that we have created.  
8 I don't think that's the intent of our policy.

9           Senator Graham: No, but that's the effect of the  
10 policy.

11          Dr. Kagan: I believe it is, yes, sir.

12          Senator Graham: So, we find ourselves where our allies  
13 in the region are supporting a terrorist group as a last-  
14 resort proposition because America is AWOL.

15          Colonel Harvey, at the end of the day, do you see a  
16 scenario of dislodging ISIL, taking Assad out, that doesn't  
17 require a sustained commitment by the world to put Syria  
18 back together?

19          Colonel Harvey: No, I do not see.

20          Senator Graham: We're talking years, and billions of  
21 dollars.

22          Colonel Harvey: I believe so, sir, yes.

23          Senator Graham: All right. Sir, I don't want to  
24 butcher your last name. If this war keeps going on the way  
25 it is a year from now, do you worry about Jordan and Lebanon

1 being affected?

2 Mr. Katulis: I do, and especially Jordan, a country  
3 I've lived in and studied as a Fulbright scholar. We are  
4 doing important things to help strengthen that government,  
5 but it is feeling the force of not only the --

6 Senator Graham: If we lost the King of Jordan, we'd be  
7 losing one of the most trustworthy allies in the region. Is  
8 that correct?

9 Mr. Katulis: Correct.

10 Senator Graham: I was told yesterday that there are  
11 more Syrian children in elementary school in Lebanon than  
12 Lebanese children. Does that surprise anybody?

13 Mr. Katulis: It doesn't surprise me, but it should  
14 shock all of us.

15 Senator Graham: Well, it should shock everybody. I've  
16 just made a statement that there are more kids in elementary  
17 school in Lebanon from Syria than Lebanese kids. So, if  
18 this war continues in its current fashion, it will create  
19 unending chaos in the Mideast that will change the map for  
20 generations to come. Do you all agree with that?

21 Mr. Katulis: Yes.

22 General Keane: Yes.

23 Senator Graham: And there is no way to get Iraq right  
24 until you deal with Syria in a responsible manner. Is that  
25 correct?

1 General Keane: That is correct.

2 Colonel Harvey: Correct.

3 Senator Graham: And Iran is all in when it comes to  
4 Syria. Assad wouldn't last 15 minutes without Iran's help.  
5 Do you agree?

6 Colonel Harvey: It's been critical to sustaining the  
7 Assad regime. They don't --

8 Senator Graham: Do you agree that, if we gave  
9 Iranians, say, \$50 billion as a signing bonus for their  
10 nuclear program, it's highly likely that some of that money  
11 would go to Assad?

12 General Keane: And to the rest of his proxies that are  
13 seeking domination of the Middle East.

14 Senator Graham: Have you seen anything to suggest the  
15 Iranians are changing their behavior for the better when it  
16 comes to the region?

17 Dr. Kagan: On the contrary, sir. They're becoming  
18 more aggressive in many facets.

19 Senator Graham: Would you say they're the most  
20 aggressive they've been in modern times?

21 Dr. Kagan: Yes, sir.

22 General Keane: Yes.

23 Senator Graham: Would you say that the Iranians are  
24 directly responsible for topping -- toppling a pro-American  
25 government in Yemen by supporting the Houthis?



1 General Keane: They contributed to it, for sure.

2 Senator Graham: Would you agree with me that, now that  
3 we've lost our eyes and ears in Yemen, al-Qaeda in the  
4 Arabian Peninsula is growing as a threat to the homeland?

5 Colonel Harvey: Yes.

6 Dr. Kagan: Not only that, but ISIS is also gaining  
7 position in Yemen.

8 Senator Graham: Do you agree with me that Syria is now  
9 a perfect forum to launch an attack from the United States  
10 because there are so many foreign fighters with Western  
11 passports?

12 Colonel Harvey: Yes.

13 Senator Graham: Do you agree with me that the Shi'a  
14 militia on the ground in Iraq are controlled by the  
15 Iranians?

16 Colonel Harvey: Yes.

17 Senator Graham: Do you agree with me that we're doing  
18 permanent damage to the ability of Iraq to reconstruct if we  
19 allow the Shi'a militia to continue to have dominance on the  
20 battlefield?

21 General Keane: Yes.

22 Colonel Harvey: Yes.

23 Senator Graham: Do you see any good thing coming from  
24 this strategy being continued?

25 General Keane: No.

1 Colonel Harvey: No, sir.

2 General Keane: It's destined to fail.

3 Senator Graham: And there is a better way. We just  
4 have to choose that way.

5 Colonel Harvey: Correct, sir.

6 General Keane: Correct.

7 Senator Graham: There is a better way. Do you all  
8 agree?

9 Colonel Harvey: Yes, sir.

10 General Keane: Yes, sir.

11 Senator Graham: Thank you.

12 Chairman McCain: Any more --

13 Senator Cruz.

14 Senator Cruz: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 Gentlemen, thank you very much for being here. Thank  
16 you for your service and your leadership.

17 I'd like to ask the panel, first, for your assessment  
18 of the current level of success we are seeing in the  
19 military campaign against ISIS.

20 Dr. Kagan: It is failing, Senator. That's our -- I  
21 think our assessment, generally, across the board, is that  
22 it is failing in Iraq, it is failing in Syria, and it is  
23 failing across the board in the region.

24 Senator Cruz: And why is it failing?

25 Dr. Kagan: In my view, it was ill-conceived to begin

1 with, because it focused exclusively on Iraq. It was badly  
2 under-resourced, and excessive restraints and constraints  
3 have been put on the limited resources that we were willing  
4 to deploy.

