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Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY
CHALLENGES AND ONGOING MILITARY OPERATIONS

Thursday, September 22, 2016

Washington, D.C.

ALDERSON COURT REPORTING
1155 CONNECTICUT AVENUE, N.W.
SUITE 200
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036
(202) 289-2260
www.aldersonreporting.com

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U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES
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Thursday, September 22, 2016

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

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

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

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

3 Chairman McCain: Good morning.

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

11 Is there a motion to favorably report these 40 million
12 -- 40 military nominations to the Senate?

13 Senator Reed: So move.

14 Chairman McCain: Is there a second?

15 Senator Sessions: Second.

16 Chairman McCain: All in favor, say aye.

17 [A chorus of ayes.]

18 Chairman McCain: The motion carries.

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

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

1 This committee has conducted regular hearings on U.S.
2 national security strategy and ongoing military operations,
3 and we have devoted special attention to the chaos engulfing
4 the Middle East and the U.S. military campaign against ISIL.
5 It will be up to future historians to render a final
6 judgment on this administration's stewardship of U.S.
7 interests in the broader Middle East. But, in the opinion
8 of this one Senator, it's been an unmitigated disaster.
9 President Obama sought to pivot away from one of the most
10 strategically vital regions of the world out of a misplaced
11 hope that, quote, "the tide of war" was receding and that we
12 should focus on, quote, "nation-building at home." That
13 withdrawal of U.S. power created a vacuum that was filled by
14 all of the worst actors in the region: Sunni terrorist
15 groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIL, the Iranian regime and its
16 proxies, and now Putin's Russia.

17 Just consider, over the past 8 years, this
18 administration has overseen the collapse of regional order
19 in the Middle East into a state of chaos where every country
20 is either a battlefield for regional conflict, a party to
21 that conflict, or both. The rise of ISIL and the threat it
22 poses has made al-Qaeda appear modest by comparison. But,
23 both terrorist networks have expanded their influence from
24 West Africa to South Asia and everything in between.

25 The administration may have postponed Iran's nuclear

1 programs, but this has come at the cost of unshackling
2 Iranian power and ambition, both of which will grow in the
3 coming years as billions of dollars in sanctions relief is
4 transformed into advanced military capability and support
5 for terrorism. And then there is Putin's Russia, which has
6 reclaimed a position of influence in Middle East it has not
7 enjoyed in four decades.

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

23 I have no doubt that ISIL will eventually be expelled
24 from its strongholds in Mosul and Raqqa. The day of
25 liberation will come later than it should have, but it will

1 come. This will be a tactical success, but it is unlikely
2 to lead to strategic gains, because the administration has
3 failed to address, and at times exacerbated, the underlying
4 conflict. The struggles for power and sectarian identity
5 now raging across the Middle East, ISIL is merely a symptom
6 of this deeper problem.

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

15 Libya, we've had success in degrading ISIL's stronghold
16 in Sirte, but what remains is a divided nation littered with
17 independent militias, flooded with arms, and searching in
18 vain for legitimate governance and political unity,
19 conditions that will remain fertile grounds for extremism
20 and anti-Western terrorism.

21 We've also begun targeting ISIL in Afghanistan, but a
22 resurgent Taliban, backed by Afghanistan's neighbors,
23 continue to destabilize and terrorize the country while
24 Afghan National Army casualties remain unsustainably high.
25 And yet, it was in this environment that President Obama

1 chose to withdraw another 1,400 troops.

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

20 It appears that none of this will ultimately matter,
21 because, once again, Assad and Putin are not holding up
22 their end of the deal, as nearly everyone predicted. Assad
23 has declared an end to the cease-fire. Barrel bombs are
24 falling again on civilians in Aleppo. And an airstrike
25 reportedly carried out by Russia has killed 12 members of a

1 U.N. humanitarian convoy. Nonetheless, administration
2 officials are desperately trying to salvage this agreement,
3 likely because they realize that, without this diplomatic
4 fig leaf, the abject failure of their Syria policy will be
5 evident, and because they know, as does everyone else, that
6 there is no Plan B.

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

16 Such will be the unfortunate inheritance of our next
17 President, a Middle East aflame, where American influence
18 has been squandered. America's adversaries neither respect
19 nor fear us. America's friends are increasingly hedging
20 their bets. And America's policy options have been
21 significantly narrowed and worsens. What's worse, America's
22 military will confront these daunting challenges with
23 constrained budgets, aging equipment, depleted readiness,
24 and a growing set of operational requirements driven by
25 other escalating challenges in Europe and Asia. We are

1 simultaneously asking our military to wage a generational
2 fight against Islamist terrorism while rebuilding a ready
3 and modernized force to deter and, if necessary, defeat
4 great-power or rogue-state competitors in full-spectrum
5 combat.

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

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

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

6 And giving the security challenges that face the United
7 States, your appearances before the committee are always
8 deeply appreciated and very timely, particularly this
9 moment.

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

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

24 Unfortunately, in Syria it appears that the cessation
25 of hostilities is not going to hold. And we look forward to

1 your assessment of the progress and the military aspects of
2 this campaign and whether there is a possibility of a
3 renewed cessation of hostilities in the future.

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

16 With regard to Afghanistan, I support the President's
17 position to maintain approximately 8400 troops in the
18 country into next year. This decision sent an important
19 message to the Afghans, our allies, the Taliban, and others
20 in the region, that the United States remains committed to
21 ensuring a stable Afghanistan. We look forward to your
22 assessment of this year's fighting season and what more we
23 can do to support the development of the Afghan national
24 defense and security forces.

25 Despite a challenging security and political

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

11 In Eastern Europe, Russia continues its pattern of
12 confrontation and antagonistic behavior. They persist in
13 the use of hybrid tactics to foment discord and political
14 gridlock throughout the region. Their aviators have
15 harassed U.S. ships and aircraft deployed to the region.
16 And they continue to provide support and training to
17 Separatists in Eastern Ukraine, in violation of the Minsk
18 cease-fire agreements. EUCOM and NATO have undertaken
19 robust efforts to deter such behavior. I look forward to
20 hearing your thoughts on the progress of, and future plans
21 for, such efforts.

22 North Korea remains one of the most dangerous and
23 difficult national security challenges that this country
24 faces. Earlier this month, North Korea conducted its fifth
25 nuclear test, demonstrating that the North Korean regime has

1 little interest in resuming Six-Party Talks. While we have
2 made significant efforts to put strong and effective
3 sanctions in place to curb North Korea's nuclear
4 development, China's unwillingness to enforce those
5 sanctions to the full extent of its ability has undermined
6 U.S. and international efforts to bring North Korea in line.

7 Finally, our long-term military strategy depends on a
8 budget that focuses at least 5 years into the future. Last
9 year, Congress passed a 2015 Bipartisan Budget Act, which
10 provided the Department with budget stability in the near
11 term. However, there is no budget agreement for fiscal year
12 2018 and beyond. Without another bipartisan agreement that
13 provides relief from sequestration, the Department will be
14 forced to submit a fiscal year 2018 budget that adheres to
15 the sequestration-level budget caps and could, and indeed
16 would, undermine our defense strategy, including the
17 investments made to rebuild readiness and modernize
18 platforms and equipment. And we must not let that happen.

19 Thank you, again, Mr. Chairman. And thank you,
20 gentlemen.

21 Chairman McCain: Welcome, Mr. Secretary. And this is
22 the last time for this year. We appreciate your -- you and
23 General Dunford's appearances before the Armed Services
24 Committee. And we look forward to your and General
25 Dunford's testimony. Thank you for -- both of you, for your

1 service to our Nation.

2 Secretary Carter.

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. ASHTON B CARTER, SECRETARY OF
2 DEFENSE

3 Secretary Carter: Thank you very much. Chairman,
4 Ranking Member Reed, all the members of this committee,
5 thank you for having us here.

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

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

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

25 As you know, DOD is currently addressing each of the

1 five challenges that Chairman Dunford and I described to you
2 in our budget testimony this spring and that the Chairman
3 and Senator Reed have already touched on, namely Russia,
4 China, North Korea, Iran, and terrorism. And, on the last,
5 in the wake of this week's attacks in New York, New Jersey,
6 and Minnesota, we remain as determined as ever to continue
7 countering terrorists around the world who seek to do harm
8 to our country and our personnel. More on that shortly.

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

21 And yet today, just 8 days away from the end of this
22 fiscal year, that budget has yet to be funded by Congress.
23 I want to discuss that with you today. But, because this
24 hearing is partly about ongoing military operations, let me
25 begin with an operational update on our campaign to deliver

1 ISIL a lasting defeat.

2 Now, each time Chairman Dunford and I have appeared
3 before this committee since back last October, I've
4 described to you our coalition military campaign plan, which
5 is focused on three objectives. The first is to destroy
6 ISIL's -- the ISIL cancer's parent tumor in Iraq and Syria,
7 because the sooner we end ISIL's occupation of territory in
8 those countries, that is the sooner we destroy both the fact
9 and the idea of an Islamic State based on ISIL's barbaric
10 ideology, the safer all of the world will be. And that's
11 necessary, absolutely necessary. It's not sufficient. So,
12 our second objective is to combat ISIL's metastases
13 everywhere they emerge around the world -- in Afghanistan,
14 Libya, and elsewhere. And our third objective is to help
15 protect the homeland. This is mainly the responsibility of
16 our partners in the FBI, the Justice Department, Homeland
17 Security, the intelligence community, and State and local
18 law enforcement, but DOD strongly supports them. And I'll
19 address how, momentarily.

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

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

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

24 Meanwhile, we're systematically eliminating ISIL's
25 leadership, with the coalition having taken out seven

1 members of the ISIL senior Shura, including its chief of
2 external operations, Al-Adnani. He was one of more than 20
3 ISIL external operators and plotters we removed from the
4 battlefield.

5 We're also continuing to go after ISIL's attempts to
6 develop chemical weapons as we continue to ensure that U.S.,
7 coalition, and Iraqi troops are vigilantly protected from
8 that threat. And just last week, in one of the single
9 largest airstrikes of our campaign, we destroyed a
10 pharmaceutical facility near Mosul that ISIL tried to use as
11 a chemical weapons plant.

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

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

20 With respect to the Syrian civil war, I want to commend
21 Secretary Kerry for working so tirelessly to seek an
22 arrangement which, if implemented, would ease the suffering
23 of the Syrian people and get Russia pushing at last for a
24 political transition, which is the only way to end the
25 Syrian civil war. There remains a way to go to see if the

1 terms of that arrangement can be implemented.

2 Unfortunately, the behavior we've seen from Russia and Syria
3 over the last few days has been deeply problematic.

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

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

11 Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, we worked with our Afghan
12 partners to conduct a large operation against ISIL over the
13 last 2 months, dealing the organization severe blows,
14 killing its top leader, and degrading its infrastructure,
15 logistics base, and recruiting. And there'll be more
16 coming.

17 Next, to help protect our homeland and our people, DOD
18 continues to provide strong support to our law enforcement,
19 homeland security, and intelligence partners. This is the
20 number-one mission of our Northern Command. And the U.S.
21 military is supporting our partners in three critical ways.
22 First, we're ensuring the protection of our personnel and
23 the DOD facilities where they work and reside. Second,
24 we're disrupting ISIL's external operations. More on that
25 shortly. And third, we're also disrupting the flow of

1 foreign fighters both to and from Iraq and Syria. This is
2 part of a broader effort within our coalition to not only
3 stem the flow of foreign fighters, but also counter ISIL's
4 online messaging, recruitment, and spread of its loathsome
5 ideology.

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

21 Let me now address issues DOD faces in institution, and
22 how you can help. We have three grave concerns related to
23 processes here in Congress. One, budget gridlock and
24 instability. Two, micromanagement and over-regulation. And
25 three, denial of needed reforms. As you've heard

1 consistently from me and DOD senior leaders, all three are
2 serious concerns. But, here today, because of how close we
3 are to the end of the fiscal year, I want to focus just on
4 the first.

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

18 We're now 8 days away from the end of the fiscal year.
19 But, instead of stability, we're going into fiscal year 2017
20 with yet another Continuing Resolution. This, for the
21 eighth fiscal year in a row. That's a deplorable state of
22 affairs. And, Chairman McCain, I appreciate your comments to
23 our service chiefs about the damage the CR can do to our
24 institution.

25 As you know, the longer a Continuing Resolution lasts,

1 the more damaging it is. It's not just a matter of money,
2 but where the dollars are. For example, a CR that goes past
3 December would undermine our plan to quadruple our European
4 Reassurance Initiative at a time, as the Chairman already
5 noted, when we need to be standing with our NATO allies, and
6 standing up to deter Russian aggression. I know you will
7 return here in November to pass defense appropriations and a
8 National Defense Authorization Act. I look forward to
9 working with you then.

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

22 Today, America is fortunate to have the world's
23 greatest military. I know it. You know it. Our friends
24 and allies know it. And, critical -- critically, our
25 potential adversaries know it, too. Only with your help can

1 we ensure that my successors can say the same and that what
2 is today the finest fighting force the world has ever known
3 remains that way for years to come.

4 Thank you.

5 [The prepared statement of Secretary Carter follows:]

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1 Chairman McCain: General Dunford.
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1 STATEMENT OF GENERAL JOSEPH F. DUNFORD, JR., USMC,
2 CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

3 General Dunford: Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed,
4 members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to
5 join Secretary Carter this morning.

6 Before offering a brief assessment of ongoing
7 operations, I'd like to associate myself with the comments
8 made by the service chiefs who testified before this
9 committee last week. As you'd expect, they offered their
10 candid assessment about the readiness and the modernization
11 challenges that affect each of the services. And I fully
12 concur with their assessment of the operational tempo and
13 the budget challenges faced by each of the services and
14 across the Department.

