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Before the

Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY
IN THE UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND
AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

Tuesday, July 9, 2019

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8 U.S. Senate
9 Subcommittee on Emerging
10 Threats and
11 Committee on Armed
12 Washington, D.C.

13

14 The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:00
15 in Room SR-222, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon.
16 Ernst, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

17 Subcommittee Members Present: Senators Ernst,
18 Hawley, Peters, Shaheen, and Hirono.

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1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JONI ERNST, U.S.
2 FROM IOWA

3 Senator Ernst: Welcome, everybody.

4 The Emerging Threats and Capabilities
5 meets today to receive testimony from Admiral Craig
6 Commander of U.S. Southern Command or, as we call it,
7 SOUTHCOM.

8 Our focus will be on the evolving security
9 this theater, as well as SOUTHCOM's efforts to
10 National Defense Strategy.

11 Welcome to the Admiral. Thank you very much for
12 here, sir. I certainly appreciate it.

13 Today's hearing is a continuation of the
14 efforts to provide oversight over National Defense
15 implementation. This is an important component of our
16 efforts to ensure our military is appropriately
17 equipped, and postured to defend the nation against a
18 growing array of threats.

19 While much attention has been on countering China
20 Russia in their traditional spheres of influence in
21 and across the Indo-Pacific region, the subcommittee
22 been particularly focused on how those nations are
23 increasingly challenging U.S. national security
24 not just within their own geographic boundaries but
25 elsewhere around the world.

1 Last year, the subcommittee held a hearing with
2 experts to discuss China's expanding presence in
3 the implications for our interests and those of our
4 partners. It was made clear during the hearing that
5 is undertaking a comprehensive and long-term approach
6 bolstering its global access and influence, oftentimes
7 the goal of undermining the United States of America.

8 The situation in the western hemisphere is no
9 different. Admiral Faller, you highlighted in
10 earlier this year that China has accelerated expansion
11 its Belt and Road Initiative in the western hemisphere
12 pace that may one day overshadow its expansion in
13 Asia and Africa.

14 China's strategic engagement in the SOUTHCOM
15 bolsters China's geopolitical network at the expense
16 security interests and regional stability. China's
17 to back oppressive governments such as the Maduro
18 Venezuela and to pump loans into local economies at
19 unpayable interest rates reveal China's interest in
20 spreading influence and consolidating power.

21 As a result, Latin America has become a fixture
22 China's ambitions, utilizing economic coercion to grow
23 support for Chinese foreign policy objectives
24 isolation of Taiwan and the exclusion of the U.S. and
25 from regional discourse. Trade and economic ties

1 the United States and Latin America are changing with
2 recently surpassing the United States as the main
3 destination for exports from several Latin American
4 countries.

5 China is also deepening military and
6 in the region. For example, we have seen deepened
7 related cooperation in Brazil, Venezuela, and
8 China has increased arms sales in a manner that
9 U.S. and EU restrictions and hinders our ability to
10 integrate with our strategic partners.

11 Meanwhile, Russia is also working to expand its
12 influence in region. The Putin regime seeks to erode
13 influence in the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility and
14 doubled down on its efforts to prop up corrupt
15 regimes in Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua through
16 and military assistance. For many years, Putin has
17 Latin America as the natural link in the chain making
18 multi-polar world, and recent port visits by Russian
19 vessels and the deployment of a long-range bomber to
20 region highlight Russia's efforts to strengthen its
21 reach in the new age of great power competition. In
22 just a couple weeks ago, the Admiral Gorshkov, one of
23 Russia's most advanced warships, was docked in Havana
24 Harbor.

25 Finally, drivers of migration, including

1 corruption, and poverty, place a significant strain on
2 regional governments and can engender regional
3 impacting not only the southern border of the United
4 but providing additional flashpoints for China and
5 exploit at the expense of American soft power.

6 All of this demonstrates clearly that the western
7 hemisphere should be viewed as an important front in
8 efforts to compete with China and Russia and implement
9 NDS.

10 I look forward to your input and your candid
11 of the evolving security dynamics in this region,
12 how the NDS information is important, and how you will
13 allocate SOUTHCOM's limited resources, as well as
14 any challenges that may impair your ability to
15 your mission.

16 And thank you again, Admiral, for joining us
17 I look forward to discussion.

18 I will now turn it over to Senator Peters, our
19 member, for your opening statement.

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. GARY C. PETERS, U.S. SENATOR
2 MICHIGAN

3 Senator Peters: Well, thank you, Madam Chair,
4 thank you for holding this hearing at a very critical
5 Events in Latin America are often overshadowed by
6 crisis in the Middle East and Asia, but stability in
7 SOUTHCOR AOR is clearly critical to our national

8 I want to thank our witness, Admiral Faller, for
9 service and for appearing here today to testify on the
10 implementation of the National Defense Strategy in the
11 Southern Command area of responsibility.

12 It is clear that Russia and China have
13 increased their presence and their influence in the
14 AOR. Chinese investment has reached unprecedented
15 and Beijing has invested billions of dollars in Latin
16 America as part of its Belt and Road Initiative.
17 often engages in predatory lending practices that
18 debt traps for small countries and allow Beijing to
19 outsized influence in these countries. The projects
20 often economically unsustainable, and many countries
21 throughout the world have found themselves billions of
22 dollars in debt with no way to repay Beijing.

23 Russia's economic influence in Latin America is
24 smaller than China's, but its intentions are much more
25 pernicious. Russia's propaganda machine has been

1 Latin America with efforts to raise doubts about the
2 democratic process and to sow discord in the region.
3 Russia's state-controlled Spanish language television
4 station spreads misinformation throughout the region
5 seeks to undermine U.S. influence in the region.

6 Russia has also used cyber attacks to attack
7 institutions. The Center for Strategic and
8 Studies reported, for example, that there have been
9 cyber attacks against Colombia's national voter
10 during the 2018 legislative elections.

11 We have also seen Russia covertly deploy Kremlin-
12 paramilitary groups to Latin America, repeating the
13 of using these forces to advance their strategic
14 abroad without having to admit that they have deployed
15 military personnel to a specific country.

