

Stenographic Transcript  
Before the

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

## **UNITED STATES SENATE**

POLITICAL AND SECURITY SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

Tuesday, October 3, 2017

Washington, D.C.

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Tuesday, October 3, 2017

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:03 a.m. in Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John McCain, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators McCain [presiding], Inhofe, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Wicker, Tillis, Sullivan, Perdue, Cruz, Strange, Reed, Nelson, McCaskill, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Donnelly, Hirono, Kaine, King, Heinrich, Warren, and Peters.

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

3           Chairman McCain: Good morning. The U.S. Senate Armed  
4 Services Committee meets this morning to receive testimony  
5 on U.S. strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia.

6           We welcome Secretary Mattis and Chairman Dunford back  
7 to the committee. We thank you both for your many years of  
8 distinguished service and your leadership of our men and  
9 women in uniform.

10          Sixteen years ago this week, U.S. and coalition forces  
11 began combat operations in Afghanistan to eliminate the Al  
12 Qaeda terrorists who attacked our Nation and remove the  
13 Taliban regime that gave them sanctuary. Very few -- few --  
14 would have predicted that 16 years later we would still be  
15 fighting what has become America's longest war.

16          To date, we have achieved our mission to prevent  
17 Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for terrorists to  
18 attack America or our allies and partners. But that success  
19 has come at a tremendous price. More than 2,000 Americans  
20 have given their lives in this war, and more than 20,000  
21 have been wounded. I repeat, over 20,000 have been wounded.

22          And while we are still denying safe haven to terrorists  
23 in Afghanistan, there is no escaping our present reality.  
24 As Secretary Mattis and General Nicholson have already  
25 testified to this committee, America is losing the war in

1 Afghanistan. That is unacceptable.

2 Much of the responsibility for this failure rests with  
3 the prior administration, which was consistently more  
4 interested in leaving Afghanistan than succeeding there. As  
5 a result, for most of the past 8 years, our commanders on  
6 the ground have had to fight this war with restricted  
7 authorities and rules of engagement, insufficient resources,  
8 political micromanagement, artificial deadlines for  
9 withdrawal, and a lack of presidential leadership. Our  
10 troops have fought bravely and honorably. But too often, it  
11 seemed as if they were doing so with one hand tied behind  
12 their back.

13 This was the situation that President Trump inherited.  
14 It was not his doing, but it is now his responsibility.

15 When the President announced a new strategy for  
16 Afghanistan and South Asia on August 21st, it came after  
17 months of delay and indecision, but it was encouraging in  
18 some respects. In particular, the President ended the  
19 foolish policy of arbitrary timetables for withdrawal and  
20 shifted to a conditions-based approach. This was a step in  
21 the right direction.

22 At the same time, in the 6 weeks since the President  
23 made his announcement, this committee, and the Congress more  
24 broadly, still does not know many of the crucial details of  
25 this strategy.

1           This is totally unacceptable. I repeat, this is  
2 totally unacceptable.

3           Many members of this committee have been actively  
4 involved in the war in Afghanistan since it started. A few  
5 have even served in the war on Active Duty.

6           We expect -- indeed, we require -- a regular flow of  
7 detailed information about this war.

8           That is not because we want to inhibit our witnesses  
9 from doing their jobs. It is because we have to do ours.  
10 We have to provide our troops with the vital authorities and  
11 resources they need to perform their missions. That is our  
12 separate, co-equal responsibility under the Constitution,  
13 and we take our duties as seriously as our witnesses take  
14 theirs.

15           Though I must say, it is bizarre that for a hearing of  
16 such importance, our witnesses failed to submit written  
17 testimony to this committee.

18           We want to be your partners, but this committee will  
19 not be a rubber stamp for any policy or President. We must  
20 be well-informed. We must be convinced of the merits of the  
21 administration's actions. And, unfortunately, we still have  
22 far more questions than answers about this new strategy.

23           At the most basic level, we still do not know how the  
24 President's new strategy will better enable us to achieve  
25 our stated objectives. In short, at present, it remains

1 unclear why we should be confident that this new strategy  
2 could turn the tide in Afghanistan or bring us meaningfully  
3 closer to success than its failed predecessor.

4 The President said in his speech that, "Conditions on  
5 the ground, not arbitrary timetables, will guide our  
6 strategy from now on." But what are those conditions?

7 The President said that our goal is still, quote, "to  
8 have a political settlement that includes elements of the  
9 Taliban." But we still do not know what kind of settlement  
10 the administration seeks, on what timeline, what role the  
11 United States intends to play in bringing it about, or what  
12 role we expect other nations to play.

13 The President said we will use, quote, "strategically  
14 applied force to create the conditions for such a political  
15 settlement." We know that 3,500 more U.S. troops are on  
16 their way to Afghanistan, mostly to train and advise Afghan  
17 forces. And we know that the military has been given more  
18 flexible authorities to target our enemies. But we still do  
19 not know how these military gains will be translated into  
20 progress toward a political solution.

21 And we have yet to hear a compelling case for why this  
22 modest increase in U.S. forces will produce battlefield  
23 results that can significantly alter the Taliban's calculus  
24 and create the conditions for political reconciliation when  
25 we could not bring about this goal with far more troops on

1 the ground.

2 The President has also said, quite importantly, that we  
3 would change the U.S. approach to Pakistan, which continues  
4 to harbor militants and terrorists who target U.S.  
5 servicemembers and officials. But we still do not know what  
6 specific steps the United States will take to convince or  
7 compel Pakistan to change its behavior, or what costs we  
8 will impose if Pakistan fails to do so.

9 Indeed, it is unclear to me if the administration  
10 believes any step or series of steps the United States might  
11 take will lead Pakistan to cease its support and sanctuary  
12 for certain terrorist groups, which has been a feature of  
13 its national security policy for decades.

14 Secretary Mattis, General Dunford, this committee, the  
15 Congress, the American people, and our men and women in  
16 uniform, all hold you in the highest regard. We have  
17 confidence in your leadership, your integrity, and your  
18 judgment. But in light of the experience of the last 16  
19 years, what should give us confidence that this new strategy  
20 for Afghanistan will be different?

21 To answer that central question, this committee, in  
22 particular, deserves a lot more detailed information from  
23 the President and from you, not just at today's hearing, but  
24 in the days, weeks, and months ahead.

25 Senator Reed?

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

3           Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I  
4 would like to join you in welcoming Secretary Mattis and  
5 General Dunford.

6           Thank you, gentlemen, for being with us here today to  
7 discuss this very important topic.

8           On August 21st, President Trump announced that the  
9 United States would stay the course in Afghanistan, thereby  
10 continuing the military's two missions of counterterrorism  
11 and capacity-building to ensure that extremist groups never  
12 again use Afghanistan as a base to attack the United States.

13          In February, General John Nicholson, the commander of  
14 U.S. forces in Afghanistan, testified before this committee  
15 that the conflict in Afghanistan had reached a stalemate and  
16 stated the need for enhanced authorities and several  
17 thousand more troops to carry out the train, advise, and  
18 assist mission at lower levels within the Afghan National  
19 Defense and Security Forces, and across the Ministry of  
20 Defense and the Ministry of Interior.

21          While I support the increase in troops and additional  
22 authorities, some have suggested that we have already been  
23 down this path, that a surge in the past of over 100,000  
24 troops could not create the conditions on the ground to  
25 successfully bring this conflict to an end.



1           And so, gentlemen, we will ask you, in many different  
2 ways, what will be different about this effort that will  
3 bring about a change that did not happen in previous efforts  
4 with even greater troop numbers and associated authorities?

5           To many, the situation in Afghanistan is not trending  
6 in a positive direction. The Afghan Security Forces  
7 continue to suffer high casualty rates in the face of an  
8 intensified insurgency, with Taliban and ISIS Khorasan  
9 continuing to plan and carry out high-profile attacks while  
10 maintaining the ability to regenerate their losses.

11           The U.N. has reported near-record numbers of civilians  
12 killed and injured in the first 6 months of this year.  
13 Furthermore, it appears that record-setting amounts of opium  
14 will be produced in Afghanistan this year, providing a  
15 steady flow of funds to fuel the conflict.

16           On the other hand, in spite of this intensified  
17 fighting, the Afghan Security Forces have repeatedly  
18 demonstrated the ability to withstand Taliban offensives and  
19 recapture lost ground. They are seeking to grow their most  
20 effective units, the Afghan Special Security Forces, and  
21 further increase their offensive capabilities.

22           The growth of the Afghan Air Force has been a force  
23 multiplier for the Security Forces, enabling greater  
24 offensive actions. In the past year, they have provided  
25 support to ground forces with limited coalition assistance,

1 conducted target surveillance and selection, and after-  
2 action battle damage assessments.

3 And I am interested in your views as to whether these  
4 developments, with additional U.S. support, will finally tip  
5 the balance on the ground.

6 Ultimately though, this conflict will not be won on the  
7 battlefield. According to the President's speech, the  
8 military efforts in Afghanistan will serve to set the  
9 conditions for the ultimate goal of the South Asia strategy:  
10 a peace settlement between the Government of Afghanistan and  
11 the Taliban that protects U.S. interests.

12 The President also stated that the strategy will  
13 integrate all instruments of American power -- diplomatic,  
14 economic, and military. However, we have heard very little  
15 about the diplomatic and economic aspects of the plan.

16 General Mattis, this integration of all our Nation's  
17 tools is essential, and I hope you will give the committee a  
18 better sense of how our continuing military involvement in  
19 Afghanistan will help translate battlefield progress into  
20 political outcomes.

21 If the mission in Afghanistan is to be successful, it  
22 is imperative to disrupt the external sanctuaries in  
23 Pakistan, which continue to provide the Taliban, the Haqqani  
24 network, and other associated groups with the ability to  
25 train, recruit, rest, refit, and stage attacks without

1 significant fear of interference.

2 We have heard that the administration intends to change  
3 the relationship with Pakistan in order to compel action  
4 that supports our efforts in Afghanistan. I agree that a  
5 change in this area is needed and look forward to hearing  
6 the current thinking with regard to the tools available to  
7 press Pakistan to make more progress on these issues.

8 In addition to Pakistan, there are a number of regional  
9 actors who are endeavoring to play a role in Afghanistan's  
10 future. It will be important to understand the strategy  
11 with regard to countries such as Russia, China, Iran, and  
12 India, each of whom is seeking to ensure that their own  
13 national interests are preserved in Afghanistan, many of  
14 which may be divergent from U.S. interests.

15 Secretary Mattis, General Dunford, the committee is  
16 eager to hear greater detail regarding the military aspects  
17 of the South Asia strategy, as well as the manner in which  
18 these efforts will support the achievement of the desired  
19 political end state.

20 Thank you again for appearing, and I look forward to  
21 your testimony.

22 Chairman McCain: Welcome. Secretary Mattis?

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25

1           STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES N. MATTIS, SECRETARY OF  
2 DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

3           Secretary Mattis: Chairman McCain, Ranking Member  
4 Reed, distinguished members of the committee, I appear  
5 before you following the tragic event in Las Vegas. The  
6 Department of Defense is staying closely linked with the  
7 intelligence community, and we remain alert to law  
8 enforcement's assessment of events.

9           This committee is keenly aware of the complex and  
10 volatile security environment that our country faces today.

11           Russia continues to invest in a full range of  
12 capabilities designed to limit our ability to project power,  
13 erode U.S. influence, and undermine NATO's transatlantic  
14 alliance.

15           China is focused on limiting our ability to project  
16 power as well, and weakening our position in the Indo-  
17 Pacific region, even as we work to find common ground in  
18 confronting North Korea's provocative actions.

19           The international community, as reflected by the two  
20 latest unanimous Security Council sanctions resolutions, is  
21 focused on the destabilizing threat posed by North Korea and  
22 Kim Jong Un's relentless pursuit of nuclear and ballistic  
23 missile capabilities. The Defense Department supports fully  
24 Secretary Tillerson's efforts to find a diplomatic solution,  
25 but remains focused on defense of the United States and our

1 allies.

2 In the Middle East, Iran continues to project malign  
3 influence across the region while we continue to make gains  
4 against the terrorist enemy in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere.

5 In Afghanistan, we have faced a difficult 16 years.  
6 General Nicholson, our NATO and U.S. field commander, with  
7 troops from 39 nations, has blunted the terrorists'  
8 offensive moves in Afghanistan.

9 NATO strikes in support of the improving Afghan  
10 Security Forces, and disarray among various enemy groups in  
11 Afghanistan, have caused the Taliban to expend resources,  
12 constrain their movements, and limit the Taliban's ability  
13 to conduct major offensives.

14 Beginning last month, and for the first time in this  
15 long fight, all six Afghan military corps are engaged in  
16 offensive operations. During these recent months, there  
17 have been fewer civilian casualties as a result of coalition  
18 operations, although, regrettably, Taliban high-profile  
19 attacks on civilians continue to murder the innocent.

20 While the Taliban still attempts to seize district or  
21 provincial centers before the end of this fighting season,  
22 they have generally been forced into decentralized, small-  
23 scale ambushes and the use of improvised explosive devises.  
24 Importantly, the rate of Afghan National Security Force  
25 casualties has reduced from last year.

1           As you know, I just returned last week from a trip to  
2 India and Afghanistan, and I can report that General  
3 Nicholson and the NATO team are holding the line. Forecasts  
4 of a significant Taliban offensive remain unfulfilled.

5           Violence and progress in Afghanistan continue to  
6 coexist, but the uncertainty in the region about the NATO  
7 campaign has been replaced by certainty due to the  
8 implementation of President Trump's new South Asia strategy.  
9 This strategy has been welcomed almost uniformly by leaders  
10 in the South Asia region as well as by the 39 countries  
11 contributing troops to the NATO-led campaign.

12           We must always remember we are in Afghanistan to make  
13 America safer and ensure South Asia cannot be used to plot  
14 transnational attacks against the U.S. homeland or our  
15 partners and allies. Our goal is a stable and secure South  
16 Asia. A political settlement in Afghanistan is only  
17 possible if the Taliban rejects support or conduct of  
18 terrorism.

19           Based on the intelligence community's analysis and my  
20 own evaluation, I am convinced we would absent ourselves  
21 from this region to our ultimate peril.

22           Our new, conditions-based approach has set the stage  
23 for regional and Afghan national change. Our new strategy,  
24 vigorously reviewed and approved by President Trump, is  
25 "R4+S," which stands for regionalize, realign, reinforce,

1 reconcile, and sustain.

2       The first R, regionalize, recognizes challenges exist  
3 beyond Afghanistan. The strategy adopts a geographic  
4 framework with a holistic, comprehensive view. India,  
5 Pakistan, Iran, Russia, and China were considered at the  
6 outset rather than focusing only on Afghanistan and then  
7 introducing external variables late in our strategic design.

8       My visit last week to India was in part to thank them  
9 for their continued generous development support in  
10 Afghanistan, and we discussed ways to expand our  
11 collaboration to improve long-term regional stability and  
12 security.

13       We will firmly address Pakistan's role. NATO's demands  
14 need to be heard and embraced in Islamabad.

15       The second R is for realign, and signifies that we are  
16 shifting our main effort to align more advisers who can  
17 provide training and advisory support at the battalion and  
18 brigade level. The fighting will continue to be carried out  
19 by our Afghan partners, but our advisers will accompany  
20 tactical units to advise and assist and bring NATO fire  
21 support to bear when needed.

22       Make no mistake, this is combat duty, but the Afghan  
23 forces remain in the lead to do the fighting. We have  
24 approximately 11,000 troops in Afghanistan alongside 6,800  
25 from NATO and coalition partners, and 320,000 Afghan

1 National Security Forces. From these numbers alone, you can  
2 see the Afghan forces remain the main effort, and we are  
3 supporting them, not supplanting or substituting our troops  
4 for theirs.

5 The third R is reinforce, and that is seen in our  
6 addition of over 3,000 U.S. troops arriving now and in the  
7 coming months to extend NATO's advisory effort to Afghan  
8 troops that are currently without.