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

24 And I say all that, mindful that we remain confronted
25 with challenges from traditional state actors and violent

1 extremism. Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea continue to
2 invest in military capabilities that reduce that competitive
3 advantage. They are also advancing their interests through
4 adversarial competition that has a military dimension that
5 falls short of armed conflict. Examples include Russian
6 actions in the Ukraine, North Korea's nuclear saber-
7 rattling, Chinese activities in the South China Sea, and
8 Iran's malign activities across the Middle East. In
9 different ways, each of these nations leverage economic
10 coercion, information operations, cyber capabilities,
11 unconventional warfare and force posture deliberately
12 seeking to avoid a U.S. military response.

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

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

23 We also remain firmly committed to defeating ISIL and
24 its affiliates wherever they may emerge. Since my last
25 appearance before the committee, I've made additional trips

1 to the Middle East, and I'm encouraged by the coalition's
2 progress in Iraq and Syria. We've also degraded the Islamic
3 State's capabilities in Libya, West Africa, and Afghanistan.
4 Coalition operations supporting indigenous ground forces --
5 and the Chairman mentioned this, Ranking Member Reed
6 mentioned, the Secretary did -- have disrupted core ISIL's
7 ability to mount external attacks, reduce its territory of
8 control, limit its freedom of movement, eliminate many of
9 their leaders, and reduce the resources that they have
10 available. Most importantly, the coalition has begun to
11 discredit ISIL's narrative and its aura of invincibility.
12 While more work remains to be done, and we're by no means --
13 by no means are we complacent -- it's clear we have the
14 momentum in the military campaign.

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

20 To meet tomorrow's requirements, we must take action
21 today. Our nuclear deterrent remains effective, but it is
22 aging and requires modernization. At the same time, we must
23 develop and enhance the capabilities that -- in the
24 increasingly contested domains of space and cyber. And we
25 must also do all that while we preserve the edge in our

1 conventional capabilities. In the end, we must maintain a
2 balanced inventory of joint capabilities and capacities to
3 meet the full range of challenges that we will confront.

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

11 Thank you, Chairman, members of the committee.

12 [The prepared statement of General Dunford follows:]

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1 Chairman McCain: Thank you very much, General.

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

8 General Dunford, in your professional military opinion,
9 is the Russia -- is the Russian -- in a quagmire in Syria?

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

12 Chairman McCain: In your professional military
13 opinion, is the cessation-of-hostilities agreement being
14 effectively implemented on the ground in Syria?

15 General Dunford: That would not -- that would not
16 appear to be the case over the last 48 hours, Chairman.

17 Chairman McCain: This is not the first time we've had
18 one of these agreements. In fact, it -- it's beginning to
19 fit the definition of insanity, of doing the same thing over
20 and over again. Suppose this fails again, General Dunford.
21 What do we do then? Try another cease-fire? What do we do
22 then? We just saw, as you know, evidence that a chemical
23 weapon -- and we knew that a chemical weapons factory was
24 functioning in Raqqa. What's Plan B? Is there a Plan B,
25 here, or do we just keep going back to the five-star hotels

1 in Geneva and have meetings with our -- with Mr. Lavrov, and
2 come out with various declarations? What do we do if this
3 one fails?

4 General Dunford: Chairman, we have a wide range of
5 military options --

6 Chairman McCain: Give us one.

7 General Dunford: Chairman, if I could finish. We have
8 a wide range of military options that we would provide to
9 the President, should our policy change in the wake of this
10 recent cessation --

11 Chairman McCain: Is the present policy working?

12 General Dunford: Against ISIL, the present policy is
13 working.

14 Chairman McCain: In Syria, with 400,000 people killed,
15 6 million refugees, is our strategy in Syria working --
16 succeeding?

17 General Dunford: With regard to political transition
18 in Syria, at this time, I would --

19 Chairman McCain: In regards to the whole situation in
20 Syria, is our policy working?

21 General Dunford: Chairman, I'd let others address the
22 policy. Our focus, from a military perspective, is --

23 Chairman McCain: I'm asking --

24 General Dunford: -- our counter-ISIL campaign.

25 Chairman McCain: -- Is the military strategy

1 succeeding in Syria?

2 General Dunford: Our military strategy is focused on a
3 counter-ISIL campaign. In my judgment, we are succeeding in
4 that campaign.

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

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

11 Chairman McCain: So, you can't judge that.

12 General Dunford: I can't judge the long-term prospects
13 for Assad, was my point, Chairman. I'm --

14 Chairman McCain: In the --

15 General Dunford: -- sure he's not --

16 Chairman McCain: -- short term?

17 General Dunford: -- leaving in the short term.

18 Chairman McCain: In your professional military
19 opinion, is it a good idea to share -- set up an
20 intelligence-sharing operation with the Russians?

21 General Dunford: Chairman, we don't have any intention
22 of having an intelligence-sharing arrangement with the
23 Russians.

24 Chairman McCain: That is part of Secretary Kerry's
25 proposal, that we set up an intelligence-sharing operation

1 in Syria with the Russians.

2 General Dunford: Chairman, the U.S. military role will
3 not include intelligence-sharing with the Russians.

4 Chairman McCain: Do you support such an idea, that
5 they should share intelligence -- military intelligence
6 information with Russia and Syria?

7 General Dunford: Chairman, what the President has
8 directed us to do is establish a joint implementation --

9 Chairman McCain: I was -- asked for your professional
10 military opinion, not what the President has told you to do.
11 I'm asking, as in your confirmation hearings, if you would
12 give your professional military opinion to this committee in
13 response to questions. I expect you to hold to that.

14 It is -- is it your professional military opinion that
15 it would be a good idea to have an intelligence-sharing
16 operation with Russia in Syria?

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

19 Chairman McCain: I thank you, General.

20 On the issue of sequestration, could -- I just
21 mentioned -- I hope it got the attention of all of my
22 colleagues -- that every one of the service chiefs said
23 that, presently, sequestration puts our men and women who
24 are serving in military in greater risk. At the same time,
25 the President of the United States is demanding -- is

1 putting the risk to American servicemen and -women on the
2 same level as funding for the EPA. And so, it is just
3 remarkable to a lot of us that we don't take care of the
4 compelling argument of caring -- of reducing the risk to the
5 men and women who are serving in the military, demanding
6 that there be nondefense increases in spending at the same
7 time.

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

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

18 Senator Reed.

19 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

20 Mr. Secretary and General Dunford, one of the factors
21 that appears to be -- influence the timing of the Mosul
22 operation is to -- how do you govern Mosul after you
23 militarily succeed -- Iraq Security Forces succeed, with
24 American and coalition assistance? And that triggers the
25 issue of, not only the role of agencies outside Defense,

1 like the State Department, AID, and others, but the
2 resources they have. It would be -- is it necessary, in
3 your view, that these agencies be robustly funded, in
4 addition, because without them, you can have a military
5 victory and essentially just wait around, because they'll
6 come back because you haven't put the politics and the
7 capacity together?

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

17 And I'm just very specifically -- if I may, Senator,
18 I'll take the political part and then the
19 stabilization/reconstruction part.

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

1 different, too.

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

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

1 --

2 Senator Reed: Right.

3 Secretary Carter: -- and other international aid
4 agencies.

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

11 Senator Reed: But --

12 Secretary Carter: -- "the local people to help them
13 reconstruct."

14 Senator Reed: But, essentially, you cannot -- you can
15 conduct kinetic operations, but the real, long-term effort
16 is political/economic relief, refugee support, et cetera.
17 Those are funds outside Department of Defense. So, a
18 comprehensive approach to all these problems requires
19 relief, not just from Department of Defense spending, but
20 for other Federal agencies.

21 Secretary Carter: It --

22 Senator Reed: Is that correct?

23 Secretary Carter: It is. The whole counter-ISIL thing
24 is whole-of-government and --

25 Senator Reed: Okay. Let me -- going back also to your

1 question about Northern Command. Northern Command is
2 critical to defense of the United States, but, without a
3 robust Department of Homeland Security, without adequate
4 resources -- the FBI and for other domestic agencies -- then
5 you could be performing at peak efficiency, but the job
6 would not get done. Is --

7 Secretary Carter: We --

8 Senator Reed: -- that correct?

9 Secretary Carter: It -- that is true. We count on
10 their support. We support them, as well. It's a whole-of-
11 government effort, defeat of ISIL and --

12 Senator Reed: And, General Dunford, do you concur,
13 from your perspective?

14 General Dunford: I do, Senator.

15 Senator Reed: Thank you very much.

16 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 Chairman McCain: Senator Inhofe.

18 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

1 really do need to have that to conduct the -- a hearing
2 that's meaningful.

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

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

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

22 General Dunford?

23 General Dunford: Senator, I don't believe they have.
24 And that's why we've articulated an increased requirement in
25 FY17, and we'll continue to reinforce those areas that we

1 identified in '17 for '18. And, of course, those -- well,
2 turn it over to Secretary --

3 Senator Inhofe: I appreciate that.

4 Do you agree?

5 Secretary Carter: Yeah. And I wanted to say --

6 Senator Inhofe: All right.

7 Secretary Carter: -- that I agree with General
8 Dunford, and what the Chief said, as well, and I'm --
9 insufficiency belongs with instability. So, I'm sorry if we
10 left that word out. Nothing intended there. The point that
11 they were making, and that I would strongly echo, is, the
12 effects of 8 straight years of ending a fiscal year without
13 an appropriation --

14 Senator Inhofe: Yeah. You --

15 Secretary Carter: -- for the next -- that is -- has had
16 a serious effect. We've tried to manage through it.

17 Senator Inhofe: Right.

18 Secretary Carter: We've done our best. But, it --
19 that's just not --

20 Senator Inhofe: I understand, Secretary.

21 Secretary Carter: -- the way to run an --

22 Senator Inhofe: Now, you've been -- let me compliment
23 you -- you've been a real stalwart on your -- in support of
24 each leg of the nuclear triad. Had stated that the nuclear
25 mission is the bedrock of our security. Today, we're

1 spending about 3 to 4 percent of our budget. However, the
2 long-term plan shows that we're going to move up, within the
3 decade, or sometime in the decade, to 6 to 7 percent. The
4 question I would ask is -- you know, General Dunford, with
5 Russia and China actively modernizing their nuclear weapons
6 and delivery system, we know what's happening in North Korea
7 -- do you think we should accelerate this so that we would
8 reach the 6 to 7 percent much earlier, like now?

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

18 Senator Inhofe: Well, I think what you're saying is,
19 even if you had more now, you could not spend it wisely.
20 You need the -- the course that we're on is adequate, in
21 your opinion.

22 General Dunford: Senator, that's exactly my --

23 Senator Inhofe: All right.

24 General Dunford: -- assessment.

25 Senator Inhofe: That's fine.

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

9 Secretary Carter: It absolutely is. That's why we
10 quadrupled the European Reassurance Initiative.

11 Senator Inhofe: But, what would that -- I would ask
12 the question, then, Why are we not providing defensive
13 lethal assistance to the Ukraine?

14 Secretary Carter: Well, that is still on the table.
15 It's been on the table for quite some time. And --

16 Senator Inhofe: Well, it's more than on the table --

17 Secretary Carter: -- I want to emphasize, we do --

18 Senator Inhofe: -- with us, because it's in our --

19 Secretary Carter: Well, it's going to depend upon what
20 the Russians do with respect to Minsk. I just met with my
21 Ukrainian counterpart a couple of weeks ago. A great guy,
22 by the way. He's been doing this for a long time and is
23 very dedicated, a good guy to work with. And we talked
24 about everything that are doing with them. We have training
25 now. We've moved from their national --

1 Senator Inhofe: Okay. And --

2 Secretary Carter: -- guard to their regular --

3 Senator Inhofe: I don't want to be rude, Mr.
4 Secretary, but my time is just about expired.

5 Secretary Carter: Okay.

6 Senator Inhofe: And I just want to know if this --
7 well, let me ask you, General Dunford. If we were to change
8 our policy, what type of weaponry would be the --
9 appropriate right now? You know, we have the Javelin anti-
10 armor weapons. What would be the right weapon? And you're
11 both fully aware that, in our defense authorization bill, we
12 address this issue, because we support lethal defense
13 weapons.

14 General Dunford?

15 General Dunford: The critical capability areas the
16 Ukrainians have identified include fire support, their
17 artillery capability, as well as their anti-armor
18 capability.

19 Senator Inhofe: Yeah, and do you agree with that?

20 General Dunford: That's a capability gap, I agree with
21 that.

22 Senator Inhofe: Thank you.

23 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Chairman McCain: Senator Blumenthal.

25 Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

1 I want to join in thanking both of you for your
2 extraordinary service and for your very forthright answers
3 to our questions here.

4 General Dunford, is there any question in your mind,
5 any doubt, that Russian planes were responsible for
6 attacking the United States -- the U.N. convoy that was
7 trying to deliver aid to Aleppo?

8 General Dunford: Senator, my -- I don't have the
9 facts. What we know are, two Russian aircraft were in that
10 area at that time. My judgment would be that they did.
11 There were also some other aircraft in the area, that
12 belonged to the regime, at or about the same time; so, I
13 can't conclusively say that it was the Russians, but it was
14 either the Russians or the regime.

15 Senator Blumenthal: Well, it sounds to me like you're
16 saying that their responsibility was demonstrated beyond a
17 reasonable doubt.

18 General Dunford: Senator, there's no doubt in my mind
19 that the Russians are responsible. I just don't know whose
20 aircraft actually dropped the bomb. So, I would certainly
21 associate myself with the comment that you made earlier,
22 that, yes, it is the Russians that were responsible.

23 Senator Blumenthal: Which is a war crime. I'm not
24 asking for your legal judgment, knowing that you would
25 probably disclaim your expertise as a lawyer, but you would

1 agree with me, as a layman, as a military person, that that
2 act constituted a war crime.

3 General Dunford: It was an unacceptable atrocity,
4 Senator.

5 Senator Blumenthal: Would you agree with Secretary
6 Kerry in contending that what ought to be done is a
7 grounding of all aircraft in certain areas of Syria,
8 including that one?