16 Russia's intervention in Venezuela has propped up
17 disastrous Maduro regime and helped deny the
18 the power of interim President Guaido. This fits a
19 of an increasingly aggressive Russia seeking to use
20 the tools in its playbook to undermine the appeal of
21 democratic process and keep Russian aligned regimes in
22 power.

23 And while Russian and Chinese influence in Latin
24 America is destabilizing to the region, I think it is
25 important to spend a few minutes on the most pressing

1 to democracy in the western hemisphere, and that is
2 corruption. Corruption is the root cause of mass
3 instability, and impunity in Central America and the
4 trafficking of illicit narcotics into our country.
5 our strategy focuses on solving the root causes of
6 corruption, then no amount of security assistance
7 Latin American partners will be effective.

8 That is why I am quite concerned that the Trump
9 administration has recently decided to cut off all
10 defense USAID and State assistance to Guatemala,
11 and El Salvador, while allowing defense assistance to
12 countries to continue. President Trump's stated
13 to punish these countries for the migrant crisis is
14 considered and totally counterproductive to reducing
15 migration numbers. Ultimately it undermines our
16 security in the region. Unless we support civil
17 in these countries and help improve the economic
18 we will never get a handle on the illicit drugs that
19 through these Northern Triangle countries and into the
20 United States.

21 One final note I think is critical for us to
22 that corruption in Central and South America not only
23 destabilizes the region, but it also provides China
24 Russia with a foothold into these countries as well.
25 Corrupt governments are more likely to take loans from

1 that allow them to skim millions off the top and leave
2 treasuries empty. Russia is able to sell arms to
3 governments that oppress their civilian populations
4 violate their human rights. The more we focus on
5 corruption, the more successful we will be in
6 the National Defense Strategy in the region.

7 And I thank the chair again for holding this
8 and I look forward to the discussion.

9 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Ranking Member Peters.
10 Thank you for those opening comments.

11 Admiral Faller, we will go ahead and start with
12 opening statement, and then we will move into
13 Thank you.

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1 STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL CRAIG S. FALLER, USN,
2 UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND

3 Admiral Faller: Chairman Ernst, Ranking Member
4 Senators, thank you for the opportunity to testify
5 you today and for the steadfast support you provide
6 and women of the United States Southern Command day in
7 day out.

8 I would like to introduce my command's senior
9 Sergeant Major Brian Zickefoose, my eyes and ears, who
10 here with me today. He is also unabashedly from the
11 State of Iowa.

12 As I mentioned in my written statement, I have
13 command of SOUTHCOM for 7 months. In that time, I
14 traveled extensively throughout Central America, South
15 America, and the Caribbean to get a firsthand view of
16 opportunities and challenges that you both
17 These opportunities and challenges directly impact the
18 security of this hemisphere, our neighborhood.
19 organizations, narcotrafficking, illegal immigration,
20 violent extremists, corruption, all enabled by weak
21 governance are principal among those challenges.

22 The most disturbing insight, the aha for me,
23 has been the degree to which the external state
24 China, Russia, and Iran have expanded their access and
25 influence right here in our neighborhood or, as

1 Neller put it, inside our interior lines.

2 The National Defense Strategy makes clear great
3 competition has reemerged as the number one security
4 challenge facing our nation. China, Russia, and
5 to shape a world consistent with their authoritarian
6 They are blurring the lines of what constitutes a
7 threat through economic coercion, the systematic
8 technology, influence campaigns, and malicious cyber
9 activity. They are contesting our military advantage
10 the traditional domains we fight around the globe:
11 air, sea, space, cyber, and information, plus one more
12 important domain, values like democracy, sovereignty,
13 rule of law and human rights. Competition is
14 globally and right here in our neighborhood, the
15 hemisphere.

16 We see this most acutely in Venezuela where the
17 security crisis created by Maduro has compounded every
18 single security crisis we face in this hemisphere,
19 Russia in their own words is protecting their loyal
20 to quote, by propping up the corrupt, illegitimate
21 regime with loans and technical and military support,
22 China, as Venezuela's largest single state creditor,
23 the Venezuelan people with more than \$60 billion in
24 is exporting surveillance technology used to monitor
25 repress the Venezuelan people. Iran has restarted

1 flights from Tehran to Caracas and reinvigorated
2 ties. Along with Cuba, these actors engage in
3 that are profoundly unhelpful for democracy and
4 stability and counter to U.S. interests.

5 How do we counter the threats and seize the
6 opportunities in this hemisphere? How do we counter
7 threats posed by external state actors in Venezuela
8 across the region?

9 The best way to out-compete is by focusing our
10 strengths, the strong, enduring ties we have with our
11 neighbors, and from a defense perspective, these
12 to-mil relations are grounded in shared
13 work with each other from a foundation of mutual
14 human rights, and shared interests in regional
15 and interoperability. We reinforce and build on this
16 through training, education, intelligence, and
17 sharing and exercises. Security cooperation is our
18 tool to continue building these strong partnerships
19 the challenges of our hemisphere into opportunities.
20 Working together, training, and exercising shoulder to
21 shoulder with American military professionals is our
22 competitive edge, and no one can match our system.

23 We also need the right, focused, and consistent
24 military presence day in and day out to go along with
25 training and education. We cannot achieve positive

1 and influence outcomes without being on the playing
2 I will point to two examples of the positive impact of
3 presence, this happening as I speak.

4 Our strategic bomber force and F-16 fighter
5 from the South Carolina Air National Guard are
6 the very capable Colombian Air Force. This mission
7 place in conjunction with the 100th anniversary of
8 Colombia's air force and builds interoperability and
9 readiness for the United States and for our very
10 Colombian partners while also demonstrating our shared
11 resolve in the face of regional and global challenges.

12 Nearby, the United States naval ship Comfort is
13 Lima, Peru to help our neighbors impacted by the
14 crisis in Venezuela. Comfort shows the very best of
15 United States of America and the strong partnerships
16 in the world. It is part of our enduring promise to
17 neighbors in this hemisphere to be a steadfast,
18 and trusted partner.

19 We appreciate the continued support of Congress,
20 committee in helping us fulfill that promise. The
21 team, our military and civilian members and our
22 appreciate the support of Congress and we will
23 honor the trust you placed in us and our fellow
24 have placed in us.