9 NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg and I together  
10 toured Afghanistan last week, sending a message of the NATO  
11 coalition's unity. He is also reaching out to allies to  
12 increase their troop levels. In light of our new strategy,  
13 15 nations have signaled that they will increase their  
14 support.

15 Again, certainty having replaced uncertainty, we are  
16 now looking to our partners to provide even more troop and  
17 financial support.

18 The last R, reconcile, is the desired outcome from our  
19 military operations. Convincing our foes that the coalition  
20 is committed to a conditions-based outcome, we intend to  
21 drive fence-sitters, and those who will see that we are not  
22 quitting this fight, to reconcile with the Afghan national  
23 government. Our goal is a stabilized Afghanistan achieved  
24 through an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace process.

25 War is principally a matter of will, and the



1 international community is making clear that it will stand  
2 alongside the Afghans committed to this fight.

3 As we have shifted to a conditions-based strategy, not  
4 time-based or troop-number focused, ambiguity has been  
5 removed. The elements of this strategy are a tangible  
6 demonstration of our resolve. All this will be carried out  
7 by, with, and through our Afghan partners and within the  
8 coalition framework, ensuring this campaign is politically,  
9 fiscally, and militarily sustainable.

10 Our Afghan partners, who continue to take the lead,  
11 fight most effectively where NATO and partner advisers are  
12 alongside them. As President Ghani said to the United  
13 Nations General Assembly in New York City, "Afghans are  
14 determined to fight. No one should mistake our will to  
15 defend our country."

16 I am heartened and impressed by the international  
17 reception to our strategy. I am confident we will see  
18 heightened levels of support from our allies and partners in  
19 the months ahead.

20 As NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg said last week in  
21 Kabul, this is about making sure that Afghanistan doesn't  
22 once again become a safe haven for international terrorists,  
23 and the best way of doing that is to enable the Afghans to  
24 have defense security forces that are strong enough to do  
25 that.

1           We are already starting to see the psychological impact  
2 of the new strategy, both militarily in the field as well as  
3 through President Ghani and the Afghan Government's  
4 commitment to reform. President Ghani recognizes that  
5 fighting corruption and accelerating institutional reform  
6 across government are critical to success. The recently  
7 launched U.S.-Afghan Compact, outlining more than 200  
8 measurable benchmarks for reform, demonstrates our shared  
9 emphasis on these goals.

10           Our South Asia strategy reinforces to the Taliban that  
11 the only path to peace and political legitimacy is through a  
12 negotiated settlement. It is time for the Taliban to  
13 recognize they cannot kill their way to power, nor can they  
14 provide refuge or support to transnational terrorists who  
15 intend to do us harm.

16           I want to close by recognizing the need to maintain the  
17 closest possible dialogue with Congress, and specifically  
18 with this committee. I pledge the Department of Defense  
19 will be fully responsive to your requirement to be kept  
20 appraised of current and planned operations.

21           As my Senate-confirmed positions get filled, we will  
22 also have greater capacity to deal with the multiple,  
23 worldwide security challenges while keeping you fully  
24 informed.

25           I trust I will have your support to ensure necessary

1 civilian oversight of our military as we address today's  
2 complex and increasingly volatile national security  
3 environment. Thank you.

4 Chairman McCain: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

5 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           distinguished members of the committee, thank you for  
5           opportunity to join Secretary Mattis in providing an update  
6           on the South Asia strategy.

7           In recent months, our commander in Afghanistan, General  
8           Nicholson, has described the current condition in the  
9           country as a stalemate. Secretary Mattis has testified that  
10          we are not winning, and members of this committee have made  
11          similar statements.

12          The situation has developed since the NATO mission in  
13          Afghanistan transitioned to an advisory effort. Since  
14          January 2015, we have advised and accompanied Afghan special  
15          operations units at the tactical level, but our advisory  
16          effort for conventional forces has generally been limited to  
17          the Afghan corps and institutional level. We also reduced  
18          the aviation, artillery, and intelligence support provided  
19          to the Afghan forces.

20          This construct did not provide Afghan conventional  
21          forces with the support they needed to succeed in combat  
22          operations. My military assessment is that we drew down our  
23          advisory effort and combat support for the Afghan forces too  
24          far and too fast.

25          As a result, the Taliban expanded territorial and

1 population control, and inflicted significant casualties on  
2 the Afghan Army and police while the campaign lost momentum.

3 Last spring, Secretary Mattis directed the department  
4 to conduct a detailed failure analysis to identify the root  
5 causes for the lack of progress in Afghanistan, and he  
6 directed we provide targeted solutions. Informed by these  
7 findings, our commanders developed, and Secretary Mattis  
8 approved, a new operational approach to break the stalemate  
9 and bolster Afghan capabilities.

10 The new approach supports the President's broader  
11 strategy by expanding our advisory efforts to the tactical  
12 level, increasing the combat support we provide to our  
13 Afghan partners, and enhancing authorities to our  
14 commanders. We believe these adjustments will improve the  
15 ability of the Afghans to conduct offensive operations,  
16 defend critical terrain, and reduce Afghan casualties.

17 The emphasis is on providing effective support to the  
18 over 300,000 Afghans we have trained and equipped so they  
19 can secure their own country.

20 Going forward, we will support President Ghani's  
21 efforts to reorganize the Afghan forces, which will expand  
22 special operations units while reducing less effective  
23 units.

24 We will also continue our efforts to develop a capable  
25 and sustainable Afghan Air Force.

1           And finally, we will enhance and expand our own  
2 counterterrorism operations in the region.

3           By next spring, this approach will have our most  
4 senior, capable, and operationally experienced leaders  
5 advising at the decisive point in Afghan operations. Their  
6 efforts will be fully enabled by the support and authorities  
7 needed for the Afghans to take the fight to the enemy. As  
8 we implement the strategy, we are also tackling corruption,  
9 the single greatest roadblock to progress.

10           Our military objectives for this new strategy are  
11 clear, and they are achievable: defeat ISIS and Al Qaeda in  
12 Afghanistan and ensure other terrorist groups are unable to  
13 launch attacks against the homeland, U.S. citizens, or our  
14 allies; further develop Afghan forces that are capable of  
15 managing residual violence with limited international  
16 support; support President Ghani's effort to secure key  
17 population and economic centers; and provide an enduring  
18 counterterrorism partnership with Afghanistan to protect our  
19 shared interests in South Asia.

20           As Secretary Tillerson has recently outlined, this  
21 entire effort is intended to put pressure on the Taliban and  
22 have them understand they will not win a battlefield  
23 victory, so they will enter an Afghan-led peace process to  
24 end the conflict.

25           Thanks again, Chairman, for the opportunity to join you

1 today, and I look forward to your questions.

2 Chairman McCain: Thank you very much, General.

3 And thank you, Mr. Secretary. And I thank you for your  
4 appearing today.

5 As I mentioned in my opening statement, 16 years ago, I  
6 think most of us would have been surprised to think that, 16  
7 years later, we would still be involved in a conflict in  
8 Afghanistan, arguably, militarily, the strongest Nation on  
9 Earth. And, of course, as I mentioned, earlier, the  
10 tremendous price: 2,000 Americans have given their lives;  
11 20,000 more have been wounded; and our commander in  
12 Afghanistan testifies before this committee that we are in a  
13 "stalemate." That is hard for most Americans to understand.

14 And some of that, obviously, as I mentioned, is the  
15 failed strategy, or lack of strategy, by the previous  
16 administration. And I have said that fairly often.

17 But I would like to say, again, that you have been in  
18 office now since January, and so far, we have not seen the  
19 details of a conditions-based strategy that will bring about  
20 an end to the conflict in Afghanistan.

21 We have had as many as 100,000 troops in Afghanistan at  
22 one time or another, and it did not end the conflict. I  
23 would like for you to tell me how the inclusion of 2,500 is  
24 going to change the battlefield equation, including the fact  
25 that we have a classic West Point text of a enemy that is

1 based in a sanctuary, that has a sanctuary in Pakistan.

2 We all know the street address of the Haqqani network.  
3 We know where they are. We know what they are doing. We  
4 know what they are doing across the border. And yet, we  
5 still have not, with any effectiveness, in the last 16  
6 years, restricted their activities and have had any  
7 particular progress in eliminating their sanctuary status.

8 I would just like to add one other point. General  
9 Nicholson said that we are in a "stalemate." After 16  
10 years, should the taxpayers of America be satisfied that we  
11 are still in a "stalemate"? I do not think so.

12 And then I would like to, finally, repeat again, we  
13 have had a lack of communication and a lack of information  
14 to this committee that, to me, is very disturbing. There  
15 are not two individuals that I admire more than those  
16 sitting at the table facing this committee. But I want to  
17 tell you again, we will not accept a lack of information, a  
18 lack of strategy, a lack of coordination with this  
19 committee. And there are several methods, thanks to the  
20 Constitution, that we have to try to force a change in that  
21 relationship.

22 I have been told by both of you that we would have new  
23 strategy, that we are now going to work closely together  
24 with the committee, that we are working with various allies.  
25 I am glad to hear that.



1           But if anyone on this committee feels that they have  
2           been fully briefed on what our strategy in Afghanistan and  
3           Iraq is, please raise your hand.

4           So the Constitution of the United States is something  
5           that every one of us raised our hands when we were sworn in  
6           as United States Senators. One of the phrases is, "support  
7           and defend the Constitution of the United States." Not  
8           support and defend the President of the United States, but  
9           support and defend the Constitution of the United States.

10          So all I can say is, with my deep admiration and  
11          respect for both of you, we are going to have to act to  
12          preserve and respect our constitutional responsibilities.

13          The hearing that you gave a week or so ago, I thought  
14          it was nice to hear. I thought it was a lot of interesting  
15          information. But I certainly did not think it was  
16          sufficient information for us to act on the defense  
17          authorization bill, which provides for the training,  
18          equipping, protection, and capabilities of the men and women  
19          who are serving, that we represent, that are serving in  
20          Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, et cetera.

21          So all I can say to you, my friends, and you are my  
22          friends, there is a Constitution; we are a co-equal branch;  
23          and we will expect -- and I know there has been turmoil  
24          within the White House, et cetera, and a number of other  
25          personnel issues. But that does not relieve you of the

1 responsibility to keep us informed, to seek our advice and  
2 consent, which is also in the Constitution.

3 And if you do not, then we have no choice but to  
4 exercise our responsibilities under the Constitution, which  
5 we have. And I regret to say this to two of the people that  
6 I admire and respect as much as anyone I have ever known in  
7 my years of service.

8 Senator Reed?

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

10 I raise this question, Secretary Mattis, because you  
11 raised it in your opening comments, and that is the  
12 Department of Defense strongly supports Secretary  
13 Tillerson's diplomatic efforts versus North Korea.

14 That does not seem to be translated to the President,  
15 since he has, in several tweets, suggested that Secretary  
16 Tillerson opening channels and preparing to discuss issues,  
17 directly and indirectly, is essentially a waste of time.

18 How do you respond to those? On one hand, you strongly  
19 support him. On the other hand, the President is telling  
20 him to knock it off.

21 Secretary Mattis: Senator Reed, President Trump's  
22 guidance to both Secretary Tillerson and me has been very  
23 clearly that we would pursue the diplomatic effort, to  
24 include the various initiatives with China, and to ensure  
25 that we pushed on sanctions, economic sanctions designed to

1 keep this in the diplomatic framework for moving forward.

2 I believe that Secretary Tillerson is accurately  
3 stating that we are probing for opportunities to talk with  
4 the North. All we are doing is probing. We are not talking  
5 with them, consistent with the President's dismay about not  
6 talking with them before the time is right, before they are  
7 willing to talk.

8 So I do not see the divergence as strongly as some have  
9 interpreted it.

10 At the same time, the President, I think, has a  
11 responsibility to ensure that we go into this with our eyes  
12 wide open, with numerous Republican and Democratic  
13 administrations in the past having been disappointed in this  
14 initiative.

15 I think it is a dynamic balance, as we try to go  
16 forward with a solution but at the same time ensure that we  
17 have military options.

18 Senator Reed: Just a final point, I do not want to  
19 dwell on this. But in these situations, and I think you are  
20 aware of it, the possibility of miscalculation,  
21 misinformation, misinterpretation, is very real. And  
22 communication, even back-channel communications, not to  
23 negotiating, but simply to be able to send messages, do you  
24 think that is vitally important? Because the President  
25 seems to be disparaging even those types of messaging

1 channels.

2 Secretary Mattis: Senator, I think the President  
3 dispatching Secretary Tillerson to Beijing here within the  
4 last several days to carry messages and to look at the way  
5 we can work with them is the most accurate answer to your  
6 question, that, in fact, this is part of a whole-of-  
7 government integrated effort that we have underway right  
8 now. And that is what Secretary Tillerson was carrying  
9 forward for the President.

10 Senator Reed: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

11 And following the Chairman's comments about the need to  
12 essentially describe in more detail this strategy, which  
13 conceptually seems to be appropriate, but the devil, as they  
14 say, is in the details, specifically with respect to  
15 Pakistan, the President called out Pakistan, I think  
16 rightfully so. But the question is, what are we going to  
17 do? What are the options we are considering, vis-a-vis  
18 Pakistan?

19 Secretary Mattis: The first thing is, Senator, we are  
20 working with the international community, including  
21 Secretary General Stoltenberg of NATO, to ensure that we go  
22 in with a unified NATO position vis-a-vis Afghanistan.

23 You are aware that I stopped first in New Delhi on my  
24 way to Kabul last week in order to further integrate what  
25 the Indians are doing in terms of development aid and

1 diplomatic efforts to ensure that South Asia stability and  
2 peace are prioritized, not just by us, or not just by us in  
3 Afghanistan, but across South Asia.

4 So there will be a very specific number of things that  
5 we deal with Pakistan on, and those will be balanced with  
6 the appropriate levels of firmness, as we set a new  
7 relationship with Pakistan.

8 And we can go into great detail, I would prefer to do  
9 so in your office, over what those specifics are, to ensure  
10 that our diplomats go in fully armed and have the initiative  
11 when the discussions open here starting in a couple weeks in  
12 Islamabad.

13 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

14 Thank you, General.

15 Chairman McCain: Senator Inhofe.

16 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 Just as an observation of one member here, one of the  
18 major improvements that I have seen is -- and I congratulate  
19 the Defense Department and the administration for saying  
20 that they will no longer comment on exact troop numbers and  
21 imposing public deadlines. I think that is a major change  
22 from the previous administration that I think is very  
23 helpful.

24 I think, Secretary Mattis, in your opening statement,  
25 you gave a pretty long answer to the question that we get

1 confronted with quite often. And let me just ask for a  
2 short answer.

3 We understand the problem for a safe haven for  
4 terrorists in Afghanistan and all these other things. But  
5 can you reiterate for the American people just why they  
6 should, in a very brief way, they should care about the  
7 future of Afghanistan, and why we should continue to expend  
8 resources and risk any more American lives? What is the  
9 short answer?

10 Secretary Mattis: Why should we continue, sir, is to  
11 make certain that Americans can live safely. And when I  
12 advise the President on sending troops in a position where  
13 they can die, I have to know in my analysis that this is  
14 going to sufficiently contribute to the well-being of the  
15 American people to put those troops lives at risk.

16 Senator Inhofe: That is a good, brief answer. Thank  
17 you.

18 On February 21st, Senator Rounds and four other members  
19 and I sat down and spent quite a bit of time with President  
20 Ghani and General Nicholson, and we made a list of some  
21 eight things that they are looking at for the future.

22 I would like to just pick out three of these and ask  
23 either one of you for a current status of where we are,  
24 because I think you would agree with the eight points they  
25 brought out. The first of the three would be the need for

1 more coalition forces to train and assist the Afghan  
2 military. The second is the strength and commitment of the  
3 Afghan people who want to take their country back, the  
4 status of that. And third is shifting the focus to winning  
5 versus not losing.

6 Start with the first one, the need for more coalition  
7 forces to train and assist the Afghan military. What is the  
8 status, currently, of that?