9 General Dunford: I would not agree that coalition
10 aircraft ought to be grounded. I do agree that Syrian
11 regime aircraft and Russian aircraft should be grounded.

12 Senator Blumenthal: Would you agree with --
13 apparently, the growing strain of thought in the
14 administration, that the Syrian Kurds should be armed?

15 General Dunford: Senator, we're in deliberation about
16 exactly what to do with the Syrian Democratic Forces right
17 now. We have -- providing them support. They are our more
18 -- most effective partner on the ground. It's very
19 difficult, as you know, managing the relationship between
20 our support for the Syrian Democratic Forces and our Turkish
21 allies. And so, we're working very closely with our Turkish
22 allies to come up with the right approach to make sure that
23 we can conduct effective and decisive operations in Raqqa
24 with the Syrian Democratic Forces and still allay the
25 Kurdish -- the Turkish concerns about the Kurds' long-term

1 political prospects.

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

6 General Dunford: Senator, I would agree with that. If
7 we would reinforce the Syrian Democratic Forces' current
8 capabilities, that will increase the prospects of our
9 success in Raqqa.

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

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

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

1 Secretary Carter: I have spelled -- I have a number of
2 concerns, which I spelled out at great length in a letter to
3 the committee. And I really look forward to working with
4 you to resolve them. There are a number of them. They're
5 serious concerns that I have for provisions in the bill.
6 And I'd like to work all of these -- I think where we have
7 common intentions, work them to a place where I can support
8 an NDAA that the President would sign. That's where I'd
9 like to get with you all by the time you return, in
10 November.

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

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

25 So, thank you very much for your testimony today.

1 Chairman McCain: Senator Sessions.

2 Senator Sessions: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

11 With regard to the sequestration issue, Mr. Secretary,
12 I'm trying to contain spending on all our accounts. I've
13 come to believe that we have to have more defense spending.

14 And we've exceeded sequestration, I guess, for the last 2
15 years. But, I guess my question to you is -- Senator McCain
16 has proposed an increase in defense spending. All the items
17 that he proposed are things the Defense Department have said
18 they need. And is it your position that the -- and is it
19 the President's position -- that we will not spend that
20 additional money for the Defense Department unless at least
21 an equal amount of money is spent on the Commerce
22 Department, the EPA, and other government agencies?

23 Secretary Carter: Well, what -- I'll speak for myself
24 -- what I can't support, and won't support, is anything that
25 moves towards instability. And that means towards

1 sequestration. And that means away from bipartisanship. We
2 submitted a budget that was consonant with the bipartisan
3 budget agreement. That's what we did.

4 Senator Sessions: Well --

5 Secretary Carter: Eight months --

6 Senator Sessions: Okay. So, I understand.

7 Secretary Carter: We did that --

8 Senator Sessions: It --

9 Secretary Carter: -- a few months into the bipartisan
10 budget --

11 Senator Sessions: All right.

12 Secretary Carter: -- agreement. And I -- the -- I
13 can't -- I don't control this. I simply approve it.

14 Senator Sessions: It's the President's decision,
15 ultimately. I understand that. So, what he's saying, in
16 leading the Democrats, and they're saying, not only do we
17 have to bust the budget for the Defense Department, we have
18 to bust it an equal amount for nondefense spending. That's
19 the problem we have today. That's why we don't have a
20 bipartisan agreement.

21 So, if we can go on to the next subject --

22 Secretary Carter: Well, there is a bipartisan -- if I
23 may say so, there is a bipartisan budget agreement, and that
24 is what we --

25 Senator Sessions: Well --

1 Secretary Carter: -- submitted our budget in
2 accordance with, whatever, 8 months ago. And now --

3 Senator Sessions: Well --

4 Secretary Carter: -- the fiscal year ends, and there's
5 no --

6 Senator Sessions: Well, we'll have to --

7 Secretary Carter: -- there's no budget on that basis.

8 Senator Sessions: -- to avoid a government shutdown.

9 And the leadership of the President and his determination to
10 compromise has bitterly been reached. I wish we could have
11 supported Defense without going further.

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

17 Secretary Carter: Yeah. Yeah, I absolutely do. They
18 said that --

19 Senator Sessions: And you've said that before. But,
20 this European Reassurance Initiative -- a European official
21 told me, "Why did not the United States demand that Europe
22 increase their defense spending at the same amount we're
23 increasing our defense spending for Europe in the European
24 Reassurance Initiative?"

25 Secretary Carter: Well, all I can tell you is, yes, I

1 am, in a long tradition -- and it actually goes back before
2 --

3 Senator Sessions: So, my question is, Why did you not
4 tell the Europeans --

5 Secretary Carter: I did.

6 Senator Sessions: -- and --

7 Secretary Carter: I did. We've been talking --

8 Senator Sessions: Well, we don't have a commitment
9 from them to match that amount of money, do we?

10 Secretary Carter: Well, it's complicated, because some
11 -- each of them has made a contribution to European
12 Reassurance, but you're -- in terms of aggregate spending,
13 they have a commitment, which not many of them have met,
14 Senator, but a few have --

15 Senator Sessions: Four out of --

16 Secretary Carter: -- which is to meet --

17 Senator Sessions: -- 28 countries are at the minimum.

18 Secretary Carter: -- which is to spend 2 percent of
19 their GDP. And important major countries in Europe aren't
20 even doing that. And that's unacceptable.

21 Senator Sessions: With --

22 Secretary Carter: It means that Europe -- too many
23 European militaries have made themselves incapable of
24 independent --

25 Senator Sessions: Well --

1 Secretary Carter: -- military activity --

2 Senator Sessions: -- I'll just say this. For the last
3 8 to 12 years, they've continued --

4 Secretary Carter: Okay.

5 Senator Sessions: -- on this, and we've said it, and
6 nothing's happened. It's time for something to happen from
7 Europe.

8 Let me ask you, really, about the Syrian situation.
9 It's such a disaster. I mean, we've got hundreds of
10 thousands dead, 6 million refugees, and I don't see an end
11 in sight. General Dunford just said that Assad is not
12 leaving anytime soon. Five years ago, the President said,
13 "Assad has to go, and is going." He did not go. And this
14 is all a result of that. So, now we're making some
15 progress, I understand, against ISIS. What kind of
16 agreement -- what kind of end do you see, Mr. Secretary, for
17 this disastrous conflict? How can we see an end to it?
18 What do you foresee, and what's our goal?

19 Secretary Carter: We are making progress in the
20 counter-ISIL campaign in Iraq and Syria. In western Syria,
21 where the civil war rages --

22 Senator Sessions: No, no, no. I'm asking, What is the
23 goal of the United States --

24 Secretary Carter: The goal of --

25 Senator Sessions: -- of America --

1 Secretary Carter: The goal --

2 Senator Sessions: -- for Syria?

3 Secretary Carter: The goal of United States policy in
4 Syria is to end the Syrian war -- civil war. It has been
5 that for a long time. And that means a end to the violence
6 there. That's -- and also a political transition from Assad
7 to a government that includes the moderate opposition and
8 that can run the country. Our approach has been a political
9 one --

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

18 Secretary Carter: Well, let me be clear about
19 something, which is, our counter-ISIL campaign is not on the
20 table or part of the discussions of Secretary Kerry with the
21 Russians. That is about the Russian activity, Syrian
22 activity in western Syria. Our counter-ISIL campaign, we
23 are conducting, and will conduct. And you're right, we are
24 making progress in it. And that's --

25 Senator Sessions: Well --

1 Secretary Carter: -- going to go on.

2 Senator Sessions: I don't see --

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

9 Senator Sessions: Well --

10 Secretary Carter: He's trying to work with those --

11 Senator Sessions: -- let me wrap up and --

12 Secretary Carter: -- who have influence --

13 Senator Sessions: My time's over --

14 Secretary Carter: -- there, and they're not --

15 Senator Sessions: -- Mr. Secretary.

16 Secretary Carter: -- and they're not exercising that
17 influence.

18 Senator Sessions: I believe we could have done a
19 better job with safe zones. I'm worried about the area in
20 Iraq. I've talked to you previously and personally about
21 it. We need a active American policy, a leadership in the
22 world. But, we cannot establish all these governments, and
23 run them, and assure how they'll come out in the end. And
24 we can't occupy these countries for decades to try to assure
25 that. That's just not realistic.

1 A wise statesman would have seen the danger in Syria.
2 A wise statesman would have seen the danger in Libya. A
3 wise statesman should have seen what could have happened in
4 Egypt. And, except for 30 million Egyptians going to the
5 public square and driving out the Muslim Brotherhood, we
6 could have a disaster there.

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

15 Thank you.

16 Senator Reed [presiding]: On behalf of Chairman
17 McCain, let me recognize Senator King.

18 Senator King: Thank you.

19 An observation about the budget. A year and a half
20 ago, we had a bipartisan agreement on the budget number.
21 And then allocations were made to the Appropriations
22 Committee, and they went through their process. And I
23 thought, "Finally, some stability. We can have
24 appropriations." But, I'm reminded of an old saying in
25 Maine, "He's so dumb, he could screw up a two-car funeral."

1 We had the numbers, we had the allocations, we had the
2 agreement, and yet, here we are at a Continuing Resolution.

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

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

24 So, I think we ought to be clear about what the problem
25 is, here, that trying to load on a lot of political baggage

1 to both the appropriations bills and the national defense
2 bill is what has gotten us to this place. The numbers have
3 been agreed on by a year -- for a year and a half. And if
4 we want to increase them, let's discuss that and work out an
5 agreement. That should be easy. But, to be holding up
6 this-- and the -- similar to the sage grouse, other kinds of
7 those issues are why, my understanding is, is holding up the
8 appropriations process.

9 So, we're doing a Continuing Resolution even though
10 we've had a number agreed on for 2 year -- for a year and a
11 half. It's just -- you know, this institution, as Senator
12 Lindsey Graham pointed out last week, is one of the greatest
13 threats to American security. He went through a litany of
14 how we've taken more troops off the battlefield, more
15 airplanes out of the air, more ships out of the ocean than
16 any enemy has done by our inability to work out what
17 ordinary people on the street would think people ought to be
18 able to figure out in a relatively short period of time.

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

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

25 Senator King: Right.

1 Secretary Carter: Now -- and that -- we figured that
2 was the best the country could do on a bipartisan basis.
3 That's the only way we've had stability in the past.

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

9 Senator King: Sure.

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

17 Senator King: Mr. Secretary, I --

18 Secretary Carter: -- for this fiscal year. And now
19 the fiscal year ends, and -- so, we've played it very
20 straight.

21 Senator King: And my point is, we had a budget
22 agreement, we had a number, and we still can't get it done.

23 Let me ask an entirely different question.

24 Next week, we are probably going to be dealing with a
25 veto of the bill that would allow people to sue Saudi

1 Arabia, the so-called Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism
2 Act. General Dunford, do you have -- or both of you -- do
3 you have concerns about what the effect on our troops, our
4 liability around the world, would be if that bill becomes
5 law?

6 Secretary Carter: Let me -- if I may, I'll say
7 something first --

8 Senator King: Sure.

9 Secretary Carter: -- and then General Dunford, if he
10 wishes to.

11 The -- first of all, I completely associate myself with
12 the intention of this, which is to honor the families of the
13 9/11 perished. And so, that is the origin of this. And
14 that's -- is a worthy one.

15 I -- it is a law enforcement matter, and, I have to
16 say, we're -- we -- we're not the ones who are dealing with
17 it, nor are -- am I, at least, an expert on it. But, you
18 did raise one thing that I am aware of, which is a
19 complication from -- that would be a complication, from our
20 point of view, namely that were another country to behave
21 reciprocally towards the United States, that could be a
22 problem for some of our servicemembers. That is, I'm told,
23 a -- something that we, in the Department of Defense, should
24 be concerned about. And you're referring to that. And
25 that's my understanding, as well.

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

2 General Dunford: Senator, the potential second-order
3 effect the Secretary has raised is one that was -- been
4 brought to my attention. So, that's my concern, as well.

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

13 Thank you.

14 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

15 [The information referred to follows:]

16 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Reed: On behalf of the Chairman, Senator
2 Ayotte, please.

3 Senator Ayotte: Thank you, Chairman.

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

6 You know, just to briefly weigh on this funding issue,
7 what's been most disappointing to me, as someone who
8 supported the bipartisan budget agreement, is that the
9 defense appropriations bill passed within that cap set by
10 the bipartisan budget agreement unanimously out of the
11 Appropriations Committee. So, both parties agreed with the
12 funding on defense. Then it came to the Senate floor, and
13 it's been blocked multiple times because it's being held
14 hostage to other issues.

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

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

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

4 General Dunford: They are, Senator. I describe their
5 major export as malign influence.

6 Senator Ayotte: And are they continuing to test
7 ballistic missiles that is quite troubling to both us and
8 our allies and, I think, in violation of U.N. resolutions?

9 General Dunford: They are, Senator, as well as
10 provocative behavior in the Gulf.

11 Senator Ayotte: Exactly, that our military has
12 encountered in the Gulf just recently.

13 General Dunford: That's right, Senator.

14 Senator Ayotte: So, one of the things that I wanted to
15 ask about is -- recently, we learned that the 1.7 billion in
16 cash relief has actually gone -- that the administration has
17 provided Iran -- has actually gone directly to the
18 Revolutionary Guard Corps. I don't know if you were aware
19 of that. And, in fact, the Iranian parliament, or their
20 equivalent of our -- their legislative body passed a law
21 that essentially said if there was a settlement, a legal
22 settlement from a foreign country, which is how this \$1.7
23 billion has been characterized, it would go directly to the
24 military. Does that trouble you, that they're taking the
25 proceeds that we're giving them and funding their military?