25 I look forward to your questions. Thank you very

1 [The prepared statement of Admiral Faller

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1 Senator Ernst: Thank you very much, Admiral.

2 What we will do, I will go ahead and start with
3 couple questions, and we will go back and forth in
4 arrival. With that, we will go ahead and get started.
5 free to take as much time as necessary, Admiral, to
6 the challenges and opportunities that you have in

7 So just to start, sir, the National Defense
8 clearly identifies great power competition between the
9 United States and, of course, China and Russia as the
10 pressing threat to national security. Given their
11 presence in your AO, the NDS has particular relevance
12 your area of responsibility. So if you could, explain
13 is the role of the U.S. military as we are competing
14 China and Russia in the western hemisphere. What more
15 we be doing?

16 Admiral Faller: Our focus is to build strong
17 partnerships with very capable -- 27 of 31 nations are
18 democracies. So we focus on partnerships. And that
19 best way to out-compete China. Our partners want to
20 with us. They want the advantage of United States
21 education, training, and exercises and military
22 It is the best in the world. And so it is up to us to
23 deliver that in a way that is relevant and also
24 return on investment for American taxpayers. So that
25 focus.

1 Colombia and Brazil are two very good examples
2 spend a lot of time. We have traveled to Colombia on
3 multiple occasions. We have been to Brazil. Their
4 of defense have been to see us. It begins with
5 sharing and education, frankly, at a person-to-person
6 and a mil-to-mil level. We enhance each other's
7 awareness, strengthen our understanding of the
8 and challenges, and work on education both in their
9 and in ours. And I have had the opportunity to go
10 speak at their institutions. And so that is the

11 That counters Russia and China best because
12 they cannot compete with our system. They are trying.
13 are in the area. Everywhere I go, the chiefs of
14 the Chinese have come. They have offered us free
15 unlimited travel, an opportunity to go to their
16 They have taken and replicated our model. They have
17 up Spanish language training in Beijing. And the
18 get from our capable partners is we do not want to
19 with them. We want to continue.

20 So the best way is to be consistent to offer the
21 of service and demand that the partners can meet. We
22 operate at their speed and then also ensure that there
23 something that we give back. And when you meet a new
24 of defense, for example, the new chief of defense in
25 Salvador and the new minister of defense in El

1 both graduates of U.S. service schools -- in fact, the
2 of defense I think has been to five U.S. schools, and
3 minister of defense graduated the Naval War College in
4 Newport. They are committed to working with us, not
5 others, and that is the way we move forward in a real
6 meaningful way, Senator.

7 Senator Ernst: Thank you very much.

8 And just to go a little bit further with that, I
9 firmly believe in those mil-to-mil opportunities,
10 through training, exercises, or through educational
11 opportunities.

12 Now, we have spoken -- maybe you can expand a
13 bit on the lack of opportunity maybe that we have been
14 to extend to other military members in attending our
15 military schools. If you could talk a little bit
16 some of those challenges are, whether it is funding or
17 otherwise, it would be good to hear about that.

18 Admiral Faller: The opportunity to expand our
19 offerings of education in our military schools and
20 in our schools -- and there is a difference, but both
21 after technical schools and the some of the
22 military -- is the single best investment we can make
23 term to our partnerships. Graduates of our school
24 go back with an understanding of U.S. doctrine, U.S.
25 tactics, techniques, and really become lifelong

1 The chief of defense in Argentina, for example, is an
2 grad of the Army War College and very proud of it and
3 just admitted into the Army War College Hall of Fame.
4 that fact is known by the political leadership in
5 and it is valued. And I find him to be one of my best
6 generals. He has also been one of my best strategic
7 partners.

8 Our levels of funding that have been provided --
9 the principal source of funding for education comes
10 International Military Education Training, IMET,
11 It is State Department-funded that has basically been
12 lined as long back as I can do the math. So then your
13 dollars, in current year dollars, of flat accounts,
14 us less school seats over time because the schools
15 than what we are able to contribute within the rules.

16 So I have advocated and former defense
17 as well that we would be well served to look at an
18 in this. The overall account of the entire Department
19 Defense is somewhere just north of \$100 million, and
20 SOUTHCOM, it is about \$11 million. And I think I
21 absorb \$18 million, a modest increase. And when you
22 the kinds of monies we are spending in other areas,
23 a low amount of money for a high dividend, high
24 I would advocate that is an area we could expand.

25 I am glad we are not like these others. And I

1 not dignify by naming the names of the countries that
2 in and offer no-strings-attached training. I am glad
3 have vetting and emphasize human rights. It is the
4 thing to do. It should be a high bar to go to our
5 We should get a return on investment from it. So I
6 do the right things with the way we screen and invest
7 look at the long-term return on investment for both
8 forces. That is an area I think we would do well to
9 Senator.

10 Senator Ernst: Very good. Dollars well spent.
11 you very much, Admiral.

12 Ranking Member Peters?

13 Senator Peters: Thank you, Madam Chair.

14 And again, Admiral Faller, thank you for being
15 Admiral, we appreciate it.

16 I think it is clear from the discussion that we
17 earlier in my office, as well as in your testimony
18 provided here at the opening, is that you agree that
19 corruption, lack of economic opportunity, violence,
20 really the failure of democratic governance in the
21 Triangle is a significant cause for some of the mass
22 migration that we are seeing out of these countries,
23 as the drug trade through these countries. Is that an
24 accurate statement?

25 Admiral Faller: Senator, the connection between

1 governance, corruption, transnational criminal
2 organizations, and then even the opportunity for China
3 Russia, as you articulated, is significant, and I
4 that the number one security threat that we face here
5 this hemisphere because that same corruption breeds
6 activity, could breed terror activity, and certainly
7 the kind of dirty deals that other external state
8 come in and thrive on.

9 Senator Peters: So in order to deal with that
10 breakdown of the governance, it would probably make
11 have a whole-of-government approach in dealing with
12 that means not just the military operations that you
13 engaged in but also NGO activities that are working on
14 society instructors. I know you have had experience
15 with some of the NGOs, particularly in the Northern
16 Triangle. Are they helpful? Do you think that is
17 the approach that we need to take in order to
18 those countries?

