

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE POSTURE OF UNITED
STATES CENTRAL COMMAND AND UNITED STATES AFRICA
COMMAND IN REVIEW OF THE DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION
REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025 AND THE FUTURE YEARS
DEFENSE PROGRAM

Thursday, March 7, 2024

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1 TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE POSTURE OF UNITED STATES
2 CENTRAL COMMAND AND UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND IN REVIEW
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4 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

5
6 Thursday, March 7, 2024

7
8 U.S. Senate
9 Committee on Armed Services,
10 Washington, D.C.

11
12 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:59 a.m.,
13 in Room 216, Hart Senate Office Building, Hon. Jack Reed,
14 chairman of the committee, presiding.

15 Committee Members Present: Senators Reed [presiding],
16 Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Kaine, King, Warren,
17 Peters, Manchin, Duckworth, Rosen, Kelly, Wicker, Fischer,
18 Cotton, Ernst, Sullivan, Cramer, Scott, Tuberville, Mullin,
19 Budd, and Schmitt.

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

3 Chairman Reed: Good morning. The committee meets
4 today to receive testimony from General Michael Eric
5 Kurilla, Commander of United States Central Command, and
6 General Michael Langley, Commander of United States Africa
7 Command.

8 Thank you both for your service, and I am grateful to
9 the men and women serving under your command, and please
10 convey that to them. The CENTCOM area of responsibility
11 has always been fraught with complexity, but I am concerned
12 that we have faced with a uniquely dangerous moment.

13 With Israel and Hamas engaged in a violent conflict in
14 Gaza, Iran is seeking to exploit the chaos as an
15 opportunity to force the United States out of the region.
16 Iran appears to have calculated that the best strategy to
17 achieve this is by directing its proxy forces to attack
18 American, Israeli, and allied interests in the Middle East.

19 To date, the Iranian linked Houthi rebels in Yemen
20 have launched more than 50 drone and missile attacks
21 against U.S. and international vessels in the Red Sea,
22 including a strike yesterday on Liberian commercial ship
23 that killed three innocent civilians.

24 The Houthis have disrupted nearly 15 percent of global
25 commercial trade, driving up cost and inflation around the

1 world. Similarly, Iranian linked Shia militias in Iraq,
2 Syria, and Jordan have conducted more than 175 attacks
3 against U.S. and coalition forces, including a drone attack
4 that killed three Americans in Jordan. In response, the
5 American led coalition has carried out hundreds of
6 airstrikes against Iranian proxies across the region,
7 significantly degrading their capabilities.

8 The United States should continue to take appropriate
9 military actions, but I must underscore there is no
10 ultimate military solution to our conflict with Iran.
11 Direct war with Iran would have devastating second and
12 third order consequences and would likely engulf the entire
13 region in war.

14 President Biden has balanced these considerations by
15 synchronizing military operations with strong diplomacy,
16 economic sanctions, and tools of statecraft. I am
17 encouraged that Iranian linked militia attacks against U.S.
18 forces in Iraq, Syria, and Jordan have paused for a
19 significant period of time.

20 We have to remember that Hamas ignited this regional
21 conflict exactly five months ago, on October 7th, when it
22 murdered, kidnaped, and committed unspeakable atrocities
23 against thousands of innocent Israelis. Israel launched
24 its own campaign to defend itself and degrade and defeat
25 Hamas, and the United States deployed troops and assets to

1 the region to support our ally and prevent a wider regional
2 war.

3 Five months into this campaign, Hamas has been
4 degraded, but the Palestinian people in Gaza are suffering
5 extreme force. Unless there is a pause in the fighting,
6 the humanitarian situation will continue to worsen, Israeli
7 hostages will continue to be held captive, and Israel's
8 long term security could be weakened.

9 General Kurilla, these challenges are compounded by
10 many others, including Iran's nuclear enrichment activities
11 and Hezbollah's attacks in Northern Israel, all of which
12 must be addressed, while maintaining the counterterrorism
13 mission in South and Central Asia.

14 I understand that you just returned from the region,
15 and I would ask for an update on how CENTCOM is postured to
16 meet these challenges, and what resources and support you
17 need to be successful.

18 General Langley, AFRICOM remains an important theater
19 in the United States' strategic competition with China and
20 Russia. Many African countries have longstanding military
21 ties with Russia and even deeper economic ties with China.

22 As the United States manages relationships across the
23 continent, we must be mindful of these preexisting ties and
24 avoid taking a with us or against us approach, or we will
25 risk alienating the very nations we seek to engage with. I

1 would welcome your thoughts on how best to calibrate the
2 U.S. approach to the region in light of these factors.

3 Over the past year, the security situation in West
4 Africa has continued to decline. Violent extremist
5 organizations have expanded across the region and are now
6 threatening to push down into the lateral states in the
7 Gulf of Guinea.

8 Partner nations are working hard to address these
9 challenges, and AFRICOM is working in collaboration with
10 many security forces in the region to enhance their
11 capability to respond effectively.

12 At the same time, military coups in places like Niger,
13 Mali, and Burkina Faso have required the cessation of U.S.
14 training and advising in those countries. Given these
15 challenges, I understand that AFRICOM must explore new
16 methods to maintain U.S. security interest in the region.

17 To do so, it is important that your command becomes
18 more synchronized with the U.S. interagency and that
19 AFRICOM receives the resources it needs to maintain
20 situational awareness. This must include adequate
21 intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance support, and
22 the capabilities to continue to work by, with, and through
23 our regional partners and allies.