9 Secretary Mattis: Sir, the Afghan Special Forces  
10 commandos that have our trainers, they have won every time  
11 they have fought the enemy. Those without have not won.

12 Right now, we are adding more troops for that very  
13 purpose. We are bringing in more NATO coalition partners  
14 and trying to bring in more of their troops for advise and  
15 assist.

16 And we intend to get this down to every corps. Every  
17 corps is going to have a brigade that will have the trainers  
18 and the advisers with them. And within that brigade, since  
19 when they do offensive ops, there is usually one or two  
20 kandaks, battalions, they will also now have trainers. They  
21 have not had them in the past several years. That means  
22 they were not able to get swift access to NATO air support,  
23 fire support.

24 Senator Inhofe: Yes, that is very good.

25 Now, the level of commitment of the Afghan people, what

1 is the status of that? How about you, General Dunford?

2 General Dunford: Senator, thanks.

3 There is constant polling done in Afghanistan, and the  
4 most recent poll came out and said 87 percent of the Afghan  
5 people reject what the Taliban represents, and more than 75  
6 percent of the people had confidence and trusted Afghan  
7 Security Forces.

8 So I think that is actually moving in the right  
9 direction, Senator.

10 Senator Inhofe: Yes, because it was not that way last  
11 February. That is an improvement, an obvious one.

12 General Dunford: It is a slight improvement from last  
13 February, but certainly a significant improvement from 2011-  
14 2012.

15 Senator Inhofe: That is right.

16 And the third one, the shifting the focus to winning  
17 versus not losing?

18 General Dunford: Senator, that is exactly what the  
19 strategy that we have just outlined is designed to do. And  
20 certainly, from a military perspective, Secretary Mattis has  
21 made very clear that we needed measurable objectives. The  
22 objectives, again, to ensure that the Afghan Security Forces  
23 are capable of providing security with a minimal amount of  
24 support, that is one element. Making sure that ISIS and Al  
25 Qaeda in the region are defeated, that is a second element.



1 Keeping other groups from conducting attacks against the  
2 United States, our allies, that is a third element. And  
3 then reinforcing the efforts for the peace process is a  
4 fourth element.

5 Senator Inhofe: Very good. The Chairman, in his  
6 opening statement talked about -- in fact, he quoted,  
7 "Conditions on the ground, not arbitrary timetables, will  
8 guide our strategy from now on."

9 Does either one of you want to take a stab at further  
10 defining conditions?

11 Secretary Mattis: Senator, first of all, that the  
12 populations centers and the bulk of the Afghan people are  
13 protected from the depredations of the terrorists. And that  
14 denies them the very platforms they need, if they want to  
15 conduct attacks against us, our allies, that sort of thing.

16 Furthermore, we are going to have to see a country that  
17 is able to provide government services. There has been  
18 pretty much a wholesale swap out of many of the old leaders  
19 in various ministries, to include the military leaders  
20 today, across-the-board from the commander of the Army on  
21 down.

22 These are post-9/11-proven people. In other words, we  
23 are getting people in now who are not colored with some of  
24 the old ways of doing business that have bedeviled us for so  
25 long.

1 Further, we are going to see, in terms of the Afghan  
2 military, we are going to see more effective operations in  
3 the field, such as we are seeing right now for the first  
4 time in the war, with all the corps on offensive strikes  
5 going against Taliban and the other terrorists in the  
6 country.

7 This will drive them toward the reconciliation, Afghan-  
8 led, Afghan-owned reconciliation, that will end this war.

9 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

10 Chairman McCain: Senator Shaheen.

11 Senator Shaheen: Thank you both for being here.

12 I guess I am still not clear, based on Chairman  
13 McCain's questions that he raised, that I understand how  
14 this strategy is going to succeed where our past efforts  
15 have not.

16 So can you give me a very succinct response to that, in  
17 the way that you gave Senator Inhofe the response to why it  
18 matters?

19 Secretary Mattis: Senator Shaheen, what we have right  
20 now is the ability to make the Afghan military, which has  
21 been through some very tough times, make them more effective  
22 in the field.

23 In other words, when they go into the fight, no longer  
24 will they worry about that high ground. Having fought in  
25 mountainous country, it is unpleasant to have the enemy

1 above you. NATO airstrikes overhead denies the enemy ever  
2 having the high ground, in terms of the dominating terrain.

3 That is a tactical effect that will make the Afghan  
4 Army bolder, and it will give them more opportunities  
5 militarily to take the fight to the enemy.

6 And that would be the way, as we take the fight to the  
7 enemy, we convince the Taliban, you are not going to be able  
8 to win this by killing.

9 Senator Shaheen: What was the strategy behind dropping  
10 the MOP bomb last April? And was it successful?

11 Secretary Mattis: Ma'am, that was not a strategy.  
12 Senator, that was a tactical event in the field. It was to  
13 collapse tunnels that troops did not want to go into, for  
14 obvious reasons. They wanted to make it an unfair fight.

15 Senator Shaheen: Was it successful?

16 Secretary Mattis: For the immediate tactical effect,  
17 yes, it was. But it was not a strategic act. It was a  
18 tactical decision by a commander in the field, who did not  
19 want to put his troops into a position that a bomb could  
20 take care of.

21 Senator Shaheen: You have said, and others have as  
22 well, that this war will not be won on the battlefield, that  
23 it will be won because there is a peaceful -- this is my  
24 analysis, based on what that means -- that it will be  
25 determined by a peaceful agreement between the Taliban and

1 the Afghans. And I assume other players in the region would  
2 need to be part of that.

3 So I know that proactively going after the Taliban is  
4 designed to try to bring them to the table. But again, do  
5 we think that just because there is now air cover for the  
6 troops, the Afghan Army, that that is going to be enough to  
7 bring them to the table?

8 And I guess the second part of that question is, I  
9 assume that the United States would be part of any agreement  
10 there, and given what Libya and Ukraine and other countries  
11 have seen with respect to our changing our commitments  
12 around their weapons, why would the Taliban think that they  
13 can negotiate with the U.S. at the table in a way that would  
14 provide certainty about what the future might hold?

15 General Dunford: Senator, if I could take the first  
16 part of the question.

17 Senator Shaheen: Please.

18 General Dunford: For many years, to include the years  
19 that I was in Afghanistan, there was a decidedly short-term  
20 view. And one thing that was really evident to me was  
21 hedging behavior by the Afghan people, by the Taliban, by  
22 regional actors, because there was always a sense that the  
23 United States was going to pull out in 12 months. In fact,  
24 in Afghanistan, it was known as the Y2K effect. At the end  
25 of every year, the expectation was that Afghanistan was

1 going to be confronted with an enemy with no support.

2 And the Taliban, frankly, fed that message to their  
3 fighters, and that is how they motivated their people year  
4 after year. It was, "One more year in the fight, and then  
5 we are going to defeat the coalition. They are going to  
6 leave Afghanistan."

7 I think one of the more significant things about the  
8 conditions-based approach here is that the Taliban, and we  
9 have already started to see this in the intelligence, the  
10 Taliban no longer have a short-term horizon to motivate  
11 their people. In fact, the impact, I think, has been fairly  
12 significant.

13 Will that be sufficient to bring though the table? I  
14 don't know, but we have not, to this point, presented the  
15 Taliban with a conditions-based approach that extends the  
16 horizon out for our commitment, makes an enduring  
17 commitment, and causes Taliban leadership now to approach  
18 their subordinates with that context.

19 Secretary Mattis: Very quickly, Senator, the polling  
20 the Chairman indicated shows that the overwhelming bulk of  
21 the Afghan people do not buy the Taliban's outcome. They  
22 don't agree with it. They don't agree that girls don't go  
23 to school. They don't agree that everyone has to act in a  
24 certain way.

25 And based on that and having seen the Afghan forces put

1 up with very severe casualties, fortunately going down now,  
2 and still holding the line, we now see a regenerated sense  
3 that they can push the Taliban into a position where they  
4 can have no hope of winning.

5 So it goes right back to what has been established long  
6 ago, where this military campaign has to lead to. They stop  
7 killing people; they live by the Constitution; and they  
8 break with international terrorists.

9 That is a pretty low bar, and we intend to peel off a  
10 fair number, as they see they have no hope of military  
11 victory.

12 Senator Shaheen: My time is up, thank you.

13 Chairman McCain: Senator Fischer?

14 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 Secretary Mattis, when General Nicholson testified in  
16 February, he and I discussed the fact that the boots on the  
17 ground limitation forced him to hire contractors to maintain  
18 helicopters, because U.S. personnel would have counted  
19 against the troop cap. This hurt unit readiness, and it  
20 also cost the government tens of millions of dollars, in his  
21 estimate.

22 Under the new approach, are we fixing issues like this?  
23 Will we be adding U.S. personnel in a way that allows us to  
24 reduce our reliance on these contractors and also help us  
25 save money?

1 Secretary Mattis: It will, Senator Fischer. The  
2 challenge is, how do we get the right balance on this?

3 I agree with how General Nicholson characterized that  
4 problem to you in his testimony. It is one of the reasons  
5 that I decided to add the reinforcements. Although the bulk  
6 of them will go to advise and assist, some are going to fill  
7 in those gaps.

8 We actually did not have a wise allocation of unit  
9 strength as we broke it apart to send it in for those troop  
10 cap reasons. So it is something we have to address, and I  
11 believe I have the ability to do so now.

12 Senator Fischer: When you say you believe you have the  
13 ability --

14 Secretary Mattis: I have to look at it, Senator, and  
15 make certain. We know that we can solve a lot of it. We  
16 know that much. But I have to look at the tentacles of a  
17 policy decision that has been in place a long time.

18 But I am very much aligned with General Nicholson.  
19 What General Nicholson said I think was accurate, and your  
20 concern, I share.

21 Senator Fischer: Are we still looking at a boots-on-  
22 the-ground limitation in Afghanistan? Did the President  
23 raise the cap? Or did he do away with it altogether?

24 Secretary Mattis: No, the President gave me more  
25 flexibility to deal with this issue, and he has shown

1 himself open, when I go in to talk with him, to my  
2 recommendations.

3 As you know, this was a rather hard-fought effort, as  
4 the President challenged every assumption to address some of  
5 the concerns that have been brought up already this morning.

6 So he is open to me going back in. But right now, I  
7 think I have what I need going in to carry out the strategy  
8 as it is outlined. If not, I will go back in.

9 Senator Fischer: Okay. Over the last few years, we  
10 have seen a decrease in our combat air operations in  
11 Afghanistan. From 2010 to 2015, we saw the total sorties  
12 conducted against enemy targets decrease by 84 percent in a  
13 span of only 5 years.

14 During the previous administration, this was coupled  
15 with, I felt, very restrictive rules of engagement, and that  
16 focused on returning fire rather than allowing commanders to  
17 proactively attack those Taliban targets. In contrast, the  
18 air campaign against ISIS has reached record levels with  
19 over 21,000 sorties flown in 2016.

20 The use of American air power helped stem further  
21 inroads by ISIS, and I think it was used successfully in  
22 locations such as Sinjar and Ramadi.

23 Are we looking at something similar, this aggressive  
24 action and use of air power, as a new strategy in  
25 Afghanistan?



1 Secretary Mattis: It is embedded in the revised  
2 strategy, absolutely. In 2017, as you noted, we have had  
3 more airstrikes than any year since 2012.

4 So already, you see some of the results of releasing  
5 our military from, for example, a proximity requirement.  
6 How close was the enemy to the Afghan or the U.S.-advised  
7 Special Forces? That is no longer the case, for example.

8 So these kind of restrictions that did not allow us to  
9 employ the air power fully have been removed, yes.

10 That said, we will never fight at any time, especially  
11 in these wars among innocent people, without doing  
12 everything humanly possible to protect the innocent that the  
13 enemy purposely jeopardizes by fighting from in amongst  
14 them. That is something we will always take as an absolute,  
15 in terms of how we conduct our tactical events on the  
16 battlefield.

17 Senator Fischer: And, General Dunford, you spoke in  
18 your opening comments about implementing strategy, and you  
19 spoke about support for President Ghani and also to improve  
20 the Afghan Air Force. Do you see a mission of the Afghan  
21 Air Force to work in conjunction with our Air Force, but  
22 also in the future being able to take on those capabilities  
23 on their own without us?

24 General Dunford: Senator, absolutely. And right now,  
25 both Afghan capability and U.S. capability are being

1 employed in support of the Afghans in an integrated way.

2 Long term, and that is about 6 or 7 years from now, we  
3 will completely have transformed the Afghan Air Force.

4 A key piece of that is the transition from Mi-17  
5 helicopters to UH-60 helicopters, which includes an attack  
6 variant. We have, over the past 2 years, fielded the A-29,  
7 which is a fixed-wing, light-attack aircraft, as well as MD-  
8 530s, which are a smaller helicopter providing the attack.

9 The Afghan Special Operations mission wing is probably  
10 indicative of where we believe the Air Force can go. That  
11 has been proven to be a very, very effective capability  
12 supporting Afghan Special Operations forces. And we expect  
13 similar progress to be made in the Afghan Air Force.

14 But it is come a long way over the past 2, 2.5 years.  
15 And again, over the next 6 or 7 years, we expect the Afghan  
16 Air Force to be able to provide the support the Afghans  
17 need.

18 Senator Fischer: My time is up. Thank you, gentlemen,  
19 for your service.

20 Chairman McCain: Senator Gillibrand?

21 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you both for being here, and  
22 thank you for your service.

23 I want to associate my remarks with that of Chairman  
24 McCain's, in terms of the Afghanistan strategy. We know  
25 from President Trump that he has an unspecified increase of

1 3,000 more troops, but most that we know really has come  
2 from remarks and statements by Afghan President Ghani rather  
3 than our own leaders. And I am very concerned that the  
4 American people cannot make good decisions about our  
5 continued investment in this 16-year conflict when they are  
6 not told the full extent of our commitment and the number of  
7 servicemembers we are sending.

8 Do I have your commitment to be honest with the  
9 American people about the numbers of American troops we are  
10 sending over and what their missions will be?

11 Secretary Mattis: No, ma'am, if it involves telling  
12 the enemy something that will help them. Yes, ma'am, yes,  
13 Senator, in any terms of honesty with this committee in  
14 private, at any time in closed hearing, we will get as  
15 specific as you wish. No reservations at all in private.

16 In talking with the American people, we will tell them  
17 we are adding the troops. We will give approximate numbers.  
18 We are not hiding this. But I would rather not say the  
19 specific capabilities or the specific numbers or the  
20 location on a battlefield they are going out of the  
21 confidentiality we --

22 Senator Gillibrand: I did not ask about any of those  
23 details. I asked you about the troop numbers and our  
24 mission.

25 Secretary Mattis: We will keep this committee fully

1 informed, as we have in closed hearings, right down to  
2 specifics of troop numbers. I think it is better in public  
3 we stay in general terms. We have said it is over 3,000, so  
4 it is that not we are hiding the trend that we are going in,  
5 but I think the specifics are best shared with you alone.

6 Senator Gillibrand: General Dunford?

7 General Dunford: Yes, I would associate myself with  
8 the comments of the Secretary, Senator Gillibrand. Thanks.

9 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

10 I would now like to talk about the Iran deal. In his  
11 address to the U.N. General Assembly, President Trump said  
12 that the Iran deal was one of the worst and most one-sided  
13 transactions the United States has ever entered into.

14 It is no secret that the administration's considering  
15 not re-certifying to Congress on October 15th, despite this  
16 administration twice certifying that Iran is in compliance  
17 with the agreement, and the IAEA having reported eight times  
18 that Iran is in compliance.

19 In fact, General Dunford, in your recent renomination  
20 hearing, you responded to a question about the  
21 administration's possible intention to walk away from the  
22 Iran nuclear agreement by saying that it, quote, "would have  
23 an impact on others' willingness to sign agreements."