19 Admiral Faller: Strong institutions and the
20 defense institutions in these countries contribute to
21 whole-of-government solution, and that is where we
22 We have a program called defense institution building
23 gets after that through our Perry Center here in
24 D.C. And so as that plays into a whole-of-government
25 strategy across what we call the DIME, diplomacy,

1 information, military, and economics, that is the best
2 solution long-term. And when we play into that with
3 private sector and NGOs, that is the best way to get
4 most lasting, resilient, long-term results, Senator.

5 Senator Peters: So you are saying programs like
6 State Department programs, in those countries are
7 important for us in our work to stabilize those areas
8 hopefully prevent migration and some of the drug
9 that comes out of those countries?

10 Admiral Faller: The integration of all elements
11 power is key. I have a civilian deputy who is a full
12 ambassador from the State Department. She has former
13 experience, Ambassador Ayalde, and we have a senior
14 executive from USAID that sits to my immediate left at
15 meeting as one of my most senior reps so we can figure
16 how to best integrate it.

17 Senator Peters: So the Trump administration
18 cut off all non-defense aid to the countries in the
19 Triangle, as I know you are aware of, Guatemala,
20 and El Salvador. Did the administration consult you
21 whether or not that would make sense?

22 Admiral Faller: The pressure that is being
23 these governments I would offer is good. And the
24 to cut off is a policy decision, and I am not normally
25 of policy decisions, Senator. But I advocated and

1 articulated to the defense leadership the important
2 contributions that professional militaries from
3 Guatemala, and El Salvador have made, particularly in
4 counternarcotics fight where their special forces are
5 getting after it in a way that is paying dividends for
6 security. And that is why we were able to continue
7 to-mil engagement, Senator.

8 Senator Peters: Admiral, the Leahy Law bars
9 to security forces who have committed gross human
10 violations, as you are aware. Would it make sense to
11 corruption to the list that would cut off security
12 assistance, particularly of corruption that enables
13 human trafficking?

14 Admiral Faller: Senator, I do not know that I
15 have thought through enough how corruption might play
16 Leahy Law. I think the Leahy Law is extremely
17 It is demanding, rightly so, and it produces units
18 can trust and that we can look at and know are doing
19 right thing with respect to human rights.

20 Senator Peters: Admiral Faller, in the
21 Times" interview from June 26th, 2019, President Putin
22 that, quote, there are no Russian troops in Venezuela
23 characterized the personnel there as just specialists
24 instructors to train local forces. Yet, multiple
25 outlets have reported that paramilitary forces linked

1 Wagner group deployed to Venezuela to provide security
2 President Maduro. These are the same forces, as I
3 are very aware, that conducted missions on the
4 behalf in Ukraine, Syria, and other countries across

5 How would you characterize the actions of the
6 and Kremlin-linked forces in Venezuela? Is it just
7 training, as Mr. Putin alleges, or is it something
8 nefarious?

9 Admiral Faller: Senator, we have consistently
10 way Russia manipulates media around the world. At one
11 in February from my full Senate Armed Services
12 hearing, about a week before the hearing, I was here
13 pre-hearing office calls, and I came out of Senator
14 office to the news that Russian state TV was reporting
15 presence on the Colombia-Venezuela border, including a
16 picture of someone who was not me and B roll footage
17 tanks and planes poised to conduct an invasion. I
18 that sort of states Russia's approach overall to

19 There are Russian troops. There are Russian
20 contractors. Their presence are in the hundreds. In
21 Venezuela, they are supporting the Maduro regime.
22 keeping Russian gear operable. They are conducting a
23 range of activities you would expect a foreign power
24 to prop up their puppet regime.

25 Senator Peters: Thank you, Admiral.

1 Senator Ernst: Senator Hawley?

2 Senator Hawley: Admiral, thank you for being
3 thank you for your leadership.

4 Is it fair to say that one key Russian and
5 objective in the region is to reduce United States
6 and access?

7 Admiral Faller: Senator, I think it is. I would
8 differentiate it slightly.

9 I think for Russia that I would characterize as
10 a wounded bear wanting power -- their principal
11 to make the U.S. look bad at whatever turn they can do
12 do anything that would blunt a U.S. advantage, even if
13 advantage is for the international good and the
14 it is in Venezuela.

15 For China, they have legitimate economic
16 around the world, and I know we are working hard as a
17 to figure out how those legitimate international
18 can actually be played using the rule of law. So they
19 an economic interest primarily. But make no question
20 my research, my study, the 56 ports that they are
21 on, the extensive IT infrastructure, the extensive
22 are doing in cyber, the space access that they are
23 on, all these that would be characterized I think by
24 state officials as soft power -- they have hard aims.
25 as I said in earlier testimony this year, they are

1 the stage for future access and influence that would
2 clearly military dimensions.

3 Senator Hawley: So just on this last point there
4 China with their ports, with their cyber, with their
5 development, you see that as part of a larger
6 on China's part to ramp up their influence in the
7 also to diminish ours. Is that fair to say?

8 Admiral Faller: China has global aims that
9 beyond economic, and I think we have got to continue
10 compete China globally, including in this
11 hemisphere.

12 Senator Hawley: Thank you for that answer.

13 Give us a sense of what you think in your
14 looks like. What does it look for us to out-compete
15 and what do we need to be doing to meet and turn back
16 strategic aims here?

17 Admiral Faller: There are a lot of security
18 around the world, as have been outlined: North Korea,
19 Russia and their near abroad, China, South China Sea.
20 have to make sure that we look at those globally, and
21 as a department. We have to make sure that they are
22 resourced globally and resourced to a sufficient level
23 that China does not come in and fill that vacuum when
24 not there. So at a point, you cannot do that and just
25 schoolhouse in Carlisle, Pennsylvania and Newport,

1 Island or Montgomery, Alabama, at any one of our
2 war colleges, or at Western Hemisphere Institute for
3 Security at Fort Benning or here in the Perry Center
4 Washington. At a point, we have got to be in the
5 present. That means U.S. Navy ships, Coast Guard
6 Marine special purpose MAGTAF forces, special
7 forces, small numbers. We have in some cases adequate
8 numbers now, but if we took reductions -- we might
9 for the global fight -- that would have a
10 impact I think in the long-term ability to work with
11 partners.