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

7 Senator Ayotte: So, you know, one of the things, as I
8 look at this -- this is our -- you know, this relief that
9 we're giving them, they're testing ballistic missiles, they
10 -- the money that they're getting -- this isn't going to the
11 Iranian people, it's going to their Revolutionary Guard
12 Corps, that we know promotes terrorism and undermines
13 stability around the world. And yet, as I see this
14 situation, I don't see us taking any steps that we should,
15 in terms of being aggressive in coming back, especially on
16 the ballistic missile program and their terrorism issues.
17 So, what should we be doing, General?

18 General Dunford: Senator, there's two things that I'd
19 draw your attention to. First is our posture in the Central
20 Command, which is, in fact, their -- both to deter Iran, but
21 also to respond to Iran, should a response be required.
22 Also, in the FY17 budget -- and I expect you'll see similar
23 requests in the FY18 budget -- much of what we are focused
24 on is dealing with what we describe as anti-access area
25 denial. That's Iran's desire to keep us from moving into

1 that area, and then operating freely within that area. And
2 many of the programs, from a cyber perspective, from
3 ballistic missile defense capability, strike capability, are
4 all designed to deal with the threat of Iran in the region.

5 Senator Ayotte: So, let me just ask you. They're
6 still testing ballistic missiles. Would you agree that's a
7 grave threat and something that needs to be addressed, in
8 terms of our security? And this is all post-agreement, that
9 they're doing this, agreed?

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

13 Senator Ayotte: One of the things I wanted to ask your
14 thoughts on, General, is that we've learned about this \$400
15 million in cash that Iran got, that would be included in the
16 1.7 billion that I referenced, for release of the American
17 hostages. And did you think that was a good idea? Were you
18 consulted about that?

19 General Dunford: Senator, that would, in the normal
20 course of events, not be something that would be in my lane,
21 so I was not consulted.

22 Senator Ayotte: Well, do you think it's a good idea
23 that we should exchange cash to a country like Iran, that
24 you've already confirmed is one of the largest state
25 sponsors of terrorism, in exchange for hostages? Because,

1 as I look at this situation, they've now taken at least
2 three more American hostages.

3 General Dunford: Senator, I just don't know the
4 details of the agreement that was made with Iran and what
5 the nature of that money was. I -- you know, on principle,
6 I would prefer that we not provide additional resources to
7 Iran.

8 Senator Ayotte: So, on principle, you'd rather them
9 not have more money. And, I mean, doesn't it worry you
10 that, as we think about exchanging cash with a country like
11 Iran -- obviously, it was funneled through the European
12 countries -- and that, in fact, we're going to encourage
13 more bad behavior from Iran, and we've seen some of it?
14 Isn't that something we should be concerned about?

15 General Dunford: Senator, before whatever arrangement
16 was made, and after whatever arrangement was made, I'm under
17 no illusion of what Iran is intending to do, nor are we not
18 -- nor are we -- we are mindful of the capabilities that
19 they're developing, as well.

20 Senator Ayotte: Well, I hope -- you know, I've
21 introduced sanctions legislation on -- to address their
22 ballistic missile program. I think this ransom payment
23 issue is just deeply troubling, and it's just causing
24 further bad behavior from Iran. We know they've taken
25 further hostages. And I just hope that this administration

1 will step up and finally address Iran's bad behavior.

2 Senator Reed: On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator
3 Ernst, please.

4 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

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

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

14 Secretary Carter: Senator, it's -- I'll just say it to
15 be -- I'll try your questions yes or no. It depends on
16 whether they lend themselves to that. And, in this case,
17 no, I was not aware.

18 Senator Ernst: Okay. Yes, he did use it as a safe
19 haven during that planning and training.

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

24 General Dunford: Yes, I did, Senator.

25 Senator Ernst: Okay, thank you, General.

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

4 Secretary Carter: I am, yes.

5 General Dunford: I am, as well. And I was in Manila
6 last week, Senator.

7 Senator Ernst: Wonderful. Thank you, General.

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

20 And President Obama admitted that we have
21 underestimated the rise of ISIS in the Middle East. And
22 what I fear right now is that we are completely
23 underestimating the rise of ISIS in Southeast Asia.

24 So, before the President went to Asia last month, I did
25 send a letter to him and encouraged him to visit about how

1 we can counter terrorism and counter ISIS in that region.
2 And I did urge him to bring up this issue with the
3 President. And shortly after that, ISIS claimed another
4 attack, killing 14 civilians.

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

7 Secretary Carter: I am. And I'll say something, and
8 then I'll ask the Chairman also if he'd chime in.

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

18 I've spoken to the Defense Ministers in each of those four
19 countries. They have concerns, particularly about the
20 possibility that ISIS could establish a foothold there. In
21 some places, it's already troubled, in some way. And there
22 are places in all those countries. And it could grab hold
23 there.

24 Senator Ernst: Absolutely.

25 Secretary Carter: So, it is very much on our agenda.

1 Chairman, please.

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

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

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

23 So, it is a different fight. I call it a requirement
24 for a regional approach in Southeast Asia, as opposed to a
25 coalition, which is required in Syria and Iraq. But, we are

1 absolutely putting pressure on ISIL in South Asia. We are
2 absolutely working very closely with our partners. And,
3 frankly, the limit of the support we provide is often what
4 they are willing to accept politically. And so, we're very
5 keen, and we will bring to the President any requests for
6 support. And I think, as you know, Senator, we are
7 providing some support now to the Philippines --
8 intelligence support and --

9 Senator Ernst: Absolutely.

10 General Dunford: -- other support, to help them to
11 deal with the extremist problem that they have in the south.

12 Senator Ernst: Thank you, General.

13 Thank you, gentlemen.

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

20 So, thank you, gentlemen, very much.

21 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

22 Senator Reed: On behalf of the Chairman, let me
23 recognize Senator Shaheen.

24 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 And thank you, Secretary Carter and General Dunford,

1 for being here today and for your service to the country.

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

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

24 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you.

25 I very much appreciate, Secretary Carter, your raising

1 the European Reassurance Initiative as one of the programs
2 that's threatened if we can't get agreement in Congress on
3 funding, and share that concern, especially because of the
4 potential threat that Russia poses on -- in Eastern Europe.

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

12 So, I would ask you, Secretary Carter, do you agree
13 that that is one avenue that we could take? And what would
14 be the followup position if they continue to fly aircraft?

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

21 There's no question -- can be no question of grounding
22 U.S. aircraft that are conducting strikes against ISIL. We
23 do that. We do that with exceptional precision and care and
24 concern for civilian casualties that no other country can
25 match. And that's true of our whole coalition in all the

1 strikes we conduct.

2 So, they're not in the same category at all. And we
3 need to continue with our air campaign to defeat ISIL.

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

5 General Dunford: Senator, the most significant concern
6 I would have -- and I don't know what the proposal is --
7 but, I would not -- first of all, there's no reason to
8 ground our aircraft. We're not barrel bombing civilians,
9 we're not causing collateral damage. And we have momentum,
10 as we've all discussed here earlier today, against ISIL
11 right now. And I think what the Secretary is saying, I
12 fully associate myself with. We need to keep the pressure
13 on ISIL. The number-one priority that we have is disrupting
14 their ability to plan and conduct external operations from
15 Syria. And the cost of taking pressure off of ISIL right
16 now exposes us to risk that I think is not acceptable.

17 Senator Shaheen: In the absence of some other action
18 that we take, along with our allies in that area, do you see
19 anything changing the dynamic of the civil war in Syria? I
20 mean, I -- I believe it's going to take some other outside
21 -- some other intervention in order to change the direction
22 of this war. And right now, there's nothing happening that
23 would do that.

24 Either one of you.

25 Secretary Carter: Well, I'll start.

1 The direction in which Secretary Kerry is trying to get
2 the Russians to move, which I understand fully, is the
3 direction they always should have been in Syria, which is
4 towards putting an end to the civil war, not pouring
5 gasoline on it, and not emboldening Assad to be intransigent
6 --

7 Senator Shaheen: But --

8 Secretary Carter: -- let alone conducting an air
9 campaign, which is -- doesn't adhere to the standards that
10 ours does.

11 Senator Shaheen: But -- I'm sorry to interrupt, Mr.
12 Secretary, but I guess -- I appreciate what you're saying,
13 and that that should have been Russia's position all along,
14 but clearly --

15 Secretary Carter: That's what Secretary Kerry's trying
16 to get them to.

17 Senator Shaheen: Right. But, we have had no success,
18 after 5 years of civil war. And so, what I'm asking is,
19 What other options do we have that might change the
20 trajectory of what's happening in Syria?

21 Secretary Carter: Well, I'm -- again, I'm not going to
22 try to get in the middle of these negotiations, but I think
23 that Secretary Kerry is trying to find a way to achieve
24 those objectives. They're -- those are the right objectives
25 to have. And I -- but, as we sit here today, the Russians

1 do not, and the Syrians do not, seem to be moving in that
2 direction, as he said yesterday.

3 Chairman, you want to add anything?

4 Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

5 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 Chairman McCain [presiding]: Senator Cotton.

7 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

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

13 Secretary Carter: I can't speak to the internal
14 deliberations of the Congress. The only thing I'd say --

15 Senator Cotton: Well, that's a public vote. That's
16 not an internal --

17 Secretary Carter: Well, let me just say, we know that
18 the only way to get budget stability is with everybody
19 coming together. And I see proposals from this side and
20 that side, and this committee and that committee, and
21 they're all different. We submitted a budget, in accordance
22 with the bipartisan budget agreements just months after a 2-
23 year bipartisan budget agreement was agreed. That's what we
24 did. And that is, in my judgment, the only way we can get
25 true stability.

1 So, I'm -- I am continuing to support the position of
2 the bipartisan budget agreement. And anything that comes
3 out of the Congress that is supported, an appropriation, at
4 last, for FY17 would be good for the Department of Defense.
5 And I hope we get such a thing --

6 Senator Cotton: Do you --

7 Secretary Carter: -- in November.

8 Senator Cotton: Do you --

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

15 Senator Cotton: Okay.

16 Secretary Carter: -- happened.

17 Senator Cotton: I understand. And my time is limited
18 here.

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

23 Secretary Carter: I can't speak for the --

24 Senator Cotton: Mr. Secretary, you are the --

25 Secretary Carter: I'm going to give you --

1 Senator Cotton: -- Secretary of Defense.

2 Secretary Carter: You asked the question --

3 Senator Cotton: You are not the Director of the
4 National endowment of the Arts. You're not the Secretary of
5 Housing and Urban Development. You are the --

6 Secretary Carter: That's where I was --

7 Senator Cotton: -- Secretary of Defense.

8 Secretary Carter: -- headed. That's exactly where I
9 was headed. I'm not. And therefore, I can't speak for the
10 needs of those departments. I do know that some of the
11 national-security-related departments, which are outside of
12 the defense appropriation --

13 Senator Cotton: You stated that --

14 Secretary Carter: -- with which I am --

15 Senator Cotton: -- stated that testimony up to here --

16 Secretary Carter: -- need their funding --

17 Senator Cotton: -- and others --

18 Secretary Carter: -- as well. So, it's not a matter
19 of indifference to me whether the government as a whole is
20 funded. And it's certainly not a matter of indifference to
21 me whether an appropriation that can be supported by
22 everyone up here so that it passes, and passed by the
23 President, is done, or not. That's what I have to be for.
24 Because I'm for getting a budget and for budget stability.
25 And I just observe -- I'm not a participant, I'm an observer

1 -- that the only way that happens is not with this proposal
2 and that proposal, it's with a bipartisan budget agreement.
3 That's the line we tried to hew to. We're just playing it
4 as straight --

5 Senator Cotton: I --

6 Secretary Carter: -- as we can.

7 Senator Cotton: I understand. You were the Deputy
8 Secretary of Defense for Secretary Panetta. Is that
9 correct?

10 Secretary Carter: Yes.

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

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

22 Secretary Carter: Well, first of all, I should say,
23 you know, few had the experience with bipartisan budget
24 management than Secretary Panetta. I don't remember that
25 passage of his memoirs, but that sounds -- it sounds like

1 his --

2 Senator Cotton: Do you remember --

3 Secretary Carter: -- his voice. But --

4 Senator Cotton: Do you remember --

5 Secretary Carter: -- I've not found myself in the same
6 circumstance, except I am in the same circumstance he was,
7 namely -- and I guess that was 2013 -- facing the prospect
8 of sequester. And he didn't like it. And I didn't like it.
9 I don't think any Secretary of Defense liked it. And I
10 think it's awfully unfair to our troops to do this again and
11 again and again and again. And that's what we've been
12 warning about. That's where I have been. That's what our
13 chiefs did last week. And I'm just hoping that, when
14 everybody comes back in November, Congress reconvenes, that
15 we get an appropriation that everybody can stand behind and
16 that moves the country forward.

17 Senator Cotton: General Dunford, are we in great-power
18 competition with China?

19 General Dunford: We are, Senator.

20 Senator Cotton: Secretary Carter, are we in great-
21 power competition with China?

22 Secretary Carter: We are, absolutely right.

23 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

24 One final question. Are you engaged in any planning,
25 deliberations, internal consultations of any kind to

1 transfer control of the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay
2 to the Department of Justice?

3 Secretary Carter: No. I'm not.

4 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

5 Chairman McCain: Senator McCaskill.

6 Senator McCaskill: I'm going to take a deep breath.
7 I'm always proud to serve on this committee, because it's an
8 oasis of bipartisanship in the Senate. And I hope we keep
9 our eye firmly on our ability to lead in a bipartisan way to
10 get the funding for our military that we really need,
11 including being honest about budgeting, not putting base
12 budget items in OCO so that we can pretend that we're not
13 spending money because OCO is off the budget books. I think
14 that the Chairman has done a remarkable job to try to keep
15 us in an honest place as it relates to budgeting. I respect
16 him for his effort in that regard. And I know I speak for
17 many on our side of the aisle, including, I hope -- I know,
18 the Ranking Member, that we're going to continue to try to
19 work as hard as we can in a bipartisan way to get your
20 budget done and make sure we're not trying to come back in 6
21 months and fund the war effort because we've played budget
22 games at the eleventh hour with OCO.