5 Senator Cruz: Could you please elaborate on the  
6 excessive constraints that have been placed on our military?

7 Dr. Kagan: Yes, sir.

8 We have forces in theater that could have made a  
9 significant difference, I believe, in the fight for Ramadi,  
10 had they been allowed to embed at lower levels, had they  
11 been allowed to perform functions of forward air controllers  
12 and bring in precision air support, had the -- some of the  
13 rotary-wing aviation that we have in theater been used in  
14 direct support of that fight, had the forces that we have in  
15 theater been able to go out to the tribes and reach out to  
16 them directly rather than relying on the tribes to come to  
17 them. There were a number of things that even this limited  
18 force could have done, I think, that would have made a  
19 difference. But, the force was probably too limited to be  
20 decisive, in any event.

21 General Keane: Yeah. Now, just to add on to that, I  
22 mean -- you know, the military -- these other components to  
23 the President's strategy, as you know -- and there's huge  
24 problems with them, as well -- but the military component is  
25 clearly under-resourced. There's not enough trainers,

1 there's not enough advisors. And the role of the advisors  
2 is fundamentally flawed, itself. The advisors have to be  
3 down where the units are doing the fighting, at least at the  
4 battalion level. What reason is that? Because they help  
5 them plan, they help them execute, they contribute to their  
6 success, they have the capability to call in airstrikes,  
7 they have the capability to use drones in support of those  
8 ground forces to help acquire intelligence for them, and  
9 they can use attack helicopters, as well.

10 And therefore, the airstrikes that we currently have,  
11 which are excellent in taking out command and control, other  
12 infrastructure, logistic infrastructures, depots --  
13 essentially, facilities -- they get -- it starts to fall off  
14 very rapidly when you're dealing with mobile targets. And  
15 then, Senator, the overwhelming amount of combat that takes  
16 place, to use military terms, is close combat in urban  
17 centers that are populated and where we get -- we, our  
18 forces, Iraqi forces -- get very close to the enemy. To be  
19 able to do that, you have to guide the bombs from that  
20 airplane, take control of them. And that's called close air  
21 support. That's what we need the forward air controllers  
22 for.

23 So, the effectiveness of our airpower is this: 75  
24 percent of the missions that are flown come back with their  
25 bombs, because they cannot acquire the target or properly

1 identify the target so they have some assurances that  
2 they're not going to hit -- hurt somebody with those bombs  
3 that we don't want to be hurt. That changes dramatically if  
4 we put those forward air controllers on the ground.

5 I'll tell you what. If you're fighting as the fighting  
6 took place in Ramadi, and, as that fight unfolded, the  
7 scenario was -- they had prepared, for weeks, to get to  
8 Ramadi. This was not due to a sandstorm. This is taking  
9 out supporting towns, other attacks, diversionary attacks,  
10 that led to, finally, an assault using suicide-bombers'  
11 vehicles to do that. If that force had antitank weapons,  
12 they could have killed those vehicles. If they had Apache  
13 helicopters, they could have killed those vehicles. Those  
14 vehicles blew up and destroyed almost entire blocks, and  
15 destroyed entire units, because the explosives were so heavy  
16 on it.

17 After that came the fighting forces, themselves. If --  
18 again, if we had close air support, we could easily deal  
19 with those fighting forces before they actually closed with  
20 the Iraqi military. Apache helicopters, close air support,  
21 would have significantly impacted them. And then we have a  
22 close fight, and assuming the Iraqi forces could deal with  
23 that.

24 But, I would tell you this. Many of those Iraqi forces  
25 -- it's not reported -- did fight heroically in Ramadi. And

1 a lot of them fled. But, that resolve gets stiffened very  
2 quickly when they watch those suicide bombers get blown up  
3 before they get to them, when they watch those units --  
4 those caravans coming down the road after them get blown up  
5 before they get to them, because we have proper  
6 surveillance, we have resources that can deal with that --  
7 antitank guided missiles and the like. We start to change  
8 the dimension on the battlefield very significantly as a  
9 result of providing them with the proper resources.

10 These are the constraints that are out there that are  
11 manifesting itself in the behavior of the Iraqi Security  
12 Forces. They have their own problems -- leadership,  
13 discipline, morale, and competence. I'm not suggesting that  
14 they don't. But, there's a lot we could do that could make  
15 a difference.

16 Senator Cruz: Let me ask one final question, which is:  
17 The administration is currently declining to arm the Kurds.  
18 The Peshmerga are fighting ISIS. They are effective  
19 fighters. They have been allies of America. In my  
20 judgment, the policy of not arming the Kurds makes very  
21 little sense. I would be interested in the panel's  
22 assessment of, Should we be arming the Kurds? And is the  
23 current policy reasonable and effective in defeating ISIS?

24 Dr. Kagan: Sir, we -- I think it's a consensus on the  
25 panel that we should be helping the Kurds defend themselves,

1 but that the Kurds will not be able to be effective partners  
2 in retaking the portions of Arab Iraq that ISIS now  
3 controls, but that certainly we should be helping the Kurds  
4 defend themselves, I think.

5 Chairman McCain: Could I point out the -- actually,  
6 we're not refusing to arm the Kurds. The problem is, it  
7 goes through Baghdad, and the Kurds continue to complain  
8 that there is not the kind of facilitation of the delivery  
9 of those weapons. But, the Senator's point is, for all  
10 practical purposes, I think, correct.

11 Senator King.

12 Senator King: One of the -- a phrase you just used  
13 struck a chord with me. It -- there was weeks in  
14 preparation for going to Ramadi -- raises the question of  
15 intelligence. And, General Keane, would you comment? Do we  
16 have adequate intelligence? Do we have any intelligence?  
17 And have we become too reliant on signals intelligence and,  
18 therefore, don't have human beings giving us information?