24 General Langley, I would appreciate your thoughts on
25 this wide ranging set of challenges and what plans you have

1 to address them. Again, let me thank our witnesses. We
2 look forward to your testimony.

3 As a reminder for my colleagues, there will be a
4 closed session immediately following this hearing in room
5 SVC-217. Now, let me turn to the Ranking Member, Senator
6 Wicker.

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. ROGER WICKER, U.S. SENATOR FROM
2 MISSISSIPPI

3 Senator Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. China,
4 Russia, Iran, and North Korea are banding together. They
5 hope to weaken American resolve and shift the global
6 balance of power away from the United States.

7 The effects of their sinister activities are on full
8 display in both CENTCOM and AFRICOM theaters, which we are
9 discussing today. I begin with a particularly acute
10 example. Hamas's barbaric October 7th massacre was not
11 merely a Palestinian terrorist attack on Israel, it was
12 also an Iranian proxy attack on the United States.

13 The Palestinians attacked Israel. They were proxies
14 of Iran attacking the United States. 33 of our fellow
15 Americans were killed and 12 were taken hostage. Iranian
16 proxies then began near-daily attacks against U.S. troops
17 in the region.

18 They attacked Israel with missiles, and they tried to
19 close maritime shipping routes in the region. It is
20 indisputable that Tehran controls its proxies, and those
21 proxies have killed Americans. Iran's objective is and has
22 always been to evict the United States from the Middle East
23 so it can achieve regional hegemony.

24 We will not be evicted from the Middle East. I
25 believe the Biden Administration should address Iran's

1 culpability head on, and we can do this without going to
2 war against Iran. The Administration spent its first three
3 years offering Iran billions of dollars in sanctions relief
4 to restore the Obama era nuclear agreement.

5 President Biden ordered minor counter strikes on
6 Iran's proxies in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, apparently hoping
7 to manage escalation through pinprick responses. This
8 approach has failed and will fail because it assumes that
9 we can deter terrorist groups without causing pain to their
10 chief sponsor, Iran.

11 General Kurilla, I hope you will share your assessment
12 of what it would take to end Iran's terrorist proxy attacks
13 on our forces. China and Russia view the African continent
14 as a power projection platform. They use the region to
15 flex their muscles, undermine Western influence, and
16 bolster their economic interests.

17 Beijing and Moscow do all this through exploitive
18 practices that often come at the expense of African
19 communities. China, in particular, approaches Africa as a
20 critical terrain for its global military expansion.

21 Its first overseas military base was established in
22 the strategically located country of Djibouti. According
23 to public reports, this base is now capable of hosting some
24 of China's most advanced naval vessels.

25 Additionally, we know China is actively pursuing a

1 naval base on Africa's Atlantic Coast. General Langley has
2 said this would, "change the whole calculus of the geo
3 strategic campaign plans of protecting our homeland."

4 General Langley, I hope you will tell the committee
5 what is being done to address this disturbing development.
6 Russia's destabilizing activity in Africa is to trade
7 security assistance for access to African natural
8 resources.

9 Putin does this by spreading disinformation and
10 propaganda to sow unrest, prop up sympathetic regimes, and
11 undermine support for Western engagement on the continent.
12 We cannot lose sight of the continued threat Al-Qaeda and
13 ISIS pose in Africa. Political instability and weak
14 security institutions have allowed these groups to expand
15 territorial control.

16 We must maintain sufficient force posture and
17 resourcing in Africa to support our national interests
18 there. At the same time, we must develop more effective
19 non-defense tools in Africa. These would include our
20 ability to use private sector financing in non-development
21 contexts through DOD's Office of Strategic Capital.

22 The world has changed drastically since the
23 publication of the National Defense Strategy. This is
24 particularly true in the Middle East, but the strategy that
25 drives our investments and force posture in both these

1 command theaters must reflect those changes. Thank you,
2 Mr. Chairman.

3 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Wicker.
4 General Kurilla, please.

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1 STATEMENT OF GENERAL MICHAEL E. KURILLA, USA
2 COMMANDER, UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND

3 General Kurilla: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member
4 Wicker, ladies and gentlemen of the committee, thank you
5 for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am
6 joined today by Command Master Chief Fleet Derek Walters,
7 the Command Senior Enlisted Leader of U.S. Central Command.

8 And I am proud to testify next to my good friend Mike
9 Langley. On behalf of the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen,
10 Marines, Coast Guardsmen, and Guardians who serve this
11 command and our nation, I welcome the opportunity to talk
12 to you today. I just returned from my 27th trip to the
13 Central Region.

14 As I sat here just a year ago, the region was on the
15 verge of improbable, unprecedented, and transformative
16 progress. Today, the central region faces its most
17 volatile security situation in the past half century. This
18 is not the same central region as last year.

19 The events of 7th of October not only permanently
20 changed Israel and Gaza, it created the conditions for
21 malign actors to sow instability throughout the region and
22 beyond. Iran exploited what they saw as a once in a
23 generation opportunity to reshape the Middle East to their
24 advantage.

25 Iran has worked for decades to strategically encircle

1 the region with its proxies, and in the past six months, we
2 have seen every proxy in the Iranian threat network
3 operationalized in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Gaza, the West
4 Bank, and Yemen.

5 Iran's expansive network of proxies is equipped with
6 advanced, sophisticated weaponry, and threatens some of the
7 most vital terrain in the world, with global and U.S.
8 implications. Houthi attacks on international shipping and
9 an Iranian aligned militia attacks on our forces in Iraq
10 and Syria are direct result of an Iranian threat that has
11 been incrementally spreading.

