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Before the

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

**UNITED STATES SENATE**

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON  
THE U.S. STRATEGY TO COUNTER THE ISLAMIC STATE  
OF IRAQ AND THE LEVANT  
AND U.S. POLICY TOWARD IRAQ AND SYRIA

December 9, 2015

Washington, D.C.

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HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE  
U.S. STRATEGY TO COUNTER THE ISLAMIC STATE OF IRAQ AND  
THE LEVANT AND U.S. POLICY TOWARD IRAQ AND SYRIA

Wednesday, December 9, 2015

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:34 a.m. in  
Room SD-106, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John  
McCain, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Committee Members Present: Senators McCain  
[presiding], Inhofe, Sessions, Wicker, Ayotte, Fischer,  
Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Sullivan, Lee, Graham, Reed,  
Nelson, McCaskill, Manchin, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal,  
Donnelly, Hirono, Kaine, King, and Heinrich.

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

3           Chairman McCain: Well, good morning. The committee  
4 meets today to receive testimony on the ongoing efforts of  
5 the United States to combat ISIL as well as U.S. policy  
6 toward Iraq, Syria, and the broader Middle East.

7           We welcome our distinguished witnesses and thank them  
8 for their appearance today as well as for their continued  
9 service to our Nation.

10          This morning, our hearts are with the loved ones of the  
11 224 people killed aboard a Russian airliner over Egypt, of  
12 the 43 people killed in bombings in Beirut, of the 130  
13 people killed in Paris, and of the 14 people killed in San  
14 Bernardino. Each one of these atrocities committed or  
15 inspired by ISIL has occurred in just the month and a half  
16 since the Secretary last appeared before this committee. A  
17 year and a half since he appeared, and all of these things  
18 have happened. Whatever illusions anyone may have had that  
19 our national security was not at stake in the conflict in  
20 Iraq and Syria or that ISIL was somehow contained, these  
21 attacks make it clear that ISIL's threat against our  
22 homeland is real, direct, and growing, that we are not  
23 winning this war, and that time is not on our side.

24          Americans have never been more worried about being  
25 attacked than at any time since the months that followed

1 September 11th, 2001. Today's hearing is essential to help  
2 the American people and their elected representatives  
3 understand what the Department of Defense is doing to  
4 protect our Nation from this new terrorist threat.

5         The administration says it has a strategy to destroy  
6 ISIL which it has called, quote, "an indirect approach,"  
7 unquote. This means that, instead of taking the fight to  
8 ISIL more directly, the administration seeks to build up  
9 local ground forces in Iraq and Syria, to support them with  
10 U.S. and coalition airpower, to enable our local partners to  
11 liberate their own lands, and to create conditions for  
12 lasting political settlements. Much of this is what many of  
13 us have been advocating for years. And, to be sure, we are  
14 making some progress. As I recently saw on a visit to Iraq  
15 with Senator Graham, the recent operation to retake Sinjar  
16 was important. Iraqi forces are closing in on Ramadi,  
17 though they still have not finished the job. And our  
18 counterterrorism operations are taking a lot of ISIL  
19 fighters off the battlefield in Iraq and Syria.

20         All of this represents tactical progress, and it is a  
21 testament to our civilian and military leaders as well as  
22 thousands of U.S. troops hoping -- helping to take the fight  
23 to ISIL every day. However, significant challenges remain.  
24 The Iraqi government is weak and beholden to Iran. The  
25 training of Iraqi Security Forces has been slow. And the

1 building of support for the Sunni tribal forces, even  
2 slower. At the current pace, U.N. -- U.S. commanders  
3 estimate that ISIL will still control Mosul at the end of  
4 next year.

5 In Syria, what the administration calls its "strategy"  
6 looks more like a hope. We will not destroy ISIL until  
7 Raqqa, the capital of the caliphate, falls. But, there is  
8 still no ground force that is both willing and able to  
9 retake Raqqa, nor is there a realistic prospect of one  
10 emerging soon.

11 The Syrian Kurds could take Raqqa, but won't. And the  
12 Syrian Sunni Arabs want to, but can't, partly due to our  
13 failure to support them. What's worse, our military and  
14 diplomatic efforts are misaligned. Russia and Iraq are  
15 doubling down on Bashar Assad. Russia's airstrikes are  
16 still overwhelmingly directed at coalition-supported groups,  
17 and more talks in Vienna will not convince Vladimir Putin to  
18 abandon his idea of Russia's national interests in Syria.  
19 We need leverage to do that, but nothing we are doing,  
20 military or otherwise, is creating the necessary conditions,  
21 both in Putin's mind as well as on the ground in Syria, to  
22 achieve a favorable political settlement. As a result, the  
23 conflict will likely grind on, ISIL will grow stronger, and  
24 the refugees will keep coming.

25 Meanwhile, ISIS is metastasizing across the region --

1 in Afghanistan, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, and, perhaps most  
2 worryingly, in Libya. In short, the threat is growing and  
3 evolving faster than the administration's efforts to counter  
4 it.

5 The broader shortcomings of the administration's  
6 approach has to do with two assumptions it appears to be  
7 making. The first is that time is on our side, that we can  
8 afford to play out their indirect approach for years while  
9 ISIL continues to hold key terrain, such as Raqqa and Mosul.  
10 Time has never been on our side in this conflict, and it  
11 certainly is not now, after Sinai, Paris, and San  
12 Bernardino.

13 The second assumption is that we should not put U.S.  
14 forces on the ground, because that's what ISIL wants. It is  
15 true that ISIL seeks an apocalyptic conflict with the West,  
16 but another key pillar of ISIL's ideology is the creation of  
17 the caliphate. So, as long as ISIL can claim to possess its  
18 caliphate, it projects an aura of success that is its most  
19 powerful tool of radicalization and recruitment. There are  
20 no local forces that are able and willing to destroy ISIL's  
21 caliphate on the ground. And if we will not commit our own  
22 forces, then we are accepting the existence of the  
23 caliphate.

24 On Sunday, President Obama once again resorted to the  
25 strawman argument that his critics want to invade Iraq and

1 Syria with 100,000 U.S. troops. No one -- no one is calling  
2 for that. What we do need in Iraq is several thousand  
3 additional U.S. troops to improve and accelerate the  
4 training of Iraqi forces, especially Sunni tribal fighters,  
5 embed with and advise Iraqi units closer to the fight, call  
6 in airstrikes from forward positions, and conduct  
7 counterterrorism operations. Once ISIL is destroyed in  
8 Iraq, we must keep a residual force there, as we should have  
9 done before. If we leave again, the threat will return, and  
10 we will have to intervene again. Iraqis must win the peace,  
11 but America has a major stake in their success, and a unique  
12 role to play in helping them. To do so, we must be present.

13 In Syria, the U.S. needs a coherent strategy to destroy  
14 ISIL and end the civil war as soon as possible. Our  
15 military efforts must create the conditions for this  
16 outcome. America must work with its coalition partners to  
17 establish and protect zones inside Syria where refugees can  
18 be safe, to deny the Assad regime the use of airpower and  
19 barrel bombs, and to impose costs on Russia for targeting  
20 moderate opposition groups.

21 Ultimately, to destroy ISIL in Syria, we will need a  
22 multinational ground force primarily made up of Sunni, Arab,  
23 and European forces, but with a strong U.S. component, to do  
24 what no local force now can or will: retake Raqqa, destroy  
25 ISIL's caliphate in Syria, and prepare for a long-term

1 stabilization effort.

2 Beyond Iraq and Syria, we need to seize the initiative  
3 and roll back ISIS -- ISIL's regional expansion. This will  
4 require a greater forward presence of U.S. military and  
5 intelligence teams that can map its networks, destroy them  
6 as part of a broader strategy to support countries and  
7 building just and inclusive governments.

8 Finally, Mr. Secretary, we have known each other for  
9 many years. I know you to be a skilled and dedicated public  
10 servant. I think you are performing to the best of your  
11 abilities as Secretary of Defense, and I value our  
12 partnership on many issues. It is true that you have made  
13 four appearances before this committee as Secretary. But,  
14 when you were nominated for your position, you agreed to,  
15 quote, "appear and testify, upon request, before this  
16 committee." Since your last testimony, as I mentioned, we  
17 have seen ISIL launch or inspire attacks in the sky over  
18 Egypt, in Beirut, in Paris, and here at home, in San  
19 Bernardino. We have also heard the administration roll out  
20 additional actions that it claims are needed to address this  
21 threat. If we are truly at war against ISIL, as the  
22 President says, then we will continue to expect the  
23 Secretary of Defense to provide regular updates to the  
24 Senate Armed Services Committee on the progress of that war.  
25 This is your responsibility to us so we can perform our

1 responsibilities on behalf of those who elected us.

2 Senator Reed.

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

3           Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

4           And let me welcome Secretary Carter and General Selva.

5           This morning's hearing is extraordinarily timely, in  
6 light of several recent and very disturbing events,  
7 including ISIL claiming responsibility for the bombing of  
8 the Russian airliner, the attacks on innocent civilians in  
9 Beirut and Paris, and the deadly attack in San Bernardino by  
10 what appears to be self-radicalized individuals. And our  
11 hearts go out to the victims of these terrible and senseless  
12 tragedies.

13           As the President outlined in his speech to the Nation  
14 on Sunday, it is critical that the U.S.-led 60-plus-nation  
15 coalition for defeating ISIL pursue a multidimensional  
16 approach. The United States and its coalition partners are  
17 intensifying their efforts to degrade ISIL militarily and  
18 deny their leaders any safe havens, to cut off ISIL  
19 financing, to interdict the flow of foreign fighters to  
20 ISIL-controlled territories, and to counter the spread of  
21 ISIL's murderous ideology that the President accurately  
22 characterized as part of a cult of death. Such an approach  
23 will require the careful coordination of military,  
24 intelligence, diplomatic, and law enforcement efforts to  
25 combat ISIL across the departments of the U.S. Government

1 and within our coalition.

2           Recently, the administration announced a number of  
3 steps to intensify our military efforts in Iraq and Syria.  
4 These include the deployment of A-10s to Turkey, the  
5 addition of Special Operations Forces in northern Syria to  
6 assist local forces, and, most recently, an announcement by  
7 you, Secretary Carter, of the intent to deploy, in full  
8 coordination with the Government of Iraq, an expeditionary  
9 targeting force to assist the Iraqi and Kurdish security  
10 forces in removing ISIL leaders from the battlefield. In  
11 addition, coalition partners, including Britain, France, and  
12 Germany, have stepped up their contributions to the fight  
13 against ISIL since the Paris attacks. And I welcome -- and  
14 I think we all do -- these continuing efforts to reevaluate  
15 and enhance our military campaign, and would be interested  
16 in any further steps that may be under consideration to  
17 intensify the military pressure on ISIL in Iraq and Syria.  
18 And I think we all agree that that intensity has to be  
19 increased significantly and rapidly.

20           At the same time, a sustainable defeat of ISIL in the  
21 region requires that ground combat forces be primarily local  
22 forces, though U.S. forces can, and I think should, provide  
23 critical advice, assistance, and enablers to assist these  
24 forces and go where they must go to assist these local  
25 forces. Putting large numbers of U.S. troops on the ground,

1 as has been suggested, I think, by all my colleagues, in  
2 Iraq and Syria, could play, directly or indirectly, into  
3 ISIL's propaganda war.

4 It's also clear that a sustainable outcome will only be  
5 possible with more inclusive governance by the Abadi  
6 government in Baghdad and a political transition in Syria  
7 that puts an end to the brutality of the Assad regime.  
8 Russia's direct engagement in the Syrian conflict will  
9 continue to further reduce the chances of achieving an  
10 acceptable political solution, so long as the Russians  
11 remain focused on attacking the moderate Syrian opposition  
12 and claiming to be joining an anti-ISIL fight, where they  
13 are, in effect, trying to degrade the anti-ISIL --  
14 Assad forces.

15 We will be interested in hearing from our witnesses  
16 regarding the progress of the campaign to defeat ISIL, the  
17 status of our efforts to train, equip, and assist local  
18 forces in Syria and Iraq, and then having -- training them  
19 to help them seize territory and hold territory taken from  
20 ISIL control.

21 And, General, I hope you can also address whether we  
22 now have the right command structure for Operation Inherent  
23 Resolve and whether our military commanders in theater have  
24 the flexibility they need to carry out the campaign plan.

25 Finally, the committee would be interested to get an

1 assessment from our witnesses of the factors contributing to  
2 the expansion of ISIL and associated groups beyond the  
3 Syria-Iraq region, as the Chairman has pointed out, and what  
4 the Department needs to counter this threat that is  
5 burgeoning throughout the region.

6 Again, thank you to the witnesses.

7 And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 Chairman McCain: Welcome, Secretary Carter and General  
9 Selva.

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1           STATEMENT OF HON. ASHTON B. CARTER, SECRETARY OF  
2 DEFENSE; ACCOMPANIED BY GENERAL PAUL J. SELVA, USAF, VICE  
3 CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

4           Secretary Carter: Thank you. Chairman, Ranking Member  
5 Reed, members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to  
6 discuss the U.S. counter-ISIL military campaign with Vice  
7 Chairman Paul Selva, here. Chairman Dunford is, as you  
8 know, currently visiting our troops deployed around the  
9 world this holiday season, conveying to them the thanks of a  
10 grateful Nation for all they do in our defense. I will soon  
11 be doing the same.

12           And, Chairman, you're right, and Ranking Member Reed,  
13 we are intensifying the campaign, and have, in the 6 weeks  
14 since I appeared before you last time. And I'm happy to be  
15 here today to describe what we're doing. It's very much  
16 along the lines of what you just described. That is, forces  
17 to accompany, to call an airstrike, to conduct  
18 counterterrorism strikes, and train and equip. So, I'll  
19 describe those actions which we're taking.

20           Because the attacks in Paris and San Bernardino were an  
21 assault upon the civilization that we defend, ISIL requires,  
22 and it will receive, a lasting defeat. The President has  
23 directed us to intensify and adapt the military campaign --,  
24 or, I'm sorry, had directed us to intensify the military  
25 campaign before the Paris attacks. And the necessity of

1 accelerating our efforts, as we're doing, has only been made  
2 more plain by the recent attacks.

3 We are urging others in the region and around the world  
4 to do the same, because those attacks further highlighted  
5 the stakes that not just the United States, but the world,  
6 has in this fight. The defense of the homeland must be  
7 strengthened, to be sure. But, it is absolutely necessary  
8 to defeat ISIL in its parent tumor in Syria and Iraq, and  
9 also to take necessary action wherever else in the world  
10 this evil organization metastasizes. Achieving these  
11 objectives means leveraging all the components of our  
12 Nation's might, as the Chairman noted: diplomatic,  
13 military, and law enforcement, homeland security,  
14 intelligence, economic, informational. That's the right  
15 overall approach, for three principal reasons:

16 First, the strategy takes the fight to the enemy where  
17 they are, which we must do.

18 Second, it seeks to develop capable, motivated, local  
19 ground forces as the only force that can assure a lasting  
20 victory. U.S. and international coalition forces can and  
21 will do more to enable them, but we cannot substitute for  
22 them.

23 And third, it seeks to set the conditions for a  
24 political solution to the civil war in Syria and for  
25 inclusive governance in Iraq, both of which are essential,

1 because they're the only durable ways to prevent a future  
2 ISIL-like organization from re-emerging there. And that's  
3 why the diplomatic work led by Secretary Kerry is the first  
4 and absolutely critical line of effort.

5 The Defense Department, of course, is centrally  
6 responsible for the military campaign, which is the focus of  
7 my statement today. Through our and our coalition partners'  
8 actions, the military campaign must and will deny ISIL any  
9 safe territorial haven, kill or capture its leadership and  
10 forces, and destroy its organization, all while we seek to  
11 identify and then enable motivated local forces on the  
12 ground who can expel ISIL from the territory it now  
13 controls, hold it, and govern it, and ensure that victory  
14 sticks.

15 Militarily, we're taking new steps each week to gather  
16 momentum on the battlefield in Syria and Iraq. I'll take a  
17 few extra minutes this morning to give as much detail as  
18 possible about the new things we're doing, applying multiple  
19 pressures on multiple fronts simultaneously to accelerate  
20 ISIL's defeat.

21 The reality is, we're at war. That's how our troops  
22 feel about it, because they're taking the fight to ISIL  
23 every day, applying the might of the finest fighting force  
24 the world has ever known.

25 In northern Syria, local forces, with our support, are

1 fighting along the Ma'ra line, engaging ISIL in the last  
2 remaining pocket of access into Turkey. Meanwhile, a  
3 coalition of Syrian Arabs that we helped equip in  
4 northeastern Syria are fighting alongside Kurdish forces and  
5 have recaptured important terrain, most recently pushing  
6 ISIL out of the town of al-Hawl and at least 900 square  
7 kilometers of surrounding territory. They're now focused on  
8 moving south to isolate ISIL's so-called capital of Raqqa,  
9 with the ultimate objective of collapsing its control over  
10 the city.

11 To build on that, President Obama, on my and Chairman  
12 Dunford's advice, ordered U.S. Special Operations Forces to  
13 go into Syria to support the fight against ISIL. American  
14 special operators bring a unique set of capabilities that  
15 make them force multipliers, such as intelligence-gathering,  
16 targeting, and enabling local forces. Where we find further  
17 opportunity to leverage such capability, we will not  
18 hesitate to expand it.

19 Next, in the south of Syria, we're also taking  
20 advantage of opportunities to enable indigenous fighters  
21 trained and equipped by us and other coalition partners to  
22 conduct strikes inside Syria. We're also enhancing Jordan's  
23 border control and defenses with additional military assets  
24 and planning assistance.

25 Turning to northern Iraq, Peshmerga units, with the

1 help of U.S. power, airpower, and advisors, have retaken the  
2 town of Sinjar, cutting the main line of communication  
3 between Raqqa and Mosul, which are the two largest cities  
4 under ISIL's control. To move people and supplies, ISIL  
5 must now rely on backroads, where we will locate and destroy  
6 them.

7 Elsewhere in Iraq, we have about 3,500 troops at six  
8 locations in support of Iraqi Security Forces. There, we've  
9 been providing increased lethal fire and augmenting the  
10 existing training, advising, and assisting program. And  
11 we're prepared to do more as Iraq shows capability and  
12 motivation in the counter-ISIL fight and in resolving its  
13 political divisions.

14 After a frustratingly long time, we are starting to see  
15 some movement in the operation to recapture Ramadi. Over  
16 the past several months, the coalition has provided  
17 specialized training and equipment, including combat  
18 engineering techniques, like in-stride breaching and  
19 bulldozing, and munitions, like AT-4 shoulder-fired  
20 missiles, to stop truck bombs, to the Iraqi Army and its  
21 counterterrorism service units that are now beginning to  
22 enter Ramadi neighborhoods from multiple directions. In  
23 fact, in the last 24 hours, the ISF retook the Anbar  
24 Operations Center on the northern bank of the Euphrates  
25 River, across from Ramadi's city center. It is an important

1 step, but there's still tough fighting ahead. ISIL has  
2 counterattacked several times, but, thus far, the ISF has  
3 shown resilience.

4 The United States is prepared to assist the Iraqi Army  
5 with additional unique capabilities to help them finish the  
6 job, including attack helicopters and accompanying advisors,  
7 if circumstances dictate and if requested by Prime Minister  
8 Abadi.