19 General Keane: Yeah, I mean, that's a great question.  
20 And it's more appropriately put to the military leaders when  
21 they come in here, because they have the details of it, and  
22 -- but, this much I do know. My sensing, from talking to my  
23 sources, is the intelligence function is not robust enough.  
24 And it -- yes, we are relying on national intelligence  
25 sources and some regional intelligence sources. Some of

1 that is surveillance, some of that is, you know, signals  
2 intelligence, as well. But, there's a lot more that we can  
3 do to assist them. We use surveillance a lot to assist the  
4 use of airpower, because it's not controlled by forward air  
5 controllers. We need different kinds of surveillance in  
6 there to assist ground forces.

7       When we were fighting in Iraq, and now finishing up in  
8 Afghanistan, our maneuver units used different kinds of  
9 drones. They've much smaller. They don't stay up,  
10 necessarily, as long as the ones that assist the airpower  
11 function. And they assist the ground commanders. That kind  
12 of capability there, controlled by U.S., would dramatically  
13 make a difference for the ground forces that are in the  
14 fight, because that would give them the ability to see the  
15 preparations the enemy is making, to see the execution  
16 before they -- it impacts on them, and, most importantly, to  
17 do something about it.

18       I think the entire intelligence function has got to be  
19 put under review. We have a tendency to focus on other  
20 things that are kinetic --

21       Senator King: Right.

22       General Keane: -- but the intelligence function, in  
23 this kind of warfare, is significant, in terms of its  
24 enhancing ground forces and air forces to be able to use  
25 their capabilities to the fullest.



1           Senator King: And it's unfortunate that we continue to  
2 -- we seem to continue to be surprised.

3           Did you --

4           Colonel Harvey: Sir, if I could, on the Ramadi issue,  
5 just -- I'm at the University of South Florida, and, you  
6 know, we drafted a paper outlining that Ramadi was going to  
7 fall, early last week, and we were looking at data that's  
8 only available to us through open-source information, but  
9 understanding the enemy, their intent, trying to get inside  
10 how they're orchestrating the fight. And it's not just  
11 about having the intelligence, it's knowing what to do with  
12 the information and how to think about it.

13           The warnings were there, the indicators were there. If  
14 we could see it, at the University of South Florida, and  
15 others here in -- like the Institute for the Study of War, I  
16 think, also saw that -- then we shouldn't have been making  
17 public statements, midweek, officially saying that Ramadi  
18 was not going to fall, that it wasn't really under threat,  
19 because that creates another problem of its own, because  
20 then you have the collapse, and it looks like there's a real  
21 problem in our communication and understanding at the most  
22 -- highest levels of our government.

23           Senator King: Well, and also it makes the ISIS look  
24 invincible and more powerful, and that's -- helps in their  
25 recruiting, and it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

1           You've made a strong case for things like close air  
2 support, forward controllers, all of those kinds of things.  
3 But, isn't one of the fundamental problems -- we could have  
4 all of those assets, but, if the Iraqi Security Forces don't  
5 have the will to fight, and if the local population doesn't  
6 have the -- any confidence in the government in Baghdad,  
7 it's still a very difficult, if not impossible, proposition.  
8 Can you give me some thoughts on that?

9           Dr. Kagan: Senator, I agree with the statement that  
10 you made. If those two conditions are true, then it's  
11 difficult, to impossible. I don't think it's true that the  
12 Iraqi forces don't have the will to fight. I think they do  
13 have the will to fight. But, I think, as General Keane  
14 pointed out and as we've seen repeatedly, will to fight is  
15 one thing, belief in your ability to succeed is another  
16 critical component to will to fight. And that's one of the  
17 things that we have provided, historically, to our allies in  
18 Iraq and Afghanistan, and also to NATO allies and various  
19 other partners who rely on our overmatching military  
20 capabilities just as much as the Iraqis would. We can make  
21 it so that the Iraqis don't have to worry about being  
22 overrun. That's what we used to do. We are allowing them  
23 to be overrun in these circumstances. And that erodes their  
24 will to fight, significantly.

25           Your point about the political accommodation is also

1     incredibly important. We absolutely need to have an Iraqi  
2     government that is prepared to reach out to Sunni  
3     effectively. And we haven't seen that. Unfortunately, the  
4     more that we try to subcontract these conflicts to local  
5     forces in preference to our own --

6             Senator King: Then you're talking about the --

7             Dr. Kagan: -- you get a --

8             Senator King: -- Shi'a militia.

9             Dr. Kagan: Exactly, sir.

10            Senator King: Which only exacerbates the sectarian  
11     conflict, which makes ISIS look good to the Sunni chiefs in  
12     Anbar.

13            Dr. Kagan: Or more tolerable, perhaps, than the  
14     alternatives.

15            Senator King: Yeah. I don't think they look good to  
16     anybody.

17            Dr. Kagan: Yes, sir.

18            Senator King: It's -- but, if they don't have  
19     confidence -- I mean, isn't that one of the fundamental  
20     problems here, is that ISIS has been swimming in, if not a  
21     friendly sea, at least a neutral sea, in terms of the Sunni  
22     provinces?

23            Dr. Kagan: I think it's a very fearful sea. And I  
24     think that that's -- you know, we shouldn't forget that  
25     terrorism works both ways, and these guys are incredibly

1 brutal in dealing with the populations that they control.  
2 So, people are going to require a certain amount of  
3 assurance that, if they rise up against these guys, that  
4 they will win, because it -- the alternative is that they  
5 will be completely destroyed as communities.