24 The other parties to the agreement have made it clear  
25 that they believe Iran is in compliance and that they would

1 not support efforts to renegotiate the agreement. This  
2 includes our closest European allies such as the UK, France,  
3 and Germany, as well as countries we need to work with on  
4 other areas of conflict, Russia and China.

5 One of the reasons why I supported the JCPOA was  
6 because I believed that the terms of agreement gave us much  
7 greater transparency. We would know where their mines are,  
8 their mills, all of their production capabilities and  
9 sourcing.

10 So I thought that intelligence was very important. And  
11 both our military leaders at the time and our intelligence  
12 leaders at the time said that that was so. My view is,  
13 without this agreement, we will lose that transparency.

14 What is your view on that assessment, General Dunford?

15 General Dunford: Senator, the agreement, right now,  
16 what I testified to last week was that Iran is not in  
17 material breach of the agreement, and I do believe the  
18 agreement to date has delayed the development of a nuclear  
19 capability by Iran.

20 Senator Gillibrand: How might either the premature end  
21 of this agreement or U.S. unilateral withdrawal impact our  
22 insight into Iran's activities, Secretary Mattis?

23 Secretary Mattis: I did not hear that, Senator.

24 Senator Gillibrand: How would either a premature  
25 ending of the agreement or a U.S. unilateral withdrawal

1 impact our insight into Iran's activities?

2 Secretary Mattis: Senator, as I understand it, right  
3 now, and I have been dealing with the President and the  
4 Secretary of State on this, it is, right now, being  
5 considered in terms of the security of the United States.  
6 By "it," I mean we are talking about the law that has passed  
7 up here where we have to certify, plus the agreement. These  
8 are two separate -- you can talk about the conditions under  
9 one of those and not walk away from the other one of those,  
10 if you see what I am -- they are two different pieces.

11 And that is under consideration right now, about how we  
12 deal with both the legal requirement from the Congress, as  
13 well as the international agreement.

14 Senator Gillibrand: General Dunford, you said that we  
15 should focus leveraging our partners that were part of the  
16 agreement to deal with those challenges that we know Iran  
17 possesses, whether the terrorist threat or the maritime  
18 threat, and so forth.

19 Secretary Mattis, do you agree with that assessment by  
20 General Dunford?

21 Secretary Mattis: In general terms, I do. The amount  
22 of misconduct, I would call it, internationally, whether it  
23 be with ballistic missiles, rhetoric, support to terrorists,  
24 threats to our friends, Arab and Israel, in the region, by  
25 Iran are areas where they are open to a great deal, I think,

1 of censure by the international community. And we are not  
2 naive about their agreement on the nuclear issue, and we are  
3 being very alert to any cheating on that right now.

4 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

5 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 Senator Reed: [Presiding.] On behalf of Chairman  
7 McCain, Senator Wicker, please.

8 Senator Wicker: Thank you, Senator Reed.

9 General Dunford, we have heard it said that America's  
10 losing the war in Afghanistan. Is that true?

11 General Dunford: Senator, what we have said is that we  
12 are not winning, and it is at a stalemate. And that is my  
13 assessment of where we are right now. We are not at a point  
14 where we can bring a successful political solution to the  
15 war.

16 Senator Wicker: If the American leadership, including  
17 people in this room, including the Pentagon and the  
18 executive branch, if we decide to win this conflict in  
19 Afghanistan, is there any reason at all why we should not be  
20 able to do so?

21 General Dunford: At the end of the day, Senator, I  
22 think it is going to require the Afghan people to actually  
23 develop the peace process that will bring an end to the war.

24 What I believe the United States can do, in conjunction  
25 with our coalition partners, is provide the Afghan

1 Government and the Afghan Security Forces the support they  
2 need to bring an end to the war.

3 Senator Wicker: And is there any reason why we cannot  
4 provide that support?

5 General Dunford: Senator, I do not believe there is  
6 any reason why we cannot provide that support, and I think  
7 the new strategy that we are here to discuss with you here  
8 this morning provides the Afghan Government and the Afghan  
9 Security Forces with that level of support to bring this to  
10 a successful completion.

11 Senator Wicker: Okay. And this has been alluded to,  
12 and you mentioned the Afghan people, is there any lack of  
13 resolve on the part of the Afghan people, including their  
14 hearts and minds, that would be a stumbling block to us  
15 being successful in this new strategy?

16 General Dunford: I do not believe so, Senator. It is  
17 very clear to me, from my personal experience as well as  
18 recent polling, that the Afghan people do, in fact, want a  
19 better life for themselves. They do reject the ideas of the  
20 Taliban.

21 And from an individual soldier perspective, I think the  
22 one thing we can all say is that the Afghan forces have been  
23 incredibly resilient and demonstrated the will to fight over  
24 the last couple years under the most extraordinary  
25 conditions.



1           Senator Wicker: They certainly have always  
2 demonstrated a willingness to fight.

3           Are we viewed as an invading force?

4           General Dunford: Senator, I think anything but an  
5 invading force. Consistently, the Afghan people have  
6 requested us to be there. Our presence is favorable across  
7 the country. Again, in polling, typically somewhere between  
8 70 percent to 80 percent of the Afghan people want support  
9 of the international community, led by the United States.

10          We have made it clear that our objectives are to  
11 support an Afghan-led peace process, to support Afghan  
12 Security Forces bringing security to their country. So I  
13 think there are very, very few people who would consider us  
14 an invading force inside of Afghanistan. The vast majority  
15 are very happy that we are there helping them to bring peace  
16 and security to their country.

17          Senator Wicker: And in regard to the new strategy, the  
18 new plan, and the new emphasis on America doing its part to  
19 get the job done, how do our troops feel about that, up and  
20 down the rank and file, General?

21          General Dunford: Senator, I think if you speak to any  
22 young man and woman who has served inside of Afghanistan,  
23 they want to get the mission done. They want to accomplish  
24 the mission.

25          Secretary Mattis has just recently come back from

1 Afghanistan last week. All they want to know is, what is  
2 the mission? And they want to have the wherewithal to  
3 accomplish that mission. And that is exactly what we are  
4 trying to provide to them.

5 Senator Wicker: I am not at all surprised by your  
6 answer.

7 Mr. Secretary, let me just ask you briefly about NATO.  
8 You met with Secretary General Stoltenberg recently. NATO  
9 allies have made significant contributions.

10 How are we doing with upping the involvement of NATO?  
11 And are you satisfied with our progress so far?

12 Secretary Mattis: I need to get to NATO now that we  
13 have the strategy in hand, now that the Secretary General  
14 and I have gone to Afghanistan, and sit down with my  
15 counterparts. I will do that in November.

16 We are already in contact with them. I believe from 15  
17 NATO nations, or partner nations fighting under NATO's flag  
18 -- for example, like Australia, Georgia -- I believe we will  
19 see, at least from 15 nations right now, additional troops  
20 put in there. There could be more than that. Those are  
21 just the ones I have indications, right now, that they are  
22 going to up their game.

23 Senator Wicker: What is their stake in all this?

24 Secretary Mattis: Sir, if anything, they are even more  
25 vulnerable than the United States is in terms of

1 transnational terrorists operating out of Afghanistan  
2 against the European continent, so they have a lot at stake  
3 here. But I think all the nations from South Asia, India,  
4 and certainly China, have a stake in this. Europe does.  
5 This is a transnational problem, Senator.

6 Senator Wicker: Thank you. Let me just tell both of  
7 you, I appreciate your work. And I, for one, support you.  
8 And I just want you to tell us what you need, and we will  
9 try to get it for you.

10 Secretary Mattis: Thank you.

11 Senator Wicker: Thank you.

12 Senator Reed: Thank you, Senator.

13 On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator King, please.

14 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 Secretary Mattis, a very quick, short-answer question.

16 Do you believe it is in our national security interests  
17 at the present time to remain in the JCPOA? That is a yes-  
18 or-no question.

19 Secretary Mattis: Yes, Senator, I do.

20 Senator King: Thank you.

21 You may have noticed that I was talking to Chairman  
22 McCain as he was leaving. I am also on the Intelligence  
23 Committee, and I hear varying analyses of the status of  
24 Afghanistan from the military and from the civilian  
25 intelligence agencies. In September of 1963, President

1 Kennedy sent a famous mission to Vietnam of Victor Krulak  
2 and Joseph Mendenhall. Krulak was a Marine general.  
3 Mendenhall was with the Foreign Service.

4 They came back and gave wildly different accounts of  
5 what was going on in Vietnam. Krulak was very optimistic  
6 about the progress. Mendenhall was very pessimistic.  
7 Kennedy's famous comment was: Did you two guys visit the  
8 same country?

9 I believe it would be important and helpful to this  
10 committee, because the facts are so important when we are  
11 talking about American lives and treasure, to have a closed  
12 briefing, I suggested this to the chairman, with DIA, CIA,  
13 NSA, all of the intelligence community, to get a real status  
14 of what is really happening on the ground to be sure that,  
15 in fact, it is winnable, I guess, and that we do have the  
16 ability to make progress.

17 As you all know, the Afghan Government has lost 15  
18 percent of their territory in the last year, and people in  
19 Maine say, is this winnable?

20 General Dunford, I know of no one who knows more about  
21 Afghanistan than you do. Is it winnable? And what does  
22 winning look like?

23 General Dunford: Senator, if you define winning as  
24 making sure we do not have another attack on the homeland  
25 from the terrorist organizations that operate in South Asia,

1 and of the 90 that we recognize, international terrorist  
2 groups, 18 to 20 of them operate in South Asia, so if  
3 winning includes keeping them from attacking us, we can do  
4 that.

5 If winning includes getting the Afghan forces to the  
6 point where they can provide security for their country with  
7 a minimum amount of international support, we can do that.

8 If winning includes meeting President Ghani's goals for  
9 security of the population in key economic areas, we can do  
10 that.

11 And if winning includes convincing the Taliban that  
12 they cannot win in the battlefield and they are going to  
13 have to enter an Afghan-led peace process, we can do that as  
14 well.

15 So those would be my elements of what winning looks  
16 like, Senator.

17 Senator King: That is a good answer, and I appreciate  
18 that.

19 Is there any evidence that the Taliban is interested in  
20 a political settlement? Are there any contacts? Are there  
21 any feelers? Are there any discussions that indicate that?

22 I am having trouble understanding why they would want  
23 to settle now when they seem to be gaining ground, and we  
24 have 8,000 people there, and we used to have 100,000, why  
25 would they now say, "Well, I guess it is time to negotiate"?

1           General Dunford:  Senator, over the years, there have  
2 always been small groups of individuals interested in  
3 reconciliation.

4           I think the framework, to date, has always been the  
5 idea that you would bring in the entire organization, not  
6 peel off smaller units, number one.  I think President Ghani  
7 has taken a different approach to the Taliban, and we saw  
8 that he has already had some success in peeling some groups  
9 off.

10           But the other issue is the calculus of the Taliban and  
11 what their horizon was.  And I think the Taliban have always  
12 thought that the international community would lose the will  
13 to fight.  This being a clash of wills, they always assumed  
14 the international coalition would quit, and that would allow  
15 them to be successful on the battlefield.

16           I think the most important thing, both from a NATO and  
17 a U.S. perspective, the most important thing that has been  
18 said over the past few months is that this will be  
19 conditions-based, and there is no time horizon for this.  
20 And I think that will fundamentally change the calculus of  
21 the Taliban.

22           And I think what President Ghani will attempt to do is  
23 begin to peel off elements of the Taliban over time who  
24 realize that actually achieving their political objectives  
25 on the battlefield is fruitless.

1           Senator King: I agree that the change from calendar-  
2 based to conditions-based was very important. There were a  
3 lot of us who advocated for that over the last several  
4 years. I think that is of critical importance.

5           Final question, I get this in Maine. The safe-haven  
6 argument, isn't that an all-purpose argument? I mean, we  
7 have parts of Syria that are uncontrolled, parts of Iraq,  
8 North Africa, there are all kinds of places that are  
9 potentially safe havens.

10           My concern is that the safe-haven argument is the  
11 domino theory argument of our generation that is a kind of  
12 all-purpose argument that would justify intervention in  
13 practically any place in the world.

14           Secretary Mattis?

15           Secretary Mattis: Senator, I think that the problems  
16 that grow out of ungoverned spaces do not remain in  
17 ungoverned spaces, so that opens the door for your very  
18 point.

19           Senator King: I appreciate that, but there are a lot  
20 of ungoverned spaces.

21           Secretary Mattis: Yes, and so our approach to this is  
22 by, with, and through allies, not to take all this on  
23 ourselves.

24           I can show you in private, sir, how we look at, if we  
25 add this many American forces, what is the ratio for the

1 others. If it is anything below about 1 to about 70, in  
2 some cases 1 to 250 -- one American troop gets 250 from  
3 coalition or host nation, depending on what the situation is  
4 -- then I would probably be very reluctant to go that way.

5 There is a way for us to lead without carrying the full  
6 burden on the American taxpayer, the American Armed Forces.

7 Senator King: I understand and appreciate that is  
8 exactly the strategy that you are following.

9 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10 Secretary Mattis: Thank you.

11 Senator Reed: On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator  
12 Rounds, please.

13 Senator Rounds: Thank you, sir.

14 Gentlemen, let me begin by just thanking you both for  
15 your service. We have a great deal of respect for both of  
16 you, and we appreciate the opportunity to ask some specific  
17 questions.

18 I think Senator King started this out by asking for a  
19 yes or no answer from Secretary Mattis, and I would like to  
20 go just a step further than that.

21 With regard to the JCPOA, there is a logic that you  
22 have used to determine that it is appropriate to stay within  
23 it. Could you share with us the logic that you use in  
24 determining that the JCPOA is advantageous to us to stay  
25 there at this time? Could you share that with the American



1 public.

2 Secretary Mattis: Absolutely, Senator. And thank you.

3 The point I would make is, if we can confirm that Iran  
4 is living by the agreement, if we can determine that this is  
5 in our best interests, then, clearly, we should stay with  
6 it. I believe, at this point in time, absent indications to  
7 the contrary, it is something the President should consider  
8 staying with.

9 There is another requirement. We certify that it is in  
10 our best interest, and it goes into a broader definition of  
11 national security, broadening beyond the issue, the  
12 agreement itself. That means the President has to consider  
13 more broadly things that rightly fall under his portfolio of  
14 looking out for the American people in areas that go beyond  
15 the specific letters of the JCPOA.

16 In that regard, I support the rigorous review that he  
17 has got going on right now.

18 Senator Rounds: Thank you, sir. Let me talk about  
19 Pakistan for just a second.

20 President Trump has stated that Pakistan is a large  
21 part of the new Afghan strategy. In the past, our  
22 relationship with Pakistan was transactional in nature.  
23 Right now, how would you categorize Pakistan, an ally  
24 against terrorism, a supporter of our efforts in  
25 Afghanistan, or an indifferent business partner?

1 Secretary Mattis: Senator, Pakistan has a convoluted  
2 history with terrorism. There can be little doubt that  
3 there have been terrorist groups that have used Pakistan as  
4 a haven for attacks outwardly, and not just toward  
5 Afghanistan. We have seen the attacks on India as well. At  
6 the same time, probably few nations, perhaps none, have lost  
7 as many troops fighting terrorists as they have.

8 So you have this dichotomy there, and I believe that by  
9 working with the regional allies and partners we have, and  
10 working with our international partners, there is a way to  
11 bring a whole-of-government approach to this to deal firmly  
12 with this, to try to move it back into a positive direction  
13 between the NATO allies and Pakistan, and remove the safe  
14 havens.

15 Senator Rounds: General Dunford, with regard to the  
16 strategies being used in Afghanistan today, the chairman  
17 made it clear that there needs to be a dialogue here with  
18 regard to strategies. Could you share a little bit any  
19 concerns that you may have as to how you share the  
20 strategies, the limitations that you feel are placed upon  
21 you with regard to sharing strategies versus simply telling  
22 the world what our plans are and allowing our adversaries an  
23 advantage in doing so? Would you share with us a little bit  
24 your thoughts with regard to what you can share, what you  
25 cannot, and how you are going to deal with that?