12 However, Iran knows that its decade long vision cannot
13 be realized if countries in the region continue to expand
14 integration with each other and deepen their partnership
15 with the United States. Violent extremist organizations
16 have also seized on this opportunity. ISIS surged their
17 attacks in Iraq and Syria earlier this year, and the risk
18 of an attack emanating from Afghanistan is increasing.

19 ISIS-Khorasan retains the capability and will to
20 attack U.S. and Western interests abroad in as little as
21 six months and with little to no warning. Strategic
22 competition has also continued to evolve across the region.

23 China and Russia are quick to capitalize on
24 destabilizing influences. They have shown meager interest
25 or capability to reduce regional tensions, but rather they

1 have increased their efforts to pressurize regional
2 partners across all elements of national power.

3 Collectively, Iran, Russia, and China are
4 strengthening their relationships and fostering a chaotic
5 landscape favorable for their exploitation. Iran continues
6 to sell 90 percent of its oil to China, funding Tehran's
7 subversive activities across the region, and Iran has
8 developed a full scale production pipeline for supplying
9 weapons to Russia, fueling their war on Ukraine.

10 The ramifications of this partnership have global
11 implications. The convergence of crisis and competition
12 makes CENTCOM the area of responsibility, the most likely
13 region to produce threats against the U.S. homeland,
14 trigger a regional conflict, and derail the national
15 defense strategy.

16 The CENTCOM region also remains critical to the
17 world's energy supply and remains essential for the flow of
18 global commerce. But CENTCOM provides strategic depth to
19 our defense of the homeland, and American security and
20 prosperity are at risk if we cede this space to Iran,
21 terrorism, and China.

22 The stable future envisioned by our National Security
23 strategy and shared by our partners supports broader U.S.
24 national interests and is worth striving for. Our partners
25 in the Levant, Arabian Gulf, and Central and South Asia are

1 committed to advancing the region, and the United States
2 remains the partner of choice for now.

3 The degree of U.S. investment in the central region
4 will be decisive in shaping this future. Our years of a
5 continuous engagement throughout the region serve as the
6 foundation for this investment.

7 The U.S. Central Command strategic approach of people,
8 partners, and innovation reinforces the vision of an
9 integrated central region and supports the whole of
10 Government effort to secure our regional and global
11 interests.

12 Our people are the bedrock of everything we do. We
13 are laser focused on optimizing their talents and
14 highlighting their character and competence to our
15 partners. Our strategic advantage remains our strong
16 military to military partnerships, while our adversaries
17 and competitors rely on parasitic transactional
18 relationships.

19 We also innovate with our partners and are developing
20 approaches, concept, and technologies to address the
21 threats we face protecting our forces and creating
22 strategic depth in our force posture. These efforts have
23 saved lives.

24 We are clear eyed about the task before us. The shock
25 waves of the past year continue to reverberate globally,

1 and our service members are standing to watch side by side
2 with our regional partners right now.

3 They operate in harm's way every day, whether at a
4 small outpost in Syria fighting ISIS, or on a destroyer
5 knocking down a barrage of ballistic and cruise missiles
6 fired by Iranian backed Houthis, and they do so with honor
7 and courage.

8 Five of our teammates gave the last full measure of
9 devotion as they lived out the oath we swear and the
10 freedoms we cherish. They represent the very best of us
11 and it is the honor of my professional life to serve as
12 their commander, and I look forward to your questions.

13 [The prepared statement of General Kurilla follows:]

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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, General Kurilla.
2 General Langley, please.

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1 STATEMENT OF GENERAL MICHAEL E. LANGLEY, USMC
2 COMMANDER, UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND

3 General Langley: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member
4 Wicker, distinguished committee members, it is an honor to
5 appear before you today representing the outstanding
6 service members, civilians, and families of the United
7 States Africa Command.

8 I am proud to testify with my good friend General
9 Kurilla, the Commander of United States Central Command.
10 Now, today I am also joined by my USAID advisor, Ms. Maura
11 Barry Boyle, and also my State Department foreign advisor,
12 Mr. Phil Nelson. They represent AFRICOM's whole of
13 Government team and integrated approach to Africa.

14 In the last year, thanks to your authorities,
15 resourcing, and support, AFRICOM all-star team responded to
16 numerous crises and conflicts across the continent. They
17 performed flawlessly, and I am honored and proud to serve
18 among them.

19 Today's global events, ranging from Russian
20 Federation's war in the Ukraine to the Houthi attacks in
21 the Red Sea, directly impact the lives of millions of
22 Africans. Terrorism, poverty, food insecurity, climate
23 change, and mass migration shatter African lives.

24 These factors sow the seeds of extremism and Russian
25 exploitation across entire regions of the continent.

1 AFRICOM's campaign revolves around central themes of
2 ensuring strategic access, countering threats to the
3 homeland and U.S. interests, preparing for and responding
4 to crises, and lastly, bolstering our allies and partners.

5 This campaign places our African partners at the
6 center, achieving positive change by executing African led
7 and U.S. enabled operations focused on our shared
8 objectives. In today's dynamic environment, our whole of
9 Government partners require appropriate resourcing.

10 I strongly advocate for our State Department and USAID
11 partners to receive the resources they need to guarantee
12 our combined success. I would also like to highlight a
13 campaign that benefits from our Congress, which supports
14 the African Center of Strategic Studies, which is
15 celebrating its 25th anniversary.

16 In Africa, modest investments and resources go a long
17 way towards achieving our National Security interests.
18 Africa faces many challenges, but also offers even more
19 opportunities.

20 With our African partners at the forefront, reinforced
21 by our efforts and the efforts of our allies, we will
22 continue to gain ground towards achieving lasting
23 stability, security, and prosperity on this crucial
24 continent.