6 General Keane: You know, the other thing is, the force  
7 that we had in Iraq, the Iraqi Security Force that took us  
8 -- it took us a while to get them to be effective, to be  
9 frank about it. And one of the things that made them very  
10 effective during the surge period, where General Petraeus  
11 changed the dimension on the battlefield, and he said,  
12 "We're not just going to provide them advisors, we're going  
13 to ask them to fight side by side with us" -- platoon, side  
14 by side; company, side by side; battalion, side by side.  
15 That dimension exponentially increased the capability of the  
16 force, because they could see what right looked like. They  
17 could see it. It was right there. A sergeant could see a  
18 U.S. sergeant's performance, how he acted under stress.  
19 Soldiers could see it. Other leaders could see their  
20 counterparts' performance.

21 So, that force grew rather dramatically, and we were  
22 there multiple weeks throughout 2007 and 2008, the three of  
23 us on this side of the table. And that was an effective  
24 force. And I can tell you for a fact, because I saw it with  
25 my own eyes, I saw battalion commanders, brigade commanders,

1 and division commanders distinguish themselves in combat and  
2 under significant stress. And we felt good about that  
3 force. We were saying, "Wow, they finally -- they've got it  
4 together." What happened to that force? Well, so much  
5 attention has been placed on Maliki's malice in what he did  
6 to undermine his political opponents. He destroyed that  
7 force, because he saw those distinguished leaders, who were  
8 accomplished as a result of their performance on the  
9 battlefield, and their people were devoted to them -- he saw  
10 them as threats to him, politically as well as his political  
11 opponents. And he undermined that force. He purged that  
12 force.

13 So, that force is not there, the one that we used to  
14 have. He put in these political phonies and cranks and  
15 other people who didn't have the military competence. Well,  
16 that -- changing leadership and getting that leadership  
17 back, and others who are willing to have that kind of  
18 commitment and competence, that takes a little time to fix.  
19 But, the fact that we did have it, Senator, at one time, and  
20 it was pretty good, tells you that there is something there  
21 that we can work with, and we can get it back there.  
22 Whether that can be done in time is another issue.

23 Senator King: Looks around -- I may be the chair now,  
24 so I'm going to give myself another 10 seconds.

25 One simple question, though. In 2007-2008, how many

1 Americans were in Iraq?

2 General Keane: Certainly. I mean, we had somewhere in  
3 the neighborhood -- correct me if I'm wrong, guys -- about  
4 130,000 in Iraq. And that's how that force grew to the --  
5 but, what I'm saying to you is that, when we finished, when  
6 we had completed our involvement in Iraq, the force that  
7 we'd left there was a capable force, the Iraqi Security  
8 Force.

9 Senator King: I understand that. The question is,  
10 What do we have to do to rebuild it? That's the question.  
11 I'm out of time.

12 Senator Sullivan [presiding]: Thank you, Mr. Chair.  
13 Gentlemen, thank you for your testimony.

14 I wanted to talk at -- initially, about the issue of  
15 credibility. And, you know, there's been a lot of  
16 discussion about how we've lost credibility with our allies  
17 in places like Syria. But, I also want to talk about the  
18 importance of the issue of credibility with the American  
19 people. And there has been, I think, a narrative in the  
20 administration that has not been helpful, in that there's  
21 been an emphasis on the fact that we are now -- our combat  
22 role in the Middle East is now finished. Well, of course,  
23 it isn't finished. Just tell that to the pilots who are  
24 flying daily missions. We think of combat in terms of the  
25 infantry soldiers, but a lot of times we forget the brave

1 men and women who are flying these missions, daily. And  
2 they're -- that's combat. And obviously, also, with the  
3 recent Delta Force mission by some very brave Americans,  
4 that's boots on the ground. So, we're in combat. We even  
5 have boots on the ground, but there's still this narrative  
6 that somehow we're done.

7 So, General Keane, what I wanted to ask you, first of  
8 all, is, Do you think that this narrative, which is a false  
9 one, in my view, has inhibited our ability to actually  
10 develop a robust strategy we're talking about? Do we need  
11 JTACs, do we need other forces on the ground? And yet,  
12 we're competing with a narrative from the White House that  
13 says, "No, no, no, no, we're done." And it seems to me that  
14 would be a limiting factor to developing a strategy that  
15 ultimately is -- would do what we all want it to do, which  
16 is protect America's national security interests.

17 General Keane: Well, yes, I certainly -- when I look  
18 at it and try to speculate about what is driving some of our  
19 decisions, what is driving our narrative, you know, one of  
20 the things I've observed since I've been closer to it in  
21 recent years than when I was when I was a younger officer,  
22 is that most administrations, Democratic or Republican, have  
23 a tendency to overreact to what took place in the previous  
24 administration. And I think this one is no exception to  
25 that, making a -- making it a principle of the

1 administration to have a guarantor that we will not be  
2 involved in any military activity in the Middle East or in  
3 South Asia that could lead to another protracted war. And I  
4 think that's probably good -- a good principle. But, the  
5 issue is, that should not trump what's necessary to do,  
6 given the fact that ISIS represents a new organization --

7 Senator Sullivan: Yeah.

8 General Keane: -- with new leadership, a new vision,  
9 in terms of its global and regional strategy, and that it is  
10 a barbaric organization committing genocide, assassination,  
11 enslavement of women, and raping of women, as we all know,  
12 and that it is fully intent on conducting a religious war  
13 based on their ideology. And we cannot let the rearview  
14 mirror of Iraq and Afghanistan so disincentivize us to deal  
15 with the reality of what this is. And I'm convinced that  
16 the American people, when we inform them --

17 Senator Sullivan: Yeah.

18 General Keane: -- and we educate them, and we take  
19 them through this -- I mean, I dealt with the Bush  
20 administration. They never truly explained what radical  
21 Islam is and why it was so dangerous. We never truly took  
22 apart the ideology.