23 My question today -- we've got 1.3 in the FY17 budget
24 for train-and-equip for local opposition forces and for the
25 Iraqi Security Forces. I'd like some kind of brief update,

1 if I could, on the screening process. How are we
2 determining who -- I mean, one of our challenges has always
3 been in Syria. Who do we help? And are they really the
4 good guys? And, obviously, we had one massive failed
5 attempt to try to put together a force on the ground through
6 train-and-equip. And now I know we've gone back. And I was
7 in Jordan and visited with our leaders over there about the
8 effort that's ongoing, working with smaller groups and
9 testing them first and making sure they're doing the right
10 thing. But, if you could briefly talk about how we are
11 doing the screening process for those resources, I'd
12 appreciate it.

13 Secretary Carter: Sure, Senator. I'll start. And
14 thank you. And, basically, it is as you say. Namely, we
15 have the same vetting process going on -- and I'll as the
16 Chairman to describe that -- but, the train-and-equip
17 program that was a disappointment when it started is now --
18 we have a -- changed completely our approach to it. And it
19 is as you describe; namely, not trying to create de novo
20 forces that will go in and oppose ISIL, but identifying
21 forces that are, and then enabling them. And that has been
22 successful. We're going to continue to do that. It does
23 involve vetting to our standards, which is required of us.
24 But, the program has changed. It needed to change. It did
25 change, and is now on a much successful footing.

1 I should also thank the committee, in the spirit of
2 what you said earlier, about -- for their budgetary support
3 in a timely way to our requests for that. And much
4 appreciate that, as well.

5 And if -- I'd ask the Chairman, also.

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

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

21 Senator McCaskill: And I also wanted to -- to both of
22 you, I appreciate your continued commitment in the area of
23 sexual assault. I know we have put a lot on the military.
24 I think we have counted up -- literally, there are hundreds
25 of changes we have made over the last few years to the

1 Uniform Code of Military Justice. I did want to hone in on
2 one area, because, as we looked at all of the reports in the
3 last year, lots of good news -- incidents down, reporting up
4 -- but that retaliation thing is an issue. And you issued a
5 report in April which highlighted standardizing the
6 definition of "retaliation," which is tough, because, you
7 know, sometimes it's in the eye of the person who's being
8 retaliated upon. And getting a standard definition, I
9 think, is really important. We put, in this year's NDAA, a
10 provision to make retaliation its own offense. I wanted to
11 find out, What kind of progress are you making on trying to
12 come up with a standardized definition of "retaliation" in
13 this context?

14 Secretary Carter: Thanks very much, Senator. And let
15 me just begin by saying -- by thanking you and all the
16 members of this committee for bearing down on this problem.
17 You know, I'm really proud of the way our forces conduct
18 themselves, but there always -- there are people who don't
19 conduct themselves up to that standard. And we can't have
20 it. It's objectionable anywhere in society, but, in the
21 profession of arms, it's particularly objectionable. And
22 so, I very much appreciate your efforts.

23 You're right, retaliation is something that we have
24 begun to realize is a dimension of this problem that was
25 under-attended. We had done good work, I think, at the law

1 enforcement part, attending to victims, and at prevention.
2 Retaliation -- the reason why, definitionally, it's
3 complicated, but we'll get there, is that there are a number
4 of different ways that retaliation takes place, some of them
5 quite subtle, but serious. So, one is, you know, a superior
6 who holds it against somebody that they reported a sexual --

7 Senator McCaskill: Right.

8 Secretary Carter: -- assault, which is --

9 Senator McCaskill: Failure to promote.

10 Secretary Carter: -- completely unfair. A little more
11 indirect is people who are getting taunted --

12 Senator McCaskill: Social --

13 Secretary Carter: -- via social --

14 Senator McCaskill: -- retaliation.

15 Secretary Carter: -- media and so forth. So, we need
16 to define these in such a way that they're legally
17 appropriate, which you would understand, but that also cover
18 the full gamut of things that a commonsense definition of
19 "retaliation" would include. So, we are working towards
20 that. And it is complicated, but we'll get there. And I
21 very much --

22 Senator McCaskill: And how soon --

23 Secretary Carter: -- appreciate --

24 Senator McCaskill: -- do you think you'll get there?

25 Secretary Carter: -- your effort. I believe that the

1 update on that is due by the end of the year -- of this
2 year. I did -- the report that I submitted to you was
3 earlier in this year. And we should be able to get that
4 done. And, of course, we'll communicate that to the
5 committee and get your views. But, I appreciate your
6 sticking with us on this issue.

7 Senator McCaskill: Thank you both.

8 Chairman McCain: Secretary, I'd just like to point out
9 that, if it were not for the work of the women on this
10 committee in a bipartisan basis, we would not have achieved
11 the results that we have. And I am deeply appreciative for
12 the bipartisan effort that's gone on, and continues to go
13 on, in this committee to address an issue that you know is
14 still with us. It may be to a lesser degree, but is still
15 with us.

16 Senator Tillis.

17 Senator Tillis: Good morning, gentlemen.

18 Secretary Carter, I want to go back to the comments
19 that Senator Ayotte made about -- I was someone else who
20 supported the bipartisan budget agreement. Very
21 disappointed that, on three different occasions, the defense
22 appropriations bill has been filibustered. What -- not
23 talking about any other discussions about appropriations.
24 You're familiar with our defense appropriations bill, right?
25 The one that's been filibustered on three different

1 occasions. Do each of you think that passing that bill
2 would be helpful with respect to completing your mission
3 within your lanes?

4 Secretary Carter: Well, I'm going to go back to where
5 I started, which is, there's no particular bill. I -- I'm
6 aware of three or four different versions --

7 Senator Tillis: Are you familiar with the measure that
8 we've tried to get on --

9 Secretary Carter: Well, let me --

10 Senator Tillis: -- in the chamber on three different
11 occasions --

12 Secretary Carter: I'm aware of --

13 Senator Tillis: -- that were filibustered?

14 Secretary Carter: -- several different measures, both
15 in the Senate and the House.

16 Senator Tillis: No. Secretary Carter, this is a
17 specific thing that we're trying to get on in the chamber of
18 the Senate. Are you familiar with a bill that passed out of
19 appropriations -- the defense appropriations bill -- that
20 we've tried to get on in the chamber?

21 Secretary Carter: I am. I've -- am aware of the one
22 that came before, yes. And --

23 Senator Tillis: Are you -- is anyone on your staff
24 familiar with an appropriations bill that we're trying to
25 get on in the Senate chamber?

1 Secretary Carter: I'm sure they are.

2 Senator Tillis: Okay. And what would they generally
3 say about the passage of that bill with respect to you being
4 able to complete your mission? In your lane. I'm not
5 talking about any of the other appropriations bills.

6 Secretary Carter: Well, I think what they'd say is
7 that if the Senate and the House pass an appropriations bill
8 that comports -- that the President can sign, we will get an
9 appropriations bill. I fully --

10 Senator Tillis: Let me --

11 Secretary Carter: -- hope we can get exactly that --

12 Senator Tillis: Let me go to General Dunford.

13 General Dunford, are you --

14 Secretary Carter: -- after the election.

15 Senator Tillis: -- familiar --

16 Secretary Carter: -- in November when people --

17 Senator Tillis: -- with the defense --

18 Secretary Carter: -- return here and --

19 Senator Tillis: -- appropriations bill that's been
20 filibustered on three different occasions?

21 General Dunford: Senator, I'm not familiar with the
22 details.

23 Senator Tillis: Do you know, generally, from your
24 service chiefs or anyone else, that they think it would be
25 helpful to pass that bill? Have you received any feedback

1 on -- this is a specific measure. This isn't a concept,
2 this is something that's gone through the appropriations
3 process, it's something that we want to pass that gives you
4 certainty, that's within the constraints of the bipartisan
5 budget agreement.

6 Chairman McCain: Senator, we do not ask the uniformed
7 military for their opinion on issues that are political in
8 nature.

9 Senator Tillis: Fair enough.

10 Let me go to something else.

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

16 I want to ask a -- go a completely different direction.
17 And, General Dunford, maybe I'll ask you.

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

1 General Dunford: Senator, I believe that's being
2 adjudicated right now in accordance with the UCMJ, so it
3 wouldn't be appropriate for me to comment publicly. But,
4 the fact that it's going through the UCMJ, obviously, I
5 think, answers your question.

6 Senator Tillis: Another subject. This has to do with
7 ISIL. You said that we need to keep the pressure on ISIL.
8 And I know that that was being answered in the context of
9 Syria, and probably Iraq. But, do you feel like we have
10 adequately addressed putting -- keeping pressure on ISIL
11 globally when you talk about Libya, you talk about Egypt and
12 other areas where they seem to be -- and Senator Ernst
13 talked about the Philippines -- do you feel like that we
14 have an adequate global strategy for keeping pressure on
15 ISIL?

16 General Dunford: Senator, I want to assure you that we
17 have a military strategy to deal with ISIL globally. And we
18 look very carefully at ISIL, wherever they are. We have
19 ongoing -- and we don't have an opportunity often to talk
20 about it -- but, we have ongoing operations in West Africa.
21 We have ongoing operations in Libya. We have ongoing
22 operations in East Africa. Of course, Syria and Iraq, we've
23 spoken much about that today. We have ongoing operations in
24 Afghanistan. And we're involved in a wide range of
25 capacity-building exercises and initiatives in Southeast

1 Asia. We're also working -- and I've just spent this
2 weekend with a large group of my counterparts to look at
3 counter-ISIL. I'll have almost 50 Chiefs of Defense here in
4 October to discuss this. This is, in fact, what you're
5 suggesting, a transregional problem that will require a
6 global response. One of the key drivers of our success will
7 be a broader intelligence and information framework within
8 which we can harness all of these other nations who have
9 information that would be helpful to us.

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

13 Senator Tillis: Thank you.

14 Chairman McCain: Senator Nelson.

15 Senator Nelson: Gentlemen, thank you for your public
16 service.

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

19 Secretary Carter: I'll start.

20 The -- it is the fighting season in Afghanistan. The
21 Afghan Security Forces have done well this season. The
22 Taliban has been strong. But, the Afghan Security Forces
23 are much stronger this year than they were last year. They
24 continue to gather strength. General Nicholson's doing a
25 great job of helping them with that. We made some decisions

1 -- the President made some decisions which gave General
2 Nicholson some wider scope to advise, assist, and so forth,
3 the Afghan Security Forces. The President made a decision
4 to adjust upward our presence there next year. We're
5 continuing to go forward with the aviation and other
6 enablers for the Afghan Security Forces.

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

14 I should turn to -- because we -- that progress, we
15 owe, in very important measure, to General Dunford, when he
16 was the commander there. And he knows that very well, so
17 let me ask him to join in.

18 General Dunford: Senator, there is no doubt that the
19 Afghan National Security Forces have had some challenges
20 over the past 18 months, when they've been in the lead and
21 we have gone to a train-and-advise-assist mission. Our
22 assessment is that they continue to control about 70 percent
23 of the country. They've taken far more casualties than
24 we're comfortable with, and they still have capability gaps
25 in their Special Operations capability, their aviation

1 enterprise, their intelligence, logistics, and, of course,
2 broadly at the Minister of Defense, Minister Interior level.
3 And that's our focus right now, is to further develop those
4 capabilities so we can mitigate the casualties that they're
5 suffering, which is of great concern, as well as some of the
6 tactical setbacks that they've had.

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

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

20 Senator Nelson: Thank you, gentlemen.

21 Thank you.

22 Chairman McCain: Senator Lee.

23 Senator Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

1 are deeply appreciated.

2 Late last week, there was a video that surfaced, a
3 video that appeared to show the Free Syrian Army --
4 personnel from the Free Syrian Army -- threatening and
5 insulting American servicemembers and forcing them to leave
6 the town of al-Rai, where they had been providing assistance
7 to the FSA. Analysts who have studied the video believe the
8 incident occurred because the U.S. is also supporting
9 Kurdish forces in Syria.

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

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

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

19 What I can assure you is that that -- the group that
20 was taking some action against our forces, at least
21 verbally, was a very small minority of the forces we're
22 supporting. And that incident was policed up by our other
23 partners. And we view that to be an isolated incident and
24 not reflective of the relationship that our forces have with
25 the vetted Syrian opposition forces. In fact, I think the

1 progress along the northern border between Syria and Turkey
2 is indicative of the relationship we have, which is very
3 effective.

4 Senator Lee: Okay. So, I think that goes a certain
5 distance toward answering what was my next question, which
6 was, you know, What's the level of tension that you're
7 seeing between some of the Sunni Arab rebel groups that
8 we're assisting, on the one hand, and, on the other hand,
9 the Kurdish groups that we're also supporting in Syria? And
10 is that -- is there tension there? And could that tension
11 and the resentment that it engenders possibly threaten the
12 security of our U.S. personnel?

13 General Dunford: Senator, it is incredible tension in
14 that region. And I would offer to you, I think it's a
15 testimony to the professionalism of our forces that are
16 there, because they have actually been managing this tension
17 for months and months. And the fact that we've been able to
18 continue to support the Syrian Democratic Forces and have
19 them make the significant progress they made, and continue
20 to support the vetted Syrian opposition forces while we
21 politically manage the relationship between Turkey and the
22 Syrian Democratic Forces and the United States, is all --
23 it's -- it is all part of a pretty complicated situation on
24 the ground over there that we are managing on a day-to-day
25 basis.