25 Thank you for giving me an opportunity to be here

1 today, and I look forward to answering your questions.

2 [The prepared statement of General Langley follows:]

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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, General Langley.
2 General Kurilla, you are facing numerous and complex
3 threats, and that is probably an understatement. Is there
4 a purely military solution to the complex threat you face?

5 General Kurilla: Thank you, chairman, for that
6 question. There is no purely military solution to all the
7 complex threats that we face.

8 We need not only a whole of Government, all the
9 instruments of national power between diplomatic,
10 informational, military, and economic. We need an
11 international solution to a lot of the problems that we are
12 seeing in the Middle East.

13 Chairman Reed: Thank you. And how are you trying to
14 integrate these efforts? I know you were just in the
15 region. I know personally you are engaging. What are you
16 doing to get the whole team on the field?

17 General Kurilla: So, what we do is we have a lot of
18 regional conferences that we bring people together. I
19 spend the majority of my time either talking to my partners
20 or over in the region, physically looking at them eye to
21 eye.

22 And we work together to be able to try and solve a lot
23 of these problems. I try and look at the problems and
24 their challenges in the region through their eyes, because
25 they understand the region far better than we ever will,

1 and they provide some interesting solutions and very
2 helpful solutions on how we should approach certain aspects
3 of that.

4 We do have a regional security construct that we get
5 together and we discuss these on.

6 Chairman Reed: The Houthis have and are continuing to
7 disrupt significant trade and threaten our ships and
8 international ships. It seems difficult to deter them. I
9 know we spoke about the lack of intelligence. Could you
10 indicate some of the obstacles you are facing in deterring
11 the Houthis, or taking them out, if you will?

12 General Kurilla: So, Chairman Reed, our campaign in
13 the Red Sea is to restore freedom of navigation in the Red
14 Sea Bab al-Mandab and the Gulf of Aden. It focuses on
15 protecting the ships that are there.

16 We have 24 nations that are part of the operation
17 protecting those ships. 17 of them talk about it publicly.
18 And then we also want to degrade the Houthis' offensive
19 capability, anti-ship ballistic missiles, anti-ship cruise
20 missiles, and a myriad of other systems that they are
21 using, all provided by Iran.

22 But to degrade that capability means nothing if Iran
23 is able to resupply them. So, we have an effort to deny
24 Iran the ability to resupply them, and that is where we
25 need more of an international and a whole of Government

1 approach to be able to stop Iran from resupplying the
2 Houthis.

3 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, General Kurilla.
4 General Langley, last year you spoke about the Wagner
5 Group's activities. I know there has been some changes in
6 the Wagner Group. They are still a presence in the AOR I
7 assume.

8 General Langley: Yes, chairman. There is.

9 Chairman Reed: And last year, you indicated how they
10 are really extorting these countries rather than helping
11 them in any way, shape, or form. The question arises, what
12 are we doing in terms of information campaign to try to
13 inform governments and the people of the dangers that these
14 groups, not just Wagner groups, but other entities are
15 posing?

16 General Langley: Chairman, thanks for that question,
17 because I would say the Russian Federation's narrative
18 drowned out the U.S. Government's in the past years. They
19 were accelerant.

20 The Russian Federation, not just through Wagner,
21 stoked a lot of the instability across the Sahel. They did
22 this through misinformation, disinformation campaigns. So,
23 I see how we could double down in our efforts is through
24 our own information campaign but matched with our assurance
25 efforts -- assurance efforts across a whole of Government.

1 Just not building military and security capacity, but
2 the story needs to be told about the successes of USAID and
3 State Department collectively and all of our operations,
4 activities, and investments.

5 Chairman Reed: And that requires additional
6 resources, I presume?

7 General Langley: Yes, chairman, it certainly does.
8 Especially in the information operations.

9 Chairman Reed: I also will presume that timely
10 passage of the supplemental appropriation, as well as the
11 regular appropriations would be critically important to
12 your Command. Is that correct?

13 General Langley: Absolutely, chairman. Because, you
14 know, as we are looking at a CR, and during this period of
15 the continued resolution, we are canceling a number of
16 operations, activities and investments, and also my biggest
17 capstone exercise in Morocco, African Lion, is going to
18 have effects.

19 Chairman Reed: Thank you. General Kurilla, passing
20 the supplemental as well as the budget is critical to
21 Central Command?

22 General Kurilla: It is absolutely critical on the
23 supplemental chairman. \$2.4 billion, \$531 million of which
24 is for counter unmanned aerial system defense, the very
25 systems that are shooting down a lot of these systems. It

1 is for our command and control systems. It is for a lot of
2 the modernization efforts that we need.

3 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much. Senator Wicker,
4 please.

5 Senator Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I do
6 appreciate the Chair and the General pointing out the
7 importance of passage of the supplemental. I would gently
8 make this point about the regular appropriation bills.

9 In the Senate, they were all reported by the
10 Democratic Chairman and the Republican Ranking Member. For
11 reasons not clear to many of us, the distinguished
12 Democratic leader has chosen not to bring the bills up to
13 the floor before the end of the Fiscal Year in regular
14 order, and that is mystifying to me.

15 There is no one else on the face of the earth that can
16 bring an appropriation bill to the floor other than the
17 Democratic leader, and I certainly share the unhappiness
18 and disappointment on both sides of the dais about the fact
19 that we have not been able to get our appropriations done
20 on time. General Kurilla, we would like to avoid war with
21 Iran, correct?