23 Senator Sullivan: Yeah.

24 General Keane: We never truly fashioned a strategy to  
25 deal with it in a comprehensive way.



1 Senator Sullivan: Can I -- I'd like to follow up --

2 General Keane: And here we sit, with the same problem  
3 today.

4 Senator Sullivan: I think that's a great point, and  
5 it's something that I think -- my own view is that you're  
6 directly on point. If we level with the American people,  
7 talk about the threats, talk about the strategy, that --  
8 it's really important -- many of you have been raising that  
9 -- I think everybody recognizes what we -- you know, once we  
10 lay that out, what we would or wouldn't have to do to  
11 address it.

12 So, let me ask a kind of a related question for Mr.  
13 Kagan. You've written on the long war, the idea of -- that  
14 I think sometimes we look at what's going on with ISIS and  
15 other issues in the Middle East and think, "Hey, we're going  
16 to have this done in a couple of months -- 18 months, 20  
17 months, maybe a couple of years." Do you think that there  
18 is an importance to having the leadership, both in terms of  
19 Congress, but particularly the executive branch, talk more  
20 broadly -- and again, level with the American people --  
21 about that this might be a generational conflict, this might  
22 be akin to the Cold War, where we've got to lay out a broad  
23 strategy -- and, Mr. Katulis, I think your point, early on  
24 in your testimony, about the need for a strategic concept is  
25 so important -- lay out a strategy that the executive

1 branch, the legislative branch, and the American people can  
2 get behind, and then execute it. And level with the  
3 American people that this might not be done in 18 months.

4 So, would any of you care -- Mr. Kagan, I know you've  
5 written about the long war. Could you -- would you feel  
6 free to talk about that?

7 And, Mr. Katulis, I'd be very interested -- when you  
8 talked about the strategic concept. What is it? Obviously,  
9 20 seconds left, that's a big topic. But, if you could  
10 point us in the direction of your writings or some  
11 principles that all of you have thought about, I think that  
12 would be very helpful.

13 Mr. Kagan?

14 Dr. Kagan: Senator, I mean, this is a generational  
15 struggle that we're in, at least. It may be longer than --

16 Senator Sullivan: But, we don't talk about it that  
17 way, do we --

18 Dr. Kagan: No, on the --

19 Senator Sullivan: -- very much?

20 Dr. Kagan: -- contrary. I think your first -- the  
21 point that you opened with is a very important one, that  
22 when the administration's narrative is that we're ending the  
23 wars, it is impossible to develop an -- a coherent strategy  
24 for fighting the wars. And we do need to understand that  
25 this is a war. This is -- these are battle fronts on a

1 common war that is going to last for a long time. And we  
2 don't get to end it unless we win. But, you don't get to  
3 decide -- we may not be interested in war, but war is  
4 interested in us. And this is going to continue to be a  
5 problem. And we need to level with the American people, as  
6 you say, as a basis for developing any kind of strategy. I  
7 totally agree with you.

8 Mr. Katulis: I think we need to define what we want to  
9 achieve. Quite often over the last 14 years, in  
10 Afghanistan, in Iraq, now with ISIL, we define our  
11 objectives in terms of what we're going to counter and  
12 defeat. That's important. But, what has been missing, I  
13 think, comprehensively, whether it's in a particular  
14 theater, like Iraq or Syria or Afghanistan, is the  
15 definition of what we actually need to leave behind in those  
16 societies, how we help others help themselves.

17 I do believe, at certain points -- President Bush  
18 certainly did this; certain points, President Obama does  
19 this -- talks about the long-term nature of this. If you  
20 look at their planning documents, at least, for the anti-  
21 ISIL strategy, it doesn't say, "Let's end this." As the  
22 administration used to say about Afghanistan and Iraq,  
23 "We're going to end it at a particular period of time." It  
24 extends into who will be the next President.

25 But, your point is terribly important, and I have

1 written several articles and a book about this, too. It's  
2 important, because, for our own society, there is a new  
3 generation, called Millennials, that are actually, this  
4 year, in number, larger than the Baby Boomers or -- I'm a  
5 Generation X-er. Our leaders aren't messaging in a cohesive  
6 way. And I think part of it is the partisanship that we  
7 have in our politics and other things. And I -- I'm a  
8 strong centrist internationalist. I believe that we need to  
9 bring the American people along with us.

10         And something Senator Kaine has said here earlier and  
11 before is that the debate that we need to be having on the  
12 authorization of the use of military force, and action on it  
13 -- this is a moment which has not been seized. You could  
14 criticize the administration or you could criticize whomever  
15 in Congress. There's been this muddle. And I think part of  
16 the reason, it goes back to, we actually haven't defined for  
17 the American public, in the way that Fred and others have  
18 argued here, that the U.S. has a special leadership role in  
19 the world. Our leadership -- countries in the region are  
20 still looking to us to actually do more. But, we need to  
21 actually take those steps beyond the questions on military  
22 and security steps, which are terribly important. We need  
23 to actually, then, talk about, How do we defeat these  
24 ideologies? We've done it before, with Naziism or  
25 Communism. You know, they're on the margins. Our model is

1 much better. Our values are better. But, what happened to  
2 the battle of ideas? We had that debate for a couple of  
3 years after 9/11. We kind of rediscovered it for a little  
4 bit. But, I think our ADD, our attention deficit disorder,  
5 in our own society -- and that's what I would say is, as  
6 thought leaders, as leaders in Congress, we all have a  
7 responsibility to continue to talk about this in a sustained  
8 way.