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

3 Senator Lee: Okay. Thank you.

4 Yesterday, as I'm sure you're both aware, the Senate
5 debated a resolution of disapproval related to the sale of
6 U.S. weapons to Saudi Arabia. And there was some discussion
7 of our broader support of Saudi Arabia's intervention in
8 Yemen. This is a headline from November 2014, "Houthis Gain
9 Ground Against Yemen's Al-Qaeda, Say They Will Continue
10 Their Fight Until Al-Qaeda Is Defeated in Their
11 Strongholds."

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

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

23 Now, I understand the complexity of the conflict in
24 Yemen. And I completely appreciate the fact that there are
25 no easy answers when it comes to that conflict in Yemen.

1 But, Mr. Secretary, do you -- do AQAP and other Sunni
2 extremist groups operating in Yemen still pose the greater
3 threat to U.S. security?

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

8 Senator Lee: Okay. And does our support of the fight
9 against the Houthis, who are also AQAP's enemy, does that
10 threaten, potentially, however inadvertently, to strengthen
11 or take the focus off of AQAP or ISIS?

12 Secretary Carter: We've not taken our focus off of
13 AQAP, no.

14 Senator Lee: General Dunford, you look like you wanted
15 to add something.

16 General Dunford: No, I just -- I fully agree with the
17 Secretary on that. We are singularly focused on AQAP. And
18 we have the resources dedicated to AQAP that we think are
19 appropriate.

20 Senator Lee: Okay.

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

22 Chairman McCain: Mr. Secretary, are the Houthis
23 sponsored by the Iranians?

24 Secretary Carter: They are certainly assisted in some
25 respects by the Iranians, Chairman, yes.

1 Chairman McCain: Senator Donnelly.

2 Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 Mr. Chairman, would you like me to proceed?

4 Chairman McCain: Please proceed.

5 Senator Donnelly: Thank you.

6 Mr. Secretary, General, I want to get your input on
7 something I asked each of the service chiefs about last
8 week. In the FY15 NDAA, we passed a requirement from the
9 Jacob Sexton Act for every servicemember to receive a robust
10 mental health assessment every year. Can you give me an
11 update on where the Department is with implementation of the
12 Sexton Act requirement on mental health assessments?

13 Mr. Secretary? General?

14 Secretary Carter: I'll need to get back to you
15 specifically on the -- that assessment.

16 [The information referred to follows:]

17 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Secretary Carter: I would like to say something more
2 generally about mental health and the priority --

3 Senator Donnelly: That's fine.

4 Secretary Carter: -- if I may, Senator. I appreciate
5 your interest in it.

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

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

15 [The information referred to follows:]

16 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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

9 Senator Donnelly: Right.

10 Secretary Carter: Self-isolation, depression, odd
11 things on social media, and so forth. So, we're trying to
12 tell everybody to watch out for their fellow servicemembers.

13 Chairman?

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

18 [The information referred to follows:]

19 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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

6 Senator Donnelly: I do. And this was signed into law
7 in December 2014. It's about 2 years now. So, do you
8 expect, General Dunford, to see this fully implemented in
9 the next year?

10 General Dunford: I do, Senator. I guess what I was
11 alluding to is the percentage of the force that actually has
12 it right now, because --

13 Senator Donnelly: No, I understand that. Yeah.

14 General Dunford: Right. So, you know, my -- and I'll
15 get back --

16 Senator Donnelly: And I know it takes time to ramp up.
17 I was just wondering if you think 2017 is the year that this
18 can get fully implemented.

19 General Dunford: I think that's -- based on my
20 previous experience as a service chief, I think that's a
21 realistic timeline.

22 Senator Donnelly: Okay.

23 Mr. Secretary?

24 Secretary Carter: I absolutely concur. We'll meet
25 that timeline.

1 Senator Donnelly: To both of you, I wanted to talk a
2 little bit about broader counterterrorism strategy. In 4
3 months, we're going to have a new Commander in Chief, and
4 preventing the next attack on our homeland and addressing
5 the persistent conflict and instability in the Middle East
6 is going to be one of the most pressing and complex
7 challenges. How would you advise this concern about our
8 counterterrorism strategy? And, you know, how would you
9 inform that next Commander in Chief as to how to move
10 forward at this time? Obviously, there's a number of areas,
11 but, looking forward, how would you talk to them about our
12 counterterrorism strategy as we head into a new
13 administration?

14 Secretary Carter: I'll start and then turn it over to
15 the Chairman.

16 We need to continue to press on all fronts. We can't
17 let up, whether it's in the counter-ISIL campaign, in Syria
18 and Iraq, elsewhere, or here at home. AQAP was mentioned a
19 moment ago. That's a serious one. And so, our capabilities
20 -- our military capabilities, our law enforcement
21 capabilities, our homeland security capabilities, all of
22 this, which we've honed now in the years since 2001, this is
23 not going to go away, this phenomenon. We'll defeat ISIL,
24 but there will be terrorism in our country's future. And so
25 --

1 Senator Donnelly: If I could ask you another question
2 and --

3 Secretary Carter: -- it'll be part of the national
4 security landscape --

5 Senator Donnelly: -- I apologize, I'm running out of
6 time here. And you may have answered this earlier. I had
7 to come in and go out. But, Raqqa. When do you -- or --
8 and not, obviously, a single date, but how is this moving
9 forward? Are we cutting off -- I know closing Manbij has
10 cut off a significant amount of the flow. Where do things
11 stand in Raqqa? Are we moving forward on that? Do you see
12 progress every day? And what are you looking at as a time
13 when Raqqa's liberated?

14 Secretary Carter: I do see progress. We're working in
15 that part of Syria with the Syrian Democratic Forces.
16 They're the group with which we worked in -- as you
17 indicated, successfully in Manbij. And they and others
18 associated with them will be the force that envelopes and
19 collapses ISIL's control over Raqqa.

20 At the same time, I emphasized -- and the Chairman
21 already stressed this -- we're working with the Turks also,
22 the Turkish military, our good ally, very strongly, also in
23 northwest -- in the northwestern part -- portion there. And
24 obviously, they have difficulties with one another, but, in
25 each case, we support them against our common objective --

1 Senator Donnelly: And, Mr. --

2 Secretary Carter: -- which is counter-ISIL.

3 Senator Donnelly: -- Mr. Chairman, if you'd give me
4 just 15 seconds.

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

14 Secretary Carter: Noted, Senator.

15 Senator Donnelly: Thank you.

16 Secretary Carter: Thank you.

17 Chairman McCain: Thank you, Senator, for bringing that
18 issue up. They should come home.

19 Senator Graham.

20 Senator Graham: Well, thank you.

21 Thank you both for your service to the country.

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

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

1 Secretary Carter: I do, yes.

2 Senator Graham: Do you, General?

3 General Dunford: I do, Senator.

4 Senator Graham: Okay. JASTA. Are you concerned that
5 we could be creating an environment where something like
6 this bill could be used against our troops down the road?

7 Secretary Carter: That is -- the law -- it is a law
8 enforcement matter, but we are watching it closely, for the
9 very reason --

10 Senator Graham: Do you support the President's veto of
11 --

12 Secretary Carter: Well, I'm very -- I'm concerned
13 about the --

14 Senator Graham: Okay.

15 Secretary Carter: I'm concerned --

16 Senator Graham: Fair enough.

17 Secretary Carter: -- about exactly what you're talking
18 about.

19 Senator Graham: Okay. Fair enough. And we'll talk.
20 I'll write you a letter and go into it more in detail. But,
21 I understand your concerns.

22 Do you support arming the Syrian Kurds?

23 Secretary Carter: I do support working -- continuing
24 to work with them, yes.

25 Senator Graham: I mean, no, I didn't say "work with

1 them." Providing them arms.

2 Secretary Carter: Yeah. Well, we are -- we have
3 provided them with some equipment already, and providing
4 them arms, yes. They are part of the -- they are --

5 Senator Graham: I gotcha.

6 Secretary Carter: -- part of the Syrian Democratic
7 Forces.

8 Senator Graham: Right.

9 Secretary Carter: Now, we haven't taken any specific
10 --

11 Senator Graham: I gotcha. Well --

12 Secretary Carter: -- decisions about --

13 Senator Graham: I gotcha.

14 Secretary Carter: And -- but --

15 Senator Graham: Right

16 Secretary Carter: -- they are --

17 Senator Graham: The answer is yes, you support arming
18 the Kurds more --

19 Secretary Carter: I support --

20 Senator Graham: -- in Syria.

21 Secretary Carter: -- whatever is required to --

22 Senator Graham: Okay.

23 Secretary Carter: -- help them move in the direction
24 of Raqqa --

25 Senator Graham: Which could be providing them more

1 arms.

2 Secretary Carter: Yeah.

3 Senator Graham: What about you, General Dunford?

4 General Dunford: Senator, it's important -- I can't
5 answer this yes or no. And it's important that I --

6 Senator Graham: I gotcha.

7 General Dunford: -- say a couple of things about this.

8 Number one, they're the most effective force that we
9 have right now, and a force that we need to go in Raqqa.

10 And we do have sufficient forces --

11 Senator Graham: Can I ask this?

12 General Dunford: -- to be able to secure and --

13 Senator Graham: I --

14 General Dunford: -- seize Raqqa.

15 Senator Graham: Yes, sir. I appreciate that.

16 We -- they -- do they support removal of Assad?

17 General Dunford: Today, that is not their stated
18 political objective.

19 Senator Graham: So, wait a minute.

20 General Dunford: They're focused --

21 Senator Graham: Slow down. Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa.

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

24 General Dunford: We have a military objective to
25 destroy ISIL. I do not have a military objective to --

1 Senator Graham: Do you --

2 General Dunford: -- remove Assad.

3 Senator Graham: Well, the President has an objective

4 of --

5 General Dunford: He has a political objective --

6 Senator Graham: Okay.

7 General Dunford: -- to remove Assad.

8 Senator Graham: All right. So, do you agree with me,

9 Assad is winning right now?

10 General Dunford: I think Assad is clearly in a much

11 stronger place than he was a --

12 Senator Graham: All right.

13 General Dunford: -- year ago.

14 Senator Graham: Well, thank you. You've always have

15 been very honest with this committee.

16 Do you agree that Obama will leave office and Assad

17 will still be in power, January 2017?

18 General Dunford: I don't see a path right now where

19 Assad would --

20 Senator Graham: Okay.

21 General Dunford: -- not be in office in --

22 Senator Graham: So, let's talk about how you change

23 the political equation. Do you agree with me that the only

24 way Assad's ever going to leave, if there's some military

25 pressure on him that makes the threat, militarily, more real

1 to him?

2 General Dunford: I think that's a fair statement,
3 Senator.

4 Senator Graham: Okay. So, if the main fighting force
5 inside of Syria is not signed up to take Assad out, where
6 does that force come from?

7 General Dunford: Senator, I can't identify that force,
8 but I do want to distinguish between what you're suggesting
9 with Assad and Raqqa. The reason why I support the SDF is,
10 my number-one priority is to --

11 Senator Graham: Yeah, I --

12 General Dunford: -- stop the planning and conducting
13 of external operations.

14 Senator Graham: Totally --

15 General Dunford: And moving forward --

16 Senator Graham: Totally --

17 General Dunford: -- against Raqqa with the SDF --

18 Senator Graham: Yes, sir.

19 General Dunford: -- is the way to do that.

20 Senator Graham: So, let's look at it this way. ISIL's
21 Germany and Assad's Japan, we're focusing on Germany. So,
22 will this force, which is mainly Kurd, but not all -- can
23 they liberate Raqqa, and hold it?

24 General Dunford: This force is not intended to hold
25 Raqqa, no.

1 Senator Graham: What is the plan to hold Raqqa?

2 General Dunford: We currently have 14,000 Arabs that
3 have been identified. And when we --

4 Senator Graham: Is that the holding force?

5 General Dunford: That may consist of part of the
6 holding force.

7 Senator Graham: Well, do we have a plan to hold Raqqa?

8 General Dunford: We have a plan. It is not resourced
9 --

10 Senator Graham: Okay.

11 General Dunford: -- Senator.

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

20 Now, I'm not blaming y'all. You didn't create this
21 problem. Years ago, most of you recommended we help the
22 Free Syrian Army when it would have mattered. We are where
23 we are. I just want to make sure that the country knows
24 what's going on in Syria is going to be inherited by the
25 next President. And if there's not a change in strategy to

1 create a ground component that not only can hold Raqqa and
2 put military pressure on Assad, this war never ends.

3 Russia. Did they bomb this convoy -- U.N. convoy?

4 General Dunford: Senator, we -- that hasn't been
5 concluded, but my judgment would be that they did. They're
6 certainly responsible.

7 Senator Graham: Do you agree with me, Secretary Carter
8 -- and we've been friends for years, and I'm sorry it's so
9 contentious -- I --

10 Secretary Carter: That's all right.

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

15 Secretary Carter: Well, I -- if -- let me put it even
16 a little more harshly. And the Chairman said this earlier.
17 The Russians are responsible for this strike, whether they
18 conducted it or not, because --

19 Senator Graham: I totally agree.

20 Secretary Carter: -- they have taken responsibility
21 for the conduct of the Syrians by associating themselves
22 with the Syrian regime. What they're supposed to do, and
23 what Secretary Kerry has been indefatigably pursuing
24 diplomatically, is to get a true cessation of hostilities
25 and get Assad to move aside in a political transition.

1 Senator Graham: They're not doing their part.

2 Secretary Carter: And I -- I'm -- that is what
3 Secretary Kerry is trying to achieve. Is that difficult?
4 Absolutely. Does it look, in the last few days, like that's
5 the direction it's headed? No. And he's said as much.
6 But, that's what he's trying to accomplish.

7 Senator Graham: Do you think the Russians are being
8 helpful? My time is up. Have they been more -- do you
9 think the Russians bombed this convoy? Most likely?

10 General Dunford: I do, Senator.

11 Senator Graham: Last question. Is there a Plan B, in
12 terms of -- if diplomacy fails, a Plan B for Syria that has
13 a military component?