1           General Dunford:  Senator, I can.  I think that is a  
2  fair question.

3           I think, first of all, we should be able to communicate  
4  clearly the ends of the strategy, if you think of a strategy  
5  as ends, ways, and means, what we want to do, how we want to  
6  do it, and then the means necessary to do it.  So if those  
7  are the three elements of strategy, I think we need to be  
8  very clear and upfront with the American people in public  
9  about what the ends of our strategy are.  Of that, there is  
10 no doubt.

11          In terms of the means necessary, in the aggregate, I  
12 think we should be very upfront in terms of how much money  
13 it is going to cost and, generally speaking, what the  
14 resource capabilities are required to be successful.

15          I think it is in the middle, which is the how we plan  
16 to implement the strategy, where many of the things that we  
17 would want to do would be best left classified and discussed  
18 in a closed hearing, so that the Congress can provide  
19 oversight but our adversaries do not find us to be  
20 predictable.

21          Senator Rounds:  Thank you.

22          Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23          Senator Reed:  On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator  
24 Peters, please.

25          Senator Peters:  Thank you, Senator Reed.

1           And thank you for your testimony here today. And thank  
2 you to both of you for your incredible service to your  
3 country. We all appreciate that.

4           Before I ask a couple questions related to Afghanistan,  
5 I would like to follow up on a question that was asked by  
6 Senator Reed. And I think it is particularly important  
7 considering last week, General Dunford, when asked about the  
8 principal threats to our country from a national security  
9 perspective, you put the threat from North Korea as number  
10 one, at least in the short term. We talked about longer  
11 term challenges that we will have as a country, but at least  
12 in the immediate term, North Korea is something that we need  
13 to be focused on.

14           And that is why I would like to go back to these tweets  
15 made by the President, which I will read directly, that came  
16 out just Sunday.

17           "I told Rex Tillerson, our wonderful Secretary of  
18 State, that he is wasting his time trying to negotiate with  
19 Little Rocket Man." And then he followed that up with,  
20 "Save your energy Rex, we will do what has to be done!"  
21 which is a striking statement. In fact, I think most folks  
22 who saw those tweets, particularly folks in the foreign  
23 policy community, thought that, basically, the President was  
24 pulling the rug out from underneath Secretary Tillerson.  
25 And he is our chief diplomat, somebody who is entrusted to

1 find diplomatic solutions to difficult situations.

2 So, General Mattis, I have incredible respect for you  
3 as a student of history. You have followed developments  
4 throughout our history and have analyzed those and thought  
5 very carefully about those. Have you ever seen another time  
6 in history, or is there another example that you can think  
7 of, where a President would actually pull the rug out from  
8 under their Secretary of State as they are about to embark  
9 on some very delicate negotiations, or perhaps diplomatic  
10 efforts to deal with a situation as important as nuclear  
11 weapons?

12 Secretary Mattis: Senator, I think that President  
13 Trump dispatching Secretary Tillerson to Beijing to deal  
14 with PRC, with China on this issue, shows the level of  
15 attention and his intent to work with other nations  
16 diplomatically, by dispatching, I agree, our top diplomat to  
17 Beijing to do that very thing.

18 I believe that Secretary Tillerson's remarks about  
19 probing North Korea to see if they are ready to talk is what  
20 the President was referring to, not the diplomatic effort,  
21 writ large.

22 Senator Peters: So the tweet that says, "Save your  
23 energy Rex, we'll do what has to be done!" is that something  
24 you agree with?

25 Secretary Mattis: I believe, again, that what he was

1 saying was the press had characterized it that Secretary  
2 Tillerson was looking to talk right now. Secretary  
3 Tillerson said he is not. He is probing to see if they are  
4 ready to talk productively. And I think it was that nuance  
5 that was lost there, Senator.

6 Senator Peters: Very good.

7 General Dunford, in your hearing last week, you  
8 mentioned a long-term security concern would be the rise of  
9 China as one that we have to be focused on, and thinking  
10 very carefully how we deal with that.

11 Secretary Mattis, you talked about the Thucydides Trap  
12 and how we need to avoid that as well in our relations with  
13 China going forward.

14 So my question related to Afghanistan is that, we are  
15 well aware that the "One Belt, One Road" strategy seeks to  
16 secure China's control over both the continental and the  
17 maritime interests, in their eventual hope, I think, of  
18 dominating Eurasia and exploiting natural resources there,  
19 things that are certainly at odds with U.S. policy.

20 So my question to both of you is, what role do you see  
21 China playing in Afghanistan, and particularly related to  
22 their "One Belt, One Road" strategy, things that we should  
23 be looking at in terms of our dealings in Afghanistan?

24 Secretary Mattis: Senator, regarding "One Belt, One  
25 Road," I think in a globalized world, there are many belts

1 and many roads, and no one nation should put itself into a  
2 position of dictating "One Belt, One Road."

3 That said, the "One Belt, One Road" also goes through  
4 disputed territory, and I think that in itself shows the  
5 vulnerability of trying to establish that sort of a dictate.

6 As far as Afghanistan goes, as we try to separate out  
7 variables where in some areas we work with China on DPRK,  
8 for example. Terrorism, I think there are areas where we  
9 can find common ground with China when it comes to  
10 counterterrorism, and we should exercise those areas pretty  
11 fully. But we should be under no illusions. There are  
12 areas where also strategically we need to confront China  
13 where we think it is unproductive, the direction they are  
14 going in.

15 General Dunford: Senator, I also believe there are  
16 many areas of divergence, certainly, between us and China,  
17 but there are some areas of convergence. And I think  
18 Afghanistan is one of those where there is some potential.

19 China is threatened by a specific terrorist  
20 organization that operates out of Afghanistan. They have  
21 worked to develop a relationship with the Afghan Government.  
22 The Afghan Government welcomes any support that the Chinese  
23 might provide.

24 And so I view that we can isolate some of the broader  
25 areas where we have divergence and actually find China

1 potentially a helpful partner in Afghanistan, particularly  
2 with the development funds that are going to be necessary.  
3 And the United States certainly is not going to be in a  
4 position to provide those funds by itself.

5 Senator Peters: Thank you.

6 Senator Reed: On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator  
7 Ernst, please.

8 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

9 Thank you, gentlemen, for being here today, and for  
10 your continued communication with Congress on the  
11 complicated issue of Afghanistan and many, many other issues  
12 facing our Nation.

13 A collaborative effort is absolutely necessary to  
14 guarantee both policy and posture are properly supporting  
15 our national defense, and, gentlemen, I appreciate you  
16 working with us to get both of these right for the American  
17 people. So I commend you on that.

18 Now, Secretary Mattis, some have criticized the  
19 administration's strategy as one that defers the  
20 responsibility of Congress to the Pentagon and leaves the  
21 American people in the dark. And, sir, to that, I disagree.  
22 To the contrary, I think that it keeps the enemy in the  
23 dark.

24 And I will agree with Senator McCain on this point,  
25 that it does require Congress to exercise our responsibility



1 to represent our constituents.

2 So, Mr. Secretary, what is your plan to keep Congress  
3 informed as we move through the new strategy in Afghanistan?  
4 We want to make sure that we are able to inform the American  
5 people as representatives of our States. But what would  
6 your plan be, and what would that look like moving forward?

7 Secretary Mattis: Well, Senator, first, I fully  
8 endorse the closest possible collaboration and the absolute  
9 openness. Sometimes, it will have to be in a closed  
10 hearing, because it will be that sensitive, in terms of its  
11 details. But I fully endorse it.

12 The plan would be to maintain constant collaboration  
13 and have people up here on the Hill, whether they be in your  
14 offices briefing you, or in hearings, or in any other venue  
15 that you think most fruitful. And I have been committed to  
16 this since I was confirmed.

17 I have had a few challenges in filling my jobs in the  
18 Pentagon, which have impacted my ability to send up here the  
19 right, high-ranking people who can address things at the  
20 level that you would expect. But as those jobs get filled,  
21 I think this will get even easier. But until then, it is my  
22 responsibility to keep you fully informed, and I will do so.

23 Senator Ernst: Thank you, I appreciate it. And thank  
24 you for making that distinction, too.

25 And we need to understand here in the Senate that there

1 are many positions that still need to be filled. So thank  
2 you for that gentle reminder.

3 And then furthermore, do we have your commitment that  
4 you will give our counsel its due regard as you evaluate the  
5 success of your strategy?

6 Secretary Mattis: Not only give it due regard,  
7 Senator, I need it. This is not a job that can be done by  
8 any one person, least of all in our form of government. But  
9 your input, especially this committee's input, is welcome.

10 Senator Ernst: Thank you. And we must exercise our  
11 oversight, but I agree 100 percent with you, Secretary, that  
12 the details of the plans should not be open to public and  
13 for public dissemination, so thank you for that.

14 I am, however, excited about the new strategy. You  
15 mentioned different ways, General Dunford, in which we will  
16 execute this new strategy. A couple of those things, train,  
17 advise, and assist at the tactical level, of the  
18 conventional forces, rather than at the higher level. I  
19 think that is really great. It has worked for the Special  
20 Operations forces in Afghanistan. Good to see that.

21 And then also leveraging partners is exceptional. And  
22 one thing that we have not fully utilized in the past.

23 Last week, I met with 21 Afghan generals from the  
24 Afghan National Security Force, and they, too, were  
25 expressing unanimous support of the new strategy. And they

1 have a lot of confidence in this new administration. And in  
2 addition to the U.S.-led security ops, we agree that an  
3 international effort must be utilized, supporting through  
4 NATO and other stakeholders like India, and knowing that  
5 India needs to be leveraged in the future as well.

6 So, Mr. Secretary, I know that you were in India. Can  
7 you explain to us what their role and how we can leverage  
8 them moving forward and that whole-of-government support,  
9 what does that look like? What do you envision?

10 Secretary Mattis: Senator Ernst, the Afghan people  
11 have come to have a deep and abiding affection for the  
12 Indian people. There is a collaboration there, based on a  
13 very generous and enduring Indian Government support for  
14 development, for hospitals, for schools, for roads, for all  
15 the sinews that pull a society together, especially one that  
16 has been shattered the way that the Afghan society has been  
17 since the Soviet invasion.

18 They are going to continue. I met with Prime Minister  
19 Modi, his Minister of Defense, and his National Security  
20 Adviser. They are committed to continuing and even  
21 broadening their development support and their support of  
22 the Afghan defense forces in terms of repair of their  
23 equipment, training their officers and NCOs in their Indian  
24 military schools, and training the medical doctors and the  
25 medics for the Afghan Army to take care of battlefield

1 casualties.

2           So I believe that Prime Minister Modi's efforts will  
3 actually be enhanced in the months and years ahead. Based  
4 on the sense that we are fully committed, he can now commit  
5 more himself to the stability and prosperity of South Asia.  
6 It is in all their best interests.

7           Senator Ernst: I appreciate that very much, and I do  
8 believe that this is up for regional partners to contribute  
9 as well. I am glad our administration is engaging them.

10           Thank you, gentlemen, very much for being here today.

11           Thank you, Mr. Chair.

12           Senator Reed: On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator  
13 Kaine.

14           Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

15           And thanks to the witnesses for your service.

16           Secretary Mattis, in your opening testimony, you talked  
17 about the R4+S, and I was just quickly scribbling, I think  
18 the fourth R was reconciliation.

19           One of the things that we have read in the paper  
20 recently is the administration trying to make a decision  
21 about the Taliban office that is open in Qatar, that was  
22 opened with support from the U.S. and Afghan Government to  
23 provide some channel for discussion. And there is a  
24 decision I guess being made within the administration about  
25 whether that office should be closed.

1 I understand no decision has been announced on that. I  
2 am kind of in the fight-and-talk camp, and I know that there  
3 is a fight-then-talk camp. But can you talk a little bit  
4 about at least when you think a decision might be made on  
5 that, or what the sort of equities are that the  
6 administration is grappling with on that question with the  
7 fourth R?

8 Secretary Mattis: I can, Senator. I think the  
9 decision will be made shortly. The equities is exactly the  
10 point. Do we have the right people in that office right  
11 now?

12 As you know, the enemy, under the increasing pressure  
13 they have been under, and the loss of some of their  
14 leadership, has become increasingly fractious. So in some  
15 ways, that is good. It means they are now doing more  
16 decentralized ops, because they cannot mount combined  
17 offenses. But politically, it makes it more problematic to  
18 try to find who actually speaks for the Taliban.

19 Secretary Tillerson and I have been in contact on this  
20 issue three times in the last 10 days. He is looking to  
21 make certain we have the right people, so it is just not an  
22 office in existence. It is an office that we can actually  
23 deal with.

24 So that is what is going on right now. No decision has  
25 been made. I anticipate one would be made soon, but we need

1 to get certain information to make the right decision.

2 Senator Kaine: One of the issues that I think has not  
3 been raised during the hearing today is this question of  
4 heroin production in Afghanistan, which is a pillar to the  
5 economy. It has been a source of financing for the Taliban.

6 Are we making progress in that? I know it is very,  
7 very difficult. Heroin doesn't have to be refrigerated, and  
8 it doesn't rot, poppies don't, and other agricultural  
9 products have that problem. So it is hard to switch folks  
10 over to it.

11 But as long as heroin is raised, and it is a source of  
12 financing for the Taliban and other miscreants, I know it  
13 creates challenges for you. So could you share progress on  
14 that front?

15 Secretary Mattis: Yes, sir. The poppy is a very hardy  
16 crop, and it doesn't take a lot of tending. So in that  
17 growing season they have in that terrain, it is a strong  
18 crop.

19 In our counter-finance effort, which is very  
20 multifaceted, the counter-drug problem has got to be  
21 accounted for. In that regard, we are looking much more at  
22 going after the refining locations, the transportation hubs,  
23 the transporters, the people who make the money off it,  
24 because that is where the Taliban dun them. That is where  
25 they get their taxation income from.

1           So that is where we will go after in a more targeted  
2 way as part of the counter-finance campaign overall, which  
3 also includes counter-corruption, because, as you know, the  
4 money out of the poppy also fuels some of the corruption.  
5 So we will try to make this an integrated effort against the  
6 heroin production, sir.

7           Senator Kaine: And I know that there have been a  
8 couple of questions about Pakistan asked when I was out of  
9 the room. I was actually at the Foreign Relations hearing  
10 with the nominee to be Ambassador to India, Ken Juster, who  
11 was before the Foreign Relations Committee right now. We  
12 were talking about U.S.-India strong mil-to-mil cooperation,  
13 your visit that you testified to.

14           Two questions about Pakistan. How does it sit with the  
15 Pakistanis, the level of Indian investment in Afghanistan on  
16 the development projects you mentioned? And then second, a  
17 separate question on Pakistan, are you seeing the level of  
18 cooperation from the Pakistani military and Government in  
19 battling terrorism along the border with Afghanistan? Is it  
20 a safe haven for people to run over from Afghanistan, or is  
21 there cooperation there that enhances our efforts in  
22 Afghanistan? How would you grade that level of cooperation?

23           Secretary Mattis: On the Indian investments, sir, I  
24 think the Pakistanis look at it with a degree of skepticism,  
25 if not distrust. However, in most cases, they can see it is

1 going to roads, into hospitals. So it is hard to dispute  
2 the facts on the ground.

3 A point I would make about our South Asia strategy here  
4 is it is not an exclusive strategy. It is inclusive for  
5 anyone who wants to stop killing of innocent, of terrorism,  
6 and restore prosperity and stability. Pakistan need not  
7 feel like this is an anti-Pakistan strategy, nor is our  
8 relationship or Afghanistan's with India an anti-Pakistan  
9 collaboration. So it is not exclusive.

10 As far as cooperation on the border, we know the  
11 Pakistan Army has taken some pretty severe losses in those  
12 attacks, but let me ask the chairman to say a few words  
13 about actually how the cross-border counterterrorism  
14 campaign is going with the Pakistanis.