9 I mention all this because it represents how we've  
10 adapted in the way we support our Iraqi partners, and it  
11 shows that training, advising, and assisting helps, and  
12 works. We will do more of what works, going forward.

13 While we're focused on making additional tactical  
14 gains, the overall progress in the Sunni-populated areas of  
15 Iraq has been slow, much to Prime Minister Abadi's and our  
16 frustration. Indeed, with respect to Sunni tribal forces,  
17 we are urging the Iraqi government to do more to recruit,  
18 train, arm, mobilize, and pay Sunni popular mobilization  
19 fighters in their communities. We continue to engage the  
20 Iraqi government at all levels to move forward on this  
21 critically important aspect of the counter-ISIL campaign,  
22 including working with Sunni local police to ensure that  
23 there's an Iraqi hold force to sustain future gains.

24 Next, in full coordination, again, with the Government  
25 of Iraq, we're deploying a specialized expeditionary

1 targeting force to assist the ISF and Kurdish Peshmerga  
2 forces and put even more pressure on ISIL through a variety  
3 of raids and intelligence-gathering missions. This force  
4 will also be in a position to conduct unilateral operations  
5 in Syria.

6 In Iraq, the force will operate at the invitation of  
7 the Iraqi government and focus on defending its borders and  
8 building the ISF's ability to conduct similar operations.  
9 We will not be discussing specifics of this expeditionary  
10 targeting force, or its operations, in unclassified  
11 settings, both to protect our forces and to preserve the  
12 element of surprise. We want this expeditionary targeting  
13 force to make ISIL and its leaders wonder, when they go to  
14 bed at night, who's going to be coming in the window.

15 Chairman Dunford and I recognize that, in principle,  
16 there are alternatives to the strategic approach we have  
17 adopted to drive ISIL from Syrian and Iraqi territory,  
18 including the introduction of a significant foreign ground  
19 force, hypothetically international, but including U.S.  
20 forces, even in the absence of capable, motivated, local  
21 ground forces.

22 While we certainly have the capability to furnish a  
23 U.S. component to such a ground force, we have not  
24 recommended this course of action, for several reasons. In  
25 the near term, it would be a significant undertaking that,

1 much as we may wish otherwise, realistically we would embark  
2 upon largely by ourselves. And it would be ceding our  
3 comparative advantage of Special Forces, mobility, and  
4 firepower, instead fighting on the enemy's terms.

5 In the medium term, by seeming to Americanize the  
6 conflicts in Iraq and Syria, we could well turn those  
7 fighting ISIL, or inclined to resist their rule, into  
8 fighting us instead. As Chairman Dunford testified last  
9 week, quote, "ISIL would love nothing more than a large  
10 presence of U.S. forces on the ground in Iraq and Syria so  
11 that they could have a call to jihad."

12 And lastly, in the long term, there would still remain  
13 the problem of securing and governing the territory. These  
14 must be done by local forces. So, in the end, while we can  
15 enable them, we cannot substitute for them.

16 Next, momentum on the ground, as I've described, in  
17 both Syria and Iraq has been enabled by greatly increased  
18 coalition airstrikes. Additional strike aircraft we've  
19 deployed to Incirlik Airbase in Turkey, along with improved  
20 intelligence, allowed us, in November, to significantly  
21 increase our airstrikes against ISIL to the highest level  
22 since the start of our operations in August 2014. Moreover,  
23 because of improved intelligence and understanding of ISIL's  
24 operations, we've intensified the air campaign against  
25 ISIL's war-sustaining oil enterprise, a critical pillar of

1     ISIL's financial infrastructure. In addition to destroying  
2     fixed facilities, like wells and processing facilities,  
3     we've destroyed nearly 400 of ISIL's oil tanker trucks,  
4     reducing a major source of its daily revenues. There is  
5     more to come, too.

6             We're also improving our capability to eliminate ISIL's  
7     leadership. Since I last appeared before this committee, in  
8     late October, we have removed two more key ISIL figures from  
9     the battlefield; namely, "Jihadi John," an ISIL executioner,  
10    and Abu Nabil, ISIL's leader in Libya. Like previous  
11    actions, these strikes serve notice to ISIL that no target  
12    is beyond our reach.

13            And as our military campaign intensifies on the ground  
14    and in the air, the Defense Department is also developing  
15    more strategic options in the cyberdomain.

16            These, then, are just nine areas of the adaptations  
17    we've made over the past 6 weeks to accelerate this campaign  
18    and to see momentum build. President Obama is committed to  
19    doing what it takes as opportunities arise, as we see what  
20    works, and as the enemy adapts, until ISIL is defeated in a  
21    lasting way. The President has consistently supported the  
22    recommendations from me and General Dunford, and we know he  
23    is prepared for us to bring him more. And we will.

24            At the same time that we're constantly looking to do  
25    more in the fight -- in this fight, the world must do the

1 same. The international community, including our allies and  
2 partners, has to step up before another attack like Paris.  
3 France was galvanized by the attack on its capital, and  
4 intensified its role. Britain has now expanded its air  
5 campaign to strike ISIL in Syria. Italy has deployed its  
6 most elite police units, like the Carabinieri, to assist in  
7 Iraq. Germany is now making additional contributions.  
8 And the Netherlands is actively considering doing more, as  
9 well.

10 But, we all -- let me repeat that -- all must do more.  
11 Turkey must do more to control its often porous border.  
12 Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states joined the air portion of  
13 the campaign in the early days -- only the air part -- but  
14 have since been preoccupied by the conflict in Yemen, both  
15 in the air and on the ground. And just this past week, I  
16 personally reached out to my counterparts in 40 countries  
17 around the world in the coalition and asked them to  
18 contribute more -- in many case, contribute much more -- to  
19 enhancing the fight against ISIL. The types of things I've  
20 requested from our partners include Special Operations  
21 Forces, strike and reconnaissance aircraft, weapons, and  
22 munitions, training assistance, and other items.

23 Meanwhile, as the Chairman noted, Russia, which is  
24 publicly committed to defeating ISIL, has instead largely  
25 attacked opposition forces. It's time for Russia to focus

1 on the right side of this fight.

2 Before I conclude, I'd like to respectfully request the  
3 committee's attention to matters that bear upon our security  
4 and its responsibilities:

5 First, over a month ago, I submitted a request to the  
6 four congressional defense committees, including this one,  
7 to release holds on the final tranche of funds in the Syria  
8 equipping program; that is, some \$116 million. We need  
9 these funds to provide and transport ammunition, weapons,  
10 and other equipment to further enable the progress being  
11 made against ISIL in Syria by partners like the Syrian Arab  
12 Coalition. All four committees have failed to act on that  
13 request. And I ask you to release these holds, urgently.  
14 We should not be impeding the very momentum we are trying to  
15 build.

16 Next is the necessity to fill key vacancies in the  
17 Defense Department's critical leadership positions. I have  
18 appeared before this committee, as noted, six times over the  
19 last 10 months -- four times on the Middle East, and twice  
20 in just the last 6 weeks, on ISIL. While this committee has  
21 held 58 full hearings over the last year, only three have  
22 been confirmation hearings for DOD civilian leaders. DOD  
23 currently has 16 nominees awaiting the constitutional advice  
24 and consent of the Senate. Twelve of these 16 are still  
25 awaiting even a hearing, including our nominees to be

1 Secretary of the Army, the Under Secretaries of each of our  
2 three military departments -- Army, Navy, and Air Force --  
3 and the Under Secretaries of both Intelligence and Personnel  
4 and Readiness. These positions should be filled by  
5 confirmed nominees, especially in a time of conflict. So, I  
6 welcome that the process is now moving, and I urge it to  
7 move quickly for all of our civilian nominees and also for  
8 our senior military nominations that will be made early next  
9 year.

10 Finally, as I conclude, I want to commend this  
11 committee on last month's budget deal, which is the kind of  
12 deal I called for back in March. It was a consequential  
13 agreement for the Nation's security. As current funding for  
14 the government is set to expire, it is vital that the two  
15 houses now conclude work on funding all of the government,  
16 consistent with the budget deal. Now is not the time for  
17 more gridlock.

18 I thank this committee in advance for your efforts,  
19 because funding this budget deal is what our national  
20 security demands, and it sends the right message to our  
21 troops, our allies, and our enemies in this time of broad  
22 global national security challenges, and especially in this  
23 war.

24 Thank you.

25 [The prepared statement of Secretary Carter follows:]

1 Chairman McCain: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In response  
2 -- Mr. Secretary -- in response to your last two points, one  
3 on the funding, we just received that request last week, but  
4 you know very well it's a result of the absolute failure of  
5 the expenditure of what was judged then to be \$43 million  
6 and four or five people were trained. We don't want to  
7 approve of something like that again. We want to -- if you  
8 want that kind of funding to train and equip, we want to  
9 know what the plan is, and we don't want to see a repetition  
10 of the testimony by the head of Central Command who said,  
11 "Well, we have four or five less, and we've spent \$43  
12 million." We have an obligation to the taxpayers.

13 On the nominees, there is four pending before the  
14 United States Senate today, and there is four more who will  
15 be having hearings this afternoon, which takes care of half  
16 of yours.

17 And I'm not going to waste the time of the committee to  
18 go back and forth about threats of vetoes that, in the view  
19 of the majority of this committee, were totally unjustified  
20 on the part of the President, including the failure, still  
21 -- still, despite your appearance in my office with the  
22 President's counterterrorism person, that you were going to  
23 send me a plan, you were going to send this committee a plan  
24 on the closure of Guantanamo. We still haven't gotten that  
25 plan, Mr. Secretary.

1           So, if you're a little bit concerned about a lack of  
2 movement, I've been a little concerned about a lack of  
3 movement on Guantanamo for the last 7 years.

4           Secretary Carter: Right.

5           Chairman McCain: So, I will do what I can to get the  
6 four that are pending before the Senate today confirmed by  
7 the Senate, and I will -- we will be having a hearing this  
8 afternoon on the four additional ones.

9           So --

10          Secretary Carter: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Appreciate  
11 that.

12          Chairman McCain: Thank you.

13          Mr. Secretary, on the 1st of December, before the House  
14 Armed Services Committee, Congressman Forbes asked General  
15 Dunford, quote, "Have we currently contained ISIL?" General  
16 Dunford, "We have not contained ISIL." Mr. Secretary, do  
17 you agree with General Dunford?

18          Secretary Carter: I agree with that General Dunford  
19 said, yes.

20          Chairman McCain: So, if we have not contained ISIL,  
21 how are we to know -- believe that we are succeeding against  
22 ISIL?

23          Secretary Carter: I think that we are building  
24 momentum against ISIL. I'm going to be very careful about  
25 describing the -- I have described the trajectory of that

1 success all around Iraq and Syria, some actions we're taking  
2 in Libya. It's not my principal responsibility, but I met,  
3 yesterday, with the Secretary of Homeland Security, the  
4 Director of the FBI, the Director of National Intelligence,  
5 and other officials, to talk about what we could do more to  
6 strengthen the defense of the homeland, as the Department of  
7 Defense. But, in our principal responsibility, which is to  
8 take the fight to Syria and Iraq, I've described the actions  
9 that we've taken just since --

10 Chairman McCain: And --

11 Secretary Carter: -- I appeared last time, and I think  
12 they are building momentum --

13 Chairman McCain: Thank you. How long do you think  
14 it'll be before we retake Mosul or Raqqa?

15 Secretary Carter: With respect to Mosul, Mr. Chairman,  
16 it is hard to say, because it -- that depends much on the  
17 progress of the Iraqi Security Forces, which I described, in  
18 building themselves into a more capable combat force.

19 With respect to Ramadi, as I described --

20 Chairman McCain: Raqqa. Raqqa. Raqqa.

21 Secretary Carter: Oh, Raqqa. Well, Raqqa, there the  
22 -- and you noted this, yourself, Mr. Chairman -- the Syrian  
23 Kurds to the north have done an excellent job of clearing  
24 their territory. We're going to --

25 Chairman McCain: They're not going to --

1 Secretary Carter: -- work with the Syrian Arabs --

2 Chairman McCain: They're not going to go into Raqqa,  
3 and you and I know that.

4 Secretary Carter: They're not going to go to Raqqa.  
5 No, no, no. No. It's -- the Syrian Arab -- it would be the  
6 Syrian Arabs.

7 Chairman McCain: I guess the point is, Mr. Secretary,  
8 here we are with attacks on the homeland, the United States  
9 of America. We have not contained ISIL. And we have no  
10 timeline -- the timeline I was given when Senator Graham and  
11 I went over there was at least the end of next year before  
12 Mosul, and there is no plan, no strategy, to retake Raqqa.  
13 And I think it's pretty obvious to all that, as long as they  
14 have a caliphate base, then they are able to orchestrate  
15 attacks such as they've successfully achieved in the last  
16 several weeks, whether it be the -- Ankara, Russian  
17 airliner, southern Beirut, Paris, or San Bernardino. So,  
18 here we are with a -- and you described some measures that  
19 are probably very helpful, but with no timeline of which to  
20 take out the caliphate from which there are many things  
21 happening, including, according to news reports, developing  
22 chemical weapons. So -- and this is why I'm really puzzled.

23 This morning, by the way, on one of the news shows,  
24 former head of the United States Army -- Chief of Staff of  
25 the United States Army, General Odierno, said we ought to

1 have American contingent of troops on the ground. And I,  
2 frankly, do not understand the logic in your statement about  
3 -- said, while you certainly have the capability to furnish  
4 a U.S. component in such a ground force, "we've not  
5 recommended, because it would be a significant undertaking."  
6 I agree. "We would have to do it largely by ourselves." I  
7 do not agree. "It would be ceding our comparative  
8 advantage"? We'd be -- "And the meaning -- in the medium  
9 term, it would seem to Americanize the conflicts." Does  
10 somehow -- does anybody really believe that if the United  
11 States struck back against the people that just slaughtered  
12 some American in San Bernardino, that somehow that would  
13 encourage them? What encourages them, Mr. Secretary, is  
14 success. And they have a pretty serious record, here, of  
15 success, just in the last several -- couple of months since  
16 you were here.

17 So, I do not understand why in the world you wouldn't  
18 want, as General Keane, the architect of the surge, the  
19 successful surge, and others, military leaders, including,  
20 this morning, former Chief of Staff of the United States  
21 Army, a small component of American forces with an  
22 international force which could be -- if the United States  
23 had the credibility, could be gathered and then go in and  
24 take out this caliphate. As long as the caliphate -- I know  
25 of no expert who doesn't believe that, as long as this

1 caliphate exists in Raqqa, they're going to be able to  
2 orchestrate attacks and metastasize, and maybe even move to  
3 Libya.

4 So, maybe you can help the committee out again that  
5 this would somehow cede a comparative advantage if we went  
6 in with a large Arab force -- the Turks and Egyptians, even,  
7 and other Sunni nations -- and go in there and take those  
8 people out. There's 20- to 30,000 of them that -- it's --  
9 they are not giants. So -- but, finally --

10 Secretary Carter: May I --

11 Chairman McCain: -- someone's going to have to  
12 convince me that airpower alone, and Special Operations  
13 Forces, are going to succeed in the short term in order to  
14 prevent further things, such as San Bernardino. I'd love to  
15 hear you response.

16 Secretary Carter: A couple of things, Mr. Chairman.

17 First of all, to your main point about more American  
18 forces -- and I would say Special Forces, but others, as  
19 well, that train, advise, assist, and accompany -- they're  
20 not Special Forces -- we are doing --

21 Chairman McCain: I was talking about a multinational  
22 force.

23 Secretary Carter: Well, there, Mr. Chairman, as I  
24 indicated, I, too, wish that particularly the Sunni Arab  
25 nations of the Gulf would do more. And going way back --

1 Chairman McCain: They are willing to do so.

2 Secretary Carter: -- to March --

3 Chairman McCain: -- if there's --

4 Secretary Carter: I've had lengthy conversations with

5 --

6 Chairman McCain: And so have I.

7 Secretary Carter: -- representatives there. Well, I  
8 have to say that I have consistently emphasized to them that  
9 they have a unique role, here, and also, insofar as they're  
10 concerned about Iran, which is another concern they have --  
11 and, by the way, that we have, also -- totally different,  
12 but serious, subject also -- that what I've emphasized to  
13 them is that we don't like it, but the Iranians are in the  
14 game, on the ground. And I very much would like, and we  
15 would very much welcome -- and we've repeatedly said this --  
16 working with those countries on the ground, because we  
17 believe, as you noted, that they have -- would have a  
18 distinctive advantage in a ground fight.

19 With respect to the Europeans, the Europeans have,  
20 generally speaking, offered to do more within their  
21 capabilities and capacities. I will note here -- and there  
22 -- this is uneven across Europe, but, in general, I am quite  
23 concerned with the level of investment that Europe is making  
24 in its militaries and its alliance and partnership therefore  
25 with the United States. There is much more that their

1 economies would enable them to do, and that their history,  
2 as standing up for the same kind of civilized values that we  
3 stand up with, really require of them. And so, while we're  
4 getting more from the Europeans -- and I indicated I've  
5 asked for more -- I'd like there to be still more. So, in  
6 that sense, I completely am with you.

7 I just -- I simply in -- on the basis of my urgent and  
8 persistent consultations with them, am less -- have less  
9 high hopes, perhaps, than you that they would assemble such  
10 a force. We would certainly welcome that.

11 With that, I also don't want to --

12 Chairman McCain: Could I just say that I urgently and  
13 fervently asked you for a strategy that you can tell us when  
14 we're going to take Mosul, when we're going to take Raqqa,  
15 and when we're going to wipe out this caliphate. And  
16 frankly, I have not seen that.

17 General, did you want to add anything?

18 General Selva: Sir, I would add three points.

19 First, I agree completely that defending the homeland  
20 is our top priority.

21 Second, taking the fight --

22 Chairman McCain: That's helpful.

23 General Selva: -- taking the fight to the caliphate is  
24 what is going on today in Iraq and Syria. The combination  
25 of increasing the momentum with the movements in Iraq in

1 Baiji, as well as in Ramadi, and partnering with Sunni --

2 Chairman McCain: And again, General, there is no  
3 timeline for Mosul and Raqqa, which is the basis of the  
4 caliphate.

5 General Selva: Sir, the fight on the ground defines  
6 the progress we will make against the caliphate. We have  
7 put significant pressure on northern Syria. We have taken  
8 -- with Syrian Arab coalition partners, have taken  
9 significant ground in the north and the east of Syria. They  
10 are using the equipment that we have provided to put  
11 pressure on ISIL's main lines of communication between Raqqa  
12 and Mosul. To provide a timeline would deny the fact that  
13 the enemy on the ground gets a vote, but they do not have  
14 freedom of maneuver. They do not have operational freedom  
15 of maneuver, they do not have tactical freedom of maneuver.