22 General Kurilla: That is correct, Senator.

23 Senator Wicker: Now, does Iran seek war with the
24 United States?

25 General Kurilla: They do not, Senator.

1 Senator Wicker: They would like to avoid a head to
2 head war with the United States. And so, they use proxies.
3 From October 2023 through January of this year, Iranian
4 backed militia groups targeted U.S. forces in Iraq and
5 Syria more than 150 times. Iranian backed militia groups
6 attacked our forces more than 150 times. That is correct,
7 is it not?

8 General Kurilla: That is correct, Senator.

9 Senator Wicker: We responded just eight times
10 militarily. Is that correct, General?

11 General Kurilla: That number sounds correct, Senator.

12 Senator Wicker: Okay. Now, unfortunately, the proxy
13 attacks continued and on January 28th of this year, three
14 U.S. servicemen were killed and more than 30 were injured
15 at Tower 22 in Jordan. That is also correct, isn't it?

16 General Kurilla: That is correct, Senator.

17 Senator Wicker: Okay. My understanding is that with
18 a little bit of extra luck, the Iranian backed militias
19 would have been able to inflict earlier casualties. Is
20 that correct?

21 General Kurilla: That is correct, Senator.

22 Senator Wicker: Okay. So, before the deadly attack
23 on Tower 22, how many instances were there in which Iranian
24 backed attacks came close to killing U.S. personnel?

25 General Kurilla: I don't have the exact numbers,

1 Senator, but there are several incidents where UAVs coming
2 into a base, hit another object, got caught up in a netting
3 or other incidents where had they hit the appropriate
4 target that they were targeting, it would have injured or
5 killed servicemembers.

6 Senator Wicker: Okay. Well, in your military
7 judgment to us as members of this branch of Government,
8 what type of military action might we have taken to prevent
9 the attack on Tower 22 and earlier ones that you just
10 referred to?

11 General Kurilla: Specifically on Tower 22 and the
12 other ones specifically, there was action taken, as we
13 said, on that eight times that were taken. My option is
14 -- my job as the Combatant Commander is to provide options
15 ranging from kinetic to cyber, and I balance the risk of
16 those options against escalation when I provide those to
17 the Secretary of Defense and the President.

18 Senator Wicker: Sure. And I would not ask you what
19 advice you gave up the chain to the Commander in Chief, but
20 what are you telling us your opinion is as to whether we
21 should have responded more than seven times?

22 General Kurilla: I think the key to establishing
23 deterrence is Iran has to understand there are consequences
24 to their actions. I think on the last attack that we did
25 against 85 targets, our messaging matched our actions, and

1 then we killed an individual name, al-Saadi.

2 He was the Kataib Hezbollah overall commander for
3 Syria, and I think that sent a very strong deterrent
4 message, and we have not had an attack in 32 days in Iraq
5 and Syria. But I will tell you that deterrence is
6 temporary.

7 Senator Wicker: General, in 1988, Operation Praying
8 Mantis, you are familiar with that, are you not?

9 General Kurilla: I am, Senator.

10 Senator Wicker: And that involved the United States
11 destroying much of the Iranian navy. That did not lead to
12 a war between the United States and the navy, but it pretty
13 much put a stop to what they were doing at the time. Is
14 that correct?

15 General Kurilla: That is accurate, Senator.

16 Senator Wicker: Do we have the capability to degrade
17 either the Houthi maritime security or the Iranian maritime
18 security?

19 General Kurilla: Well, the Houthis don't really have
20 a maritime force. They do have explosive unmanned surface
21 vessels and underwater unmanned vessels. We hit those when
22 we see them. In fact, we hit three of them yesterday and
23 destroyed them. In terms of the Iranians, we do have the
24 capability in the Department of Defense to do that.

25 Senator Wicker: Thank you, General. Thank you, Mr.

1 Chairman.

2 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Wicker. Senator
3 Shaheen, please.

4 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. And thank you, General
5 Kurilla and General Langley for your service and for being
6 here this morning. And thank you for the maps. I love the
7 maps the DOD gives us. And picking up on that, I thought
8 it would be helpful for us to have a map of AFRICOM and
9 most of CENTCOM I think is in there, with respect to where
10 we don't have ambassadors.

11 I really appreciated both of you talking about a whole
12 of Government approach that you are doing in your areas of
13 responsibility, because, as you point out, there isn't a
14 military solution in these countries. And I wanted to show
15 this map. You can see by the pins where we do not have
16 ambassadors in Africa and also in Turkmenistan.

17 So, we have eight open missions in Africa, the African
18 Union, in Zimbabwe, Nigeria, the biggest most populous
19 country in Africa, Cabo Verde, Djibouti, where Senator
20 Wicker pointed out the Chinese have a base, Liberia,
21 Somalia, Burundi, and Burkina Faso. We also do not have an
22 ambassador in Turkmenistan, in CENTCOM.

23 So, how important is it for us to have ambassadors in
24 the countries where you are operating to help us move the
25 missions that we have in these countries? I would ask both

1 of you to respond to that.

2 General Langley: Senator, it is very essential that
3 we have, especially with our whole of Government approach.
4 These African partners understand that we are here to help
5 them reach their overall national goals of stability and
6 security.

7 But when we bring our assurance actions and our
8 African campaign plan and say three D, they say, okay, then
9 why are we important enough to have an ambassador? And so,
10 it doe draw a strategic communication that can be exploited
11 and leveraged by the Russian Federation and the People's
12 Republic of China. It is certainly essential.

13 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. And I would point out
14 that the PRC has ambassadors in all of those countries.
15 General Kurilla.