12 Senator Hawley: Are there capability gaps that
13 have currently that you are concerned about that we
14 be doing something about?

15 Admiral Faller: I am concerned. The littoral
16 ship is an excellent platform the Navy is bringing
17 It has had some growing pains. I am confident we are
18 to come out of those. The sergeant major and I spent
19 several hours on a littoral combat ship in Mayport,
20 recently. It is a capability we need. We do not have
21 The Navy is committed to deploying one in October. In
22 the US -- I will not give the name but a ship in
23 And we look forward to that. So we do not have a Navy
24 combatant now, and so that is a capability gap.

25 Intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance assets

1 challenged worldwide. We need those for monitoring
2 situation in Venezuela, also for the global
3 fight, the crisis in this nation. That is our number
4 asset to detect that flow. So we are short assets,
5 Senator.

6 Senator Hawley: Thank you for that. That is
7 helpful.

8 Let me ask you about our mil-to-mil contacts
9 which you have already discussed some. They seem to
10 your region relatively narrow focused and at the small
11 level. I am just wondering. Do you feel that our
12 events with our partner nations are focused at the
13 level, and are they having the effect that you think
14 should be?

15 Admiral Faller: We do focus at the unit level,
16 basic blocking and tackling rightly starts there. But
17 also have some high end exercises with our very
18 partners.

19 So we just completed UNITAS, which is the longest
20 serving maritime exercise that the United States has
21 years. This was the 60th year. Our very capable
22 partners led that and hosted it and were in command of
23 exercise. 12 nations in that exercise from around the
24 globe, observers from the UK and others and ships from
25 Ecuador in a very capable high end exercise.

1 At the same time, we had our Forces Commando, so
2 special operations forces, squads working together as
3 in a competition also in Chile simultaneously

4 So we do have high end exercises. I think there
5 more we could do to increase the level and complexity
6 those and bring more partners in, and that is one of
7 things we are focused on if there is additional
8 for exercises.

9 Senator Hawley: Can I ask just one more
10 Madam Chair?

11 The last question just on UNITAS, since you
12 it, Admiral. I understand over 1,700 personnel
13 participated, 12 nations. Can you describe the degree
14 trust among the member nations, the participating
15 alignment of priorities, things you feel came out of
16 that you would report on to us?

17 Admiral Faller: I attended the opening ceremony
18 had a chance to sit into the pre-sail brief in the
19 a Chilean frigate and went down the line and met the
20 lieutenant who was leading the diving salvage and the
21 aggressor force of a 03 lieutenant who was leading the
22 opposition force, the commander of the Chilean sub who
23 going to go out and sink the high end American
24 the Michael Murphy, named after one of our Medal of
25 winners. And you saw a band of brothers standing

1 the flight deck. It would make any one of us proud.
2 that is exercise money, train dollars that is well
3 And that exercise covered everything from HADR to
4 to a terrorist activity, and it was intense.

5 Senator Hawley: Thank you.

6 Thank you, Madam Chair.

7 Senator Ernst: Thank you.

8 Senator Shaheen?

9 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

10 And thank you, Admiral Faller, for being here

11 You mentioned the shortfall in the global
12 counternarcotics effort, and as I am sure you are
13 opioid crisis in the U.S. was responsible for more
14 47,000 deaths in 2017. And much of those substances
15 through Mexico. Heroin grown in South American
16 particularly Colombia, is trafficked to the U.S. by
17 sea. And it has a real impact on the entire country,
18 know. In New Hampshire, we have the second highest
19 related overdose deaths in the nation.

20 So can you talk a little bit about what you are
21 to coordinate with State governments and the U.S. on
22 effort?

23 Admiral Faller: The drug crisis is a national
24 crisis, Senator. It is that easy to get drugs in and
25 other illicit commodities that can come along those

1 networks. It is a significant focus of ours.

2 And as I mentioned in a previous question, there
3 insufficient resources dedicated. We are working as
4 we can with the Coast Guard. It is a premier agency,
5 they are working hard. They have dedicated twice the
6 of cutters to the effort than what they commit in
7 annual global plan, which shows the level of
8 And our Navy has stepped up to commit more.

9 Joint Interagency Task Force South in Key West,
10 know, is the premier center and, with about 1.5
11 the budget, gets about 90 percent of the drugs headed
12 the country, cocaine which is principally coming from
13 Colombia.

14 So we are working as hard as we can with our
15 across the U.S. interagency, principally in the Joint
16 Interagency Task Force South, and in the committees
17 Washington, D.C. to look at ways to be more effective
18 put more resources and intelligence and thought into
19 interdiction problem.

20 It is also a supply problem and a demand problem.
21 that regard, I would have to say that Colombia has
22 up in a significant way, and while the statistics that
23 cite do not reflect that because of the time lag, what
24 been published and made public for 2018 since
25 Duque has taken over is a significant increase in

1 eradication, manual eradication, a significant
2 Colombian partner interdiction, a significant increase
3 the Colombian forces' contact with the
4 the terrorist groups that deal in this.

5 And so working with our partners, both in the
6 interagency and our other host nation partners, 40
7 of our interdictions right now are by these partner
8 that we train and work with Colombia. And I mentioned
9 already the very capable forces of El Salvador,
10 and Guatemala. I would have to add in there Panama
11 Costa Rica have stepped up.

12 But more can be done, and we are dedicated to
13 because there is still way too much drugs that are
14 through and getting to this country, Senator.

15 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you very much.

16 I want to switch subjects now. I am looking at a
17 contract award document from the Defense Logistics
18 for February of 2018. And one of the projects
19 here is for a contingency mass migration complex at
20 Station Guantanamo Bay, and it is a \$23,164,000 fixed
21 contract for construction of that mass migration
22 It includes site shaping for tents, concrete pads for
23 headquarters. It goes on to talk about mass
24 system, various infrastructure requirements.

25 Are you aware of this contract, and have you been

1 of any discussions about what that mass migration
2 going to be used for? Is it going to be used for
3 of migrants from our southern border to Guantanamo

4 Admiral Faller: Senator, one of our missions is
5 able to handle any kind of mass migration event that
6 SOUTHCOM mission. And we have experienced that in the
7 with some migrants from Cuba and Haiti.