15 Senator Kaine: Thank you.

16 General Dunford: Senator, they have done a lot in the  
17 border area. And as Secretary Mattis has mentioned, they  
18 have suffered significant casualties.

19 In my judgment, what we need is an effective bilateral  
20 relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan to manage the  
21 border area. We have had a broad framework on that for  
22 about 3 or 4 years, and I do not think satisfactory progress  
23 has been made.

24 We were encouraged, just this week, with General  
25 Bajwa's visit to Afghanistan. He was in Kabul the day



1 before yesterday. He had very good meetings Afghan  
2 leadership. Our leadership was engaged in those meetings as  
3 well. There is at least a commitment now to address those  
4 issues and do better coordination along the border area.

5 When we were actually doing that, we had a better  
6 degree of cooperation along the border. We had better  
7 visibility. As we drew down the force, that was not  
8 replaced with effective Afghan-Pakistan cooperation.

9 But I think as you correctly point out, Senator, that  
10 has to be one of the key elements of our success moving  
11 forward. And again, I think the pressure we want to put on  
12 Pakistan is to move in that direction.

13 First few days, way too early to tell. But the first  
14 few days, particularly this recent visit by General Bajwa to  
15 Kabul, is encouraging.

16 Senator Kaine: Great. Thank you both very much.

17 Thanks, Mr. Chair.

18 Senator Reed: On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator  
19 Perdue, please.

20 Senator Perdue: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

21 General Dunford, how would you define victory now?

22 First of all, I applaud the regional strategy that the  
23 administration and you guys are authoring right now. I have  
24 espoused that for years, having some background in Pakistan.

25 The relationship between India, Pakistan, Afghanistan,

1 Russia, China is critical to the solution. Afghanistan,  
2 obviously.

3 But how would you now define, for the American people  
4 after 16 years, what is our current view of what victory  
5 looks like in Afghanistan?

6 General Dunford: Senator, I think it is probably four  
7 components.

8 The first is that we would defeat ISIS and Al Qaeda,  
9 those specific groups terrorist groups. And then prevent  
10 the other 18 groups that operate from South Asia from  
11 conducting an attack against the United States, the American  
12 people, or our partners.

13 I think the second component would be that the Afghan  
14 Security Forces, with a minimal amount of international  
15 support, can provide security inside of Afghanistan.

16 I think the third component would be supporting  
17 President Ghani's initiative to secure 80 percent of the  
18 population in the key economic centers within the next 4  
19 years. He has outlined a plan to do that.

20 And I think the fourth element is supporting the  
21 reconciliation process, and specifically an Afghan-led peace  
22 process that allows people to solve their problems through  
23 that process as opposed to on the battlefield.

24 Those would be the four components that I believe,  
25 particularly as you look at it through the military

1 dimension, are necessary for us to be successful.

2 Senator Perdue: Including the Taliban in those  
3 negotiations? Is that correct?

4 General Dunford: That is correct, Senator. It would  
5 be an Afghan-led process, but include the Taliban so that  
6 they no longer address any grievances on the battlefield,  
7 but they are part of an Afghan peace process.

8 Senator Perdue: So from an expectations point of view,  
9 we have had soldiers, men and women in Japan, Germany for 70  
10 years. The question is, is it reasonable to expect, under  
11 the first definition of victory about ISIS and the other 18  
12 potential terrorist threats out there, is this a static  
13 point in time? Or is this a dynamic thing that we have to  
14 ensure over the future, really?

15 General Dunford: Senator, I believe we have enduring  
16 interests in South Asia, and those enduring interests are  
17 going to require, over time, a diplomatic presence, an  
18 economic presence, and a military presence.

19 I think the nature of that diplomatic, economic, and  
20 military commitment will change over time. So in that  
21 perspective, the military commitment that we have right now  
22 is a moment in a time. I expect that contribution, the  
23 military contribution, will decrease over time as the Afghan  
24 forces have stood up.

25 As I mentioned in my opening statement, I think we just

1 pulled off our advisory effort prematurely before the  
2 Afghans were capable of taking the fight on their own. In  
3 my judgment, it will be a few years. But in my judgment,  
4 the Afghans will get to the point where, with a much lower  
5 level of support, they will be capable of actually securing  
6 Afghanistan.

7 Senator Perdue: Thank you.

8 Secretary Mattis, I was just over in Afghanistan and  
9 Pakistan, spent the day with General Bajwa. We went up to  
10 the border area and so forth.

11 He intimated that he was willing to cooperate in joint  
12 efforts, and I noticed that he is there just this week, met  
13 President Ghani, who also was supportive of that idea.

14 That was back in July. I think time is of the essence  
15 here. I would really love to see more of that potential  
16 cross-border cooperation, particularly with Haqqani network.

17 My question relates to Russia. General Nicholson said,  
18 both on that trip and also in public, recently back in  
19 December 2016, Russia has overtly lent legitimacy to the  
20 Taliban by claiming that the Taliban is fighting ISIS. So  
21 it looks like we have a joint foe there.

22 The question I have is, Russia, China, and Pakistan  
23 just held a conference in December 2016 on Afghanistan,  
24 without inviting the Afghans or India, advocating for  
25 reconciliation with the Taliban, including the delisting of

1 Taliban leaders as terrorists.

2 What is Russia's endgame in Afghanistan today? And how  
3 do we counter it in the long-term strategy?

4 Secretary Mattis: Senator, I am concerned that Russia  
5 is not operating in its own best interest with what it is  
6 doing down in South Asia.

7 Secretary Tillerson is engaged with his counterpart in  
8 Moscow on this issue and will try to bring some strategic  
9 thought into this situation. But I can tell you that we  
10 have concerns about what Russia is doing. It may be no  
11 deeper than just, if there is an opportunity to poke us in  
12 the eye, they will do it, even if it is against their own  
13 interests.

14 But it defies logic that they would see any benefit to  
15 engaging the way they have with these other two countries,  
16 in light of the apparent support. And I cannot define that  
17 support right now. We are trying to get the intel on it and  
18 figure out why Russia is going this way.

19 As far as the other two, I think what we are seeing is  
20 Russia trying to be a player in terms of the South Asia  
21 outcomes. And I think it is much better we all work together  
22 on this, rather than exclusively.

23 Senator Perdue: Thank you, both. Thank you.

24 Senator Reed: On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator  
25 McCaskill, please.

1 Senator McCaskill: Thank you very much.

2 Thank you both so much for your hard work, and I think  
3 you both have incredible responsibilities and are handling  
4 it well.

5 I was concerned about SIGAR's high-risk report in  
6 January for Afghanistan. I know it will not surprise either  
7 of you to know, based on my history in this committee, that  
8 I was particularly concerned about the contract management  
9 identification.

10 We have more contractors on the ground in Afghanistan  
11 than we have active military, as you all are well aware. We  
12 are never going back to a time where we are not incredibly  
13 reliant on contractors. So I have been like a broken  
14 record, that we have to get this contract oversight right.

15 Now this report came out before the report that we  
16 learned about the \$50 million that went to New Century  
17 Consulting to buy Porsches, Alfa Romeos, a Bentley, an Aston  
18 Martin, a Land Rover, prohibited weapons, as well as  
19 questionable unallowable expenses and \$420,000 in salaries  
20 for spouses or significant others of the CFO and the CEO.

21 So I need to know what your sense is about this. And I  
22 need to know, who is supposed to be overseeing that  
23 contract? And what has happened to that person? Was that a  
24 COR that was overseeing this contract? Was it someone  
25 higher in the command that was overseeing this contract?

1           With this kind of contract, money going out the door,  
2           it just, after all the years we have worked on this with the  
3           Contracting Command -- and I know we have made progress,  
4           gentleman. I know we have. But when I see this, after all  
5           the work we have done on wartime contracting and cleaning it  
6           up, it just makes me depressed.

7           So can either of you shed any light on how we would  
8           have had an incident that, to me, shows a real backsliding,  
9           in terms of contract oversight?

10          Secretary Mattis: Senator, I have to look into the  
11          specifics that you are bringing up. But that said, we have  
12          made very clear that the contracting that is going on in  
13          Afghanistan must be focused on the combat capability that we  
14          are bringing there, that we are going to work with the  
15          international donors to address other aspects of development  
16          in the country. And I want a review board that is actively,  
17          perhaps with its own IG, going to be looking at each of  
18          these. And I want continuity of efforts on contracts. So  
19          people, once they sign a contract, are held accountable for  
20          the life of that contract.

21          And right now, I cannot assure you that I have that,  
22          but that is the direction that we are taking this.

23          General Dunford: Senator, if I could just follow up on  
24          the resources. We have worked very closely with the SIGAR.  
25          And I think one of the positive changes that has taken place

1 over the last couple years is, as opposed to just providing  
2 a report, we have been really looking at lessons learned and  
3 try to incorporate those.

4 We tried a few years ago to move much of the money that  
5 we were providing to the Afghans on budget. That did not  
6 work out. And we have significantly reduced the amount of  
7 money on budget, meaning that we now are directly dispersing  
8 those funds, and we have direct oversight.

9 Secretary Mattis mentioned in his opening statement the  
10 compact that has been now signed between the Embassy and  
11 President Ghani as well, which has given us now visibility  
12 into the Afghan organizations as well.

13 One of the things that we did when we did a failure  
14 analysis for Secretary Mattis moving forward, so that we  
15 could answer the hard questions, which are the right  
16 questions, the hard questions about why are things going to  
17 be different moving forward is, we did failure analysis.  
18 And the corruption that we have seen, the contracting that  
19 we have seen, and the lack of visibility and transparency in  
20 the resources were clearly an issue.

21 In fact, I had the SIGAR over in my office as we were  
22 doing the failure analysis, and the SIGAR was actually a  
23 part of our team that put together the failure analysis for  
24 the Secretary.

25 So with your emphasis on the SIGAR over time, and the



1 SIGAR's corporate memory, I think we have done the best we  
2 can now moving forward to incorporate those lessons learned,  
3 and particularly in those areas where we are talking about a  
4 significant amount of money in taxpayer dollars.

5 Senator McCaskill: Well, you know, the culture in the  
6 military is that when there is a screw-up, somebody is held  
7 accountable. And who is held accountable is a big deal as  
8 to whether or not that screw-up occurs again. So I would  
9 really like a follow-up from both of you or from you,  
10 General Dunford, maybe directly, as to whose you-know-what  
11 is on the line for this contract and the excessive abuse  
12 that occurred in this particular contract, because picking  
13 out somebody to make an example of in this area makes a  
14 difference.

15 When we first started down this road, they were just  
16 handing a clipboard to somebody, the low man on the totem  
17 pole, and said, "Oh, you are supposed to overseeing  
18 contracts." And it was a joke, as you know, in Iraq in the  
19 early years, in terms of contract oversight.

20 So I need to know that somebody is held accountable for  
21 the Alfa Romeos, the Bentleys being bought in Afghanistan.

22 General Dunford: Senator, I am not familiar with the  
23 details of that contract, but we will certainly get that to  
24 you right away.

25 Senator McCaskill: Thank you.

1           Senator Reed: On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator  
2 Tillis, please.

3           Senator Tillis: Thank you, Senator Reed.

4           And, gentleman, thank you for being here and your  
5 continued service.

6           Secretary Mattis, I was here for your opening comments.  
7 And I liked the way that you framed it around the four Rs,  
8 and I think regionalize, realign, reinforce, they all make  
9 sense. I am more concerned with something that is  
10 foundational to ultimately being successful, and that is  
11 reconcile.

12           And there seems to be two pieces of that, that I would  
13 like for us to drill down on.

14           And, General Dunford, you as well.

15           When I was in Afghanistan last, there was a lot of  
16 optimism around some of the economic development that was  
17 going on in the country. They had a lot of work to do. But  
18 they were getting partners investing money there, and it was  
19 helping their underlying economy. There was optimism on the  
20 part of President Ghani, in terms of infrastructure  
21 projects.

22           So I would like to kind of get a status update on how  
23 those underpinnings are working. That is one piece.

24           I would like to know what, if any, insights we have  
25 into popular opinion about the four R strategy, and whether

1 or not we are seeing trending in the right direction among  
2 the Afghan people.

3 And then, finally, I would like to talk about what does  
4 the Taliban look like in a reconciled country. I mean, do  
5 they have a political role to play in the political process?  
6 What do you all envision as the steps toward successful  
7 reconciliation, which would actually have to deal with that?

8 Secretary Mattis: Senator Tillis, on the  
9 reconciliation effort, obviously, it is a fight-and-talk  
10 effort, but the underpinnings you accurately point out are  
11 what give people hope.

12 I think that progress and violence co-existing right  
13 now, what we need to do is expand the security envelope  
14 behind which much of this development progress, for which we  
15 have a large amount of international support, especially now  
16 that they see we are going to stay the course, that will be  
17 coming in.

18 As far as the popular opinion, we track it through  
19 polls, not only our own polls, they involve polls taken by  
20 international organizations unaffiliated with us. We also  
21 have our own.

22 I would note that, in the last several weeks, one of  
23 the things we look at is property values in Kabul. And we  
24 just got the readout, and the property values have started  
25 going up since we have announced this strategy. In other

1 words, there is a certain amount of commitment now.

2 It is something we cannot control. That is why we look  
3 at it. This is objective data. This is not subject to  
4 subjective evaluation.

5 So as we look at this process going forward, we see the  
6 development funds coming in, largely from the international  
7 donors, that is going to help keep President Ghani's  
8 optimism fueled with startup kind of money.

9 We also have opportunities in the extraction  
10 industries, that, if we can get the security right in  
11 certain areas, that can start creating income for the  
12 government.

13 But overall, there appears to be a psychological impact  
14 already of what we have done by implementing this strategy.  
15 Too early to say that it is because of military success,  
16 although, like I mentioned, Senator, for the first time in  
17 16 years, we have all six Afghan Army corps on the offensive  
18 at the same time.

19 Senator Tillis: General Dunford, anything to add?

20 General Dunford: Senator, the only thing I would say  
21 is, on the third question, which I think is really an  
22 important question, which is, what does reconciliation look  
23 like? At the end of the day, what we are helping to do is  
24 set the conditions where the Taliban believe they are going  
25 to have to come to the peace table in order to move forward.

1           And I think that question is uniquely capable of being  
2 answered by the Afghan people. I do not think we can  
3 actually impose that.

4           This is something that the Taliban, in the context of  
5 an Afghan-led peace process, are going to have to figure  
6 out, how do they incorporate into the political system  
7 inside of Afghanistan? And how do they move beyond seeking  
8 their political objectives by using violence?

9           Senator Tillis: Thank you.

10          And, General Mattis, I will not ask you to, or I should  
11 say, Secretary Mattis, I will not ask you to cover it now in  
12 my remaining time, but I would be interested in any  
13 information that gives me a sense of the popular opinion  
14 trending, what we have seen maybe before we announced the  
15 strategy, afterwards. And that is something that I think is  
16 a really good indicator for how well we are doing, because  
17 we only succeed if we win the hearts and minds.  
18 Reconciliation only succeeds if we continue to make positive  
19 progress at the same time we are fighting.

20          Thank you very much.

21          Thank you, Senator Reed.

22          Senator Reed: Thank you.

23          On behalf of the chairman, Senator Donnelly, please.

24          Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25          I want to thank you both for your service, for

1 everything you have done for our country.

2 Going back to Afghanistan, and I apologize if this has  
3 been asked, does it ever change if Pakistan does not end  
4 safe havens? Does it ever change?

5 I mean, we can continue to put more people in, have  
6 less people there, do this, do that. Does it ever  
7 stabilize, if that step doesn't occur?

8 Secretary Mattis: I think it would be highly difficult  
9 to sustain any stabilization in South Asia, not just in  
10 Afghanistan, but certainly anywhere around Pakistan, India,  
11 unless safe havens are removed.

12 Senator Donnelly: Well, let me follow up with this,  
13 then, Mr. Secretary. We have tried for a long time, had  
14 meeting after meeting with the Pakistan Government. And I  
15 would like both of you to answer this.