16 General Kurilla: Thank you, Senator. Actually, it
17 has been a great year for CENTCOM in terms of getting
18 ambassadors confirmed, so I thank this body for that. And
19 in Turkmenistan, the recent ambassador did recently leave
20 so we actually had a very -- it is critical to have an
21 ambassador. I talked to the ambassador from Afghanistan
22 -- from Iraq just this morning.

23 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you. I would hope that
24 our colleagues on both sides of the aisle, but particularly
25 those Republican colleagues who have been blocking these

1 ambassadors, will help us get this done. It is in our
2 National Security interest to have ambassadors in these
3 countries.

4 It helps not just with your mission, but with other
5 efforts that Americans are making in those countries.

6 General Kurilla, I just returned from a trip to Turkey. I
7 met with President Erdogan.

8 We were the first Congressional delegation to meet
9 with President Erdogan since 2019. It seems like there may
10 be an opening for a new -- to reset somewhat our
11 relationship with Turkey. And one of the things we talked
12 about with Syria and the potential for us to cooperate more
13 going forward in Syria.

14 And I recognize we have challenges in trying to do
15 that. But as we look at the role that Iran and Russia are
16 playing in Syria, it seems like that might be an
17 opportunity for us. So, can you talk about what we are
18 doing currently to maintain military to military
19 deconfliction relations with Turkey and how we might
20 benefit from more cooperation there.

21 General Kurilla: Thank you, Senator. I welcome the
22 opportunity to collaborate more with Turkey. As you know,
23 that is part of the EUCOM Combatant Command. But we are in
24 Turkey -- or sorry, we are in Syria for the enduring defeat
25 of ISIS and that is the whole reason that we are inside of

1 there.

2 And what I do look forward to is the ability to
3 cooperate with Turkey in a more wholesome manner going
4 forward on that.

5 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you. And what is
6 CENTCOM doing to try and ensure the repatriation of ISIS
7 fighters who are a real threat in that region?

8 General Kurilla: Senator, last week I was in Syria.
9 I was at the Al-Hol detention -- IDP camp, and I was in the
10 Al-Roj IDP camp. We have been making quite -- good
11 progress. I think almost 7,000 have been repatriated in
12 2023.

13 When I was in there, what we try and do -- the large
14 population of those are Iraqi. We are trying to move those
15 back into a place called Jeddah one. And it is the
16 throughput there before they go back into the communities.
17 There has been other countries that have done a tremendous
18 job on repatriating their people.

19 Kyrgyzstan is one of them. And we have gone from a
20 high of 70,000 in Al-Hol camp, we are down to 43,000 right
21 now. So, we are making progress. We would like to make
22 faster progress. The other thing is the ISIS army in
23 detention.

24 Over 9,000 detainees across 27 different detention
25 facilities in Syria. We need to repatriate those detainees

1 for either to face prosecution or reintegration and
2 rehabilitation back into their societies.

3 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. Thank you both very
4 much.

5 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Fischer -- excuse
6 me, Senator Shaheen. Senator Fischer, please.

7 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank
8 you both for being here today. General Kurilla, in your
9 written testimony, you stated that, "despite gains in the
10 counter VEO fight, various groups in the central region
11 retain the capability and will to target U.S. interests
12 abroad in under six months with little or no warning."

13 I remain deeply concerned about our ability to conduct
14 over the horizon counterterrorism operations in
15 Afghanistan. We have conducted only one strike against a
16 target in Afghanistan since that withdrawal. We don't have
17 reliable partners on the ground or basing agreements with
18 neighboring countries, and we rely on Pakistan for access
19 to Afghan airspace.

20 Despite these challenges, your mission of preventing
21 ISIS-K or other terrorist groups from successfully
22 conducting another large scale attack on the United States
23 or our partners remains an integral part of our national
24 defense strategy.

25 So, General, in your written testimony, you also

1 stated that, "the reprioritization of intelligence,
2 surveillance, and reconnaissance targeting expertise and
3 linguists creates gaps and seams in our ability to detect
4 and disrupt plots, increasing freedom of movement for VEOs
5 to plan a strike against the homeland."

6 And that, "this could be partially mitigated by
7 additional and alternative ISR assets and cooperation with
8 our Central and South Asian partners." Have you requested
9 any additional or alternative ISR assets from your chain of
10 command that have not been provided?

11 General Kurilla: Senator, I have made the assessment
12 of order required to accomplish all of these missions, and
13 I have passed it up to the chain of command.

14 Senator Fischer: Have you been provided those assets?

15 General Kurilla: I don't think any combatant
16 commander has all of the assets that they have. As you
17 look at the Secretary has to balance this globally across
18 all the combatant commands. We have received some and
19 there is some that I have asked for that I have not
20 received.

21 Senator Fischer: Have you been able to do an analysis
22 when you do not receive those assets on negative impacts
23 that has had on any of your forces or strategic plans?

24 General Kurilla: So, Senator, what I do is I turn the
25 -- if I don't get these resources, we measure that in terms

1 of risk. We look at the consequence of an action happening
2 should we not get that resource and the probability of that
3 action happening based on that. And we look at that across
4 all the different resources and missions that we have.

5 Senator Fischer: I would hope that you would make use
6 of your unfunded priorities list in the future so that
7 Congress has a better idea of what you need and what we
8 need to do in order to provide you with the resources that
9 you and your men and women need.

10 General Kurilla: I look forward to doing that,
11 Senator.

12 Senator Fischer: Thank you, sir. Also, would you
13 -- can you tell us if a mix of kinetic and directed energy
14 weapons in CENTCOM would provide you with better options to
15 defend against the Houthis attacks that Senator Reed was
16 talking about and asked you about that we are seeing in the
17 Red Sea?