16 Chairman McCain: General, they were just able to  
17 orchestrate an attack in San Bernardino, California.

18 My time is long ago expired.

19 Senator Reed.

20 Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

21 Mr. Secretary, we've all come to the conclusion we need  
22 American forces on the ground. The question, very  
23 generically, is how many, and what are they going to do?  
24 This is a unique situation, but we've got some analogies, or  
25 at least examples. One, in Enduring Freedom, we sent in

1 specialized teams of U.S. personnel and -- airpower -- and,  
2 together with local forces, were able to disrupt and then  
3 ultimately defeat the Taliban. In Iraqi Freedom, we sent in  
4 conventional forces, we won a very swift and brilliant  
5 conventional victory, and then were confronted with  
6 instability and counterinsurgency. It would seem to me that  
7 you're tending to favor the former model, which would be to  
8 have specialized troops in there with our airpower, et  
9 cetera, and that the constraining factor right now is the  
10 local indigenous forces on the ground, particularly Arab  
11 forces -- not Kurdish forces, but Arab forces. And I am  
12 told there's about 100, sort of, new Syrian fighters that  
13 have been trained, that are on the ground, that are the  
14 potential. Can you elaborate on those comments?

15 Secretary Carter: I can. First of all, with respect  
16 to the Afghan experience, I agree with your general analysis  
17 of the history of those two incidents. That was a  
18 circumstance, in 2001 and 2002, where we were able, very  
19 rapidly and extremely effectively, to leverage a preexisting  
20 indigenous force -- namely, largely the Northern Alliance --  
21 which we had, over the previous, geez, decade or so, built  
22 up in order to fight the Soviets. And they actually  
23 succeeding at expelling the Soviets from Afghanistan. That  
24 force, that organization, and other organizations of the so-  
25 called Mujahideen in those days, we could quickly link up

1 with again. And, by providing them -- enabling, exactly in  
2 this manner, they would advance. That would cause the  
3 Taliban to expose their positions, and we could cream them  
4 from the air. And so, that was a perfect example -- ideal.  
5 We'd like to replicate that. Of course, in this current  
6 circumstance in Syria and Iraq, we're having to build those  
7 forces, and they don't exist in the same way that they did  
8 in the Northern Alliance.

9 With respect to the new Syrian forces -- and it gets  
10 back to the funding issue -- we did change our approach to  
11 training and equipping Syrian forces. Our early experience  
12 there was disappointing. I've said that. I always told you  
13 I'm going to be very honest about things. That didn't work  
14 out very well, because we were trying to build units from  
15 scratch. And what our -- the new approach -- and by -- the  
16 one we're asking you to fund, and we are providing -- I'm  
17 willing to send up a team today to brief you further on what  
18 we're looking for. But, we really need this agility if  
19 we're going to fight a war, so I'd plead with you to take  
20 the briefings or whatever. We have a reason for requesting  
21 this money. It's different from the old program. We  
22 learned our lesson. We're doing something different, which  
23 is this. We're taking units that have already formed and  
24 have undertaken to combat ISIL. The Syrian Arab coalition  
25 is an example of that. And instead of making -- trying to

1 create a brand new force or recruit a brand new force -- and  
2 then put them, including by being on the ground with them,  
3 but especially equipping them and providing them with  
4 airpower, amplifying their power. And we hope -- and this  
5 gets to the Chairman's question about a timeline for Raqqa  
6 -- the -- that if we make them successful as they move  
7 further south -- remember, now these are Syrian Arabs, not  
8 Kurds -- the Chairman rightly noted wouldn't be appropriate  
9 for us --

10 Senator Reed: Right.

11 Secretary Carter: -- to attack largely Arab Raqqa --  
12 that they and their success will build, so to speak, a  
13 snowball that accumulates more fighters as they go. As that  
14 accumulates and there are more of them, we'll do more in --  
15 to fall in behind them, with the objective, then, of them  
16 taking Raqqa, which would be a very important victory in the  
17 heart of ISIL territory.

18 Senator Reed: Thank you.

19 General, quickly, the command arrangements. General  
20 MacFarland is now the joint commander with operational  
21 control both in Iraq and Syria, I understand. Are you  
22 satisfied, and General Dunford satisfied, that you have the  
23 best framework for command now to integrate all of the DOD  
24 elements and ancillary elements you need?

25 General Selva: Yes, sir. The Joint Task Force command

1 structure in Baghdad that covers both Iraq and Syria is more  
2 than adequate to cover the military maneuver that's required  
3 and to orchestrate the forces that are required, and has the  
4 support of Central Command's headquarters as a oversight and  
5 supporting headquarters.

6 Senator Reed: And they have the flexibility to make  
7 critical decisions in a timely way without sort of second-  
8 guessing up and down the line?

9 General Selva: Yes, sir.

10 Senator Reed: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 Chairman McCain: Senator Sessions.

12 Senator Sessions: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 And I appreciate your remarks. There's a great deal of  
14 frustration, Secretary Carter, and concern that we're  
15 drifting and reacting and not in -- don't have the kind of  
16 plan that will lead to success, number one.

17 Number two, I understand now the President says he  
18 wants an authorization of force. But, because of the  
19 difficulties and bungling I think that we've seen so far,  
20 we're going to have to know what you're going to do, how  
21 you're going to do it, how it's going to be successful.  
22 That is not clear. It's not clear to the American people.  
23 It's not clear to Congress, not clear to our European  
24 allies, our allies in the Middle East, or our enemies. And  
25 that's a problem we've got. It's just very real.

1           Secondly, I think that Secretary Gates was correct to  
2 say we need an overarching strategy for this whole deal with  
3 Islamic extremism in maybe 20, 30, 50 years. And we've used  
4 the word "containment" to deal with that. However, that  
5 does not mean that, in a long-term strategy of containment  
6 of extremism, that we don't have to act decisively and  
7 militarily now.

8           And I just think, and I shared with you, that we're --  
9 I believe the Defense Department is underestimating the  
10 significance of the refugee crisis, the impact it's having  
11 in Europe, the impact it's having in the United States,  
12 what's happening from all this disorder and the flee of  
13 human beings and the deaths that's being caused and the  
14 humanitarian disaster that's out there.

15           So, it seems to me, does it not to you, that a prompt,  
16 decisive action to create safe zones in Syria, where people  
17 don't have to flee their home country, can be kept safe  
18 there, would be positive as a matter of humanity and as a  
19 military possibility?

20           Secretary Carter: Thank you, Senator. I'll begin,  
21 including on the safe zones, and then perhaps ask the Vice  
22 Chairman to add in. He's done a lot of work on that, as  
23 well.

24           I'll just note, with respect to the AUMF, that we have  
25 the -- I'm not a lawyer, but I'm told, and I'm glad,

1 otherwise it would be a problem -- we have the authority,  
2 legal authority, to do what we want to do. And the AUMF, as  
3 I've testified, that the President submitted would also  
4 allow us to do everything we need to do in this campaign.

5 Senator Sessions: Well, just don't blame the Congress  
6 --

7 Secretary Carter: And --

8 Senator Sessions: -- for not rubberstamping it  
9 immediately --

10 Secretary Carter: Yeah. No, I understand --

11 Senator Sessions: -- if we don't understand what the  
12 --

13 Secretary Carter: I think it's okay. In fact, I  
14 didn't even mention it, for just that -- for just that  
15 reason.

16 You're right. And I -- I associate myself with you  
17 about acting decisively. I do recognize that there may be  
18 decades of combating radicalism, in general. But, we need  
19 to go after ISIL in its parent tumor, in Iraq and Syria,  
20 now, and urgently. And so, I associate myself with that  
21 point of view.

22 Refugees is a tragic matter. And, by the way, I --  
23 just a reminder that only about half of other refugees are  
24 actually from Syria. And they are also, importantly, from  
25 Libya, from Afghanistan, from throughout Africa. And while

1 there are women and children and -- caught up in this  
2 circumstance, the great bulk of them are young people,  
3 mostly male, and professionally oriented, who are looking  
4 for work. That's why German companies are at the train  
5 station, recruiting them off the trains for their companies.  
6 That's the reality. But, what does that mean for the  
7 countries from which they come? It's a tremendous talent  
8 drain, as well as a humanitarian issue. So, all the more  
9 reason why in Syria, to the extent that's part of -- a major  
10 part of the refugee crisis, we have to get an end to the  
11 civil war there and get a government that can govern  
12 decently. And Assad's government is not that.

13 With respect to safe zones, we have thought about that.  
14 I've certainly thought about that a great deal. I'll begin  
15 and describe -- the concept of a safe zone would be to  
16 create a patch of Syria that -- wherein people who are  
17 inclined to go there could go there and be protected. They  
18 would need to be protected, because you can foresee that at  
19 least ISIL and other radical groups, and quite possibly  
20 elements of the Assad regime, would undertake to prove that  
21 it wasn't safe. And so, it would have to be made safe, and  
22 that takes us back to the question of who -- what's the --  
23 an appropriate force of that size to protect a zone of that  
24 size? It's -- in our estimates, it's substantial. And  
25 again, I don't see, much as I wish otherwise, anybody

1 offering to furnish that force.

2 I also think we have thought about who might want to  
3 reside in such a zone. I think it would undesirable if it  
4 became a place into which people were pushed, say, from  
5 Turkey or Europe, expelled, so to speak, into this zone. I  
6 don't know what the people who now live in the zone would  
7 think about other people coming into the zone. That would  
8 have to be taken into account -- and whether other people  
9 want to live there.

10 So, it's -- so, we have thought about it. It's  
11 complicated. We have not recommended that, because it's an  
12 undertaking of substantial scale, wherein I -- my judgment,  
13 the costs outweigh the benefits.

14 Let me ask General Selva --

15 Senator Sessions: Just -- before you answer, on -- a  
16 major European Ambassador told me that the Europeans have  
17 recommended that, and the United States has said no. Is  
18 that correct?

19 Secretary Carter: No European defense leader has  
20 indicated a willingness to do that and contribute to a force  
21 to do that.

22 Senator Sessions: Well, I asked him twice. I said,  
23 "So, you've recommended that, and the United States is the  
24 one saying no?" And that's what he said, "Yes."

25 Secretary Carter: I haven't observed that, no.

1 Chairman McCain: Senator McCaskill.

2 Senator McCaskill: Thank you.

3 If you would disagree with any of these statements, I'm  
4 going to summarize a letter that General Austin sent to  
5 Senator King about what is the situation in the fight  
6 against ISIL.

7 Number one, ISIL is losing territory. Correct? I  
8 won't go into all the details that delineate the territory  
9 they've lost, but -- because I don't want to take the time,  
10 but certainly it's factually available to any member of the  
11 committee or any American.

12 Secondly, ISIL is losing leadership. Correct?

13 Secretary Carter: Yes.

14 Senator McCaskill: We've -- we have, in fact, taken  
15 out more than 100 of ISIL's leadership, including the  
16 Special Ops taking out their chief financial officer, where  
17 we gained a great deal of intelligence about what was  
18 funding ISIL. And secondly, air strikes taking out their  
19 online recruiting campaign, the cyber caliphate, and also  
20 the top commander in Libya. Correct?

21 Secretary Carter: That -- that's -- and "Jihadi John,"  
22 the executioner, another one of note. But, there are many,  
23 yes.

24 Senator McCaskill: And we have taken -- and they are  
25 losing funding, correct?

1 Secretary Carter: That is correct.

2 Senator McCaskill: We have -- the coalition airstrikes  
3 have destroyed hundreds of oil transport trucks just in the  
4 last 30 days --

5 Secretary Carter: That's --

6 Senator McCaskill: -- correct?

7 Secretary Carter: -- true.

8 Senator McCaskill: In addition to oil operations  
9 infrastructure that we have taken out with our airstrikes.

10 Secretary Carter: True also.

11 Senator McCaskill: Okay. So, one of our colleagues,  
12 who is not here today, which is interesting, considering  
13 this would be a pretty important hearing if you're running  
14 for President, he has said, quote -- this is Senator Cruz --  
15 has said, "We will utterly destroy ISIS. We will carpet-  
16 bomb them into oblivion. I don't know if sand can glow in  
17 the dark, but we're going to find out."

18 How many women and children would be involved if we  
19 carpet-bombed the areas where ISIS is currently a  
20 stronghold? What are we talking about, in terms of lives  
21 lost of women and children in those areas? Does anybody  
22 have an estimate?

23 Secretary Carter: I -- Senator, I'll let General Selva  
24 speak that. That is, of course, not our approach. And we  
25 are very effective from the air, but we take some --

1 Senator McCaskill: We're surgical.

2 Secretary Carter: -- which is able to be effective.  
3 We're able to be effective, while minimizing collateral  
4 damage.

5 Senator McCaskill: And one of the reasons the  
6 locations we took out was so important is, now we've forced  
7 their transport trucks out into the open, where we can find  
8 them and take them out; whereas, when they're in the city  
9 center, we'd kill thousands of innocent people, correct?

10 General Selva: Senator, our process is to be as  
11 deliberate as possible, as careful as we can, with the  
12 intelligence that we have, and to discriminately strike  
13 targets and avoid civilian collateral damage. That has been  
14 our process since day one. It has proven very effective.  
15 And I -- that's where I would end the comment.

16 Senator McCaskill: And isn't the biggest danger to the  
17 homeland the ability of this extreme jihad viewpoint being  
18 transferred to Americans and them become radicalized and do  
19 what these people did in San Bernardino? Isn't that the  
20 biggest threat to our homeland?

21 General Selva: Senator, it's clear from ISIL's  
22 strategy that their objective is to cause us to engage in  
23 what they believe is an apocalyptic war with the West. And  
24 anything that we do to feed that particular frame of  
25 thinking counters our national security. We have to be very

1 careful about how we prosecute a campaign that appears to be  
2 an indiscriminate attempt to attack ISIL and the population  
3 that surrounds it.

4 Senator McCaskill: If we did an indiscriminate carpet-  
5 bombing of a major area, and killed thousands of women and  
6 children, would you assume that would have some impact on  
7 their ability to recruit misguided barbarians, like this  
8 couple that took out more than a dozen innocent people last  
9 week? I would have to assume it would put their recruiting  
10 on steroids.

11 General Selva: Senator, I'm going to avoid anything  
12 hypothetical. What I would say categorically is, the  
13 process you described as your hypothetical question is not  
14 the way that we apply force in combat. It isn't now, nor  
15 will it ever be.

16 Senator McCaskill: Ever.

17 General Selva: No, ma'am.

18 Senator McCaskill: If we cleared out Raqqa, which I  
19 have no doubt that our military could do, if we could --  
20 cleared our Raqqa or Ramadi, do we have any local force  
21 capable of providing security on the ground in those  
22 locations ongoing?

23 General Selva: Senator, I can't talk about  
24 specifically about Raqqa, because we don't have that kind of  
25 intelligence on Raqqa. In the case of Ramadi, there is a

1 Sunni -- predominantly Sunni police force that is ready to  
2 follow in behind the force that is attempting to take Ramadi  
3 back, and it is the intention of the Iraqi government to put  
4 that police force in place. I don't, at this instant, have  
5 the numbers. I can provide them for you if you'd like them.

6 Senator McCaskill: But, in Raqqa, are we aware of any  
7 force that is available to secure and hold Raqqa if we were  
8 able to take it out, or would we have to stay as long as it  
9 took?

10 General Selva: The forces that we are aware of at this  
11 point are the Syrian democratic forces that are working with  
12 Kurdish partners that are willing to put pressure on Raqqa.  
13 It's not clear that that force is large enough to be the  
14 hold force and the security force that would follow. That  
15 is one of the reasons that we have advocated and gotten  
16 authorities to put Special Ops Forces into Syria to build  
17 that depth of intelligence to understand which forces are  
18 available to put increasing pressure and a hold force into  
19 Raqqa.

20 Senator McCaskill: Thank you very much.

21 Chairman McCain: You don't want to neglect World War  
22 II, General Selva, as far as carpet-bombing is concerned.

23 Senator Sullivan has asked for -- to take precedence  
24 over his colleagues.

25 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 Fix this mic, here. Thanks. Having a mic issue.

2 Mr. Secretary, General, good to see you.

3 You know, I think one of the things that's -- you're  
4 hearing here is a common theme, really from all our  
5 colleagues, is a sense of urgency. So, you're laying out  
6 the strategy. And I think some of the elements that you've  
7 highlighted in your testimony look like they're useful  
8 elements of strategy, but they're -- there's a strong belief  
9 that there's a lack of sense of urgency, here. And I think  
10 one only had to watch the press conference between President  
11 -- with President Obama and President Hollande, and you saw  
12 one leader who was very urgent, he was going around the  
13 world trying to get our allies motivated on this, and you  
14 saw another leader -- unfortunately, it was our President --  
15 was very passive. And I think, no matter what the strategy  
16 is, if there's not engaged American leadership, serious  
17 leadership, that people believe that we're in there and  
18 committed to the strategy, we're not going to be able to do  
19 any of these things. We've talked about an Arab army force.  
20 They're not going to follow unless they believe we're fully  
21 committed. So, I think that's one of the elements of the  
22 frustration that you see among the members on the committee  
23 today.

24 Let me ask you, in terms of strategy. Now, this is a  
25 bit of a difficult question, but let's say that there's

1 another, kind of, San Bernardino event, but maybe much  
2 bigger, in our country, maybe 200 Americans killed, an ISIS-  
3 directed attack on Americans. Would we keep the same  
4 strategy right now, or would we keep the same strategic  
5 patience, as the White House calls it? Assume you had a  
6 crystal ball and you saw that coming 2 weeks from now or 3  
7 weeks from now, where 200 Americans are killed by -- would  
8 you be satisfied that this should be the strategy?

9 Secretary Carter: As far as the military campaign is  
10 concerned, Senator, I just want to say, I share your sense  
11 of urgency. And as far as --

12 Senator Sullivan: But, it doesn't seem like the  
13 President does. And I think that's a real common -- even  
14 members of his own party have indicated that.

15 Secretary Carter: He has encouraged General Dunford  
16 and me, and we have encouraged all of our subordinate  
17 commanders, as was asked -- said before, to propose ways to  
18 accelerate the campaign. And the -- he has approved all the  
19 ones we've proposed so far. We expect to propose more, as I  
20 indicated, and to gather momentum in this campaign.

21 With respect to others following --

22 Senator Sullivan: So, let me ask just the question I  
23 -- if you can address the question I asked. Assume there's  
24 a Paris-like attack, 200 Americans killed. God forbid it  
25 happens, right? None of us want that to happen. But, let's

1 say that happens and it's directed by ISIS. Would you go  
2 back to the President, saying, "Keep the same strategy"?

3 Secretary Carter: Well, look, Senator, if I had more  
4 to recommend to him to accelerate the defeat of ISIL in  
5 Syria and Iraq, I'd be doing it now.

6 Senator Sullivan: But, isn't that the key question?  
7 That we want to make sure we don't have 200 Americans killed  
8 in an ISIS-like attack, so we should be doing everything now  
9 so we don't have to be motivated to do it once it happens?

10 Secretary Carter: I think -- again, on the military  
11 campaign, it is as I said. With respect to homeland  
12 security -- and here, I'd have to refer you to Secretary --

13 Senator Sullivan: But, they're all related --

14 Secretary Carter: -- Johnson -- of course -- and so  
15 forth. I know that you all are considering various  
16 provisions in the law that affect visa waivers and so forth.  
17 I think there are probably some improvements and steps that  
18 can be taken in that direction. And if there are, again, I  
19 would refer you to Secretary Johnson and Director Comey and  
20 Attorney General Lynch and others on that. I --

21 Senator Sullivan: Well, Mr. Secretary, I just -- I  
22 think it's important. We can't wait for an attack -- a big  
23 attack -- we've already just had one -- on our country to  
24 get the President engaged and more urgent. I think that's  
25 the frustration that you're seeing.