16 What does change their mind, in regard to the safe  
17 haven policy? How do you ever move that ball?

18 Secretary Mattis: I think being very clear and firm in  
19 what we expect, and using all aspects of the government to  
20 bring about that change, working internationally. The  
21 reason we started with a regional strategy, we did not start  
22 with Afghanistan then work outwardly, was to make certain we  
23 began with a recognition of the role of India, of Russia, of  
24 China, of Pakistan.

25 Senator Donnelly: What carrot or stick, for want of a

1 better term, moves the Pakistan Government to change?

2 Secretary Mattis: There are a number of lines of  
3 effort being put together now in the Secretary of Treasury's  
4 Office, Secretary of State's Office, my own office, the  
5 intel agencies. We are also working with Secretary General  
6 Stoltenberg to ensure that NATO's equities are brought to  
7 bear.

8 Certainly, India has a role to play as a neighbor, and  
9 potentially is a very strong economic benefit to Pakistan,  
10 if Pakistan can find a way to carry out its international  
11 responsibilities and end any kind of safe haven inside their  
12 country.

13 So there is a great deal that Pakistan can benefit,  
14 economically, diplomatically, financially, for its  
15 government, economically for its people, by finally sensing  
16 that the tide has shifted against this.

17 Senator Donnelly: General Dunford, is it your sense  
18 that the ISI is still helping the Taliban?

19 General Dunford: Senator, I think it is clear to me  
20 that the ISI has connections with terrorist groups.

21 And if I could just follow up on something Secretary  
22 Mattis said, I think over the last several years, we have  
23 had a bilateral approach in trying to effect a change in  
24 Pakistan's behavior. And if you think about the coalition,  
25 we still have 39 nations that are part of the coalition in

1 Afghanistan and many other interested nations.

2 So the answer to your question, what one thing might  
3 change Pakistan? I do not think there is one thing that  
4 would change Pakistan, but I find it hard to imagine that we  
5 cannot get more cooperation, if we can fully leverage the  
6 multilateral approach with 39 nations that are part of the  
7 coalition in Afghanistan, with the other nations now, to  
8 include China and India that are not in the coalition, but  
9 clearly have vital national interests inside of South Asia.

10 If we can have a diplomatic and economic effort that  
11 harnesses all of that potential multilaterally, it seems to  
12 me that we have a much better chance than we have had to  
13 date with a bilateral approach.

14 Senator Donnelly: If I could switch to North Korea for  
15 a minute, and this is obviously speculation, but what do you  
16 think gets Kim Jong Un to put a halt? What do you think he  
17 is looking for, in terms of either a decision to make a halt  
18 because he feels threatened and/or a decision to halt  
19 because he feels maybe there is a path forward here?

20 General Dunford: Senator, if you walk back and you  
21 say, what is he doing and why? I think the intel community  
22 assesses, and I agree, that Kim Jong Un is on the path he is  
23 on right now because he believes that is necessary to  
24 enhance the survival of his regime. So he views the  
25 possession of ballistic missiles and nuclear capability as



1     inextricably linked to regime survival.

2             What I think Kim Jong Un needs to realize is, he cannot  
3 survive with ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons because  
4 the international community will not allow him to survive.

5             And I think if there was one area that has been  
6 identified by many people as maybe being the one that would  
7 most profoundly change his behavior, it would be the loss of  
8 oil. And we have seen in the past, when the oil has been  
9 cut off, there has been a change in Kim Jong Un's behavior.

10            The fact is, he needs economic resources external to  
11 the country to survive. I think when he starts to have the  
12 risk calculation of the path he is on and actually the  
13 regime surviving, because of economic resources necessary  
14 for it to survive, that is the best potential, which is why  
15 I think we should support Secretary Tillerson's current path  
16 of diplomatic and economic pressure to convince him that  
17 being a part of the international community and a key  
18 component of Secretary Tillerson's plan has been the  
19 prospect of North Korea entering back into the community of  
20 nations and addressing their economic challenges.

21            When he views the chances of doing that are more  
22 important than the path that he is on, I think that there is  
23 a potential for change.

24            And again, we are prepared with a military option,  
25 should that fail. But I think we are all, at this point,

1 doing what we can to make sure the economic and diplomatic  
2 pressure campaign gets a full opportunity to succeed.

3 Senator Donnelly: I want to thank you both for your  
4 service to the country.

5 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 Senator Reed: Thank you very much.

7 On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator Sullivan, please.

8 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 And, gentleman, thank you for the testimony.

10 I want to echo what a number of my colleagues have  
11 mentioned. I think it gives the American people a lot of  
12 comfort to see the two of you leading on our military and  
13 Department of Defense efforts. I just want to applaud you  
14 for all you are doing and the focus you are giving to some  
15 of these really important national security issues in what  
16 are clearly challenging times.

17 One area where I do not think you have gotten enough  
18 compliments for what you have done is the ISIS strategy.  
19 You came in, a new strategy, a serious strategy, started to  
20 implement it. And we are not there yet, but I think it is  
21 clearly working. It is clearly reversing what had been a  
22 losing battle.

23 And maybe I can ask you to just initially comment on  
24 that, because I think the American people are not fully  
25 aware that they are completely on the defensive now, in my

1 view, in large measure to your leadership, your strategy,  
2 and, of course, to the troops who are executing that.

3 Secretary Mattis, care to comment on that, sir?

4 Secretary Mattis: Senator, the troops have done a  
5 yeoman's job out there in enlisting other forces to work  
6 alongside us. It has been a very complex battlefield, as  
7 you know.

8 But right now, ISIS is seeing its fundraising and its  
9 recruiting dry up because of what we have done to them on  
10 the battlefield. That said, they remain a threat, and we  
11 are taking no sense of complacency here. And it is still a  
12 full-fledged fight.

13 Senator Sullivan: Let me ask next, now you have put  
14 together another strategy. I think a lot of us view it in a  
15 similarly positive manner. You talk a lot about the  
16 regional strategy. I think that is actually really  
17 important, with regard to Afghanistan and your focus, which  
18 I think is actually critically important on India. It  
19 matters not only to Afghanistan, but to other challenges  
20 that we are seeing throughout the country.

21 I think they can be an incredibly important strategic  
22 partner of ours. We share similar values, the oldest,  
23 largest democracies in the world working together.

24 Can you give me a sense, Mr. Secretary, on your recent  
25 trip, not only with regard to the importance that India

1 could play with regard to our Afghanistan policy, but other  
2 challenges, say, China's aggressive actions in the South  
3 China Sea, and the rise of China, and maybe looking at India  
4 as a partner on some of those key issues where our interests  
5 align?

6 Secretary Mattis: Senator, your point about where our  
7 interests align is very, very indicative of the current  
8 situation we find ourselves in.

9 What we have right now, Senator, it is a strategic  
10 convergence, a generational opportunity, between the two  
11 largest democracies in the world to work together based on  
12 those shared interests of peace, of prosperity, of stability  
13 in the region.

14 And India's coming into its own. It is going to be a  
15 global player. And I think this is quite right, as Prime  
16 Minister Modi takes them forward, economically, to a much  
17 higher level of living for his people, to a bigger role in  
18 the world. And that role, from our perspective, is a wholly  
19 positive one right now.

20 And I think we are natural partners, India and the  
21 United States, and we recognize each other's sovereignty.  
22 We have respect for each other. But we also see the  
23 opportunity we are presented with right now.

24 Senator Sullivan: So it is safe to say your meetings  
25 went well in India recently?

1 Secretary Mattis: The meetings could not have gone  
2 better, Senator.

3 Senator Sullivan: Great. Let me turn to North Korea,  
4 like a number of my colleagues. A lot of concern on that.

5 I, for one, very much appreciate your regular briefings  
6 that you have had with this committee. I think they have  
7 been constructive. I think they are helping bring both  
8 members, Democrats and Republicans, into trying to help with  
9 regard to that.

10 The policy strategy, a very challenging national  
11 security issue, as we all know.

12 The main effort, then, continues to be diplomacy? I  
13 know you have been asked this a number of times, but I just  
14 want to reiterate that, a simple yes or no answer on that.

15 Secretary Mattis: It is diplomatically led, Senator,  
16 by Secretary Tillerson. There are economic sanctions that  
17 you have seen demonstrated by the unanimous U.N. Security  
18 Council resolutions.

19 How often do we find Russia, China, the United States,  
20 France, others, all voting as one? It shows the degree of  
21 acceptance that this is an international threat and people  
22 are working together, imperfectly, but working together to  
23 try to address it.

24 And we will continue to maintain a Department of  
25 Defense that looks toward the defense of our people and the

1 defense of our allies with military options on the table.

2 Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

3 And, Mr. Chairman, if I may, just one final quick  
4 question?

5 On part of our strategy, it has become apparent that  
6 the President and the two of you and others have been  
7 talking about how critical missile defense is as a key  
8 element of our strategy, not just dealing with North Korea,  
9 but rogue nations like Iran.

10 As you know, in the NDAA, we had a number of provisions  
11 to advance our Nation's missile defense. I know that the  
12 administration's looking at additional measures. Could you  
13 describe those, General or Mr. Secretary, both, in terms of  
14 what you want to do, how we could be supportive?

15 I think one of the breakthroughs that you saw in the  
16 NDAA this year is missile defense is no longer a partisan  
17 issue. It is being viewed very much as a bipartisan issue,  
18 and I think that is important.

19 I think you will get a lot of support for what you want  
20 to be doing on missile defense. We just need to know  
21 exactly what you want to be doing to advance it in the near  
22 term, which I think we need to do more to advance it in the  
23 near term.

24 Secretary Mattis: Senator, we have enjoyed bipartisan  
25 support up here on the Hill. You will notice that the

1 budget for this has increased in the out-years, in the years  
2 ahead. We are optimistic we will get a budget by December.  
3 That will help.

4 But also, the reprogramming approved by the Senate and  
5 the House here allowed us basically \$440 million more in  
6 fiscal year 2017 dollars to reprogram to buy more of the  
7 ground-based interceptors, increase the number of sensors.

8 And the emphasis in the near term is exactly where you  
9 indicated, and you will see it reflected in the budgets that  
10 we submit for your consideration in the future.

11 Senator Sullivan: Great. Thank you, gentleman.  
12 Appreciate it.

13 Senator Reed: On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator  
14 Blumenthal, please.

15 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you very much, Senator Reed.

16 Thank you both for your service. You have been thanked  
17 many, many times by this committee, and you certainly  
18 deserve those thanks and much more.

19 I know you have been asked about Russian activity in  
20 Afghanistan, Mr. Secretary, and you observed that they are  
21 acting against their own self-interest. And I know also  
22 that when you visited Afghanistan last week, you criticized  
23 both Russia and Iran. Could you talk a bit about Iran's  
24 activity in Afghanistan, which seems as malevolent and  
25 potentially pernicious as Russia's?

1           Secretary Mattis:  Sir, Iran has, over many years,  
2 played a very complex role and, at times, one that is hard  
3 to figure out.  They have had their own diplomats killed by  
4 Taliban in the past.  And yet, they have also supported the  
5 Taliban at times with small amounts of money dribbled in, or  
6 weapons, and this sort of thing.

7           The bottom line is, I think Iran thrives where there is  
8 chaos.  And you will see that in Syria.  You will see it in  
9 Lebanon.  You see it with what they have tried to do in the  
10 Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.  You see it in Yemen.

11           And the only consistent theme I can see on Iran is they  
12 seem to go where they can create trouble and destabilize  
13 countries in the region.  It is not in their best interests.  
14 We all can see that.  I think an objective appraisal would  
15 say that that is not in Iran's best interests.  But for some  
16 reason, they insist on doing it.

17           Senator Blumenthal:  Why do you think it is not in  
18 their best interests?

19           Secretary Mattis:  Because if you are looking out for  
20 the best interests of your people, as a nation-state, and if  
21 you are not just acting like a revolutionary cause in order  
22 to stay in power, then you want peace because you are not  
23 going to have the kind of economic advantages for your  
24 people, you are not going to have the kind of diplomatic  
25 engagements with your people that represents their best



1 interests.

2 But I think that to those in power right now, holding  
3 the real power in Tehran, they want to play the role of a  
4 revolutionary power to stay in power.

5 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you for that answer, Mr.  
6 Secretary.

7 I want to shift to Puerto Rico, if I may. I want to  
8 begin by expressing my thanks to the men and women under  
9 your command who are providing essential assistance in  
10 Puerto Rico.

11 There are about 6,400 American military members there  
12 now, including members of the Connecticut National Guard,  
13 whom I saw off just a few days ago. They are deployed in  
14 relief efforts that impose considerable hardship on them and  
15 some risk as well.

16 So I think they are to be thanked. And my hope is that  
17 there will be more of them because more are needed, as well  
18 as logistical support, helicopters, and other kinds of  
19 equipment there.

20 The military, essentially, is the only potential  
21 resource and asset in Puerto Rico that can provide the  
22 transportation and restoration of power and so forth.

23 I met yesterday with members of the Department of  
24 Defense, along with FEMA, at the FEMA Headquarters. A  
25 number of my colleagues and I went there at the invitation

1 of the administrator of FEMA.

2 And what impressed me is the, very bluntly, need for  
3 additional troops and resources there from the Department of  
4 Defense in order to fill the gap, and the disconnect between  
5 the supplies that are in the ports and the airports and the  
6 people in the cities and interior that need those food,  
7 medicine, water, and other essential supplies.

8 So I think there is any opportunity and an obligation  
9 for greater Department of Defense involvement.

10 General Dunford, you may recall when I asked you about  
11 this topic, you said, I am quoting, "If there is more that  
12 needs to be done, I can assure you that Secretary Mattis has  
13 placed Puerto Rico as a priority for all of us. And General  
14 Robinson is in constant contact with FEMA, as well as with  
15 officials in Puerto Rico, to make sure the department is  
16 leaning forward and providing all the support they need,"  
17 end quote.

18 I hope that commitment is continuing, and I hope that  
19 the Department of Defense will have a plan going forward,  
20 because as of yesterday when I met with FEMA officials, they  
21 could not assure me that there is a plan for the Department  
22 of Defense involvement and for longer term recovery on the  
23 island.

24 So I thank you for the contribution that has been made  
25 so far, and I hope that there will be a plan and a

1 commitment of resources going forward.

2 Secretary Mattis: Senator, I assure you this is all-  
3 hands-on-deck. There is no delay. When a request comes in,  
4 it is approved the moment it hits the Pentagon.

5 We have over 10,000 troops there. We had two ships  
6 pre-positioned. There are now six ships there. Comfort  
7 will arrive today or tomorrow.

8 And we had to reopen the airports themselves, which is  
9 part of the restraint on how many aircraft we could get in.  
10 There was a logistics effort simply to open the door for  
11 them to get in. So you bring in a few people, get things  
12 opened up and keep expanding.

13 But there is no lack of resources, sir. We are ready  
14 to go, even to the point that it is going to impact the  
15 deployments, perhaps, of some of these troops overseas next  
16 year, because we have interrupted their preparation.

17 That is okay. When it is helping fellow Americans,  
18 especially, although we also help some of the other small  
19 countries that were hard hit, but when it comes to helping  
20 Americans, it is all-hands-on-deck, and we do not have a  
21 problem from volunteers from the various National Guards and  
22 certainly every unit, every ship is learning forward for a  
23 mission like this.

24 Senator Blumenthal: I have no question, sir, about  
25 your commitment and General Dunford's. What concerns me is

1 that waiting for requests from the local leadership without  
2 a larger plan from the Department of Defense may create gaps  
3 or disconnects.

4 And I hope that the President, when he is visiting  
5 today, will ask for a plan, as a result of this trip. And I  
6 know that you have a commitment to develop one.

7 Secretary Mattis: We are in support of FEMA, sir, and  
8 that is why we pre-positioned ships and troops, so, even  
9 before they asked for it, they were ready. It was not a  
10 matter of calling up some people. We have continued calling  
11 up some, but we had people ready to go as fast as they were  
12 asked for.