8 Part of the naval station -- there is a field, a
9 of the naval station at Guantanamo Bay that is an
10 field that could be subject to any kind of weather
11 conditions, mud. And so to get that field to a
12 if we had a mass migration, as I mentioned from Cuba
13 Haiti, we could keep the migrants on cement pads
14 in the mud and have power and water for sanitation
15 go. We did not currently have adequate facilities for
16 numbers that we would estimate in those worst kind of
17 migrations.

18 So I have been down to look at the progress. I
19 there at the start of the work. Work is ongoing. We
20 supervising it.

21 We also run an annual training drill. We
22 our Army South soldiers there to walk through the
23 and control and the interagency coordination that may
24 required. So I am very much involved in the details.
25 is for a projected future mass migration event. There

1 been no discussion or no order given to me to prepare
2 site for any kind of southwest border flow.

3 Senator Shaheen: Are you aware of any
4 have been held that you may not have been given a
5 order, but have you been part of -- or do you know of
6 discussions that have been held to move southern
7 migrants there?

8 Admiral Faller: No, Senator. Nobody has had a
9 discussion with me to that effect.

10 Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

11 Senator Ernst: Senator Hirono?

12 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Madam Chair.

13 I would like to follow up on the questions that
14 Shaheen just asked.

15 So she referred to a \$23 million --

16 Senator Shaheen: It is over \$23 million. It is
17 \$24 million.

18 Senator Hirono: \$24 million contract to house
19 migration -- people as a result of mass migration. So
20 is that money for? Is it just what? I do not
21 Is it not going to go to put some buildings up in this
22 that you are talking about at Guantanamo Bay?

23 Admiral Faller: Senator, we currently have a
24 operation principally for Cuban migrants, and there
25 small flow of migrants that come from Cuba --

1 Senator Hirono: This money is for mass
2 do not think we are talking about Cuba or Haiti.

3 Admiral Faller: So the current facilities are
4 inadequate to hold any more than a few hundred. And
5 worst case plans based on historical analysis or some
6 of future event -- it could be a weather-related event
7 would call for a larger infrastructure footprint that
8 hold into the tens of thousands. And so that is what
9 is based on. It is based on electrical
10 sewage, water, power, concrete pads, some sanitation
11 buildings. It is a very spartan camp, though,

12 Senator Hirono: Admiral, are you saying that
13 money is not for the purposes of moving some of the
14 from the Northern Triangle countries to Guantanamo

15 Admiral Faller: That is correct, Senator, not

16 Senator Hirono: So any news reports that say
17 there is a potential for housing these people at
18 Bay would be mistaken?

19 Admiral Faller: I have seen the same news
20 Senator, but the program money and the project we are
21 overseeing and the mission we have is for mass
22 not the southwest border.

23 Senator Hirono: So you have not gotten any order
24 there is no direct order, no discussion about sending
25 from the Northern Triangle to Guantanamo Bay. But if

1 an event occurs or such discussions occur, would you
2 this committee know?

3 Admiral Faller: Senator, I assure you I would if
4 was a discussion or an order that I had in that

5 Senator Hirono: Okay, because of course with
6 and thousands of people coming from the Northern
7 our facilities are bursting at the seams and there is
8 question that there is an acknowledgement that some of
9 defense assets might be put to use to house these
10 So I think it is a matter of great concern for us.

11 So page 1 of your testimony -- you talk about the
12 impact of interstate competition with China and
13 are capitalizing on the instability within your AOR.
14 China, as you know, is a primary threat in the Indo-
15 AOR, but they are, of course, increasingly turning to
16 countries, including -- they spread a wide net.

17 What impact has China's activities on Southern
18 had with your relationships with partner nations?
19 you know, China is very busy trying to insert
20 into having influence with our partner countries in
21 area. So is it making it harder for you to retain
22 important relationships with our partner countries?

23 Admiral Faller: Our partners still want and view
24 a partner of choice, and our schools, education, and
25 everything is preferred.

1 I think the challenge comes in if we do not have
2 speed, the quantity, or for some reason we are not
3 be able to provide the partnership. And so from that
4 respect, when a nation -- I will give you one example,
5 Senator. I am sitting with -- I am having my third
6 tea with one of the leaders from a capable Caribbean
7 nation. And I do not start out asking about China. I
8 asking about the things that are mutual threats, how
9 perceive them. I have a lot to learn in my tour. But
10 get to China, whether they bring it up, I will bring
11 And then I will be blunt and ask what is China
12 you, and this particular chief of defense said they
13 me \$23 million last year. I said, well, what did you
14 with it? Just \$23 million. Here is cash. I looked
15 security cooperation card, and I think my total sum of
16 assistance was \$1.5 million, which I thought was
17 adequate.

18 And so we are not going to compete in volume. We
19 to compete in quality and speed of relevance.
20 that may be fast, sometimes slow based on what the
21 needs.

22 And so that does make it challenging, though.
23 million. And the chief of defense said, well, I did
24 any IT with that, Admiral. I am like, well, okay.
25 mean, there are only so many uniforms you can buy for

1 million. So you did something with it. I get it. It
2 hard to turn down cash. That is the challenge that we
3 competing with.

4 And some of the partners are turning it down.

5 Senator Hirono: One wonders for how long can
6 down what might be basically free money.

7 So are China and Russia also involved in the
8 Triangle countries?

9 Admiral Faller: So it is different per country,
10 try to always break them apart and go country by
11 The previous leadership in El Salvador had a little
12 different view about China and changed directions. I
13 the new leadership is much more pro-U.S. and really
14 to partner. I mentioned their chief of defense and
15 of defense, and that is including both Russia and
16 And I see the same in Honduras and Guatemala. From a
17 perspective, they stuck by Taiwan and the U.S.
18 and Honduras have. So I think it is different, but
19 and China are in there. And they are trying to make
20 inroads, and they will take every opportunity to move
21 we are not.

22 Senator Hirono: So it sounds as though, with
23 of competition, your presence, whatever we can do to
24 up our relationships is a constant thing for you. So
25 doing it.