1           Let me ask a related question on urgency. Do you  
2 believe that the longer ISIS holds territory, that that  
3 increases risk to the homeland? Do you think that's a --  
4 so, if they hold more territory, and they continue to do so,  
5 does that increase risk to our citizens here at home?

6           Secretary Carter: Whenever a terrorist group finds  
7 safe haven somewhere from which to plot against the United  
8 States, that's a danger to the United States. We've been  
9 pursuing such groups for -- since 9/11, and actually before,  
10 and we have to do that with respect to ISIL today. So, yes,  
11 that's absolutely right.

12          Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

13          Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14          Chairman McCain: Senator Manchin.

15          Senator Manchin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16          And thank you all for being here. I appreciate very  
17 much your service, too.

18          Secretary Carter, I think that, you know, all -- you  
19 can -- the frustration -- I can just speak for the  
20 constituents in West Virginia, all the good people and all  
21 the military that we have from West Virginia. We're just --  
22 they ask me the question, "What's the end game this time?  
23 Is it going to repeat what we've done before? Are we going  
24 to get bogged down for 10 years or more again? And American  
25 men and women in our National Guard people put on the front

1 line, in jeopardy?" So, if ISIS and/or Assad would fall, if  
2 we're able to make that transition, how do we prevent that  
3 being filled by another terrorist group? Because, you know,  
4 we started out with the Taliban we heard about first, then  
5 al-Qaeda, then all the spinoffs of al-Qaeda, and then ISIS  
6 came about. So, they believe that, basically, when you cut  
7 the head off, you can't kill the snake. And that's what  
8 they're concerned about. How do you ever have an end game  
9 that has any type of normalty -- or normalty from that area,  
10 if it's even possible?

11 Secretary Carter: Well, I've been speaking, obviously,  
12 mostly of the military campaign and the urgent need --

13 Senator Manchin: Yeah.

14 Secretary Carter: -- to crush ISIL. You're asking a  
15 -- the -- a very good question. And I said the political  
16 line of effort is fundamental here, because, in order to  
17 have what you're correctly identifying as the end state that  
18 will keep the peace in the long run, there has to be, first  
19 of all, in Syria, a political transition from Assad to a  
20 government that includes some of the opposition -- the  
21 moderate opposition that's been countering him, and  
22 preserves some of the structure of the Government of Syria  
23 so people can have a government there that functions and is  
24 decent.

25 And in Iraq, a government along the lines that Prime

1 Minister Abadi says -- and I believe he's genuine, he's  
2 trying to create there, which is one he -- he calls it, I  
3 think, a decentralized Iraq, namely one in which the  
4 different sectarian elements of Iraqi territory, mainly  
5 Sunnis and Shi'a and Kurds, can remain one state, but have  
6 enough autonomy within their different areas that they're  
7 not going at each other. That's absolutely fundamental in  
8 both --

9 Senator Manchin: Mr. Secretary --

10 Secretary Carter: -- of those places.

11 Senator Manchin: Mr. Secretary, if I could ask this  
12 question. I think the perfect -- have we identified anybody  
13 -- any group that we think's -- can take over if Assad's put  
14 aside to where the -- I mean, are we able to come to an  
15 agreement -- and we have to come to agreement, I would  
16 assume -- with Russia? Because they're much involved in  
17 that. Iran seems to be having an awful lot of input in  
18 that. And are we three going to be able to come to  
19 agreement of a new leadership in that -- that's going to  
20 bring the rebel -- so-called friendly rebels in and everyone  
21 turns their efforts towards ISIL?

22 Secretary Carter: I'd have to refer you to Secretary  
23 Kerry on that matter. And -- but, it -- I think that's  
24 exactly what he's trying to do. And in addition to the  
25 three parties you mentioned -- namely, us and the Russians

1 and the Iranians -- and, of course, the Russians and the  
2 Iranians are on the -- working in the wrong direction at the  
3 moment, so it means getting them turned around. But, also I  
4 might note, all the Gulf -- Sunni Gulf states that we've  
5 talked about, otherwise, would need to be involved, as well.  
6 And that's the end state that will keep the peace in Syria.

7 Senator Manchin: And can you give me -- I understand  
8 that they're currently meeting in Saudi Arabia now, talking  
9 about all of these things that we're talking about right  
10 now. Why hasn't the YPG or the Syrian Kurds been involved  
11 in these talks? Why do you think they haven't -- which has  
12 seemed to be the most effective ground troops we have in  
13 Syria right now -- of them leading the charges, and they're  
14 not even asked to be at the table. Would that be because  
15 we're trying to please the Saudis and not upset the Turks?  
16 Or --

17 Secretary Carter: Can I get back to you on that  
18 question? I don't know where, diplomatically -- I mean, we  
19 are obviously in touch with them. We are -- and Secretary  
20 Kerry knows that and is --

21 Senator Manchin: Sure.

22 Secretary Carter: -- involved with them. I simply --

23 Senator Manchin: Sure.

24 Secretary Carter: -- would have to give you --

25 Senator Manchin: And the other thing I'd --

1 Secretary Carter: -- a considered answer.

2 [The information referred to follows:]

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1           Senator Manchin: -- like to get your opinion on is  
2           that -- you know, we've been talking about, "What do we do  
3           for the visas -- visa waivers?" And I've had a lot of  
4           conversation with different people from that part of the  
5           world that basically have located in West Virginia. And  
6           they understand that we have to have a much tougher, much  
7           stronger vetting process, or -- they don't want to relax  
8           that at all.

9           The other thing they would be acceptable to is  
10          biometric scanning. And I'm thinking biometric scanning --  
11          people can change their name, they can change their  
12          appearance, they can't change who they are. And to me, I  
13          think the American people would be a lot more comfortable if  
14          we go down that path and says, "There will be no more visas  
15          coming to this country unless you've had biometric scanning  
16          and we know who you are." And that's something that's  
17          accepted, I think, in -- is it -- is that something that you  
18          think, in your thought process, would be feasible, we could  
19          do?

20          Secretary Carter: I really would need to defer you to  
21          the Department of Homeland Security and so forth on that,  
22          Senator. Very good question. I just simply don't know a  
23          good answer.

24          Senator Manchin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25          Chairman McCain: Senator Ayotte.

1 Senator Ayotte: I want to thank you both for being  
2 here.

3 General Selva, could you tell us what percentage of  
4 U.S. sorties are returning in the fight right now against  
5 ISIS without dropping munitions?

6 General Selva: Madam Senator, it depends on which day  
7 and which target set we're talking about, but roughly 40  
8 percent come back every day not having struck dynamic  
9 targets, with weapons still aboard.

10 Senator Ayotte: So, let me ask you this. We asked  
11 Central Command recently whether or not the Department of  
12 Defense JTACs are operating outside of operations centers.  
13 And, basically, what we heard back is that they weren't.  
14 And so, I would like to hear from you, Secretary Carter, and  
15 you, General Selva -- I mean, we know that the -- one of the  
16 things that makes our airstrikes even more effective are the  
17 forward air controllers on the ground calling them in. And  
18 what is our position, in fact, on embedding JTACs, whether  
19 it's with the Kurds or Iraqi forces, so that we can more  
20 effectively bomb ISIS and take out the most productive  
21 targets to defeat them?

22 Secretary Carter: First, I'll note a very good memory  
23 I have of your coming to the Pentagon with a number of JTACs  
24 --

25 Senator Ayotte: I did.

1 Secretary Carter: -- a couple of months ago.

2 Senator Ayotte: And I appreciate -- we met with the  
3 JTAC Associations. And thank you for doing that.

4 Secretary Carter: Oh, thank you. It was very  
5 grateful, and they're great people, because they represent  
6 veterans of a great capability. And a -- that's -- we talk  
7 about American comparative advantage, this is one of the  
8 things we are incomparably good at and that is very  
9 effective when we do it.

10 And the answer to your question is yes, we are -- I  
11 want to be careful about what we're doing actually today, as  
12 I speak, but we are doing that, accompanying. And people  
13 who have those -- and, by the way, other skills --  
14 intelligence skills and other skills that allow us to  
15 leverage a local force and make it much more powerful by  
16 bringing in the full weight of America -- America's might  
17 behind it. And it's the JTACs and those kind of skills that  
18 create that connection between a motivated local force and  
19 the might of American power.

20 General Selva, do you want to say anything about JTACs?

21 General Selva: Senator, in areas where we're not able  
22 to accompany to the nearest point of contact, we have  
23 actually trained Syrian Arabs, members of the New Syrian  
24 Forces, as well as our Iraqi partners, to provide the kind  
25 of precision target identification that's necessary. And

1 then we're passing that pack through JTACs to be vetted in  
2 Ops Centers.

3 Senator Ayotte: Well, I'm glad to hear this, because  
4 what we were hearing before is that they were only in the  
5 Ops Centers. And obviously, when possible, getting them at  
6 the battalion level is going to make the difference. So, we  
7 can train all the other people we want, but we know our guys  
8 are the best, and women who do this. And that they're going  
9 to be able to call in these airstrikes. And we've got 40  
10 percent returning. We can increase that percentage  
11 dramatically by having the right information on the ground.

12 One question I've gotten a lot of is -- you know, I  
13 saw, in your testimony, Secretary Carter, that we've taken  
14 out 400 ISIS fuel trucks at this point. And I appreciated  
15 the report that there were 116 of those taken out with the  
16 help of A-10s. But, why did it take so long for us to go  
17 after assets like the fuel trucks, knowing where they were?  
18 And I think there's a lot of people that have asked that.  
19 And are we going to be more aggressive in really going after  
20 these assets, going forward?

21 Secretary Carter: Yes, we're going to be more  
22 aggressive, but -- and what made it possible was  
23 intelligence that we didn't have before. And that is what  
24 allowed us to identify those parts of the oil infrastructure  
25 that are being used to fund ISIL. And we greatly increased

1 our insight into that infrastructure in recent months. And  
2 this is one of the ways that, as our intelligence, which I  
3 have to say, when I started out, had a lot of improvement to  
4 be done in -- there, in terms of collection and graininess  
5 of data and so forth -- is getting a lot better. And that  
6 is also a huge enabler. Because when those JTACs call in  
7 airstrikes, it's based upon an intelligence foundation.  
8 That's getting -- that is what made the critical difference  
9 in our ability to go after the energy infrastructure --

10 Senator Ayotte: So, I don't want to -- I don't want to  
11 interrupt, but I need to, since my time is almost up, and a  
12 really important topic before we leave, and that's Iran.  
13 We've now been informed that Iran has made another missile  
14 test, on November 21st. We know that previously they made a  
15 missile test on October 10th, in violation of existing U.N.  
16 resolutions. And, as far as I can tell, in raising this  
17 with the administration, nothing has been happening. No  
18 response. And these are certainly -- our own Ambassador to  
19 the U.N. has said the October 10th, clear violation of the  
20 U.N. resolution. You and I have talked, Secretary Carter,  
21 about the importance of stopping them from having ICBM  
22 capability. Yet, they continue to test, in violation of  
23 U.N. resolutions. What's our response?

24 Secretary Carter: Well, what we're doing, in the  
25 Defense Department -- and you may remember, we discussed

1 this shortly after the nuclear deal was made with Iran --  
2 is, basically, we continue to deter Iran to counter its  
3 malign influence, to have a military presence in the region,  
4 which is oriented not only toward the urgent need to defeat  
5 ISIL in its homeland, but we also have to remember we need  
6 to deter and counter Iran, as well.

7 And, as far as its ballistic missile program is  
8 concerned, as you know, we're making some improvements in  
9 our -- both qualitative and quantitative -- in our missile  
10 defense system. That's principally oriented towards North  
11 Korea at the moment, but it's also a capability that will be  
12 relevant against Iran, in the unfortunate event which --  
13 sometime in the future they were able, as we discussed  
14 earlier, to field an ICBM.

15 On the specific matter of this missile test, I'd refer  
16 you to the U.S./U.N. or our -- or the State Department on  
17 that. But, on the military side, we are continuing  
18 unchanged in our need to deter and counter Iranian malign  
19 influence in the region.

20 Senator Ayotte: Let me just say this. I'm all for --  
21 I've been long supporting enhancing our missile defense  
22 system in this country, but there already are existing U.N.  
23 resolutions that they're in violation of, that -- in testing  
24 these missiles. And if we don't respond to their violations  
25 in a very forceful way, then this agreement -- we might as

1 well -- you know, this -- tear this JCPOA up, because it  
2 doesn't matter, because this issue is already a  
3 demonstration of them really backing off on international  
4 commitments with this agreement pending.

5 Chairman McCain: Before I recognize Senator Donnelly,  
6 Mr. Secretary, you may want to correct the record. We all  
7 knew those fuel trucks were moving back and forth. We've  
8 seen them. We knew it. A decision was not made by the  
9 White House to attack them. I think you may want to correct  
10 the record, because I certainly knew --

11 Secretary Carter: Well, I can --

12 Chairman McCain: -- that the fuel trucks were --

13 Secretary Carter: Not a matter of correction at all.  
14 I can clarify, if you -- if that would help.

15 The -- that is the case. And the -- what the air  
16 commanders were able to do is identify those trucks -- and  
17 in a classified setting, I can describe exactly how that  
18 information was obtained -- which were directly supporting  
19 ISIL. We have and continue to try to withhold attacks upon  
20 that part of the general infrastructure -- energy,  
21 electricity, water, et cetera -- that is also necessary for  
22 the people of Syria. And we're trying to peel off that  
23 which is -- which ISIL uses in command and controls for its  
24 own revenue source. We are now able to make that  
25 distinction, which is what enabled the airstrikes, Chairman.

1           And with regard to where that intelligence came from  
2 and so forth, I'd be happy to have somebody come up and tell  
3 you in a classified manner.

4           Chairman McCain: I'll be glad to. But, I repeat, we  
5 knew those fuel trucks were moving back and forth. We saw  
6 them. And -- through ISR -- and the decision was not made  
7 in the White House to attack them or not. You can't tell me  
8 they were moving all that stuff back and forth for over a  
9 year and we didn't know about it. I mean, it's just not  
10 possible, given our technologically -- capabilities. But,  
11 I'll be glad to hear additional information. But, I was  
12 told directly, in Iraq, that we didn't attack them because  
13 the decision had not been made to attack them, and they  
14 didn't want to harm anybody. So, I'll be glad to call those  
15 people a liar that briefed me that were doing those attacks.

16           Senator Donnelly.

17           Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18           Mr. Secretary, you said before that none of the  
19 European defense ministers has offered to provide troops to  
20 creating a safe zone. Have you asked any of them to provide  
21 troops for creating a safe zone and to provide an area for  
22 Syrian refugees?

23           Secretary Carter: We've talked to them about all kinds  
24 of capabilities. And as I indicated --

25           Senator Donnelly: Did you ask any of them to provide

1 troops to help create a safe zone?

2 Secretary Carter: Well, we believe that a -- the costs  
3 outweigh the benefits --

4 Senator Donnelly: So, you --

5 Secretary Carter: -- of a safe zone. So, that is --

6 Senator Donnelly: So, it's safe to say --

7 Secretary Carter: -- not something --

8 Senator Donnelly: -- we did not ask them.

9 Secretary Carter: We -- I have not asked them for  
10 forces for that undertaking. I have asked them persistently  
11 for forces of all kinds for undertakings where we think the  
12 benefits outweigh the costs. And there are many of those.

13 Senator Donnelly: And what are the answers that you're  
14 getting from the French, from the English, from the Saudis,  
15 from the Jordanians?

16 Secretary Carter: It varies. But, just to -- the  
17 French, as I mentioned, were truly galvanized. And I spoke  
18 several times to the French Defense Minister. He came here  
19 to the United States. We've talked. And they're doing a  
20 great deal more. And I'm sorry about the circumstances that  
21 galvanized them --

22 Senator Donnelly: My expectation --

23 Secretary Carter: -- but I appreciate the help.

24 Senator Donnelly: -- is that if you asked the French  
25 Defense Minister for troops for a safe zone, he would

1 probably offer them.

2           Additionally, what I'm trying to find out is -- I  
3 believe also, like you and like others, when ISIS holds  
4 ground, it makes it more dangerous for our own country,  
5 because they have a safe haven to work out of. And so, I  
6 have confidence that we're working in Iraq to move them out  
7 of Iraq. And then we look at Syria. And so, we talk about  
8 100 people in training. They have 20,000 on the ISIS side.  
9 How do we get to Raqqa, and when do we get to Raqqa, when we  
10 are training 100 people? Where do the other people come  
11 from?

12           Secretary Carter: The people that we are now not only  
13 training -- in fact, not even principally training, but  
14 equipping and enabling, are Syrian Arab forces that are  
15 working with the Kurdish YPG in the northern part of Syria.  
16 They are prepared to advance. They already have, as I  
17 indicated, advanced south. And we are enabling them. We're  
18 doing more to enable them. And as they do more, we will do  
19 yet more to enable them.

20           Senator Donnelly: Do we have any timeline --

21           Secretary Carter: And they're the right force to do  
22 it, if I may say, because they're Syrian Arabs.

23           Senator Donnelly: Well, you know, I was in Saudi  
24 Arabia, and they said, "We want to put in troops to help."  
25 Maybe they told you different. Maybe they wouldn't actually

1 do it. But, they said they want to put in troops to help.  
2 King Abdullah, in Jordan, said, "We want to put in troops to  
3 help." So, you have Sunnis in Jordan, you have Sunnis in  
4 Saudi Arabia who want to put in troops to move the ball to  
5 head toward Raqqa. So, you have other groups that want to  
6 help, as well. Do you not want their help, or do you not  
7 think that they --

8 Secretary Carter: We welcome everything King Abdullah  
9 is doing, and are very grateful to it. And, as I said, I've  
10 spoken to the Saudis, and I remind you that the -- that we  
11 had a -- the Gulf Cooperation Council leaders to Camp David,  
12 back in -- geez, that was -- I think it was April or so --  
13 and specifically talked to them about the creation of a  
14 Sunni-Arab combined force. And so -- and that has not --

15 Senator Donnelly: So, why can't we --

16 Secretary Carter: -- materialized among them.

17 Senator Donnelly: -- get that off the ground? And  
18 isn't that the force that gets to Raqqa?

19 Secretary Carter: Well, it depends on -- from one to  
20 another. And I would prefer to speak about part of this --  
21 these things privately.

22 Senator Donnelly: That's fine.

23 Secretary Carter: But, one thing that's very clear, in  
24 the case of the Saudis, just to -- since you mentioned them,  
25 has been the Yemen situation, which has preoccupied a lot of

1 the time and energy of their forces, as well as their  
2 leadership.

3 Senator Donnelly: I also spoke with some of the Sunni  
4 tribal leaders today. They still have extraordinary  
5 humanitarian needs. Do we have a plan to work to meet  
6 those? Because they still have people who are starving.

7 Secretary Carter: Yeah, there is. It's a -- State  
8 Department, AID, and various international donors are part  
9 of that. I can't speak to that authoritatively. Secretary  
10 Kerry could. But, it's important to note, from the military  
11 point of view, from our point of view, because it's an  
12 important part of holding territory once it's taken. To  
13 give you an example, when Tikrit was retaken, it was  
14 important that order be kept, that services be restored, and  
15 that humanitarian assistance be rendered. And that's why  
16 people are moving back into Tikrit --

17 Senator Donnelly: I apologize, Mr. Secretary. I have  
18 a vote I have to get to. I just want to finish up by saying  
19 this. It is strongly believed, by me and many others, that,  
20 as long as Raqqa is held and other areas are held, that  
21 dramatically increases the chance of another attack in our  
22 country. When we ask, "When are we going to get to Raqqa  
23 and move them out?" -- it's not because we're trying to find  
24 a date, it's because it's extraordinarily dangerous to the  
25 citizens of this country that they're there. So, the sooner

1 the better that we clear up the clutter with the Saudis, the  
2 Jordanians, and move on that city.