14 General Dunford: Senator, we have --

15 Senator Graham: Regarding Assad.

16 General Dunford: -- we have done, and will continue to
17 do, a wide range of planning. And, should the President
18 change the policy objectives, we'll be prepared to support
19 those.

20 Chairman McCain: Senator Fischer.

21 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 And thank you, gentlemen, for your service. It is
23 appreciated by all of us.

24 Secretary Carter, you stated that the United States
25 will not ignore attempts to interfere with our democratic

1 processes, which I believe is in reference to the recent
2 cyberattacks on political parties, candidates, and election
3 systems. By that, do you mean that costs will be imposed on
4 those responsible for these attacks?

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

13 Senator Fischer: But, when --

14 Secretary Carter: And it's part of the way NATO's
15 going to have to adapt to the world as it really is. And,
16 yes, we're going to have to defend ourselves against --

17 Senator Fischer: So costs --

18 Secretary Carter: -- that kind of thing.

19 Senator Fischer: -- would be imposed for cyberattack.

20 Secretary Carter: That is -- like any other attack.

21 Senator Fischer: Do you think that -- with regards to
22 cyber, that this should be done in a public way so that the
23 penalties are clearly visible and -- to other potential
24 attackers in the future?

25 Secretary Carter: Well, I certainly think that we need

1 to defend ourselves and then take action against
2 perpetrators when we identify them, and that in -- is in
3 appropriate ways. I simply mean that because the
4 perpetrators are -- of cyberattacks range from -- and
5 cyberintrusions -- range from nation-states to cutouts to
6 hackers to criminal gangs.

7 Senator Fischer: Correct.

8 Secretary Carter: And it's quite a variety. And it's
9 why our highest priority in cyber, and including in our
10 Cyber Command, is defense of our own networks.

11 Senator Fischer: Right.

12 Secretary Carter: It's something --

13 Senator Fischer: It has been widely reported that
14 Russian hackers are responsible for the penetration that
15 we've seen at the Democratic National Committee, those
16 computer systems, when we look at leaks of the DNC emails
17 and documents. I guess the questions continue to persist
18 regarding the strength of that connection between the
19 hackers and Russian officials. And it is generally accepted
20 that the affiliation exists.

21 If this is true, that there is this connection out
22 there, what is clear is that it's a -- to me, another very
23 public instance, this time using cyber, where Russia
24 continues their aggression towards this country and towards
25 our interests. And when we have an adversary who so

1 brazenly strikes at the heart of our democratic process, I
2 think that indicates how low they believe the cost of that
3 behavior is going to be. So, in other words, I think we've
4 possibly lost the deterrence factor when it comes to
5 cyberattacks.

6 Would you agree with that?

7 Secretary Carter: We can't lose deterrence effect,
8 ever. And with respect to Russia, it is -- one of the
9 reason -- one of the emphases, stresses we made in our
10 budget -- and, by the way, this is one of the reasons why we
11 would appreciate having our budget passed, as is, to get
12 back to an earlier question -- is because it prioritize
13 something we haven't had to do, Senator, as you're
14 stressing, for a quarter --

15 Senator Fischer: But, do you --

16 Secretary Carter: -- of a century, which is -- we --
17 it used to be -- we haven't had, as a major component of our
18 defense strategy, countering the possibility of Russian
19 aggression.

20 Senator Fischer: But, now we do.

21 Secretary Carter: That's why we're making --

22 Senator Fischer: And --

23 Secretary Carter: -- investments. And it ranges from
24 cyber to the European Reassurance Initiative, which is one
25 of the things that we hope doesn't get affected in --

1 Senator Fischer: Am I --

2 Secretary Carter: -- budget --

3 Senator Fischer: I apologize for interrupting you.
4 The Chairman's strict on time.

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

16 Secretary Carter: That's a very good question. And
17 we're just discussing here, because there are many aspects
18 to the answer to this, but, yes, we have a lot of cyber
19 capabilities that we are building, developing in all the
20 services and at Cyber Command

21 And, more generally, for the Russians, let me ask the
22 Chairman to add something.

23 General Dunford: Senator, for exactly the reason
24 you're raising, we're in the process of rewriting, at the
25 Secretary's direction, a more broad framework for dealing

1 with Russia in contingencies associated with Russia. It's
2 also the reason why our national military strategy now will
3 be a classified document, because what we are trying to do
4 is provide a strategic framework to deal with the full range
5 of behavior that we may see from a state like Russia, China,
6 North Korea, and Iran. And, in some cases, a cyberattack
7 may not beget a cyber response. We want to make sure our
8 national command authority has a full range of options to
9 deal with something that has been determined, in fact, a
10 violation of our sovereignty and an attack in cyberspace.

11 So, there's really two things. One, the strategic
12 framework working on, and we're also working on a full range
13 of tools -- cyber tools -- so that we have both the ability
14 to protect our own network and to take the fight to the
15 enemy in cyberspace, as required, our offensive cyber
16 capability.

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

24 Senator Fischer: I thank you for that. And I think
25 the deterrence aspect of cyber response is very, very

1 important, that we keep that, and also that public responses
2 make an impression, as well. Thank you, sir.

3 Chairman McCain: Senator Sullivan.

4 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 Gentlemen, last week, as you know, we had the service
6 chiefs testify. And I began my comments commending you, Mr.
7 Secretary, and the President for the selection of such men
8 and women of high caliber, high integrity, leading our
9 military, including the current Chairman. And one of the
10 reasons is that they typically give this committee and the
11 American people honest testimony.

12 And an example of that was last week. I asked what the
13 risk level was our Nation faced in being able to conduct a
14 full spectrum of operations, including one conventional
15 conflict. And each service chief said that this would
16 entail, quote, "high military risk" for their service. Each
17 service chief. Which I found remarkable. And distressing.

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

24 General Dunford: Senator, I don't know if it's
25 unprecedented, but, over the last several years, I think all

1 the chiefs, to include me when I was the Commandant, and the
2 chiefs before I assumed that responsibility, have been
3 articulating the risk associated with the readiness
4 challenges that we've had, really, now that date back as far
5 as 2005.

6 Senator Sullivan: So, do you -- you agree then, I
7 assume, with the assessment of each service chief, that we
8 face high military risk, in terms of a --

9 General Dunford: Senator --

10 Senator Sullivan: -- spectrum of ops that includes --

11 General Dunford: Senator, I don't agree that we have
12 -- I agree that each of the services has high risk, and
13 they've articulated it.

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

22 Senator Sullivan: You think high military risk is
23 acceptable?

24 General Dunford: I did not say that, Senator, for one
25 minute.

1 Senator Sullivan: So --

2 General Dunford: What I want to do is, I want to
3 communicate, to those who are listening, both in the force
4 and our potential adversaries, to make it clear that my
5 judgment is that the U.S. military, today, can, in fact,
6 dominate any enemy in a conflict. I --

7 Senator Sullivan: Mr. Secretary, the four service
8 chiefs talked about high military risk. Again, I thought
9 that was remarkable. I don't know if that's ever happened,
10 Mr. Chairman, before this committee before. But, it begs
11 the question that we've been talking about in this hearing
12 today, is how -- if that's what they're saying, how can we
13 not -- how can the President not support increased military
14 spending? Right now, there's a new Gallup poll out, saying,
15 "First time since 2002, the American people support more
16 military spending." If the service chiefs are each saying
17 we face high military risk, how can we not be supportive of
18 additional military spending? I just don't -- I just don't
19 understand that at all.

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

25 There is risk in the force. And the risk --

1 Senator Sullivan: It's actually high risk.

2 Secretary Carter: Let me just tell -- let me unpack
3 that, because they each did that for you. There are -- it's
4 different in each of the services, but there are a few
5 common denominators.

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

12 Senator Sullivan: Mr. Secretary, just to -- just real
13 --

14 Secretary Carter: Eight -- let me finish -- eight --

15 Senator Sullivan: -- a quick point on that --

16 Secretary Carter: -- eight times in a --

17 Senator Sullivan: -- just a quick point on that --

18 Secretary Carter: -- eight times in a row. So, that's
19 going to have an effect --

20 Senator Sullivan: You've had the minority leader --

21 Secretary Carter: -- on risk.

22 Senator Sullivan: -- of the United States Senate
23 filibuster the defense appropriations bills, not three
24 times, as my colleagues have said -- six times in the last
25 year and a half year. So --

1 Secretary Carter: Let me --

2 Senator Sullivan: -- we're trying to make that happen.

3 And --

4 Secretary Carter: Thank you. Let --

5 Senator Sullivan: We're all trying to make that
6 happen.

7 Secretary Carter: Thanks. Let me go on. There's
8 another thing that's so substantive of importance, other
9 than the budget instability the last few years. And that is
10 the services -- and, I think General -- I think you
11 mentioned General Milley -- he, in particular -- and I want
12 to associate myself with this -- is trying to move to full
13 spectrum, exactly the words you used, from an Army that we
14 dedicated almost wholly, in terms of force structure, to the
15 COIN fights that we had to conduct in Iraq and Syria. So,
16 the Army's been resourcing them heavily. Now he is trying
17 to get his forces trained for full-spectrum combat.

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

25 If we go to the Marine Corps -- and I know General

1 Neller spoke to you about that -- their highest readiness
2 priority, which I also want to foot-stomp, as I'm sure he
3 did, is in their aviation. And there are a lot of different
4 dimensions to that. One is the recap of their aviation,
5 both rotary wing and with the F-35 joint strike fighter
6 coming down the line.

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

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

18 So, in the budget we submitted for FY17 -- and we said
19 this -- readiness and resourcing are -- the readiness plans
20 of each of the services was our highest priority. So,
21 there's no question about it, there's risk there. It has
22 accumulated over the years. We need stability and we need
23 priority in order to work through it. We need stability
24 from you. We'll give it priority. And I totally support
25 the chiefs in what they told you last week.

1 Chairman McCain: Senator Cruz in just a second.

2 Mr. Secretary, the impression that was given by the
3 service chiefs was: it comes down to readiness, training,
4 spare parts, all the things that go when you have budget
5 cutbacks. We've seen the movie before. So, although, as
6 you pointed out, each individual service has some specific
7 needs, it all comes back to funding for operational
8 readiness and training, which is always the first to go.
9 And that's -- obviously, when we have U.S. pilots flying
10 less hours per month than Chinese or Russian pilots, there's
11 something fundamentally wrong. And I know you agree with
12 that.

13 Senator Cruz.

14 Senator Cruz: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

18 The last 7 years, we've had an administration that has,
19 in many ways, neutered itself and ignored one transgression
20 after another from our enemies. And, as a result, our
21 adversaries are continuing to increase their belligerence.

22 Iran has received no meaningful repercussions for
23 illegally seizing American sailors and endeavoring to
24 humiliate them, and has since increased their aggressive
25 tactics and harassment of U.S. Navy vessels operating in the

1 Arabian Gulf.

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

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

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

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

22 Secretary Carter: Well, first of all, thank you very
23 much, Senator, for that. And you hit them all, the five
24 parts of our military strategy that are reflected in what
25 we're trying to get in our budget, namely counter-ISIL,

1 Iran, North Korea, Russia, and China. All of those are --
2 present very different, but serious, challenges that have a
3 serious military dimension to them.

4 With respect to Iran, notwithstanding the nuclear deal,
5 which was good, in the sense that it removed -- if
6 implemented faithfully, which it is being, so far -- removed
7 nuclear weapons from our concerns about Iran. It did
8 nothing to alleviate other concerns we have -- their malign
9 influence, their support for terrorism, malign influence in
10 the region. And this is why, to give you one answer to your
11 question -- and I'll ask the Chairman to pitch in -- why we
12 have a strong, ready presence in the Gulf. Gets back to our
13 readiness discussion. It's not just about ISIL. We have a
14 big OPTEMPO to defeat ISIL. We're going to do that. Takes
15 a lot of force structure, but also readiness consumed doing
16 that, consumed in a good thing because we're defeating ISIL.
17 But, we are also standing strong in the Gulf. That means
18 defending our friends and allies there, defending our
19 interests, and countering Iranian malign influence. So, it
20 is an enduring commitment of ours.

21 Let me ask the Chairman to join in.

22 General Dunford: Senator, I think there's -- from a
23 military perspective, there's three things that we need to
24 do. Number one is, we need to make sure that the inventory
25 of the joint force can deal with Iranian challenges that do

1 range from ballistic missile defense to the malign influence
2 that you spoke about earlier. Number two, we need to make
3 sure, in our day-to-day operations, we make it clear that
4 we're going to sail, fly, and operate wherever international
5 law allows us to, and we'll continue to do that. Number
6 three, as the Secretary said, we need to have a robust
7 presence in the region that makes it very clear that we have
8 the capability to deter and respond to Iranian aggression.
9 Those would be the three elements that we need to have for
10 -- from a military perspective, to give our President
11 whatever options he may need to have.

12 Senator Cruz: General, in your judgment, was flying
13 \$1.7 billion in unmarked cash to give to the Iranian
14 government incentivizing positive behavior from Iran?

15 General Dunford: Senator, I'm not trying to be
16 evasive, but I don't know the details of that arrangement.
17 And it really was a political decision that was made to
18 provide that money. And I don't think it's appropriate that
19 I comment on that.

20 Senator Cruz: Well, let me ask it this way. I spoke,
21 yesterday, to Pastor Saeed Abedini, who was one of the
22 American hostages held in Iran. And Pastor Saeed described
23 how, when he was preparing to fly out, that his captors told
24 him they were going to wait until the planeload of cash
25 landed. And if the planeload of cash didn't land, he wasn't

1 flying out. And when \$400 million touched down in cash,
2 they allowed him to fly out.