13 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you.

14 General Dunford: Senator, one change that has taken  
15 place since we spoke last week is Lieutenant General  
16 Buchanan, who is the component commander for the Army forces  
17 in Northern Command, arrived on the ground with a very  
18 capable staff.

19 And when we spoke last, the Secretary alluded to it, it  
20 was about opening the ports and opening the airfields. The  
21 focus now is on distribution. That is what you spoke about.  
22 It is the large stockpiles of supplies and so forth that are  
23 getting to the country, but not necessarily out to where the  
24 people are.

25 And I can assure that today, General Robinson's

1 command, but more particularly, General Buchanan, who is on  
2 the ground in Puerto Rico, they do have a plan to support  
3 the distribution of those supplies, and that is their focus.

4 And then when the Secretary spoke about the Comfort  
5 arriving, that will be over 200 more hospital beds that will  
6 be available to the people of Puerto Rico tomorrow.

7 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you very much.

8 Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

9 Senator Reed: On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator  
10 Heinrich, please.

11 Senator Heinrich: I want to start by just thanking  
12 both of you for your attention on Puerto Rico and the U.S.  
13 Virgin Islands. It was clear early on with the radars down,  
14 in particular, at all those air fields, there were certain  
15 things DOD does particularly well and needed to do in order  
16 to get those bottlenecks out of the way. So we very much  
17 appreciate that focus.

18 I want to go back to Iran and the line of questioning  
19 that Senator King had, and start with just asking, if Iran  
20 maintains its compliance with the JCPOA, but Congress votes  
21 to reimpose sanctions anyway, would we, as the U.S., be in  
22 violation of our obligations under the JCPOA under that  
23 scenario?

24 Secretary Mattis: Senator, I do not know. I would  
25 have to look at what the conditions specifically would call

1 for under the JCPOA and what, in particular, we would not be  
2 willing to do.

3 Congress has a role to play in this. We see it as  
4 distinct but integral. In other words, we look at this  
5 problem set as having two distinct aspects, the JCPOA itself  
6 and the congressional action. And I would have to compare  
7 the details on that, Senator.

8 Senator Heinrich: One of the reasons why I ask is  
9 because the scenario I am worried about is if we  
10 unilaterally withdraw from the JCPOA, I am concerned about a  
11 scenario where Iran gets to keep its sanctions relief, but  
12 where we lose key enforcement and intelligence advantages.

13 Is there a scenario where those things come to pass  
14 that could possibly be in our national security interest?  
15 Because if we are not careful, we could end up with the  
16 worst of both worlds, right?

17 Secretary Mattis: Well, if it is mishandled, yes,  
18 Senator, that could happen.

19 As you know, it is still under consideration in the  
20 executive branch and a decision has not been made.

21 Senator Heinrich: I would just urge you to consider  
22 that, because if we end up in a situation where we are not  
23 able to reinstate the sanctions that were multilateral, but  
24 we also lose our ability to effectively enforce the nuclear  
25 agreement, we have sort of lost on both sides of the ledger.

1 That would be a very unfortunate for our national security.

2 I want to go back to Afghanistan for a moment. I think  
3 it is clear that a very concise, clear strategy is  
4 essential, both for a positive end-state in Afghanistan, but  
5 also absolutely key for our troop morale. And I think it  
6 has been challenging, with a conflict that is gone on for 16  
7 years, and a positive end-state in many ways still over the  
8 horizon, to maintain troop morale.

9 How do you describe troop morale in Afghanistan, at the  
10 moment?

11 Secretary Mattis: Senator, I was just there a couple  
12 days ago, and I got on board the aircraft after our last  
13 stop with Secretary General Stoltenberg. And here is an  
14 outside observer looking at probably a dozen different  
15 Nations' forces, our own being dominant, of course, of the  
16 groups that he saw. And he said, I am amazed at how high  
17 the morale is, that they have such a strong sense of  
18 purpose.

19 And I think it humbles all of us to think, after 16  
20 years -- I personally landed in Afghanistan in November  
21 2001.

22 Senator Heinrich: I remember.

23 Secretary Mattis: And after 16 years, it reminds us we  
24 have a national treasure in the U.S. military, that these  
25 young patriots, young people -- anyone who thinks we have a

1 problem with the younger generation hasn't seen these lads  
2 and lasses in action. They are phenomenal. They look past  
3 the hot, political rhetoric, and say, "Give me the job.  
4 Give me the authority. And let me go at it. Give me what I  
5 need."

6 And there is a commitment out there that humbles me to  
7 this day.

8 Senator Heinrich: I couldn't agree more with your  
9 sentiment, with regard to the quality of people serving in  
10 our military today, and that certainly has been my  
11 experience, both here and overseas in places like  
12 Afghanistan and, unfortunately, a number of other places, as  
13 well.

14 I want to ask, what is the current price tag for  
15 security in Afghanistan? Are we still, roughly, spending  
16 about \$5 billion a year, General Dunford?

17 General Dunford: Senator, we are spending about \$12.5  
18 billion, and \$1.1 is the cost of the uplift that we have  
19 just proposed.

20 Senator Heinrich: I think it was General Nicholson who  
21 testified at one point that roughly 10 percent of our total  
22 allocations for security were picked up by the Afghan  
23 Government. Should we expect to be paying that in  
24 perpetuity? Is there any end in sight? What is the limit  
25 of our involvement?



1           General Dunford:  Senator, where that figure comes  
2 from, there is about -- \$5 billion a year is what it takes  
3 to sustain the Afghan forces, and the international  
4 community coalition has paid about -- \$5 billion for the  
5 Afghan forces, specifically.  The \$12 billion was the cost  
6 of the entire operation --

7           Senator Heinrich:  The entire operation.

8           General Dunford:  -- that I spoke about earlier.  The  
9 Afghan forces, specifically, is \$5 billion.

10           But \$1 billion is paid by our international partners,  
11 members of NATO and so forth.  And \$500 million is paid for  
12 by the Afghan Government.

13           We would expect that that figure will increase over  
14 time, and the Afghans will become more self-sufficient.

15           Right now, the Afghans have commitments from the  
16 international community and the United States, as a result  
17 of a NATO summit, until 2020.  So after that, there is going  
18 to have to be a plan for sustaining the Afghan Security  
19 Forces.

20           Senator Heinrich:  Thank you both.

21           Senator Reed:  On behalf of the chairman, Senator  
22 Nelson?

23           Senator Nelson:  Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24           And thank you, gentleman.  And I certainly want to  
25 echo, it took the United States military getting into Puerto

1 Rico, and you all are doing the job.

2 If you could, for me, just clarify the numbers? We  
3 called the Pentagon last night. They said 1,100 in Puerto  
4 Rico. We called the National Guard last night. They said  
5 3,300. And you have just said 10,000.

6 So some clarification on the numbers would be most  
7 appreciated.

8 But the fact is that you are doing the job. And it is  
9 too bad that it took until late last week to get General  
10 Buchanan in place, because once he got in place, things  
11 started to improve. So thank you very much for that.

12 So just at your convenience, General Dunford, give us  
13 some clarity on the numbers. If you have them now, fine,  
14 otherwise --

15 General Dunford: Senator, we do. Secretary Mattis,  
16 and I both have the numbers. We do have over 10,000 on the  
17 ground right now. That is about just short of 4,000 in the  
18 Active component and almost 7,000 members of the National  
19 Guard.

20 And that includes almost all the troops that are  
21 currently supporting both operations in the Virgin Islands  
22 and Puerto Rico. As you know, because of the multiple  
23 storms happening in sequence, we do not have forces  
24 specifically assigned, but they are providing support  
25 throughout the area.

1           Senator Nelson: Okay. That is clearly the step in the  
2 right direction. I give you all the accolades that you are  
3 due, because that is what it took to get the distribution  
4 out into the interior of the island.

5           Since the purpose of this hearing is Afghanistan, I  
6 wanted to ask you, Pakistan is sometimes friendly and  
7 sometimes it is not, when it comes to Afghanistan. And the  
8 President has said he is going to put significant new  
9 pressure on Pakistan.

10          Can you explain that to the committee, what he meant?

11          Secretary Mattis: I can, Senator Nelson. The pressure  
12 will be -- let's put it in optimistic terms -- so that they  
13 can see where their interests converge with the  
14 international community at stopping terrorism.

15          And again, they have lost probably more troops than any  
16 other single country in the fight against terrorism. At the  
17 same time, we seen havens left to the terrorists' own  
18 devices. We have seen the Government of Pakistan come down  
19 on terrorism while ISI appears to run its own foreign  
20 policy.

21          So what we are going to do is, working with the  
22 international community and the South Asia neighboring  
23 nations, plus China, Russia, looking for common ground with  
24 all of these nations, and the 39 troop-contributing nations  
25 that include NATO, plus NATO's partners, we are going to

1 work to have a very firm list of what has got to change.

2 And then using diplomatic and economic means, having  
3 venues where we share the way ahead with each other, we are  
4 going to try to get this to a productive outcome.

5 Right now, based on a very recent visit by the Army  
6 chief of staff from Pakistan, there is actually optimism in  
7 Kabul that his visit presages a new chapter.

8 I am in the "we'll see" mode. But we intend to bring  
9 all the effort we can, in a whole-of-government,  
10 international-framed way, to Islamabad and show them how to  
11 get out of the situation they are currently in.

12 Senator Nelson: Thank you.

13 Senator Reed: On behalf of the chairman, Senator  
14 Warren, please.

15 Senator Warren: Thank you, Ranking Member Reed.

16 And thank you, Secretary Mattis and General Dunford,  
17 for your work and for being here.

18 In August, the President released his new Afghan  
19 strategy, and a key part of it seems to be the idea that the  
20 U.S. will use all of its tools, military, economic and  
21 diplomatic, to get the Taliban to the negotiating table.

22 In fact, the Pentagon's release says, and I want to  
23 quote it, "We will bolster the fighting strength of  
24 government forces to convince the Taliban they cannot win on  
25 the battlefield. This will set conditions for the ultimate

1 goal of our strategy: a peace settlement between the  
2 Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban that protects our  
3 interests."

4 Now, for some of us, this strategy seems like deja vu  
5 all over again. So I just have a straightforward question  
6 on this.

7 Secretary Mattis, can you explain to me how you will  
8 "convince the Taliban they cannot win on the battlefield,"  
9 when 16 years of evidence suggests otherwise?

10 Secretary Mattis: Well, the point we are making is,  
11 ma'am, that the change to a conditions-based means we set  
12 the conditions, we bolster -- they used the word that you  
13 just quoted there -- we bolster the Afghan fighting forces'  
14 capability so that the Taliban find they cannot kill their  
15 way to power, is the bottom line.

16 It is going to be a fight. We have already seen  
17 difficulties in the Taliban's campaign. For example, they  
18 are still trying to take down provincial and district  
19 centers. They have been unable to do so. For the first  
20 time in 16 years, six Afghan Army corps are on the  
21 offensive. We have never had all six of them work at the  
22 same time.

23 So you see that is the way we drive the enemy to the  
24 understanding they cannot wait us out. Before, they could  
25 wait us out. They always knew what the timeline was for

1 withdrawal. They kept sensing we were leaving.

2 Senator Warren: We have had multiple strategies where  
3 people come in and tell us, "We are using a different  
4 military strategy. We are using a different military  
5 strategy. And this time, it is going to work." I do not  
6 think I could count how many times that has happened in 16  
7 years.

8 But the part you are focused on now is that part right  
9 at the end that says they cannot wait us out. And that is  
10 what bothers me, because what it seems to be saying is that  
11 the Trump administration's plan to force the Taliban to the  
12 negotiating table is to say we are willing to continue to  
13 fight the Afghan war forever.

14 And that just can't be right. It can't.

15 Secretary Mattis: Well, we are not fighting the Afghan  
16 war, ma'am. Again, we are not going to supplant or  
17 substitute our troops for the 320,000 Afghan troops, whose,  
18 fortunately, their casualties are going down now, while the  
19 Taliban's are going up. We are going to assist them in  
20 fighting this war.

21 And we are not going to put a timeline on it, that the  
22 Taliban then gets hope that we can wait them out.

23 Senator Warren: But with respect, Mr. Secretary, you  
24 are talking about having our troops in Afghanistan, in  
25 harm's way, forever. And that can't be right. You are

1 saying that is the key to this.

2 Secretary Mattis: But the point is not forever,  
3 because we are saying you can't wait us out now.

4 Now the way you win this, it is a matter of will. It  
5 is not -- certainly, we may have advisers there 10 years  
6 from now, but the Taliban will not be the enemy they are.

7 Pulling out, I am convinced, would imperil the people  
8 of Massachusetts and California.

9 Senator Warren: I understand that that is your  
10 position on this. But I am very concerned that the central  
11 change seems to be, "We will wait them out," which is an  
12 open-ended commitment that sounds a lot like the word  
13 forever to me.

14 Let me ask you about one other thing from that  
15 statement. The statement says that we are going to have a  
16 negotiated settlement that "protects our interests."

17 Can you just say a word, Mr. Secretary, about what that  
18 means?

19 Secretary Mattis: That means that transnational  
20 attacks on the United States would not occur. That is in  
21 our interests, we don't not be attacked, as we saw coming  
22 out of that area on 9/11.

23 And furthermore, the way you do that is helping the  
24 Afghan people to have Security Forces that defends them, so  
25 they do not have these kinds of attacks germinating in their

1 mountains coming against New York City.

2 Senator Warren: And we are going to do this through  
3 negotiations.

4 Secretary Mattis, we have now been in Afghanistan for  
5 16 years. Two thousand three hundred and eighty-six brave  
6 Americans have died. More than 20,000 have been wounded.  
7 More than 100,000 Afghans have been killed. We have spent  
8 nearly a trillion dollars.

9 And after all of that, the Afghan forces still lack the  
10 ability to stand on their own. The government controls less  
11 than 60 percent of their territory. They control only a  
12 third of their population.

13 The U.N. reported that opium production in Afghanistan  
14 rose 43 percent last year alone. Endemic corruption  
15 continues with no signs of diminishing. Fewer than half of  
16 Afghans support the Afghan Unity Government.

17 I understand the need to prevent Afghanistan from once  
18 again becoming a safe haven for terrorist groups. And I  
19 very much appreciate the work you are doing and your coming  
20 here today, Mr. Secretary.

21 But as best I can tell, this new strategy is just more  
22 of the same, except we have removed the timetables because  
23 we have little hope of success within any identified time  
24 period.

25 Secretary Mattis: Senator, we have removed the



1 timetable that gave hope to the Taliban. At the same time,  
2 we are going to give support and advice and assistance at a  
3 level in the Afghan military that, for all the casualties  
4 they took, they were not as effective as they could have  
5 been.

6 So by making them more effective, the Afghan military  
7 will worsen the situation the Taliban face, and we will be  
8 ready to talk at any point. But it is the same conditions  
9 that Secretary Clinton established for the Taliban: stop  
10 killing people, stop supporting international terrorists,  
11 and live by the Constitution.

12 That is a pretty low bar that we are driving toward.  
13 It will be an Afghan-led reconciliation, is where we are  
14 going.

15 Senator Warren: And I just say with respect, yes, it  
16 is a very low bar that we are driving toward. And we are  
17 losing.

18 Secretary Mattis: I would disagree with the last  
19 point, ma'am.

20 Senator Warren: Well, all I know is to look at the  
21 numbers. And the drug trade is up. Corruption is up.  
22 There is no support for the government. And more and more  
23 people keep dying.

24 And we keep hearing our generals come in here and tell  
25 us over and over, "Just give us one more military plan, and

1 it is going to work." It is just hard to buy that.

2 And it is hard to buy it on behalf of the people who  
3 put their lives at-risk.

4 Secretary Mattis: Sure.

5 Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

6 Senator Reed: Thank you, Senator Warren.

7 Gentleman, thank you for your testimony and for your  
8 service. And on behalf of Chairman McCain, I will adjourn  
9 the hearing. Thank you.

10 [Whereupon, at 12:34 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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