3 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 Secretary Carter: Amen.

5 Chairman McCain: Senator Fischer.

6 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 Mr. Secretary, you mentioned the targeting force. What  
8 impact do you expect that force to have on the battlefield?

9 Secretary Carter: I'm sorry. Well, I'm hoping it has  
10 a very great effect. That's what it's designed to do. I  
11 believe it will. The -- it -- the -- we envision a variety  
12 of missions for -- I want to be careful what I say here --  
13 that range from interdicting individuals on the move,  
14 leaders on the move, to the kind of -- well, let me give you  
15 two examples where we've already employed this technique,  
16 because, again, I want to be very careful about operational  
17 security here. This is a no-kidding, you know, force  
18 that'll be doing important things. But, to -- I think it  
19 would help everyone to understand. If you remember the raid  
20 that killed Abu Sayyaf, that's an example of the kind of  
21 thing that this force could do. Another one was the freeing  
22 of 70 prisoners -- ISIL prisoners in which a very heroic  
23 action was taken by a soldier, Joshua --

24 Senator Fischer: Correct.

25 Secretary Carter: -- Wheeler --

1 Senator Fischer: We've seen --

2 Secretary Carter: So, there's an example of the kinds  
3 of things that can be done. And it puts the leadership on  
4 notice. It'll get valuable intelligence. It'll free  
5 people, in the case of that kind of mission. So, there's a  
6 variety of missions, and I --

7 Senator Fischer: Correct. I -- if I can, we've seen  
8 those two raids in the last year and a half. Would you  
9 anticipate that we're going to see a greater frequency with  
10 this force in the days and weeks and months ahead?

11 Secretary Carter: That's absolutely the intent,  
12 Senator.

13 Senator Fischer: And I would hope we could have  
14 general conversations -- I realize the sensitivity of this  
15 force, but I would hope we could have general conversations  
16 about them so we could lay out truly what the goals are when  
17 we're talking about the force. Do you have any immediate  
18 goals in mind for this targeting force that you can speak  
19 about in a -- general terms at this point?

20 Secretary Carter: In general terms, they fall in the  
21 categories I described: intelligence-gathering,  
22 interdiction of leadership, key nodes, facilitation -- and  
23 certainly, for you, we can discuss more in a classified  
24 setting also. But, that's the kind of thing that -- it's  
25 actually a really -- to me, to all of us, a very flexible

1 and potent tool. And so, it would learn from experience.  
2 By using it, one raid builds on another. You know, the Abu  
3 Sayyaf raid built on things, because we gained  
4 understanding, as has been reported.

5 Senator Fischer: And you said that we will do more of  
6 what works, going forward. So, I hope, in a more classified  
7 setting, you can lay out those goals so that we can have  
8 something to measure the success or failure of these raids  
9 by them in the future.

10 I was also interested in knowing, as the number of  
11 raids are increasing, will General MacFarland receive any  
12 authority to help to plan and order the -- that these raids  
13 be carried out, then?

14 Secretary Carter: Yeah, General MacFarland is in  
15 overall charge of the campaign there. I've made that very  
16 clear. And I have great confidence in him, and it's why I  
17 created that role, so that we would have one senior leader  
18 in charge of the entire campaign, covering both Syria and  
19 Iraq. And that is General MacFarland, who has -- who is  
20 extremely experienced.

21 Senator Fischer: Will he be able to approve those  
22 raids by himself, or will he need to come to you or the  
23 President?

24 Secretary Carter: In many cases, this would be  
25 something that he and General -- I think General Austin,

1 remember, also in the chain of command -- otherwise, when --  
2 if they come to me for approval of things that they think  
3 require my approval, that's fine, too. But, there will, and  
4 there has to be, a certain amount of delegation of  
5 authority, here, so that the -- because, for one thing, one  
6 expects that raids build upon themselves, and so you can't  
7 -- you're going to want to strike again after you're struck  
8 once, on the basis of what you've learned from the first  
9 strike. So, we need to have some significant authority in  
10 there.

11 Senator Fischer: When you said it -- it's "fine, too"  
12 if they come to you, do you -- don't you have that laid out  
13 what a --

14 Secretary Carter: We do.

15 Senator Fischer: -- certain plan would be that would  
16 require --

17 Secretary Carter: Yes, we --

18 Senator Fischer: -- the General, then, to come to you?

19 Secretary Carter: Yes, we do. It's based on their  
20 judgment about whether approval at my level is required.  
21 And that's as -- I mean, that's generally true. It's  
22 perfectly appropriate in this case.

23 Senator Fischer: Thank you.

24 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 Senator Reed [presiding]: On behalf of Chairman

1 McCain, let me recognize Senator King.

2 Senator King: Thank you.

3 Before beginning my questions, several references have  
4 been made to a letter, which I received in early November  
5 from General Austin, which laid out a series of steps that  
6 had been taken. I'd like to submit that letter for the  
7 record, please.

8 Senator Reed: Without objection.

9 Senator King: Thank you.

10 [The information referred to follows:]

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25 Senator King: Mr. Secretary, it strikes me that this

1 is an exceedingly complex challenge. I guess that's pretty  
2 obvious. But, part of the problem is, we want to defeat  
3 ISIS, but we want to do it in such a way that doesn't  
4 propagate their ideology around the Muslim world. And that  
5 really makes it very difficult. I think the San Bernardino  
6 attack is a good example. There's no evidence that I've  
7 heard that that attack was directed by ISIS. Instead, these  
8 people were self-radicalized and took it upon themselves to  
9 perform these heinous acts.

10 The question is, How do we keep moderate Muslims, the  
11 vast majority of the 1.6 billion Muslims in the world, from  
12 falling into the ISIS trap? And ISIS has made it clear that  
13 part of their strategy is to provoke us to Westernizing this  
14 conflict and making it a war of America and the West against  
15 Islam, and thereby pushing heretofore moderate Muslims in  
16 their direction. So, this gets to the question of, How do  
17 we take Raqqa, for example? And my understanding is that  
18 there's no inclination to use a large contingent of U.S.  
19 troops, but there is a recognition, as the President has  
20 already acknowledged, that there are places for U.S. troops  
21 in a Special Forces kind of setting. Is this the kind of  
22 calculation that you're making?

23 Secretary Carter: That's exactly correct, yes.

24 Senator King: How do we -- the gap in the strategy, it  
25 seems to me, from the beginning -- and I say "gap," that's

1 not a criticism, that's just the fact -- is, Where do we get  
2 ground troops in Syria? Ground troops are available in --  
3 Arab ground troops, Muslim ground troops, are available in  
4 Iraq, the Iraqi Security Forces and the Peshmerga. In  
5 Syria, there's not an available force. And that's why, it  
6 seems to me, the whole issue of getting rid of Assad is a  
7 key part of this calculation, that Assad is the lightning  
8 rod that, in effect, created ISIS, in part. And if we can  
9 work with other parties, particularly Russia, to move Assad  
10 off the stage, then you've got an Arab army, a Muslim army,  
11 in Syria. It's the -- all of the opposition, except perhaps  
12 al-Nusra, and the Syrian army. That's why, it seems to me,  
13 that's a key part of it. But, the question that our  
14 colleagues are asking is: time. We -- somehow we've got to  
15 accelerate the timetable. We can't wait years for Assad to  
16 leave and we turn the guns of the opposition and the Syrian  
17 army on ISIL. Would you -- do you share that --

18 Secretary Carter: I do. I mean, I -- as you can hear,  
19 I'm all for urgency and acceleration of the military  
20 campaign. And I'd like to see that, too, on the political  
21 side. It's trickier. Secretary Kerry's trying to work  
22 toward that end. But, it is exactly as you say. If we  
23 could get a political transition that brought the Syrian  
24 armed forces, that part of which it would be appropriate to  
25 carry forward into a new Syria, plus the moderate

1 opposition, you'd have a force that could both clear Syrian  
2 territory of radicals and eliminate the civil war, which is  
3 what fuels the violent -- this extremism, in the first place  
4 --

5 Senator King: Do --

6 Secretary Carter: -- and have a governance of Syria  
7 that the Syrian people deserve.

8 Senator King: But, there's one piece of this -- and  
9 you've mentioned it -- you listed a long series of things  
10 that we needed to do, and, at the very end, you said,  
11 "information." And that's where we're losing right now. I  
12 heard a figure recently that ISIS posts something like  
13 90,000 posts a day in social media. And just reading a  
14 piece about a young man in the U.S., 17 years old, who found  
15 this ISIS community online, and he's being encouraged to  
16 move forward. And I know it's not in the Department of  
17 Defense, but we -- this country has to do a much better job,  
18 it seems to me, of countering the story that ISIS is telling  
19 to attract young people across the world. We're not only  
20 engaged in a military war, here, we're engaged in a war of  
21 ideas. And right now, I think we're -- it's somewhere close  
22 to a stalemate on the military side, but we're losing the  
23 war of ideas.

24 Secretary Carter: May I just note, Senator, that it is  
25 for that very reason that yesterday I got together with the

1 Secretary of Homeland Security, the Director of the FBI, the  
2 Director of National Intelligence, and we were talking  
3 exactly about that, how -- what -- the information war.  
4 Now, you're right, it's not principally a defense thing. We  
5 don't operate here at home. We do operate in the  
6 cyberdomain. I alluded to that. And, you know, we're at  
7 war, and we have authorities to use our Cyber Command in  
8 this case, and are identifying opportunities to do that. At  
9 the same time, I just -- I have to say, the FBI, the  
10 Department of Homeland Security, and the Director of  
11 National Intelligence are working intensely -- they were  
12 before San Bernardino, they're working now -- and hence the  
13 -- on exactly this question of these people who are --

14 Senator King: If we --

15 Secretary Carter: -- sitting with a keyboard somewhere  
16 in the United States.

17 Senator King: If we win a town in Syria and lose  
18 10,000 kids in France or Belgium or Florida or Ohio, that's  
19 not victory. I'd hope, in the councils of war, you will  
20 continue to press that point of view.

21 Secretary Carter: Will do.

22 Senator King: Thank you.

23 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Senator Reed: Thank you.

25 On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator Wicker, please.

1           Senator Wicker: Thank you very much.

2           Mr. Secretary, always good to have you back. And I do  
3 echo what Senator McCain said, and I hope you'll come back  
4 more often and share with us your thoughts.

5           Let me let you be explicit on the issue of Bashar  
6 Assad, because I hear and I read in the paper -- for  
7 example, December 7, Bloomberg said, "Obama no longer seems  
8 sure Assad should go." Is that true? Do you believe that  
9 Mr. Assad should explicitly be removed from power? Or is  
10 there a growing feeling that perhaps we ought to team up  
11 with Assad?

12           Secretary Carter: I think -- and I don't want to speak  
13 for him, but I think what Secretary Kerry is trying to  
14 engineer is the departure of Assad in a way that everyone  
15 can support, which, by the way, includes the Russians, who  
16 have a lot of influence with Assad, so there -- it's  
17 important to see if you can get them on the right side of  
18 history, here -- and that accomplishes that -- and this is  
19 important, quite apart from the atrocities that Assad has  
20 committed -- in a way that removes him while the structures  
21 of the Syrian state are still relatively intact, because, to  
22 get back to what Senator King was saying a moment ago, we do  
23 want -- we do need there to be, after Assad, an -- a  
24 Government of Syria that is inclusive, that involves the  
25 forces that have been fighting each other, fighting ISIL and

1 governing the territory decently. That is exactly the  
2 transition that Secretary Kerry is working --

3 Senator Wicker: Much like we needed in Iraq after the  
4 successful invasion. I think I understand what you're  
5 saying. But, let's get your testimony on this. To your  
6 knowledge, is the President still resolute in saying that  
7 Assad should go and that a solution is not that we should  
8 begin to work with him?

9 Secretary Carter: No, I -- a political transition in  
10 which Assad leaves power and is replaced by a more inclusive  
11 form of government is the outcome that we're trying to --

12 Senator Wicker: And a political solution in which  
13 Assad stays in power, is that acceptable to you?

14 Secretary Carter: I think what -- no, Secretary --  
15 what Secretary --

16 Senator Wicker: Is it acceptable to the President?

17 Secretary Carter: Well, what Secretary Kerry is trying  
18 to arrange is --

19 Senator Wicker: I understand what your testimony just  
20 was. I'm -- but, I'm wondering -- we need to get this on  
21 the record, and Americans need an answer to this. Is the  
22 President steadfast in having a goal that includes Mr. Assad  
23 being removed from power?

24 Secretary Carter: Well, that's the path that he has --  
25 that's the kind of political transition that he has

1 Secretary of -- Kerry seeking, yes.

2 Senator Wicker: Would you agree that it would be very  
3 difficult to convince Syrian rebels to fight only ISIS if --  
4 and not Assad -- if that were a direction in which the  
5 administration should --

6 Secretary Carter: We actually have experience in  
7 exactly that matter, and --

8 Senator Wicker: And what is your experience?

9 Secretary Carter: The experience is that they're --  
10 that it's easier to find fighters who are intent upon  
11 fighting Assad than to find ones that are intent upon  
12 fighting ISIL.

13 Senator Wicker: Do you believe Mr. Assad should be  
14 removed from power?

15 Secretary Carter: Yeah. I think that to have a decent  
16 government there that is in -- that brings the moderate  
17 opposition into governance there is going to require the  
18 departure of Assad. The how, the when, the where, and so  
19 forth, is something that Secretary Kerry is negotiating.

20 Senator Wicker: Yeah, I --

21 Secretary Carter: You know, the --

22 Senator Wicker: -- I understand.

23 Secretary Carter: -- civil war has gone on a long  
24 time, and he's been a lightning rod in that civil war. And  
25 if we want to get it behind us and defeat ISIL and get peace

1 in Syria, I think that's going to be necessary, yeah.

2 Senator Wicker: Well -- very good. I may try to  
3 follow up with some questions on the record there.

4 Let me ask you about no-fly zones. I understand we've  
5 had some testimony today about safe zones. And I'll ask you  
6 first, Mr. Secretary, and then if you want to ask the  
7 General to add his thoughts, that would be good.

8 Safe zone -- I mean, no-fly zones would allow Syrians  
9 to stay in their own country instead of seeking to become  
10 refugees anywhere. They would allow Syrian opposition  
11 leaders to exercise sovereignty over Syrian territory. Do  
12 you and our coalition partners have the pilots, personnel,  
13 and equipment required to establish no-fly zones? And, in  
14 particular -- I think maybe earlier, while I was out of the  
15 room, there was an attempt to get you to discuss the  
16 coalition partners that might be able to enforce this. And  
17 do you believe President Putin would challenge our air  
18 dominance there and the clearly defined no-fly zones that we  
19 would be seeking to enforce?

20 First you, Secretary Carter.

21 Secretary Carter: Sure. On no-fly zones, that's  
22 something that I've discussed for the committee before.  
23 That's not a step we have recommended -- again, because the  
24 benefits don't warrant it, in light of the costs. I can  
25 explain more, but I'm going to ask General Selva, who's done

1 a lot of work on that kind of thing, to comment further.

2 And with respect to the Russians, also, he can comment  
3 on the Memorandum of Understanding there, and it -- and the  
4 working relationship we have with the Russian military in  
5 the air in -- over Syria right now.

6 Senator Wicker: Fair enough.

7 General?

8 General Selva: Senator, we have the military capacity  
9 to impose a no-fly zone. The question that we need to ask  
10 is, Do we have the political and policy backdrop with which  
11 to do so? And I don't mean that in the case of our  
12 government, but in the case of the governments who would  
13 challenge the no-fly zone. And so, if we're asking the  
14 question, Could we do it? -- the answer is yes. Are we  
15 willing to engage the potential of a conflict -- a direct  
16 conflict with the Syrian Integrated Air Defense System or  
17 Syrian forces, or, by corollary, a miscalculation with the  
18 Russians, should they choose to contest the no-fly zone?  
19 And those are the questions that have been posed, asked, and  
20 answered.

21 And so, military capacity, we have the capacity to do  
22 this. We have not recommended it, because the political  
23 situation on the ground, and the potential for  
24 miscalculation and loss of American life in the air in an  
25 attempt to defend the no-fly zone, don't warrant the no-fly

1 zone, given the fact that, on the ground, the forces would  
2 still contest the safe zone on the ground.

3 Senator Wicker: Well, I'm way over my time, but let me  
4 just say that the Secretary mentioned the cost and benefit.  
5 And when I think of the benefit that we could have had in  
6 the United States not to be faced with this refugee crisis,  
7 the benefit to Europe if we had given Syrians a place where  
8 they could live in their own country safely, away from these  
9 barrel bombs and the -- and these attacks on civilians, it  
10 just seems to me that the benefit of doing so, even now, but  
11 certainly having done so over time, would have been so  
12 enormous that it would have justified whatever cost we might  
13 have had to risk.

14 So, thank you very much for your answers.

15 And I appreciate the Chair indulging me.

16 Chairman McCain [presiding]: General, I must say, it's  
17 one of the more embarrassing statements I've ever heard from  
18 a uniformed military officer, that we are worried about  
19 Syria and Russia's reaction to saving the lives of thousands  
20 and thousands of Syrians who are being barrel-bombed and  
21 massacred. So far, 240,000 of them. Remarkable  
22 performance.

23 Senator Hirono.

24 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 Thank you, Mr. Secretary and General Selva, for being

1 here.

2 Mr. Secretary, you noted in your testimony that Russia,  
3 which has publicly committed to defeating ISIL, has instead  
4 largely attacked opposition forces. And you said, "It's  
5 time for Russia to focus on the right side of this fight."  
6 What's it going to take to have Russia turn its attention to  
7 fighting ISIL rather than propping up Assad?

8 Secretary Carter: Well, I can't speak for the  
9 Russians, but I have spoken to the Russians, and I have  
10 explained to them why their actions are wrongheaded and  
11 counterproductive even from the point of view of their own  
12 security, because it fuels the civil war in Syria, which  
13 we've discussed, which is the underlying cause of the  
14 radicalization that gave rise to ISIL, which is the very  
15 thing they fear. So, their actions are -- as I -- the  
16 phrase I've used is "pouring gasoline on the civil war in  
17 Syria."

18 Senator Hirono: So -- I'm sorry, Mr. Secretary -- so,  
19 is Russia fully engaged in the discussions to end the --  
20 with us, with Secretary Kerry and the -- some of the other  
21 parties that are -- that need to be at the table, in ending  
22 the civil war in Syria? Are they fully engaged in that?

23 Secretary Carter: I don't want to speak for Secretary  
24 Kerry in that regard -- fully engaged. They are certainly  
25 engaged. He's talking to them along the lines that we

1 discussed, along with a range of other parties that will be  
2 necessary to a final political transition, here.

3 Senator Hirono: I think there are a lot of people who  
4 agree with the assessment that ending the civil war in Syria  
5 is one of the keys in enabling the United States, as well as  
6 Russia and our other partners, some 60-plus, to focus on  
7 defeating ISIL. I think that that is generally  
8 acknowledged, and I certainly agree with that.