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

10 Secretary Carter: It -- Senator, let me just jump in
11 here for the Chairman.

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

17 Senator Cruz: Mr. Secretary, I appreciate --

18 Secretary Carter: -- community. I think we have to
19 refer you --

20 Senator Cruz: -- that, but --

21 Secretary Carter: -- refer you there.

22 Senator Cruz: -- I would like an answer from General
23 Dunford to the military question, whether, in his
24 professional military judgment, it concerns him, the
25 precedent of paying ransom for Americans, to terrorist

1 governments.

2 General Dunford: Senator, without commenting on
3 whether or not that was ransom, again, because I don't know
4 the details, our policy in the past is that we don't pay
5 ransom for hostages. And I think that's hold us -- held us
6 in good stead in the past. But, again, I don't know the
7 arrangements that were made in this particular case, and I
8 can't make a judgment as to whether or not that's what we
9 did. All I've done is read the open-source reporting on
10 that.

11 Senator Cruz: Thank you.

12 Chairman McCain: Senator Wicker, if you would give
13 General Sullivan a chance to ask one more question.

14 Senator Wicker: Indeed.

15 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 Gentlemen, I just wanted to turn to the issue of the
17 South China Sea. And the international ruling in the Hague
18 put China on the defensive. Mr. Secretary, as you know, a
19 number of us at the Shangri-La Dialogue have been supportive
20 of your efforts. And I certainly want to give the
21 administration credit for sending two carrier battle groups
22 to the region together recently. But, I think a number of
23 us remain concerned about the likelihood of reclamation at
24 the Scarborough Shoal and the ongoing -- and it's definitely
25 ongoing, from all reports -- militarization at Fiery Cross,

1 Subi, and Mischief Reef, which was also declared as not, you
2 know, being within China's territorial realm. So, what's
3 the strategy to deter future Chinese reclamation activities
4 in the South China Sea, especially at Scarborough Shoal?
5 And equally, if not more important, what's the plan to
6 respond to ongoing militarization of the land that they've
7 already claimed?

8 Secretary Carter: Thanks, Senator. I'll start and
9 then -- Chairman can join in.

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

16 Now, the -- what we have stood for there now for many,
17 many years, and continue to stand for, and the reason why so
18 many countries there associate their -- themselves with us,
19 and increasingly so, is, we stand for principle. And one of
20 those principles is the rule of law. So, the decision did
21 come down, and our -- we didn't take the position the
22 disputes themselves -- we do support the decision of the
23 court.

24 China's rejection of that is having the effect -- you
25 asked, sort of, What's the reaction to all this? -- the

1 effect of causing countries there to express their concern
2 by wanting to do more with us. And we like building the
3 security network there. We're not trying to do that against
4 China, but, if China chooses to exclude itself in this way,
5 this is the development that occurs. So, we're working more
6 with each and every country there. We find them
7 increasingly coming to us. And we are continuing to operate
8 there, as we always have and always will.

9 And last, I guess I should say, in terms of
10 investments, in addition to putting a lot of our force
11 structure there, which you're very familiar with, and I'm
12 grateful that your State hosts some of that, including some
13 of our most modern stuff, we're making a number of
14 qualitative investments in -- and that's one of the things
15 that's reflected in our budget, and one reason why we hope
16 that, in addition to funding our budget, we -- nobody
17 shuffles around in our budget stuff that we -- new stuff
18 that is oriented toward the high end for old force
19 structure. And we've seen a tendency towards that.

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

23 Let me ask the Chairman to add.

24 General Dunford: Senator, I think a response to the
25 challenge you identified clearly is going to require

1 diplomatic action, economic action, and military action.

2 So, I'll talk to the military piece of this, which, right
3 now, is actually, I don't think, the most prominent piece in
4 dealing with the challenge of China. But, I think, from my
5 perspective, we need to do a couple of things:

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

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

12 And, number three, we need to make sure that our
13 posture in the Pacific assures our allies and deters any
14 potential aggression by China, and makes it absolutely clear
15 that we have the wherewithal, both within the alliance as
16 well as U.S. capabilities, to do what must be done, vis-a-
17 vis China.

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

23 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Chairman McCain: Senator Wicker.

25 Senator Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 And let me say that I hold both of these witnesses in
2 high regard. I appreciate their distinguished career of
3 service.

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

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

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

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

1 the region that was quickly seized by President Putin. We
2 are now faced with an enduring quagmire.

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

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

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

23 Now, I was here when this hearing began, at 9:30.
24 You've all been very patient with your answers. And I know
25 you've discussed this already, Mr. Secretary, but it -- at

1 this point, toward the end of this hearing, is there
2 anything else you'd like to add in response to what I've
3 said?

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

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

24 Let me see if the Chairman wants to add anything.

25 Senator Wicker: Well, let me just ask this, if you

1 don't mind, Secretary Carter. It would help if the barrel
2 bombing ended. And I spoke to a Democratic colleague of
3 mine today. I've been calling for a no-fly zone to stop the
4 barrel bombing, and I asked this colleague of mine on the
5 other side of the aisle if he would support that. And he
6 said, "Yes." He said, "I want to call it something else,
7 rather than a no-fly zone," but that this particular Senator
8 -- it is a fact that this particular Senator has now changed
9 his position and would like us to take action to present --
10 to prevent the barrel bombing.

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

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

16 Senator Wicker: I think he was talking about a no-fly
17 zone --

18 Secretary Carter: Well, okay.

19 Senator Wicker: -- but described in more palatable
20 terms.

21 Secretary Carter: There are -- a number of different
22 proposals have been made, but I -- the one that I think it
23 -- the focus on right now is the one Secretary Kerry's
24 trying to promote, namely a no-fly zone for the Russians and
25 the Syrians who are attacking the Syrian people. If they're

1 talking about a no-fly zone for American aircraft fighting
2 ISIL, needless to say, that -- that's not going to get any
3 enthusiasm, get strong opposition from me.

4 Senator Wicker: I'm speaking about a --

5 Secretary Carter: But, I think that's what a -- but --
6 it's not called that, but Secretary Kerry is trying to get a
7 standdown of the Syrian and Russian air force. And if he's
8 successful, that would be a good thing.

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

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

18 Senator Wicker: What about the option of controlling
19 the airspace so that barrel bombs cannot be dropped?

20 General Dunford: All options --

21 Senator Wicker: What do you think of that option, sir?

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

1 Chairman McCain: To impose a no-fly zone --

2 General Dunford: Chairman, could I, for a second, say

3 --

4 Chairman McCain: No. No.

5 Senator Gillibrand.

6 General Dunford: That's not what I said, Chairman.

7 Chairman McCain: Go ahead.

8 Senator Wicker: Well, yeah, I do think that's --

9 General Dunford: What Senator -- what the Senator

10 asked me was "to control all of the airspace" --

11 Chairman McCain: No, what he asked was, Should we have

12 a no-fly zone so we can protect these people from being

13 slaughtered? What's what he's talking about.

14 General Dunford: I answered that first.

15 Chairman McCain: That's what we're all talking about.

16 Senator Wicker: So, that would not require going to

17 war, full-scale, would it?

18 General Dunford: Not necessarily, Senator. I -- I'm

19 sorry, but I tried to answer the first question first, and

20 then I was responding to the second part of your question.

21 But, that -- I did not mean to say that imposing a no-

22 fly zone would require us to go to war. That's not the

23 question I was answering.

24 Senator Wicker: Thank you.

25 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 Chairman McCain: Senator Gillibrand.

2 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 Thank you both for testifying today.

4 I want to continue some of the issues that Senator
5 Fischer brought up about cyber. In the past year, we've
6 learned, obviously, about a number of cyberattacks, whether
7 it was against the DNC or against NSA or the Office of
8 Personnel Management. And these attacks have demonstrated
9 the integrated nature of our networks and how our -- how
10 targeting one system can have a broader effect. Whether
11 it's critical infrastructure, private companies, or
12 political party networks, we need to have a much more
13 integrated response to these attacks.

14 How can we create an integrated framework for response
15 to hacks and cyberattacks? And what is DOD's role? And are
16 the processes and authorities now in place for DOD to
17 respond in a systemic way rather than ad hoc to each attack?

18 Secretary Carter: I'll start.

19 And you're -- you used the phrase, Senator -- and thank
20 you -- that I would use, as well, which is "an integrated
21 approach," because you don't necessarily know, at the
22 beginning, who the perpetrator is. And there's this whole
23 spectrum of possible and actual perpetrators, ranging from
24 criminals and kids right up to nation-states. And, you're
25 right, it's -- it is -- the Defense Department shares this

1 responsibility with law enforcement and Homeland Security
2 and intelligence. But, we aim to play a big role -- a big
3 supporting role.

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

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

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

22 Secretary Carter: I appreciate that. And I appreciate
23 the committee's support for DIUX. It's one of many things
24 we're trying to do to continue to connect our Defense
25 Department to the most innovative parts of American society,

1 get good people to want to join us or our defense companies
2 -- good scientists and engineers -- and let them feel the
3 meaning of contributing to national defense. And we've got
4 to work extra hard at that, simply because, generationally,
5 a lot of young people haven't served -- they may be cyber
6 experts, they haven't served, they've never worked with or
7 for our Department before. And so, we're really working
8 hard to draw them in.

9 I just opened up the DIUX branch in Austin, and
10 there'll be more. And I appreciate --

11 Senator Gillibrand: And I'd be grateful --

12 Secretary Carter: -- what you said about New York.

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

19 Secretary Carter: Thank you. We'll give --

20 Senator Gillibrand: -- things that you need further,
21 you --

22 Secretary Carter: -- we'll give you more. I should
23 say, it's strongly represented in our FY17 budget, because
24 --

25 Senator Gillibrand: Yeah.

1 Secretary Carter: -- because we gave it a lot of
2 priority. And the reason why it was possible to give it
3 priority is not just because of its importance, but because
4 -- it's not just a matter of money, it's -- as you
5 indicated, it's a matter of good people.

6 Senator Gillibrand: Right.

7 Secretary Carter: They're the hard thing to find in
8 cyber. And --

9 Senator Gillibrand: And, lastly, I just want to
10 continue on Senator McCaskill's line of questioning. We've
11 been really looking at this issue of retaliation very hard.
12 We've made it a crime for several years. But, the 62
13 percent of retaliation being reported over and over again is
14 very challenging. And those being reported, their view is
15 that it's from above them in the chain of command, more
16 often than not. So, that's just what we're working with.
17 And it's a perception, not necessarily a defined, enumerated
18 crime. I fully understand that. But, have you done any
19 prosecutions of retaliation this year? Have you actually
20 taken any cases to court-martial yet?

21 Secretary Carter: I can't answer that question. I
22 believe the answer to that is yes. And I'll get back to you
23 on that, Senator.

24 Senator Gillibrand: Yeah.

25 [The information referred to follows:]

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[COMMITTEE INSERT]

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

7 Senator Gillibrand: Yeah. And all of those reasons,
8 whether it's lateral or higher up, is one of the reasons why
9 survivors don't report. It's one of their enumerated
10 reasons. They feel it will end their career. And we still
11 only have two out of ten survivors reporting. So, we're not
12 where we need to be. It's not good enough. And --

13 Secretary Carter: Right.

14 Senator Gillibrand: -- I'm grateful for your continued
15 efforts.

16 Secretary Carter: Thank you. Likewise.

17 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

18 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 Chairman McCain: I can assure the Senator from New
20 York, as long as I'm Chairman of this committee, we will not
21 take away the responsibility of the commanding officer, the
22 chain of command, as hard as she may try to remove that.

23 Senator King, did you have anything else?

24 Senator King: Just one quick question, to follow up on
25 this line of questioning about cyber.

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

4 Secretary Carter: Senator, that's not a decision we've
5 taken yet, but I think that's going to be a natural
6 evolution for us and is going to be part of the natural
7 evolution of our cyberforce in giving this new priority.
8 So, we are looking at the various managerial aspects of
9 cyber. Chairman and I discuss that frequently. We discuss
10 it with our colleagues around Washington and the
11 intelligence community with which we share a lot of it -- of
12 responsibility.

13 I mean, ultimately, something that involves combatant
14 commanders would be a presidential decision. But, this
15 committee will have a big role in that, as well. So, we
16 look forward to working with you as we make that evolution.
17 But --

18 Senator King: I --

19 Secretary Carter: -- we're thinking about it,
20 absolutely.

21 Senator King: I just hope the evolution takes a little
22 less time than the evolution of human beings.

23 [Laughter.]

24 Secretary Carter: I think it will.

25 Chairman McCain: Mr. Secretary, it's been a long

1 morning for you and General Dunford, but I would just like
2 to ask one additional question.

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

7 Secretary Carter: Absolutely, we can.

8 Go ahead, Chairman.

9 General Dunford: Chairman, it's a -- we assess it to
10 be a sulfur mustard blister agent. We don't assess that
11 ISIL has the -- has a very rudimentary capability to deliver
12 that. It went on one of our bases. We have effective
13 detection equipment there. We have effective protection
14 equipment. We can also decontaminate. But -- and we also
15 are tracking a number of targets. One, we struck last week,
16 which was a pharmaceutical plant, which is part of the
17 chemical warfare network that ISIL has. And so, we have
18 been tracking this. We've had a number of strikes -- I
19 think 30 over the past year -- against emerging chemical
20 capability. And, in this latest strike, again, we assess
21 was sulfur mustard. None of our folks were injured by this
22 particular incident. And it wasn't particularly effective,
23 but it was a concerning development.

24 Chairman McCain: It is concerning, because we have
25 known that they had some kind of chemical weapons facility

1 there in Raqqa. And, as you say, we have struck it, but it
2 is concerning, particularly on those people who don't have
3 the protective equipment, as well.

4 I thank the witnesses. I know it's been a long
5 morning. And I appreciate their being here. And we will
6 look forward to, perhaps in the lameduck session, trying to
7 get them the authorization that they require in order to
8 carry out their responsibilities. And I am not proud of the
9 fact that the Congress of the United States has not carried
10 out ours.

11 I thank the witnesses.

12 This hearing is adjourned.

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

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