9 Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

10 Thank you, gentlemen.

11 Senator Kaine [presiding]: We've all had one round,  
12 but if anybody has a second round -- I'm just going to seize  
13 the moment, here, to continue for a few minutes, if we can.

14 I'm interested -- we've had visits in the Senate  
15 Foreign Relations from leaders that are our allies -- King  
16 -- the King of Jordan, in January; the Emir of Qatar, in  
17 February. We've had discussions with Saudi leadership,  
18 including the Saudi Ambassador. And every time we have  
19 these discussions, I ask them, "Tell us what you think the  
20 role of the U.S. should be, vis-a-vis ISIL, the battle  
21 against ISIL." And, in particular, because this is a point  
22 of difference among some on the Foreign Relations Committee,  
23 I've asked about the -- their thought about American ground  
24 troops. And I want to tell you what they've said, but then  
25 I'm curious about your opinions about what they've said.

1           The King of Jordan said, "That would be a mistake.  
2 This is our battle, not yours. And if it gets positioned as  
3 the U.S. against ISIL, then that will not be a helpful  
4 thing. If it's -- we stand up against the terrorist threat  
5 in our own region, and the U.S. helps us in a vigorous way,  
6 but clearly a supporter, not the main driver, that's the way  
7 this should position, and significant U.S. ground troops  
8 would -- just like the U.S. is doing 90 percent of the  
9 airstrikes, the significant U.S. ground troops would make  
10 this the U.S. against ISIL."

11           The Emir of Qatar said, similarly, "If there's  
12 significant ground troop presence from the United States,  
13 this will be the -- a recruiting bonanza for ISIL."

14           In Saudi Arabia -- and this -- the meetings with the  
15 Saudis occurred right after the Saudis had gone in a major  
16 way into Yemen, but -- so, they're -- you know, they're  
17 willing, at least somewhere, to take some significant  
18 military action to deal with threats in their own region,  
19 but they also said, "U.S. ground troops against ISIL would  
20 be problematic."

21           Now, I don't -- you know, I'm not -- I didn't read that  
22 to say, "not even one," or "under no circumstances." But,  
23 they were very wary about the notion of U.S. ground troops.

24           So, we're trying to work that out on the Foreign  
25 Relations Committee as we think about an authorization. Are

1 they right? Are they wrong? Of, if they're right, how  
2 would you square that with what a U.S. presence, U.S.  
3 support should mean?

4 Mr. Katulis: If I could start. It's why I -- the  
5 thrust of my remarks were on this coalition.

6 I actually think, for all of the criticisms of the  
7 Obama administration's strategy, some of which I share, this  
8 is the one component that simply did not exist before. It's  
9 one that has been underutilized, I believe. I do think that  
10 things like the GCC Summit last week, though there were a  
11 lot of optics and news articles about it, there is a  
12 conversation to try to build on, What can we do in  
13 partnership with them?

14 So, I think if there's one thing we should have learned  
15 from 2003 to 2010 or '11 in Iraq, is that, yes, U.S. forces  
16 can have an important impact on the security situation  
17 there. But, there's also downsides to having such a visible  
18 presence.

19 I don't think anyone on the panel -- unless I misheard  
20 it -- was talking about ever going back to, say, a 2006-2007  
21 posture. But, I do think striking the right balance is the  
22 key question. I think the administration has been  
23 understandably reticent about what it does in Iraq,  
24 Afghanistan, Syria, and other places, given the unforced  
25 errors on the part of the United States. But, this regional

1 dynamic has shifted quite a lot, which is what I was trying  
2 to emphasize.

3 The region, itself, recognizes that the U.S., in a very  
4 visible presence on the ground, does have significant  
5 downsides for their own legitimacy with their own  
6 populations. The region also is taking action in what it  
7 sees as its own self-interest. What I was trying to say, in  
8 terms of a multidimensional -- it's not only security  
9 support; it's investment in media campaigns and different  
10 political forces across the region.

11 Where I think the U.S. strategy right now -- and again,  
12 it's more honed in on what my expertise and focus is --  
13 where we need to enhance it more is working with those  
14 reliable partners, from Jordan to the United Arab Emirates  
15 to Saudi Arabia to a number of different allies, including  
16 the Kurds we've talked about, and some of the Iraqis, to  
17 actually take what has been a significantly larger amount of  
18 resources in energy and activity and channel it towards more  
19 constructive purposes. I don't see that happening in Yemen  
20 right now. I don't see that happening yet in Syria. And I  
21 don't see that happening in many other theaters.

22 So, I think the basic answer to the question -- the  
23 leaders that you spoke with, I think, are reflecting a very  
24 popular view at the popular level in their countries, as  
25 well. They understand that, for whatever happened in the



1 Iraq War, the surge, and other things, the U.S. is better  
2 sort of seen as a backbone of support behind them, as  
3 opposed to visibly out in the front.

4 Dr. Kagan: Senator, I think we need to distinguish  
5 between the ideal and reality. Ideally, of course it would  
6 be better for regional states to take care of regional  
7 problems, and regional militaries to be involved, with a  
8 caveat that we do have a regional war going on, and the  
9 regional actors we're talking about are being seen as on one  
10 side of that. So, we need to think about what the Iranian  
11 reaction would be to Saudi divisions deploying into Iraq on  
12 behalf of the Iraqis. I don't think we would enjoy that  
13 very much. And I think it might be worse, actually, than  
14 the Iranian reaction to the deployment of U.S. forces in  
15 there. So, it's a complicated dynamic.