9 One of the advantages that ISIL has its ability to  
10 recruit young men and women and influence actors around the  
11 world through its online media campaign. And San Bernardino  
12 is just the most recent example. In your opinion, how can  
13 we counter this or overcome the effectiveness of ISIL's  
14 online presence? And I realize that this is an issue that  
15 should be addressed, not just by -- perhaps not even mainly  
16 by you, but FBI and the Director of National Intelligence,  
17 Homeland Security, with whom you met. So, what do we have  
18 to do to debase ISIL's ability and its success in motivating  
19 lone wolves in our country and all across the world in  
20 committing terrorist acts?

21 Secretary Carter: Well, you're right. Here at home,  
22 the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security and Director  
23 of National Intelligence are working along those lines at --  
24 to identify those who are self-radicalizing or plotting  
25 using the Internet. And I wouldn't want to speak for them.

1 They're -- I can only tell you that they're intent upon  
2 solving that problem.

3 There is a role, I would say, not in that fight, but it  
4 is related to the fight we are waging, because it's why I  
5 think it's important to strike at and eliminate the parent  
6 tumor in Syria and Iraq, because that's part of the creation  
7 of the narrative that fuels the Internet, which fuels even  
8 lone wolves, and also, where we are able to, to eliminate  
9 people who are trying to recruit our people.

10 I think the Chairman referred, earlier, to the  
11 elimination of Junaid Hussain, which I reported to you when  
12 I was last up here. He was somebody who was trying to  
13 recruit Americans to attack Americans. No doubt about it.

14 So, there are some things even we can do -- well, not  
15 only "even we" -- we can do as the Department of Defense to  
16 assist in this. But, this -- a big effort by Director Comey  
17 and Secretary Johnson and the Director of National  
18 Intelligence, the Director of Central Intelligence, on this  
19 effort. Now, it began well before San Bernardino, but San  
20 Bernardino illustrates why this is no-kidding important  
21 thing to do.

22 Senator Hirono: Would you say that debasing the  
23 ability of ISIL to motivate lone wolves -- what -- people  
24 who don't even have any direct contact with ISIL, but who  
25 have access to their ideology and through the Internet --

1 that this is more of a whole-of-government approach that we  
2 need to take that includes law enforcement and -- local law  
3 enforcement as well as people in the community?

4 Secretary Carter: Yes. This whole campaign really is  
5 a whole-of-government campaign. Has to be. In today's  
6 world, all these pieces need to be connected.

7 Senator Hirono: Mr. Chairman, my timing -- the timer  
8 is not working, so I have absolutely no idea how much time I  
9 have left. Well, in that case, I will stop here.

10 [Laughter.]

11 Chairman McCain: -- I'd say to the Senator.

12 Senator Hirono: I just have one last question, that --  
13 we talk about defeating ISIL. And, really, what does that  
14 look like? I mean, what does defeating ISIL look like?

15 Secretary Carter: In --

16 Senator Hirono: Including the -- preventing the  
17 ability of them to encourage the lone-wolf actors all across  
18 the world.

19 Secretary Carter: In Iraq and Syria, which, as I said,  
20 is necessary -- not sufficient, but necessary -- it means  
21 destroying their organization, their leadership, their  
22 ability to control territory, their ability to have a source  
23 of revenue, and their ability to claim that they're anything  
24 but a bunch of barbarians, their state. That's what  
25 eliminating them -- and that's the end state that we're

1 seeking in Iraq and Syria. And, of course, to make that  
2 stick gets us back to what others have been talking about,  
3 the political dimension of it. But, from the military point  
4 of view, that's the objective.

5 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 Chairman McCain: Senator Rounds.

7 Senator Rounds: I'd like to return to this question of  
8 no-fly zones. General Selva, your testimony is that United  
9 States has the military capability to impose a no-fly zone  
10 over Syria.

11 General Selva: Yes, sir.

12 Senator Rounds: A little over 2 weeks ago, Turkey shot  
13 down a Russian aircraft for violating Turkish airspace. How  
14 many Russian aircrafts have violated Turkish airspace since  
15 that incident?

16 General Selva: None that I know of.

17 Senator Rounds: Do you think we can infer a lesson  
18 from Vladimir Putin's conduct in the aftermath of that  
19 shootdown, since he had repeatedly violated Turkish airspace  
20 beforehand?

21 General Selva: I think I'd be very careful in  
22 inferring his decision process to that particular set of  
23 circumstances, because what the Russians have done, as a  
24 consequence of that shootdown, is to beef up their  
25 integrated air defense. They've brought surface-to-air

1 missiles into their base in Latakia, they've installed  
2 surface-to-air missiles around Aleppo. They have worked  
3 with Syrian partners, and the Syrian partners now have their  
4 radars active, which they didn't have just a few weeks ago.

5       So, I think it's -- it is that set of consequences,  
6 when we think about no-fly zones, that we have to factor  
7 into our calculus. If a no-fly zone is to be defended, and  
8 it is to have effect on the ground, the consequences of  
9 activity by surface-to-air missile systems and air-defense  
10 aircraft have to be factored into the equation. We have the  
11 capability to deal with those. The consequence is a direct  
12 confrontation with Russia or Syria.

13       Senator Rounds: Thank you.

14       Secretary Carter, I noticed that you were smirking at  
15 my question. Could I get your take on that?

16       Secretary Carter: No, I was -- I'm sorry, I was  
17 smiling at the General's --

18       Senator Rounds: I think it might deserve a smirk. I'm  
19 not --

20       Secretary Carter: -- directly, but it's hard to --

21       Senator Rounds: -- rebuking you.

22       Secretary Carter: No, no, no. I was smiling about  
23 inferring Vladimir Putin's intentions. I -- and I -- he  
24 rightly said, it's a little hard to know. That's all. I  
25 was just --

1           Senator Rounds: Well, I would submit that he  
2 repeatedly violated Turkish airspace until Turkey defended  
3 its airspace, and he has not done that -- done so since  
4 then, and that maybe we can learn a lesson from that.

5           I also want to return to the point that Senator Ayotte  
6 was discussing about the oil trucks that we struck shortly  
7 after the Paris attacks. I believe it was a little over  
8 100. Can you explain why that didn't happen earlier? I  
9 mean, why that didn't happen 6 months ago, a year ago?

10          General Selva: There are two principal reasons. First  
11 is the development of the actual intelligence as to the  
12 contribution of those particular routes to the finances of  
13 ISIL. With respect to the Chairman, those are -- that  
14 black-and-gray economy in oil across the region --

15          Senator Rounds: And I -- so, I understand that, and I  
16 understand that intelligence can often be hard to develop,  
17 especially when you don't have a presence on the ground.  
18 But, I don't understand what's hard to develop intelligence  
19 about tanker trucks leaving refineries in ISIS-controlled  
20 space.

21          General Selva: The second point, Senator, is that, in  
22 an effort to minimize the civilian casualties, the drivers  
23 of those trucks are not necessarily adherents to ISIL's  
24 ideology, but are Syrians trying to make --

25          Senator Rounds: I have no doubt about that.

1           General Selva:  So --

2           Senator Rounds:  They're probably Syrians who are  
3 driving trucks, and Islamic State said, "Drive this truck or  
4 we're going to kill you and cut the heads off your kids."

5           General Selva:  So, I actually visited with the unit  
6 that prosecuted the attacks on the bulk of those vehicles.  
7 And they used a set of tactics, techniques, and procedures  
8 that warned the drivers in advance so they could flee their  
9 trucks, and then destroyed the trucks in situ.  We are  
10 looking for more opportunities to do exactly the same thing  
11 so that we don't alienate the civilian population, those  
12 that are not ISIL adherents.

13          Senator Rounds:  I --

14          General Selva:  We'll continue to degrade the  
15 infrastructure for production --

16          Senator Rounds:  And I strongly support that.  And I'm  
17 aware of the TTPs you're discussing, but those are things  
18 that our Air Force have done for a long time to minimize  
19 civilian casualties.  We didn't just develop these TTPs in  
20 the last month, did we?  I mean, we could leaflet civilians  
21 6 months ago or 12 months ago, right?

22          General Selva:  They are not new TTPs, but the  
23 opportunities and the places with which to use them are a  
24 product of the intelligence that we developed from our  
25 understanding of the oil infrastructure and distribution

1 network that supports it.

2 Senator Rounds: I'd like to talk about, now, the  
3 rules-of-engagement decision-making authority. One constant  
4 thing I've heard from senior commanders down to low-level  
5 troops in my travels in the region and here in the United  
6 States is that decisions that were being made in the middle  
7 part of the last decade by O-5s are now being made by three-  
8 and four-star generals, or even civilians, in Washington,  
9 and that the rules of engagement have been incredibly  
10 restrictive -- as the example, this oil tanker truck  
11 example. Secretary Carter, do you care to comment on what  
12 I've been hearing from troops directly on my trips --

13 Secretary Carter: I'll start, and then I do want  
14 General Selva to represent professional military judgment in  
15 this matter, so I'd like him -- to give him the opportunity  
16 to speak, as well.

17 The commanders there, the air commanders, have told me  
18 -- and I'll let -- and General Selva and General Dunford  
19 have reported to me about limitations on the effectiveness  
20 of the air campaign. And I have asked about whether our  
21 rules of engagement are a limiting factor that is stopping  
22 them from being more effective. And just two things I'd say  
23 about that, and then I'll let General Selva go into it in  
24 more detail.

25 They have not changed over time. And, by the way, they

1 are not -- these are not things that are approved in  
2 Washington or anything, they're -- these are things that are  
3 done by the air operators in theater, which is appropriate.  
4 The -- in -- the things that have really enabled our air --  
5 well, let me put -- turn it around and say, the things that  
6 have limited it from time to time, our air campaign, have  
7 been, first of all, annoyingly, weather. And that was true  
8 a month and a half ago, for a couple of weeks. But, then  
9 more -- and that's important -- more fundamentally has been  
10 intelligence. And we've gotten a lot better intelligence  
11 picture now, and therefore are able to conduct more  
12 effective strikes, which is one reason why we're able to be  
13 -- to conduct more strikes, absorb more air capability,  
14 because we can get into Incirlik, from which the sorties  
15 were shorter, absorb more capability from the French and  
16 others, and put it to good use, because we could develop the  
17 targets. And I always say it's better to have more  
18 airplanes than targets, than targets than airplanes. And  
19 so, on some days, a sortie goes out for dynamic targeting,  
20 as opposed to deliberate targeting. Deliberate targeting,  
21 the bombs are almost always dropped. More than 90 percent.  
22 Dynamic targeting is where you go out there and hope that a  
23 target that you're thinking might develop actually does  
24 develop. That's an important thing to do, because it's what  
25 stops ISIL from being able to use the roads safely, having

1 to drive at night with their lights off, all that kind of  
2 stuff. And you don't always find those targets. And so,  
3 sometimes the airplanes come back with their bombs on them.  
4 It's intelligence that makes all the difference.

5 General, please.

6 General Selva: Senator, I haven't met a soldier,  
7 sailor, airman, or marine who wouldn't ask for looser ROE in  
8 any active fight. But, having consulted with the  
9 commanders, from the JTF all the way up to Central Command,  
10 I know of no rules-of-engagement restrictions that have  
11 prevented us from striking targets and that prevented our  
12 forces from being as effective as they can be on the ground.  
13 I've consulted with all of them.

14 Senator Rounds: Thank you.

15 I'm over time. But, Senator Reed, if I can have one  
16 moment to ask a more lighthearted question of General Selva.

17 For 60 years, NORAD and the Air Force has been tracking  
18 Santa over the skies of North America. Can you assure the  
19 boys and girls of this country that NORAD and the Air Force  
20 are fully prepared to track Santa once again?

21 General Selva: I don't have a complete intelligence  
22 report, Senator, but I understand that the reindeer have  
23 been, in fact, fed their quantity of oats and are prepared  
24 for the delivery of all of those gifts to those who have  
25 been nice and not naughty.

1           Senator Rounds: Well, I think it's a welcome reminder  
2 that, while most Americans are at home enjoying Christmas  
3 with their families, that our airmen, soldiers, sailors, and  
4 marines, whether they're in NORAD or around the world, are  
5 out there keeping us safe and defending our values and what  
6 makes this country great.

7           General Selva: Sir, not to extend the questioning and  
8 the answering, but I did spend my Thanksgiving with our  
9 troops in Iraq, in Baghdad, Taji, and Arrow, and I can  
10 report to you that their moral is high, and they did phone  
11 home and talk to the people who love them.

12           Senator Reed [presiding]: Thank you very much for  
13 reminding us of the service and sacrifice of so many,  
14 Senator.

15           And, on behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator Nelson,  
16 please.

17           Senator Nelson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18           Secretary Carter, I gave a speech recently and showed  
19 the map of Syria and Iraq and the area that ISIS used to  
20 occupy that it no longer occupies and the area that it  
21 occupies now that it did not occupy. And the difference is  
22 dramatic, that you all have shrunk the territorial  
23 occupation of ISIS. And you are to be congratulated on  
24 that.

25           But, at the end of the day, as you all have already

1 testified, Syria is not going to be able to contain ISIS  
2 until at least there is a plan for the exit of President  
3 Assad. Now, when that occurs, what is the Arab force that  
4 is going to be on the ground, with the guidance of our  
5 Special Operations Forces -- what is -- give me a concept of  
6 what that makeup is of that Arab force.

7 Secretary Carter: Well, it's a very good question, and  
8 it gets to the issue of the end state of the campaign, here,  
9 and the critical political ingredient, because a political  
10 transition in Syria is essential to a durable end state to  
11 this. Because it's the civil war in Syria that started this  
12 whole business in Syria. And that would mean -- and, at  
13 that time, the force that is now not available because  
14 they're fighting each other, but that could fight ISIL, is  
15 the combination of Syrian forces and the moderate opposition  
16 that is now fighting in Syria. If there's a political  
17 settlement, that -- in the meantime, we're using forces --  
18 some Kurds up north, the YBG, and we're trying to accumulate  
19 additional Syrian Arabs who want to take their homes back  
20 from ISIL. But, the civil war is, meanwhile, using up a lot  
21 of combat power that could potentially be used against ISIL.

22 Senator Nelson: So, you really believe that, once  
23 there's a path for Assad to leave, that Syrian government  
24 forces, which include Alawites, which are Shi'a, are going  
25 to join up with the opposition Sunni forces to go after

1     ISIL.

2             Secretary Carter:  The political transition is exactly  
3     to have a Syria that is once again whole, multisectarian for  
4     sure, like all those states over there, with all the  
5     complications that go with that, and that we see in Iraq.  
6     But, that, as an alternative to sectarianism and the  
7     continuation of sectarian civil --

8             Senator Nelson:  Right.

9             Secretary Carter:  -- war, yes.

10            Senator Nelson:  So, go over to Iraq.  Is that anti-  
11     sectarian?  Is it working, with the forces on the ground  
12     that we're supporting from the air?

13            Secretary Carter:  Well, first of all, Prime Minister  
14     Abadi -- I've spoken to him frequently; I'll have an  
15     opportunity to speak to him in coming days when I, too, will  
16     be visiting our troops in theater -- is committed precisely  
17     to that kind of vision for Iraq.  I believe him.  I've  
18     talked to him --

19            Senator Nelson:  Do you think he --

20            Secretary Carter:  Well, that's the -- whether he can  
21     pull it off in Baghdad is obviously a difficult matter for  
22     him.  We are supporting him in that regard, because we  
23     believe that the alternative, which is further sectarian  
24     division, civil war, cleansing, and so forth -- we've seen  
25     that before.  And if he can keep his vision of an Iraq,

1 which, as he called it, is decentralized, so it's not  
2 everybody under the thumb of Baghdad, because he knows the  
3 Kurds and the Sunnis won't go for that -- but, still, the  
4 ability to retain an integral state that keeps peace within  
5 its borders -- that's what he's --

6 Senator Nelson: Right.

7 Secretary Carter: -- committed to. That's the end  
8 state we also want in Iraq.

9 Senator Nelson: Right. So, it's possible that, with  
10 Assad leaving Syria, you could get Syria under control, but  
11 everything could go haywire in Iraq.

12 Secretary Carter: They are two separate dynamics.  
13 There's one thing I'll mention that I mentioned when I was  
14 with you 6 weeks ago, and we have -- and has subsequently  
15 come to pass. I was talking about the importance of getting  
16 the town of Sinjar -- you're talking about territory, but  
17 the -- but, you know, a lot of that territory is empty, and  
18 it's the towns that matter. The critical crossing of Sinjar  
19 -- now, what is Sinjar? Sinjar is a place in between Mosul  
20 and Raqqa. And the -- to cut ISIL into its Syrian branch  
21 and stop them from cross-feeding is a -- the objective of  
22 taking Sinjar. And so, in the end, the political end states  
23 are different for Syria and Iraq, absolutely.

24 Senator Nelson: Understand.

25 Mr. Chairman, if I may, just one quick question,

1 because the Department of Defense has asked for \$116 million  
2 reprogramming to keep the effort of General Nagata's  
3 training program. Do you support the restarting of that  
4 program?

5 Secretary Carter: I urgently support that funding. I  
6 -- but, I don't describe it, and the documents we sent you  
7 don't describe it, as a restarting of the old program. As I  
8 described earlier, we learned from the old program. It had  
9 some success, but not nearly what we had hoped for. And  
10 I've told you that that -- for me, that was a  
11 disappointment. And -- so, I'm very up front about that.  
12 But, what we're asking for is that -- is funds that were  
13 previously earmarked for that to an approach that we think  
14 is more effective, which is precisely one of the ones I've  
15 been describing today. That's why we would urgently like  
16 that fund.

17 And I just -- you know, I mean, people decry  
18 micromanagement, but micromanagement also comes from -- can  
19 come from many sources. And I would urge you, please, to  
20 avoid that, give us that funding that we've requested. We  
21 submitted the paperwork -- I know the Chairman said, a week  
22 ago, and I -- I apologize if it was that recently. My  
23 understanding was, it was more than that. But, this is a  
24 war, and I'd simply urge you -- I know you're very busy  
25 people who have lots of things to do, but if you can please

1 give that your earliest attention.

2 Chairman McCain [presiding]: We will, Mr. Secretary.  
3 We also, obviously, as I mentioned before, would like to  
4 know the details of how it's used. And I think that's  
5 appropriate. I thank you.

6 Secretary Carter: Fair enough.

7 Chairman McCain: Senator Tillis.

8 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 Gentlemen, thank you both for being here today.

10 On November the 12th, the President answered the  
11 question, "Is ISIS gaining strength?" by saying, "I don't  
12 think they're gaining strength, and I believe we've  
13 contained them." Now, 2 weeks before that interview, in  
14 Ankara we saw two bombs kill 102 people, in the Sinai we saw  
15 224 people lose their lives when the Russian jetliner was  
16 downed. On the day of his interview, in Beirut, two suicide  
17 bombers killed 43. And then the day after his interview, a  
18 wave of six terrorist attacks killed 130 in Paris. And then  
19 on December 2, 14 Americans were killed.

20 Right now, in another committee hearing down at  
21 Judiciary Committee -- I stepped in for a minute before I  
22 came back here -- Director Comey said that America is at its  
23 highest threat level since 9/11.