1 Thank you, Madam Chair.

2 Senator Ernst: Admiral, we will go ahead and do
3 second round of questioning. I think our members have
4 additional questions they would love to hear your
5 on.

6 We talked a little bit about Argentina during
7 office call and some of the deep space tracking
8 that are there. If you could in an unclassified
9 this room, can you elaborate on the assessed purpose
10 facility and the threat that it is posing to our
11 and to other assets that we have here?

12 Admiral Faller: China is working in space around
13 globe and across all elements of space. I think our
14 on space is exactly right because we have to stay
15 this area. They are looking for access points. They
16 found them in South America, and Argentina is
17 one. The extent to what China is doing and the degree
18 military activity at that site is extremely concerning
19 the security of the United States.

20 Senator Ernst: And can you expound on what is
21 impact to the United States?

22 Admiral Faller: China has the ability to have a
23 global view of all space activities, and that could
24 gamut of offense and defense. So beyond that, we
25 to go to a different setting, Senator.

1 Senator Ernst: Absolutely. Thank you. I
2 that.

3 Outside of China and Russia -- we spent a lot of
4 visiting about them. But Iran and Iranian proxies do
5 long history in South America and in the western
6 There was the 1994 bombing of a Jewish center in
7 and the presence of Hezbollah-affiliated fund raising
8 activities across the region.

9 And how would you characterize their presence in
10 hemisphere, and what are their primary objectives?

11 Admiral Faller: Iran continues to be the number
12 state sponsor of terror around the world, and their
13 of malfeasance is everywhere. And we have seen that
14 recently in their attacks on tankers. They have at
15 two attributable terror attacks here in this
16 right here in Washington, D.C. where they attempted to
17 the Saudi ambassador to the United States really
18 blocks of where we are sitting and their state-
19 terror attack in Argentina. And there are active
20 connections between the Iranian regime and Lebanese
21 Hezbollah fund raising activities throughout the
22 watch these closely. There is also Iranian
23 Islamic centers with very dubious and questionable
24 throughout the hemisphere that has considerable ties
25 known terror activities in Iran. And we keep our eye

1 this, and we work closely with our capable partners
2 Brazil and Argentina to share information about these
3 threats.

4 Senator Ernst: And in your estimation then,
5 elements that exist in this hemisphere -- are they
6 of hindering U.S. objectives?

7 Admiral Faller: We have seen what Iran is doing
8 and day out, Senator, in the Arabian Gulf, in Yemen,
9 Saudi Arabia, in the UAE, what they have done here in
10 past. And so I do not put much stock in their good
11 intentions going forward. And so I think we have got
12 eye on this one as best we can with the resources we

13 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Admiral.

14 I will yield back my time.

15 Senator Peters?

16 Senator Peters: Thank you, Madam Chair.

17 I am going to pick up on a question that the
18 asked you about the domains. You have talked about
19 space domain, but the other domain that we need to be
20 focused on is cyber, in particular Chinese activities
21 the world in that area.

22 Could you explain what the Chinese may or may not
23 doing in Latin America to expand their cyber

24 Admiral Faller: Start with the crisis in
25 So the Maduro-made crisis there, which now pushed out

1 million migrants -- unfortunately, it is affecting
2 region -- is being aided, abetted by Russia, Cuba, and
3 lesser extent but a significant one, China. And the
4 that I mentioned in my opening statement -- China is
5 and I mentioned this as well -- involved in enabling
6 for the Maduro regime.

7 We look broadly beyond that. The attractiveness
8 infrastructure and the safe city/smart city concept
9 infrastructure can provide surveillance opportunities
10 security forces is being actively pursued by a number
11 important partners in the region. We have been very
12 actively involved with our interagency partners to
13 the risks, and on a mil-to-mil and security force
14 partners -- they get it. And they have been able, in
15 cases, to articulate to their leadership to slow or
16 some projects.

17 But they turn to us and say what is our
18 Just like was mentioned about the money, Senator
19 mentioned at some point you do need resources. They
20 say, hey, we need IT infrastructure. What is the
21 alternative that will come forward that we can

22 On a mil-to-mil level, we are working on some
23 security cooperation packages with CYBERCOM, some of
24 first-ever security cooperation packages with partners
25 have asked almost everywhere we go -- the partners

1 do more in this area. And we have made some visits to
2 some assessments, and with the support of Congress, we
3 going to come forward with some 333 packages that will
4 training, education, and cyber infrastructure in a
5 mil realm. It is the first ones ever we are pushing
6 couple of our very capable partners.

7 And so that has got to be our response, and that
8 another reason why we need to -- when I talk more
9 about being there and being consistent, that is one of
10 areas we are going to look moving forward and that
11 both of us on cyber defense. But China is there in a
12 way, Senator.

13 Senator Peters: And China uses cyber not just to
14 with security issues, surveillance issues to prevent
15 but also to keep track of their population and, some
16 argue, to manipulate the population and get them more
17 compliant with the regime.

18 Do you believe Latin American governments are
19 moving in that direction with the assistance of the

20 Admiral Faller: Senator, when I talk to our
21 about the U.S. versus China, I said, look, I am not
22 bash China. I am not here to even ask you to make a
23 I am here to talk about what is important to you and
24 important to us, and I think I know where you come
25 where you honor and respect democracy, rule of law,

1 rights, and sovereignty. I look at those sort of four
2 representative variables. And I said I look at the
3 competition that you might do business with, these
4 external state actors, and I know where we stand. We
5 not the perfect people, but we work really hard at
6 good in this country and particularly in our military.
7 make mistakes, but they are usually honest mistakes.
8 where we stand on those four variables. I also know
9 the competition stands on those four variables. So
10 buy into a product, are you prepared to buy in what
11 come with what kind of rule of law, what kind of
12 human rights?

13 I do not see currently an indication that people
14 buying into that in a way that is corrupting them or
15 them to stray from their commitment to us and their
16 commitment to professionalism. On a mil-to-mil level,
17 not. But it concerns me when you look long-term, when
18 leverage yourself, and you look down the list,
19 human rights, rule of law.

20 Senator Peters: Thank you, Admiral.

21 Senator Ernst: Senator Shaheen?

22 Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

23 Admiral, as I am sure you are aware, in 2017
24 Trump signed into law the Women, Peace, and Security
25 which mandates that we prioritize the inclusion of

1 conflict negotiations and security structures and in
2 negotiations.