16 But, look, in the world of reality, the Jordanians,  
17 they don't have the forces to do this. The Saudis don't  
18 have -- the regional militaries are not capable of providing  
19 the kind of assistance to Iraq that we can provide. They  
20 don't have it in their force structure, they don't have it  
21 in their --

22 Senator Kaine: How about the Turks?

23 Dr. Kagan: The Turks might be able to provide some  
24 element of it, although no one provides the capability that  
25 the U.S. provides to its allies, including the Turks, and

1 they would still be dependent on us.

2 But, again, the -- I'm really not sure that the optics  
3 of the return of the Ottoman Empire in force to Iraq would  
4 be better than the optics of having a limited number of  
5 American troops on the ground there. So, I think that the  
6 regional leaders you're talking to are expressing an ideal  
7 version of a strategy which we would all like to see, but  
8 it's not in accord with reality.

9 And, as you think about an AUMF, I would say an AUMF in  
10 which Congress micromanages what forces can or cannot be  
11 sent, and thereby, in my opinion, infringes somewhat on the  
12 prerogative of the President to choose how to fight a war  
13 that Congress authorizes, but also, in this circumstances,  
14 that would constrain the deployment of American ground  
15 forces when they are so clearly necessary, would be  
16 extremely damaging.

17 Colonel Harvey: Senator Kaine, if I could.

18 This reminds me of the myth that I heard in Iraq about:  
19 U.S. forces were the generator of the antibodies that caused  
20 the insurgency. It was a real misreading of what was going  
21 on in Iraq in the drivers of the fight.

22 We have to be focused on what are U.S. interests and  
23 how do we defeat this enemy. And the seeds of strategic  
24 failure are found in failing to define that enemy, define  
25 our interests, the costs, and the risks. And if we do those

1 things, and we think about our interests, it will drive us  
2 to engage more seriously than we have, in my mind. I think  
3 it's a very similar situation today. We study  
4 radicalization, recruitment for the foreign fighter flow.  
5 The U.S. presence in Iraq is not going to dramatically  
6 increase the foreign fighter flow. It is being driven by a  
7 range of issues and the different types of recruits that are  
8 being pulled in from Tunisia and elsewhere. The driver  
9 within Iraq is not the U.S. presence, it's Shi'a domination,  
10 it's the fear for their future and their own lives and lack  
11 of political inclusion, et cetera. That's the issue we need  
12 to get our head around.

13 General Keane: Yeah, I -- you know, I agree with what  
14 everybody's said here. And I think we talk past each other  
15 a little bit on this issue. No one here, certainly, is  
16 advocating that we should have ground units that are  
17 occupying towns and villages, and securing them, and  
18 therefore, protecting them from ISIS attack that would put  
19 us right in the mainstream of defending against ISIS. Now,  
20 I think that's unnecessary, and it would be a mistake. But  
21 also, when we have a policy that says "no boots on the  
22 ground," that doesn't make any sense, either, because it  
23 denies us from having advisors that have a role to play, it  
24 denies us with -- from forward air controllers that have a  
25 role to play, as we pointed out, and other military

1 capabilities that are unique to us. And we've elaborated on  
2 what they are. They are significant enablers that make --  
3 would make a difference in what the 60 nations have agreed  
4 to do, which is support the Iraqi ground forces, as  
5 imperfect as they are. But, let's give them a better hand  
6 to play than what we are doing. And I don't believe there  
7 is a single nation that would object to anything of what we  
8 are describing is -- are enablers that would make a  
9 difference.

10 Second, when it comes to Syria, I think this is a  
11 difference. And if you spoke to them about that, you know  
12 what their view is about Assad. We've already dealt with  
13 that in the regime. And they know full well that the deal  
14 with ISIS in Syria, this is going to take a ground force,  
15 and they would have to contribute to that ground force. I  
16 would think that they would logically ask us to participate  
17 in that with them. We would -- I don't think we would  
18 necessarily have to be the largest contributor, but I think  
19 we would have to participate. And I think they would  
20 reasonably want us, too, because of our experience and our  
21 capabilities, if we would actually lead it. Maybe not.

22 But, I think those two things would probably be on the  
23 table for discussion. And I think it's reasonable that that  
24 kind of allocation of U.S. capability and leadership to deal  
25 with ISIS in Syria is, in fact, an eventuality.

1           Senator Kaine:  Senator Blumenthal, do you have  
2 questions for the panel?

3           Senator Blumenthal:  I do.  Thank you very much.

4           Thank you all for being here and for your very  
5 thoughtful and eloquent remarks.  I was here for the  
6 beginning remarks.  Unfortunately, as so often happens here,  
7 I was diverted to another committee meeting after our vote.

8           I want to come back to what Mr. Kagan was describing as  
9 the "evil" of ISIS/ISIL and the absolutely horrid,  
10 unspeakable acts of brutality that they commit -- mass rape,  
11 mass murder.  And I agree with you that they are one of the  
12 most evil, maybe the most evil institution in history.  We  
13 can argue about it.  But, when I go home this weekend, most  
14 folks are going to ask me, What's the threat to the United  
15 States?  And 50 years from now, others will be sitting where  
16 you are, and where I am, talking about probably other evil  
17 institutions that are committing mass brutality.  Because  
18 that seems to be, unfortunately and tragically, the nature  
19 of the human condition.  It's happened throughout our  
20 history.  And I think the ordinary person in Connecticut  
21 over the Memorial Day weekend is going to wonder what our  
22 role should be in stopping that from occurring unless there  
23 is a threat to this country.  So, perhaps you and others on  
24 the panel could tell me what I should tell the people of  
25 Connecticut about why the United States should be involved,

1 whether it is Special Operations Forces or better air  
2 support or whatever the involvement is, and why that matters  
3 to our security.