18 General Kurilla: So, we do want to get --

19 Senator Fischer: Senator King and I love this.

20 General Kurilla: So, we do want to get -- it is a
21 layered defense, and whether that is on a ship, or it is on
22 a base. And we do have directed energy. The Army's
23 transformation in contact for it, they have sent us some
24 directed energy, mobile short range air defense that we are
25 experimenting with right now over in the Middle East.

1 I would love to have the Navy produce more directed
2 energy that can shoot down a drone, so I don't have to use
3 an expensive missile to shoot it down. But what is worse
4 than not having that expensive missile shoot it down is
5 hitting that \$2 billion ship with 300 sailors on it.

6 Senator Fischer: Agree. I hope that we can see some
7 further usage of those developmental systems that are out
8 there. But as you said, your first and most important
9 priority is to protect the men and women that are serving
10 this country. So, thank you, sir.

11 Also, how is CENTCOM supporting the Israeli military
12 as it seeks to root out Hamas? Are you -- and in
13 conjunction with that, working with Israelis, are you also
14 working to continue to develop partnerships with our Arab
15 allies, friends, neighbors as well?

16 General Kurilla: So, that is one of the biggest
17 things that we work. And I will tell you up until October
18 7th, we were on a trajectory that we had not seen any time
19 in the past, and that was in developing these relationships
20 with our Arab partners, and also with our Israeli partners
21 there.

22 Senator Fischer: Thank you, sir.

23 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Fischer.

24 Senator Manchin, please.

25 Senator Manchin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank

1 you all for your service. I appreciate it very much.

2 General Langley, if I could, on this -- I hope you have
3 been made aware of the just -- I think it has just been
4 brought out in the case of West Virginia National Guards
5 announced yesterday a new state partnership with Capone. I
6 don't know if that has been brought to your attention on --

7 General Langley: Yes, Senator.

8 Senator Manchin: Okay. I am biased, but I confirm
9 the National Guard of West Virginia specifically got asked
10 to take on the partnership giving their close relationship
11 that they have built with Qatar and Peru.

12 We have been working there very strategically. Part
13 of the reason that I believe West Virginia was selected was
14 due to the seven countries in Africa having gone to a
15 military coup in recent years. However, the August
16 military takeover of Gabon saw positive reactions from the
17 public due to previous Gabonese government's corruption.

18 So how productive have your previous engagements with
19 Gabon been, and how do you plan to use the new partnership
20 to expand the relationship? Or how will the West Virginia
21 National Guard fall into that?

22 General Langley: Thanks for that question, Senator.
23 Because I will tell you that the State Partnership Program
24 writ large is something that is unrivaled. When I say it
25 is unrivaled, because this is not offered by the People's

1 Republic of China, nor is it rivaled by the Russian
2 Federation.

3 So, we are continuing to engage through this authority
4 -- is going to be able to assist Gabon into being
5 -- increasing their partnership and capacity. We are going
6 to operate within the imposition of 7008 sanctions because
7 there was a coup.

8 But I think there is enough on notwithstanding
9 authorities to increase their overall capacity in their
10 security construct and also get them back on the road to
11 democracy.

12 Senator Manchin: Does the military have -- their
13 military has taken over. The coup was done with the
14 military. Do they still have control and they are running
15 the country?

16 General Langley: Yes, they do. And General Nguema
17 says that he is laying out a plan. State Department, our
18 African Bureau, Assistant Secretary Phee is going to ensure
19 that they lay out the benchmarks that will be acceptable to
20 the U.S Government for them getting back to that end state.

21 Senator Manchin: General Kurilla, if I may, Iran
22 continues to fund their terrorist organizations and all
23 their allies that they have been working with there. And
24 they have killed U.S. troops.

25 They are backing more recent destabilization activity

1 with Hamas. And it goes on and on. Despite a state
2 sponsor of terror, they continue to evade sanctions. How
3 knowledgeable have we been of the go ships and turned a
4 blind eye to that?

5 General Kurilla: Senator, that is actually Department
6 of Justice and Treasury in terms of the go ships. But in a
7 closed session, I can tell you what I know of the number
8 and how they operate when.

9 Senator Manchin: When we go into that session, I
10 would love to hear more about that. Alongside of our
11 partners and allies in the region, are you able to prevent
12 Iranian vessels from selling sanctioned oil used to finance
13 terrorism, or do you have to have approval from Justice to
14 do that?

15 General Kurilla: So, the Department of Justice is the
16 one that then does the --

17 Senator Manchin: Unless they give you the order, you
18 don't get the order directly. You cannot stop?

19 General Kurilla: We don't seize those ships, Senator.

20 Senator Manchin: You don't seize them or stop them.

21 General Kurilla: Generally, what happens is they talk
22 to the master of the ship, and they take it to a port. But
23 what I would highlight is that 90 percent of that oil is
24 going to China. So, China is funding that, and the very
25 dollars are then going out to fund Iran's malign activity

1 through their proxy network.

2 Senator Manchin: It is a lose, lose proposition for
3 the United States of America and all of our allies and
4 freedom loving countries around the world to allow what is
5 happening to happen.

6 And putting that oil into that market, such as that,
7 makes it much more challenging and difficult for us, and
8 just makes no sense at all. Are you worried about the
9 delays and theft in equipment deliveries from the Kurds in
10 both Syria and Iraq?

11 General Kurilla: The vast, vast majority of all the
12 equipment makes it up to the Kurdistan Region and the
13 Peshmerga. There has been some delays of some of that
14 equipment in Baghdad as they work through some of their own
15 process.