3 Can you talk about how SOUTHCOM is implementing
4 law and how you see it helping you to accomplish your
5 mission?

6 Admiral Faller: Master Chief Stacey Arin is my
7 advisor, sort of the alter ego to the command sergeant
8 here. She was at our full Senate hearing. She is out
9 actually on a field trip working on this.

10 So when we look at professionalism, what it takes
11 a professional force -- and I think that is
12 people want to partner is we are professional.
13 forces are legitimate. Professional forces respect
14 rights, rule of law. They also respect talent and
15 equal opportunity to come in and compete irrespective
16 you are, what you do, and whether you are a female or
17 male. And so that is what our approach is and how we
18 about it.

19 So my commanders conferences that I have -- we
20 big one coming up in August in Brazil for all the
21 American countries. That will be a focus point of the
22 discussion with our counterparts and how they work
23 how we work with them. And we have actually had
24 from some of our partners to say how did you, the
25 States, work through the integration of putting women

1 team on combat ships at sea. And so that is one of
2 projects we are taking on with one of our partner
3 right now. So they are receptive to it.

4 We appreciate the act because it came with
5 that help us to sponsor training courses. We hosted
6 first course where we are training the trainers. So
7 all the combatant commands at SOUTHCOM, and I kicked
8 course off. It was the afternoon of my first day in
9 actually. And we are looking to kind of move this
10 in practical ways that deliver combat capability. And
11 actually think it does -- I know it does -- delivers
12 capability.

13 Senator Shaheen: Well, I think it is also
14 point out that there is a growing body of evidence
15 shows what a difference it makes to have women at the
16 in conflict resolution and peace negotiations where we
17 if women are part of those negotiations, they are more
18 30 percent likely to last for longer than 15 years.
19 I think for all kinds of reasons, including the ones
20 you cite, it is very important for us to see this law
21 implemented. Thank you very much.

22 Thank you, Madam Chair.

23 Senator Ernst: Senator Hirono?

24 Senator Hirono: Thank you.

25 Admiral, the Joint Interagency Task Force South

1 detect, monitor, and stop drug trafficking. And last
2 only 6 percent of known drug movements were

3 Can you clarify for me? You mentioned it in your
4 response to one of the questions that 40 percent of
5 interdictions are by our partner countries. So that
6 percent of the 6 percent of the drugs that are

7 So when President Trump declared a national
8 to fund his border wall, he announced he would pull
9 million from the Department of Defense's drug
10 program. That is the program that we are talking

11 So how are the funds in this drug interdiction
12 used to address drug trafficking? And if these funds
13 diverted to build a border wall, how would this impact
14 ability to complete your drug interdiction efforts?

15 Admiral Faller: Senator, the Joint Interagency
16 Force South, as you mentioned, currently led by a
17 Guard two-star, is key to this effort, and they are
18 great job with about 1.5 percent of the overall
19 counternarcotics funds for the entire U.S. Government
20 about 90 percent of all the cocaine. Still, it is not
21 enough. As you cite, 6 percent.

22 The policy decision on how the border security is
23 is not something that I am involved in. We have not
24 cut in our funding for the counternarcotic fight. So
25 however that money is flowed, we have received the

1 that we have needed and do need to fight the fight
2 are in. We do need more assets. That does cost
3 the principal problem that we face has not been a
4 of the counternarcotics money. We appreciate
5 support in that. Thank you.

6 Senator Hirono: Clarify for me that this \$2.5
7 -- you are not going to miss it if it goes away?

8 Admiral Faller: If it went away, if we lost the
9 from our counternarcotics fund, we would miss it. I
10 it was a long answer to we have not had a cut in our
11 counternarcotics funding.

12 Senator Hirono: Well, it may happen the way
13 going.

14 So considering that, since the President is
15 about diverting this money for a wall which, by the
16 not going to help in terms of your drug interdiction
17 because most of your drugs come through the regular
18 entry, not where a wall will be.

19 You noted in your testimony on page 2 that this
20 your AOR, is the largest source of illicit drugs and
21 migrants to the United States. And you note further
22 you are working with your partners to address shared
23 challenges and threats in this area, including weak
24 governance, corruption, transnational criminal
25 organizations, and the flow of illicit drugs. And you

1 that you are looking forward to discussing the nature
2 this activity in detail and how you are working with
3 partners to address these issues.

4 So can you give me an example of how you are
5 with your partners to go after all of these, the weak
6 governance, corruption, and, you know, all the litany
7 things?

8 Admiral Faller: It is a team effort, and it is a
9 list, Senator, as you point out. Our principal
10 within the Department of Defense is our NORTHCOM. So
11 General O'Shaughnessy and I are in constant
12 about how we ensure there is no seam between the
13 Mexican border and how we view and track these

14 So at its heart, these are intelligence-driven
15 challenges. So what are the drivers of the migration?
16 are the key criminal organizations that are involved
17 illicit trafficking, whether it is people, arms, drugs
18 prey on the weak governance? And so sharing
19 with our partners, building their capacity to
20 their own environment, and then taking that
21 building into packages that we pass to partner
22 enforcement and our own law enforcement is key because
23 of these challenges involve action by other government
24 entities working very closely with Homeland Security
25 information that we know when we know it about migrant

1 caravans or illicit drugs.

2 Senator Hirono: And really, Admiral, to make an
3 impact, you have to have a long-term commitment to
4 addressing these issues, corruption, as I said, the
5 litany. And it does not help when you have \$450
6 that is taken away from particularly the Northern
7 countries. It does not help. I think you have to
8 acknowledge that.

9 Thank you, Madam Chair.

10 Senator Ernst: Thank you.

11 I appreciate the subcommittee's participation in
12 today's activities.

13 Admiral Faller, thank you very much for being
14 representing our men and women of SOUTHCOM so aptly.
15 truly do appreciate your service to our nation.

16 Thank you, Sergeant Major Zickefoose, for being
17 well.

18 To you and your team, we appreciate the great
19 that you have provided for all of us.

20 And with that, this hearing is closed.

21 [Whereupon, at 4:03 p.m., the hearing was
22
23
24
25