4 Dr. Kagan: Senator, I think it's a fair question.  
5 And, as a Connecticut native, I'm -- I am concerned about  
6 what you have to tell the Connecticut people to get them  
7 onboard with this.

8 May I start by saying -- as I was driving down to  
9 Virginia the other day, I drove past the Holocaust Museum,  
10 and I saw, again, the sign that's up there that is always  
11 there, which is "Never Again." And I would submit that we  
12 need -- one of the things we need to tell the American  
13 people is that America is not historically a country that  
14 watches these kinds of atrocities on this scale occur and  
15 does nothing. It actually is a core American value to take  
16 a stand against these kind of -- we do it very late, we did  
17 -- we try to talk ourselves out of it, we have long  
18 arguments about it, but, ultimately, we generally do it.  
19 And that's one of the things that makes us America. And I  
20 think we really shouldn't lose sight of that moral  
21 imperative as we talk about this.

22 But, your comments are very well taken, sir. The  
23 reality is, ISIS poses a clear and present danger to the  
24 United States homeland. It has already been encouraging,  
25 condoning, and applauding lone-wolf attacks here. It has

1 made it clear that it has the objective of attacking America  
2 and the West, that it is actively recruiting cells in  
3 America and the West. And it will do that with the  
4 resources of a ministate behind it, which is something that  
5 we have never seen before with al-Qaeda. This is not a  
6 group of bandits hanging out in the mountains in  
7 Afghanistan. And that attack was devastating enough. But,  
8 if we reflect on the resources that ISIS has access to,  
9 controlling Mosul, Fallujah, Ramadi, al-Raqqa, oil  
10 infrastructure, the resources that were in various  
11 universities in Mosul and so forth, that -- thousands of  
12 fighters, tens of thousands of recruits -- this is an army,  
13 and this is an army that is very sophisticated and has an  
14 ability to conduct operational military planning and execute  
15 it that is in advance of anything that I've seen from any of  
16 these groups. And it has declared its intention to come  
17 after the United States, and shown a willingness to do that.  
18 That is something that I think the people of Connecticut  
19 need to be concerned about.

20 General Keane: Yeah, I would certainly agree with what  
21 Fred is saying, is that it should be a concern to us, in a  
22 couple of ways. Certainly, what they are doing to motivate  
23 and inspire others who are not necessarily in the region but  
24 are in other countries and are -- can identify with this  
25 movement, and many of them are self-radicalized or possibly

1 they're already radicalized, but they're motivated to take  
2 action, and take violent action. We've seen plenty of  
3 evidence of that.

4         And the longer you permit the organization to succeed  
5 -- can you imagine what has gone out on the Internet from  
6 ISIS around the world as a result of their success in  
7 Ramadi, and how that has motivated others, that ISIS, in  
8 fact, is winning, and they're standing up against the United  
9 States, they're standing up against these strong allies of  
10 the United States in the region and Europe, and they're  
11 actually winning? So, there's huge danger there. As long  
12 as you let this organization stay and we don't decapitate  
13 it, then they -- the motivation and inspiration of self-  
14 radicalization continues to grow. That's one thing.

15         The second thing is, in the region itself -- and we  
16 showed on a map -- they're moving into other countries at  
17 the same time they're defending what they have in Syria and  
18 Iraq, and expanding in those countries. This is what makes  
19 this organization so very different than what we've dealt  
20 with in the past. And they're looking at Libya as a --  
21 because of the social and political upheaval in Libya -- and  
22 there's hardly a government there and anybody to push back  
23 on it -- they're going to put huge resources in there. Why  
24 are we concerned about that? Our interests in the region,  
25 our interests in North Africa, that would be on the southern



1 tip of NATO there, not too many miles away from Italy. In  
2 Afghanistan, they have expanded rapidly, beyond most of our  
3 expectations, I would assume, into eight provinces in  
4 Afghanistan. Now, we have interests in Afghanistan, for  
5 obvious reasons.

6 So, this is a movement that we can tie directly to the  
7 security of the American people and to our national security  
8 objectives of the United States in this region and in South  
9 Asia.

10 Senator Blumenthal: So, it -- if I can put it a  
11 different way, just to conclude, it's more than -- and, by  
12 the way, American values are directly and inevitably linked  
13 to stopping human atrocities. I agree totally with you, Mr.  
14 Kagan. But, our interests go beyond that -- those values.  
15 And, by the way, all of the reasons that you've articulated  
16 are the reasons that I voted for the training and equipping  
17 measures that have been implemented. But, my frustration is  
18 that, as you also have observed, there is a huge gap between  
19 the goals and missions that we've outlined for the United  
20 States and the actual action that we're undertaking. The  
21 train-and-equip activities are way behind what we might have  
22 hoped by this point, and there's no clear timetable for  
23 really achieving the level of capability that we expected or  
24 hoped.

25 So, I think this has been a very sobering morning, and

1 I thank you all for being here.

2 Thank you.

3 Chairman McCain [presiding]: Well, I also want to  
4 thank the witnesses. And it's been, I think, very helpful  
5 to all members. And this is not an issue that's going away.  
6 So, I'm sure that we'll be seeing you again.

7 Thank you.

8 This hearing is adjourned.

9 [Whereupon, at 11:59 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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