24 So, I'm trying to square the statement made by our  
25 President on November 12th, that they're not gaining

1 strength and that we have contained them, with a comment  
2 that you made in the opening, I think, in response to  
3 Chairman -- the Chairman's question about how we contain  
4 them. What am I missing, in terms of you saying that we  
5 haven't contained them, the President says that we have and  
6 that they're not gaining strength, with the events that  
7 we've -- I've just summarized there? Secretary Carter, I'll  
8 start with you, and then General Selva.

9 Secretary Carter: Well, we have to defeat ISIL. And  
10 --

11 Senator Tillis: I agree with that, but --

12 Secretary Carter: -- and that --

13 Senator Tillis: -- a part of it is -- excuse me,  
14 because I want to try to stick to the time -- a part of it  
15 has to do with the President acknowledging the current  
16 situation. Do you agree with his characterization that  
17 they're not gaining strengthen --

18 Secretary Carter: The --

19 Senator Tillis: -- and we've contained them?

20 Secretary Carter: The President has asked me, and  
21 asked our military leaders, to give him recommendations, and  
22 to keep giving him recommendations, to defeat ISIL. That --  
23 and he has approved all the ones that we've taken to him.  
24 We expect to take more. And I think that's --

25 Senator Tillis: Secretary Carter --

1 Secretary Carter: -- that's the --

2 Senator Tillis: -- have you told the President that  
3 they're not gaining strength and that we've contained them?

4 Secretary Carter: I have not used -- General Dunford  
5 said, last -- talked about tactical containment versus  
6 strategic containment, if we're going to use that word. I  
7 kind of like the word "defeat," myself, Senator.

8 Senator Tillis: General Selva, I want to ask you a  
9 question about some of the airstrikes. I know that you were  
10 talking about the rules of engagement. And it seems to make  
11 sense to try and protect the civilian drivers in the  
12 tankers, et cetera.

13 Back in June, the military officials acknowledged that  
14 75 percent of the planes flying combat missions returned  
15 without dropping their weapons. You, in response to Senator  
16 Ayotte's questions, said that that's now about 40 percent.  
17 What's changed?

18 General Selva: Senator, we've increased the number of  
19 deliberate strikes, preplanned designated targets, as  
20 opposed to having airplanes looking for dynamic targets in  
21 the environment. We have sufficient airpower in the region  
22 to accomplish both. But, in any case of dynamic targeting,  
23 some of those airplanes are always going to come back with  
24 their ordnance because targets don't present themselves.

25 Senator Tillis: Thank you.

1           And former Deputy Director Mike Morell, of the CIA,  
2     made, in a comment on November the 25th, that we didn't go  
3     after oil wells, actually hitting oil wells that ISIS  
4     controls, because we didn't want to do environmental damage  
5     and we didn't want to destroy infrastructure. Are those  
6     still key factors in whether or not you go after ISIS  
7     targets?

8           General Selva: I don't know of the rules of engagement  
9     that he's talking about, but, as we develop deliberate  
10    targets, we do bring environmental considerations into the  
11    factors that we consider, but they do not limit us from  
12    striking the infrastructure. They just change the way we  
13    strike it. So, we try to do as little environmental damage  
14    as possible, but still limit the capacity of the well to  
15    produce.

16          Senator Tillis: And, Secretary Carter, maybe just to  
17    close out with this, just to go back to defining the  
18    problem. If we shift -- and you made the distinction  
19    between tactical and strategic containment -- but, if we  
20    shift to a global perspective, away from the narrow focus  
21    of, maybe, tactically, what we're doing in Iraq and Syria,  
22    is there any grounds for describing ISIS as "contained"?

23          Secretary Carter: I'll let General Dunford, who's not  
24    here, speak for himself. I described, and I think we need  
25    to be concerned about -- we've talked about metastasis to

1 the homeland, and we've talked about the necessity of  
2 getting the parent tumor. We have not discussed as much the  
3 necessity of going after ISIL elsewhere. I mentioned Libya.  
4 We took out its leader in Libya. We're going to have to do  
5 more in Libya. ISIL is becoming a magnet for groups that  
6 previously existed, in some cases, that are now rebranding  
7 themselves as ISIL. But, it's worse than that, because in  
8 -- they're also gaining energy from the movement in Iraq and  
9 Syria, which is why we need to destroy it in Iraq and Syria.  
10 But, this is a worldwide phenomenon. And I've talked to  
11 leaders -- I was recently talking to some leaders in  
12 southeast Asia, actually, about many things, but one of the  
13 things they raised is concern about little patches of ISIL  
14 and self-radicalization of the kind that we find.

15 So, in the Internet Age and the Social Media Age,  
16 terrorism doesn't have any geographic bounds. So, I think  
17 we have to recognize it while we need to attack it  
18 geographically on the ground in Syria and Iraq. That is  
19 necessary, it's not sufficient.

20 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

21 Chairman McCain [presiding]: Senator Kaine.

22 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 And thank you, to your -- to our witnesses, for your  
24 service and your testimony.

25 Secretary Carter, do you agree with a recent study done

1 by the RAND Corporation suggesting that it would be wise for  
2 Congress to pass a new Authorization for Use of Military  
3 Force against ISIL?

4 Secretary Carter: I haven't seen that study, Senator.  
5 I have testified in favor of the AUMF that the President  
6 submitted, and I welcome that. It's not necessary,  
7 literally, in the sense that we're able to conduct our  
8 campaign.

9 Senator Kaine: The RAND -- the study -- I would just  
10 encourage you to take a look, because I think it backs up --

11 Secretary Carter: Will do.

12 Senator Kaine: -- backs up your position; it was  
13 reported 2 days ago -- says that an authorization by  
14 Congress would send a message of resolve to our allies --

15 Secretary Carter: Would do.

16 Senator Kaine: -- send a message of resolve to ISIL,  
17 it would send a message of resolve to the troops.

18 Secretary Carter: Troops.

19 Senator Kaine: And RAND, which is, you know, not  
20 biased on the legal analysis, said that, at a minimum, the  
21 connection of the battle against ISIL to the 2001 and 2002  
22 authorizations requires, quote, "legal gymnastics" that it  
23 would be wise to clear up.

24 Secretary Carter, what message does it send to the 3600  
25 troops that are deployed overseas in this fight at the

1 holidays, and to the families of the 11 servicemembers who  
2 have lost their lives in Operation Inherent Resolve, and  
3 five others who have been wounded, that Congress has been  
4 unwilling to debate and vote upon this war in the 16 months  
5 since it started?

6 Secretary Carter: I think that the passage of an AUMF,  
7 as you indicate -- and this is one of the reasons why I  
8 testified in favor of it, would be a signal of resolve and  
9 support to our troops. Therefore, I think it's -- it is  
10 desirable. By the way, a signal of resolve to our enemies.

11 I should say, that's not the only thing. I think when  
12 you visit them, as some of you have done in the last week,  
13 when you hold a hearing like this and show that you care  
14 what they're doing, when you go back to your bases and -- at  
15 home and tell them how proud you are of them, the family  
16 members that are back here -- all that stuff's incredibly  
17 important. They need to know we're behind them. And, you  
18 know, I always tell our people, "I'm 1,000 percent behind  
19 you." And --

20 Senator Kaine: Let me --

21 Secretary Carter: -- if this would add to it --

22 Senator Kaine: Let me ask you this.

23 Secretary Carter: -- that's good.

24 Senator Kaine: It -- our Chairman, Senator McCain, was  
25 quoted last week -- now, this was not an approving quote,

1 this was a critical quote, in the same way that I am  
2 critical of the current status of affairs where Congress has  
3 been silent for 16 months -- the quote was that a  
4 congressional vote to authorize war against ISIL doesn't  
5 seem forthcoming now, because of politics here, and that it,  
6 quote, "may require an attack on the United States of  
7 America to force such a vote." Would it wise for Congress  
8 to wait that long?

9 Secretary Carter: Again, I -- I'm -- I am in favor of  
10 the one that the President submitted. I think, on balance,  
11 it would be a positive thing and a sign that the country's  
12 behind the troops. And, provided it allowed me and General  
13 Selva and our military leaders to do what we think is needed  
14 to defeat ISIL -- provided it does that, it -- I think the  
15 signal it sends of resolve by this country is a good thing.

16 Senator Kaine: At least three nations on the U.N.  
17 Security Council -- England, France, and, I'm very sorry to  
18 say, Russia -- have submitted to their legislative bodies  
19 the -- a -- for a debate and vote, their engagement in  
20 military action in Syria and Iraq. And other nations, such  
21 as Germany, have done the same. The President started the  
22 war against ISIL 16 months ago yesterday. There's only been  
23 one vote in the Senate -- it was a Senate Foreign Relations  
24 Committee vote, a year ago Friday. There hasn't really been  
25 action in the House.

1 I just hope that we would follow -- I hate to say this  
2 -- I hope we would follow the lead of other nations whose  
3 legislative bodies have decided it was important enough to  
4 have a debate and vote on this before the public.

5 Second issue I want to just bring up. And this is more  
6 just kind of an observation for you. Senator McCain was the  
7 first to call for the no-fly zones. And, at the time that  
8 he started that, I didn't agree with him. And the reason I  
9 didn't is that there were testimony from General Dempsey and  
10 others here that to do a no-fly zone would run the risk of  
11 running across the Syrian air defenses. To many of us on  
12 the committee, that argument fell away when the  
13 administration came and proposed an aerial attack on Syria  
14 after the use of chemical weapons against Bashar al-Assad.  
15 And when we reminded them, "Hey, wait a minute. You said  
16 Syria has really tough air defenses," the administration  
17 testimony at that point was, "Yeah, well, we're not that  
18 worried about them."

19 Let me tell you why I think the absence of the  
20 humanitarian zone is going to go down as one of the big  
21 mistakes that we've made, equivalent to the decision not to  
22 engage in humanitarian activity in Rwanda in the 1990s.  
23 With respect to Syria, there's been testimony from the  
24 military to us that the Syrian Air Defense System is really  
25 not all that great, and that we could take care of it. And

1 with respect to Russia, Russia voted for Security Council  
2 Resolution 2139 in February of 2014 calling for cross-border  
3 delivery of humanitarian aid into Syria without the  
4 permission of Bashar al-Assad.

5       There are few guarantees in life, but I can pretty much  
6 give you this one. Russia would not intervene and try to  
7 mess around with us if we were engaged in a humanitarian  
8 effort that was premised upon a U.N. Security Council  
9 Resolution that they actually voted for. And since February  
10 of 2014, we've had the ability and the legal rationale to  
11 enforce that resolution. And we haven't. And millions of  
12 refugees have left the country. If we had done that then, I  
13 think we'd be in much better place now. And I think we can  
14 still do it, and we'd be in much better place.

15       So, just in terms of the argument about, "Here's why we  
16 don't think it's a good idea," previous testimony to the  
17 committee by folks from the Pentagon have undercut your  
18 argument with respect to Syria and Russia.

19       Mr. Chair, I don't have any other questions.

20       Chairman McCain: Senator Graham.

21       Senator Graham: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22       Mr. Secretary and General, thank you for your service.

23       The President addressed the Nation Sunday night. Did  
24 you hear his address, Mr. Secretary?

25       Secretary Carter: I did not. I read it.

1           Senator Graham: Okay. Do you believe that we're at  
2 war with ISIL?

3           Secretary Carter: I do.

4           Senator Graham: Do you believe they're at war with us?  
5 The answer is --

6           Secretary Carter: Yeah.

7           Senator Graham: -- yes, yeah. They would hit our  
8 homeland if they could.

9           Secretary Carter: For sure. They say that --

10          Senator Graham: Okay.

11          Secretary Carter: They say that they -- and they  
12 indicate that --

13          Senator Graham: Is there any place on the planet that  
14 you would take off limits when it comes to fighting ISIL?

15          Secretary Carter: No, I don't think we can do that,  
16 for the reasons I just -- I said earlier. They are  
17 metastasizing everywhere, and everywhere there is -- there  
18 are information media, there are going to be people who go  
19 online who, maybe, have never been to Syria or Iraq, or even  
20 know where they are --

21          Senator Graham: The answer is --

22          Secretary Carter: -- they only know --

23          Senator Graham: -- no.

24          Secretary Carter: -- where their screen is.

25          Senator Graham: Right, I agree with you. I think

1 that's a very good answer. There is no place on the planet  
2 we should give them safe haven.

3 Number two, when it comes to time, in terms of this  
4 war, when will it end?

5 Secretary Carter: As soon as we can possibly bring it  
6 to --

7 Senator Graham: Five years? Ten years? Does anybody  
8 know?

9 Secretary Carter: Well, I think that --

10 Senator Graham: Do you want to put a time limit on how  
11 long we should fight it?

12 Secretary Carter: I think, in war, it's good to have  
13 plans. I think it was Eisenhower, who --

14 Senator Graham: Here's my question. Are you willing  
15 to put a time limit on how long we can fight ISIL?

16 Secretary Carter: I think we have to fight ISIL until  
17 ISIL is defeated everywhere.

18 Senator Graham: I couldn't agree with you more.

19 When it comes to means, do you believe this country  
20 should use all lawful means when it comes to fighting ISIL,  
21 depending on what the circumstances dictate?

22 Secretary Carter: Sure.

23 Senator Graham: Do you think Raqqa, Syria, will be --  
24 still will be in the hands of ISIL by January 2017, more or  
25 less likely?

1 Secretary Carter: I'm sorry, you said -- which ones?

2 Senator Graham: Do you think Raqqa, Syria, will be in  
3 the hands of ISIL --

4 Secretary Carter: Oh, I very much hope that it won't  
5 -- that it would be -- that --

6 Senator Graham: Do you think it's more likely --

7 Secretary Carter: -- it will either be -- it not be in  
8 the hands of ISIL or that there -- control will be  
9 substantially eroded --

10 Senator Graham: Okay. So --

11 Secretary Carter: I hope that. I can't guarantee --

12 Senator Graham: Right.

13 Secretary Carter: -- that. You can't guarantee  
14 anything --

15 Senator Graham: Right. But --

16 Secretary Carter: -- in war, but it's --

17 Senator Graham: -- we hope --

18 Secretary Carter: -- certainly an objective.

19 Senator Graham: We all --

20 Secretary Carter: As soon as possible.

21 Senator Graham: We all hope, but we're not going to  
22 get there on hope. So, you're a good man. I'm not trying  
23 to fight you, here.

24 Here's what I've done. I'm making an offer to our  
25 President that I believe this war is going to go on for a

1 long time, after his presidency. I believe that they're  
2 going to go wherever they can on the planet, and that we  
3 should stop them wherever necessary. And when it comes to  
4 means, we should not limit this Commander in Chief or any  
5 other Commander in Chief when it comes to means. Do you  
6 agree with that?

7 Secretary Carter: Yeah, I do.

8 Senator Graham: So, I have an Authorization to Use  
9 Military Force, Senator Kaine. It's not limited by  
10 geography. It's not -- could you put it up, please -- it's  
11 not limited by geography, time, or location. It represents  
12 a theory that this President and future Presidents need to  
13 have the same capabilities against ISIL as we gave -- that  
14 existed after 9/11 regarding al-Qaeda.

15 So, I agree with Senator Kaine that the Congress should  
16 be involved. I am answering the request of the President to  
17 get involved. And here is the question. As Secretary of  
18 Defense, could you support an authorization using military  
19 force that has no limit on geography, time, or lawful means  
20 when it comes to destroying ISIL?

21 Secretary Carter: Well, I'm not going to invent a new  
22 AUMF here. This is the first time I've studied yours. I'm  
23 sorry to --

24 Senator Graham: Okay.

25 Secretary Carter: -- to say. I did support the

1 President's AUMF, for two principal reasons. The first --

2 Senator Graham: Do you --

3 Secretary Carter: -- first --

4 Senator Graham: Do you --

5 Secretary Carter: -- the first was because I thought

6 it could, exactly as you say, permit us to conduct the

7 campaign that we need to do to defeat ISIL. That's

8 critical. It did have a time dimension in it, which I --

9 Senator Graham: From a military point of view,

10 General, do you think saying you're going to have a time

11 dimension is probably a wrong signal to send to the enemy?

12 General Selva: The context of the time signal makes a

13 difference. I would prefer not to have one.

14 Senator Graham: Okay.

15 General Selva: So I could say to them, "I'm going to

16 prosecute you anywhere I find you."

17 Senator Graham: That's what I want to say.

18 General Selva: As long as I --

19 Senator Graham: I want to say to this President that,

20 "I want to give you the tools, that time is no factor when

21 it comes to destroying ISIL, and location doesn't mean a

22 damn thing, where, after you -- wherever you go, as long as

23 it takes, whatever is required to defeat you." That's the

24 statement I think America needs to make. Is that a fair

25 statement?

1           Mr. Secretary? "Whatever it takes, as long as it  
2 takes, wherever we need to go to destroy you," when it comes  
3 to ISIL.

4           Secretary Carter: Well, I mean, that's okay, from the  
5 point of view of conducting the military campaign, but you  
6 have to --

7           Senator Graham: That's --

8           Secretary Carter: -- but you have to get the votes.

9           Senator Graham: That's -- no, I know.

10          Secretary Carter: And I -- that, I can't --

11          Senator Graham: Yeah, but, you know --

12          Secretary Carter: -- predict. So --

13          Senator Graham: -- I'm not asking you to vote.

14          Secretary Carter: -- I'm not going to try to craft  
15 what it -- what can be passed here, Senator. I've testified  
16 in favor of the AUMF the President --

17          Senator Graham: Would you vote for this?

18          Secretary Carter: -- submitted.

19          Senator Graham: Would you vote for this?

20          Secretary Carter: I don't know. I'm seeing it for the  
21 first time. I'm --

22          Senator Graham: Well, as Secretary --

23          Secretary Carter: -- not a --

24          Senator Graham: -- Secretary of Defense, do you  
25 support the concept that the President --

1 Secretary Carter: I support an AUMF that the President  
2 submitted --

3 Senator Graham: Do you support --

4 Secretary Carter: -- that gives us the authority --

5 Senator Graham: With --

6 Secretary Carter: -- to wage the war that --

7 Senator Graham: Just --

8 Secretary Carter: -- we need to wage. That's --

9 Senator Graham: Mr. Secretary --

10 Secretary Carter: -- the important thing.

11 Senator Graham: -- do you support the concept, the  
12 authority that this President should have no time limits  
13 placed on his ability to fight the war? Do you support that  
14 concept?

15 Secretary Carter: I think the AUMF, as submitted, only  
16 recognizes that his term of office --

17 Senator Graham: I'm not asking you --

18 Secretary Carter: -- comes to an end --

19 Senator Graham: -- about his AUMF.

20 Secretary Carter: -- in a year.

21 Senator Graham: Right. I agree with that. Do you  
22 agree the next President, whoever he or she may be, should  
23 have a AUMF not limited by time? That's just a smart  
24 decision, from the military point of view. Do you agree  
25 with that?

1 Secretary Carter: Well, it's not --

2 Senator Graham: When you -- are you going to -- are  
3 you, as Secretary of Defense, telling me that you want to  
4 put limits, in terms of time, regarding --

5 Secretary Carter: No, I'm trying to explain to you why  
6 -- as I explained to this committee before, why I understood  
7 that there was the 3-year time thing --

8 Senator Graham: I'm not asking you about --

9 Secretary Carter: -- provision. And it was not --

10 Senator Graham: Listen.

11 Secretary Carter: -- for a military reason.

12 Senator Graham: Okay, right. But --

13 Secretary Carter: It was in deference to a future  
14 President.

15 Senator Graham: Yeah. Okay.

16 Secretary Carter: And you can agree or disagree --

17 Senator Graham: Right.

18 Secretary Carter: -- with that, but that was the  
19 reason why it was included --

20 Senator Graham: Okay.

21 Secretary Carter: -- in there. And I -- that was a  
22 political reason --

23 Senator Graham: Right.

24 Secretary Carter: -- having to do with --

25 Senator Graham: From a military point of view --

1 Secretary Carter: -- the constitutional system, not a  
2 military --

3 Senator Graham: From a military -- listen to me,  
4 please. From a military point of view, you don't want time  
5 limits.

6 Secretary Carter: I don't think we can -- I don't  
7 think --

8 Senator Graham: From a military point of view, you  
9 don't want geographical limits.

10 Secretary Carter: Yeah, I don't -- we don't -- we  
11 can't have geographic --

12 Senator Graham: And from a military point of view, you  
13 don't want to take means off the table that are lawful, when  
14 it comes to --

15 Secretary Carter: And that we --

16 Senator Graham: -- destroying ISIL.

17 Secretary Carter: -- that are useful to this --

18 Senator Graham: Yeah.

19 Secretary Carter: -- campaign.

20 Senator Graham: So, to the Congress, if you don't like  
21 what this President or future President does, in terms of  
22 fighting ISIL, defund it. That's your job. I am making a  
23 simple proposition to this President that, "I will give you  
24 whatever you need, in terms of my authorization to go  
25 wherever you need to go, as long as it takes, to use

1 whatever available tools you have, within legal limits, to  
2 destroy this threat. Mr. President, are you all in, or  
3 not?" The Secretary of Defense seems to be indicating this  
4 is good military policy.

5 To my colleagues on the other side, if we produce an  
6 Authorization to Use Military Force restricted by time,  
7 means, or geography, you're sending a message to the enemy I  
8 will not send, you're restricting our ability to defend this  
9 homeland, which is a -- an imminent attack is coming. So, I  
10 want to have this debate, like Senator Kaine has suggested.  
11 And it is imperative that the Congress get off the  
12 sidelines.

13 Tim Kaine and I may have a different outcome, but  
14 you're absolutely right, let's have a discussion, let the  
15 enemy know, without hesitation, there is no limitations on  
16 time, means, or location when it comes to destroying ISIL.

17 "Mr. President, embrace this authorization for you and  
18 future Presidents, because the country needs it."

19 Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary and General, for  
20 your fine service.

21 Chairman McCain: Senator Blumenthal.

22 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 Thank you for your service, Mr. Secretary, General.

24 And thank you for being here.

25 I've just come from a vote on the floor, but, before

1 that, a hearing of the Judiciary Committee, where FBI  
2 Director Comey was testifying about many subjects related  
3 closely to the subject matter of your testimony. Even  
4 though the geography may be different, the threat is the  
5 same. And clearly, the strategy for confronting that threat  
6 of terror has to be coordinated and targeted to what poses  
7 the danger to our Nation. And my feeling is -- I agree with  
8 you -- the reality is, we are at war. That's the stark,  
9 irrefutable reality. And more needs to be done, more  
10 aggressively, more intensely, and more effectively, in using  
11 our Special Operators, advising local forces, supplying and  
12 equipping them, providing them with intelligence,  
13 intercepting communications of our adversaries, and cutting  
14 off the flow of money, which is their lifeblood. And the  
15 pace of our present activities seems inadequate.

16 Now, we may differ on that point. And you have more  
17 on-the-ground knowledge than I do. But, the American people  
18 are growing impatient and apprehensive. I think that  
19 statement, in fact, is an understatement.

20 So, I would like to see our strategy become more  
21 aggressive and intensified in combating this threat abroad,  
22 in the theater, where we confront ISIL, and at home, where  
23 we confront terror in our neighborhoods and streets, and  
24 where the adversary is just as real and potentially growing  
25 just as alarmingly.

1           Are you satisfied that the intersection and  
2 coordination between those two efforts, in the Middle East  
3 and elsewhere in the world and internally at home, is  
4 sufficiently aligned and coordinated that we have the most  
5 effective strategic approach?

6           Secretary Carter: I met, just yesterday, with Director  
7 Comey, also along with the Director of Homeland Security,  
8 Jay Johnson, the Director of National Intelligence, James  
9 Clapper -- John Brennan's out of the country, but his --  
10 somebody from CIA was there, and other agencies, working to  
11 do exactly what you rightly know is necessary -- say is  
12 necessary, namely to align our efforts overseas, which  
13 involve exactly the ingredients that you name, and you're  
14 right, we are looking for opportunities to do more by using  
15 precisely the tools you describe. We're finding them, and  
16 we're strengthening and gaining momentum in the military,  
17 which we need to do, because we need to defeat ISIL over  
18 there as soon as possible. Back here, we haven't -- it's a  
19 different kind of challenge, but it's related. Director  
20 Comey's working extremely hard and skillfully on that. And  
21 the purpose of my calling this meeting yesterday was  
22 precisely to make sure that we're all aligned. And we'll  
23 continue to do that periodically. And there are things, by  
24 the way, that we can do, as DOD, even though we obviously  
25 don't operate here in the United States the way the FBI

1 does, in terms of striking their information infrastructure  
2 the same way we strike their energy infrastructure, their  
3 command and control, and so forth, in Iraq and Syria.

4       Senator Blumenthal: I thank you for that answer. I  
5 agree totally that the efforts need to be aligned. And, in  
6 fact, better aligned, more seamless than they are now, in  
7 terms of intelligence-sharing and intelligence-gathering,  
8 but also working with our partners in the region, because  
9 the troops on the ground need to be local. We cannot send  
10 American troops back to that part of the world in massive  
11 numbers with a combat mission. There's always the danger of  
12 mission creep, even in a small number. But, I remain  
13 dissatisfied that the number of Special Operators on the  
14 ground may be insufficient, and the pace of sending them  
15 there may be too lengthy, and that local forces, like the  
16 Peshmerga, have shown that a robust effort involving all of  
17 those ingredients that are planned to be sent can make a  
18 difference if they're timely and sufficient.

19       And I agree, finally, that an Authorization for the Use  
20 of Military Force is absolutely essential. The reality is,  
21 we are at war. And the President deserves a declaration of  
22 war. And that declaration may define the kind of conflict  
23 that we see, and provide a forum for debate about the limits  
24 we may want to put on them. But, at least it will provide a  
25 framework for public support that the President needs for

1 this continuing war.

2 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 Chairman McCain: Senator Lee.

4 Senator Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 And thanks, to both of you, for all you do for us to  
6 keep us safe.

7 I want to start by echoing some of the concerns that  
8 have been stated by my colleagues, Senator Kaine and Senator  
9 Blumenthal. Like them, I feel like, for constitutional  
10 reasons, we ought to be following the process in the  
11 Constitution. For some of the reasons mentioned by Senator  
12 Graham, I think it's important to have the debate and the  
13 discussion about the extent of our involvement there. And  
14 that's another nice process associated with following the  
15 constitutional structure.

16 After the failure of the initial train-and-equip  
17 program in Syria, the Department of Defense seems to have  
18 shifted its focus to equipping forces that are already on  
19 the ground in Syria, such as the Syrian Kurds and Arab  
20 groups that we have somehow, in one way or another, using  
21 methods that I'm not familiar with, deemed to be moderate,  
22 or deemed to somehow have interests that overlap with ours.

23 Mr. Secretary, can you explain to us how, specifically,  
24 we're vetting this -- these groups, how we decide who ought  
25 to be the beneficiary of this program?

1           Secretary Carter: Well, you're basically right. We --  
2           that is the shift we made, although, you know, we're still  
3           willing to do -- we're open to lots of different  
4           possibilities with our train-and-equip program, but the --  
5           it is essentially --

6           Senator Lee: It's not, basically, an equip program  
7           rather than a train-and-equip program, right?

8           Secretary Carter: No. We take some of the people out  
9           for training. We're willing to do that. And we have those  
10          training sites, so we'll take selected individuals -- not  
11          the whole unit -- out and give them specialized training in  
12          how to connect with us and how to connect with our enablers.  
13          So, there is a training aspect to it. But, you're right,  
14          fundamentally, it's enabling groups that exist rather than  
15          trying to create brand-new groups. That's the essential  
16          correction, I'd say -- course correction that we made.

17          And you asked how they're vetted. They are -- they're  
18          -- it is their leaders that are vetted, rather than down to  
19          the individual level. And I can get you a description of  
20          that.

21                 [The information referred to follows:]

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25

1 Secretary Carter: And, General Selva, maybe you'd like  
2 to say something about the vetting process in general.

3 General Selva: We have, in the case of the Syrian Arab  
4 coalition, convinced leaders to come to the Iraqi side of  
5 the border. We have vetted them through public and  
6 classified databases for their relationships and prior  
7 conduct, and we have spent time with them on the items that  
8 the Secretary talked about, how they link to our forces, how  
9 they communicate back their progress. And our relationship  
10 with them is relatively transactional, where we supply them  
11 with ammunition and the advice required to hit strike-  
12 specific targets, and then we watch that progress.

13 Senator Lee: Once we decide to equip a particular  
14 group -- I mean, it sounds like it is -- it's made on a  
15 group basis, based, in part, on our assessment of their  
16 leaders -- what degree of command and control do we retain  
17 over the group in question, over its leaders, and  
18 specifically, perhaps most importantly, over the supplies  
19 that we give them?

20 General Selva: I could go into much more detail in a  
21 classified environment, but, at the surface level, we don't  
22 exercise command and control. We exercise influence. And  
23 the influence we have is their connection to the enablers,  
24 that we provide fire support through airpower, advice, and  
25 training.

1           Senator Lee: Do the groups that we're supporting in  
2 this capacity, specifically the Syrian Kurds and the Syrian  
3 Arabs -- do they -- or to what extent do they share the same  
4 political goals and the same vision for Syria in the future?

5           General Selva: Today, they share the goal of wanting  
6 to take their homes back and defeat ISIL in doing so. And  
7 that is necessary and sufficient to get at the fight in  
8 eastern Syria and working our way back towards Raqqa.

9           Senator Lee: Are you concerned about the possibility  
10 of their goals shifting? I mean, is it common in the region  
11 for some groups to have one focus one day and then have a  
12 priority shift, perhaps one day having interests that align  
13 roughly with our own goals and with preserving interests  
14 that are important to American national security that might  
15 change later?

16          General Selva: If you'd allow me to discuss that one  
17 in a classified setting on the how we measure and manage  
18 that relationship, it will be much more useful than doing it  
19 in open session.

20          Senator Lee: Okay.

21          Can you tell me roughly how many people are involved in  
22 this right now, how many units or how many members they  
23 have? Is that something we can discuss in a nonclassified  
24 environment?

25          General Selva: Yes, sir. The Syrian Arab coalition,

1 we brought out roughly 40 of their leaders -- I'm sorry --  
2 20 of their leaders, did a full vetting of their allegiances  
3 and their prior conduct. They brought to the battlefield  
4 roughly 1600. The number varies up and down slightly from  
5 that number, based on who's engaged in the fight. But,  
6 roughly 1600 fighters that have worked their way through  
7 roughly three villages or three towns right now in eastern  
8 Syria. They started in a place called al-Hasakah. They  
9 have taken al-Hawl, and they are beginning the preparatory  
10 actions to prosecute a third target that I'd like to keep  
11 private at this point.

12 Senator Lee: Okay.

13 I see my time is expired. Thank you very much.

14 Chairman McCain: Senator Gillibrand.

15 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 Thank you so much for your testimony today. This has  
17 been extremely helpful to our committee. And thank you,  
18 obviously, for your extraordinary service.

19 In yesterday's hearing, Commander Jeffrey Eggers said  
20 that, while our military victories against ISIL will affect  
21 their ability to recruit new fighters, how we conduct the  
22 war will also affect that ability. Specifically, he said  
23 that having ground troops go into Syria is what ISIL wants.

24 On Monday, a New York Times article pointed out that in  
25 2003, al-Zarqawi had called the Iraq war, quote, "the

1 blessed invasion," because his and ISIL's apocalyptic vision  
2 is that non-Muslims will come to Syria to fight Muslims and  
3 bring about the end of the world.

4 So, do you believe that a ground war with Western  
5 troops would help or hurt ISIL's recruiting? And which  
6 countries are best positioned to fight ISIL on the ground,  
7 in your opinion?

8 Secretary Carter: The forces that are best positioned  
9 to fight ISIL on the ground in both Iraq and Syria would be  
10 local indigenous forces, particularly Sunni forces, because  
11 the ISIL representation and the territory they occupy is  
12 mostly Sunni territory. Therefore, outside of -- well, so  
13 in both Iraq and Syria, Iraqis and Syrian local forces --  
14 that's why we're trying to work with them, that's why we're  
15 trying to put a political end to the civil war in Syria, so  
16 that the Syrians stop -- Syrians who are not ISIL -- are not  
17 ISIL sympathizers, not under the thumb of ISIL right now,  
18 can unite to defeat ISIL.

19 Next in line -- and this is something that I have  
20 urged, and the U.S. has urged now for some months, would be  
21 for more of Sunni Arabs from the Gulf states to become  
22 involved, not necessarily occupying territory, but  
23 participating in enabling local forces there and --

24 Senator Gillibrand: Have you had any luck there? I  
25 mean, any?

1 Secretary Carter: Well, they have participated, in the  
2 early days, in the air war. Now, I'm generalizing a little  
3 bit --

4 Senator Gillibrand: Yeah.

5 Secretary Carter: -- here -- and not -- generally  
6 disinclined to participate on the ground and, of course, now  
7 with the Yemen conflict, got preoccupied with that. But --

8 Senator Gillibrand: General?

9 General Selva: Ma'am, I think your quote of Mr.  
10 Zawahiri -- or Zarqawi, I'm sorry -- that said, "Bringing  
11 Americans to this fight is a blessing to the radical Islamic  
12 view that ISIL portrays" is exactly right. What we don't do  
13 enough of is talking about who ISIL is and what they do.  
14 They're barbaric, they are -- they subjugate women, they  
15 subjugate children, they engage in extortion. They are not  
16 creating a caliphate that's consistent with Islamic  
17 teaching; they're creating caliphate that's consistent with  
18 their narrative of Western subjugation and extremist Islam.  
19 And it's about their power and enriching themselves. And  
20 so, we need to tell that truth. If we fall into the trap of  
21 radical Islamic violent extremists baiting us into a ground  
22 fight, we're actually doing exactly what they want us to do.

23 Senator Gillibrand: Yeah.

24 General Selva: So, as we work through and with  
25 partners that we can find that are willing to fight, they'll

1 have the effect we need them to have.

2 Senator Gillibrand: And can't we be more aggressive  
3 with our allies in the region, particularly Sunni Arab  
4 allies, to do more? I mean, I don't -- I haven't seen our  
5 success there yet. So, I'm wondering if you feel there's  
6 leverage there to get that result.

7 General Selva: We have had support from Turks, from  
8 the Jordanians, as well as from a small number of our Sunni  
9 partners. That is a place where we might be able to exert  
10 some additional effort.

11 Senator Gillibrand: Just quickly on Turkey, since you  
12 raise it. Obviously, Turkey is critical to the fight  
13 against ISIL. What do you think were Turkish calculations  
14 in shooting down the Russian plane? And has it affected our  
15 ability to work with Russia and Turkey?

16 General Selva: I can only tell you what I learned from  
17 consultation with my Turkish counterpart the day of the  
18 shootdown. I actually was in Turkey that afternoon after  
19 the shootdown. They believe, and executed against, a  
20 incursion into their airspace. What I pressed him on,  
21 though, was securing their -- the Turkish border from end to  
22 end. And there is a roughly 90-kilometer span of the  
23 Turkish border through which ISIL still has a fair number of  
24 smuggling lanes that are relatively open because ISIL  
25 controls the Syrian side of that border. The Turkish have

1 redoubled their efforts. They have opened up their  
2 Terrorist No-Fly List, their Terrorist Identification  
3 Database, and a variety of other techniques to help seal  
4 that border. Much beyond that, if we could do that in a  
5 closed session or a private conversation, that would be --

6 Senator Gillibrand: That would be fine.

7 Secretary Carter, do you have anything you'd like to  
8 add?

9 Secretary Carter: No, I think General Selva said it  
10 very well. We -- the -- Turkey is -- shares a border with  
11 both Syria and Iraq. That border has been used as the  
12 principal border through which fighters flowed in both  
13 directions. And we've asked the Turks to do more. They  
14 have done some more. We're helping them do yet more. But,  
15 it's critical that they control their border.

16 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

17 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 Chairman McCain: Well, of course, ISIS wants, more  
19 than anything else, to preserve their caliphate. No one is  
20 arguing to -- that there should be 100,000 troops, although  
21 the President, and obviously you, like to set up the  
22 strawmen. It is clear that, without American participation  
23 and leadership, there is no strategy to take Raqqa, which is  
24 their base of operations where they are planning and  
25 orchestrating attacks. We just saw the manifestation of it,

1 including working on chemical weapons.

2 Mr. Secretary, I would beg you to call up General  
3 Keane, General Petraeus, Secretary Gates, Secretary Panetta,  
4 even former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Ask all of  
5 them, and they will tell you that a safe zone could have  
6 prevented the millions of refugees and the horrible  
7 consequences of at least a quarter of a million people  
8 barrel-bombed.

9 And for you to sit there, General, and say that we'd  
10 have to take out Syrian air defenses is either a stunning  
11 display of ignorance or, again, this whole aspect of  
12 avoiding -- or making the problem seem so huge that we can't  
13 handle it. All we have to do is protect a no-fly zone. We  
14 don't have to take out a single airplane -- air defense  
15 capability of theirs. All we have to do is tell them, "If  
16 you fly into this area, you're going to get shot down,"  
17 which we can do with Patriot batteries. And everybody knows  
18 that. And that's why General Keane and General Petraeus and  
19 Secretary Gates, Secretary Panetta, and even Secretary  
20 Clinton have said that these things are doable. It's really  
21 saddening to see that, basically, business as usual while  
22 thousands and thousands of Syrians are slaughtered by this  
23 horrible barrel-bombing, which also was accompanied by acts  
24 of chemical weapons.

25 So, I leave this hearing somewhat depressed, because

1 clearly there is no strategy to take Raqqa, there is no  
2 motivation to set up a no-fly zone, which, even as I say  
3 Hillary Clinton has supported and every military leader that  
4 I know that was architect of the surge, says you can do it  
5 without much difficulty. But, we are seeing again what we  
6 have seen from this administration for the last 4 years,  
7 since some of us advocated it, saying that it would be too  
8 hard to do, ignoring the fact that, as long as Bashar Assad  
9 continues to do this horrible barrel-bombing, they're  
10 slaughtering thousands of innocent civilians -- men, women,  
11 and children. Where is our moral -- where is our -- the  
12 tradition of the United States of America? We went to  
13 Bosnia after the -- after they ethnically cleansed 8,000  
14 people. This guy has killed 240,000. And yet, it's too  
15 hard for the most powerful nation on Earth to set up a no-  
16 fly zone.

17 This hearing is adjourned.

18 [Whereupon, at 12:26 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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