16 Senator Manchin: You have to close that loophole. I
17 mean --

18 General Kurilla: I am sorry?

19 Senator Manchin: Were you able to stop -- are we able
20 to stop that from happening?

21 General Kurilla: What we do is we work with the
22 government in Baghdad to be able to make sure that that
23 equipment makes it up to the Peshmerga.

24 Senator Manchin: Thank you, sir. Thank you,
25 Chairman.

1 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Manchin.
2 Senator Cotton, please.

3 Senator Cotton: General Kurilla, General Langley,
4 welcome. Thank you for your service and the men and women
5 who serve in your commands.

6 General Kurilla, last year at the same hearing you
7 said that Iran was undeterred. You have touched on this a
8 couple of times today. What is your current assessment?
9 Iran deterred or not deterred?

10 General Kurilla: I would tell you Iran is undeterred
11 in support to the Houthis. They are undeterred in their
12 support to Hezbollah, their support to Hamas, to some more
13 support into the West Bank.

14 They are deterred right now in Iraq and Syria and
15 their support to the Iranian aligned militia groups, but
16 not -- in terms of attacks, but not necessarily in terms of
17 their funding and equipping.

18 Senator Cotton: Okay. I think in response to Senator
19 Wicker, you said there hasn't been an attack in Iraq and
20 Syria in 32 days?

21 General Kurilla: 32 days.

22 Senator Cotton: And that is what you judged, they are
23 deterred?

24 General Kurilla: I also base it -- based on the
25 intelligence that I read.

1 Senator Cotton: Okay. But you also used the term
2 temporary. That is --

3 General Kurilla: Deterrence is always temporary.

4 Senator Cotton: Okay. But they are still training
5 and equipping those militias and other proxies in Iraq and
6 Syria?

7 General Kurilla: 100 percent.

8 Senator Cotton: If you raise and train a Pitbull and
9 then you let it off the chain in the neighborhood, do you
10 think you are responsible for the actions of the Pitbull?

11 General Kurilla: Senator, I do.

12 Senator Cotton: Okay, thank you. Talking about those
13 attacks, Senator Wicker asked you how many occurred since
14 October 7th? What was that number?

15 General Kurilla: Number of attacks in Iraq and Syria
16 or where?

17 Senator Cotton: I think he asked Iraq and Syria.

18 General Kurilla: Iraq and Syria is approximately 175.

19 Senator Cotton: Okay.

20 General Kurilla: 173.

21 Senator Cotton: And how many times since October 7th
22 have we struck Iran proxy positions in Iraq and Syria?

23 General Kurilla: I believe it is eight.

24 Senator Cotton: That doesn't seem like a very good
25 balance, 173 to 8. What is up with that?

1 General Kurilla: I think the -- when we strike, we
2 are hitting it. On the last strike that we did, we hit 85
3 targets, and we killed them, and we waited. And then we
4 killed their top commander for Syria, for Kataib Hezbollah.

5 Senator Cotton: Unfortunately, though it wasn't just
6 attacks on October 7th and since. Do you know the number
7 of attacks from January 20th, 2021, to last October 7th?

8 General Kurilla: I don't have the number, but it is
9 up there, Senator.

10 Senator Cotton: Would it surprise you that Secretary
11 Austin testified to this committee last year that it was 83
12 attacks?

13 General Kurilla: That would not surprise me.

14 Senator Cotton: And how many retaliatory strikes had
15 we launched in those two years and nine months?

16 General Kurilla: I don't have the exact number at the
17 tip of my fingers.

18 Senator Cotton: He testified that it was four. Would
19 that surprise you?

20 General Kurilla: No, that would not surprise me.

21 Senator Cotton: Again, not a very good balance, if
22 you ask me. Okay, so you said they are not deterred with
23 Houthis, which I think we can see obviously since the
24 Houthis keep sinking ships and killing people every day in
25 our global chokepoint that accounts for one-sixth of the

1 world economy. Have you offered strike options against the
2 Houthis that go beyond the current strikes that have
3 occurred?

4 General Kurilla: I provide options, a wide variety of
5 options, everything from cyber to kinetic, and with the
6 risk of escalation based on those.

7 Senator Cotton: Can you tell me a little bit about
8 the campaign to compel?

9 General Kurilla: The campaign to compel is when we
10 wrote back in October, and that is to compel Iran to cease
11 their support and attacks through their proxies. And it is
12 to hold Iran accountable for those.

13 Senator Cotton: Are you currently implementing that
14 campaign?

15 General Kurilla: We are implementing portions of that
16 campaign, but it requires a whole of Government. There is
17 no just big military and our instruments of national power
18 beating diplomatic information, military and economic.

19 Senator Cotton: Okay. You testified or you stated
20 that one of your priorities is limiting Iranian resupply of
21 the Houthis. What about striking their indigenous
22 manufacturing capabilities that Iran has built up
23 substantially over the years?

24 General Kurilla: Where -- internal to Iran?

25 Senator Cotton: No, in in Yemen. Yemen is making a

1 lot of its own drones and --

2 General Kurilla: Absolutely, Senator. And I can talk
3 to you in a closed session some of the challenges with
4 that.

5 Senator Cotton: Those are fake sites, aren't they?

6 General Kurilla: They are, if you know where they
7 are.

8 Senator Cotton: Okay. Do you think it is a good idea
9 to remove the Houthis from the Foreign Terrorist
10 Organization list in February 2021?

11 General Kurilla: That was a policy decision, Senator.

12 Senator Cotton: Do you think that embolden the
13 Houthis or encouraged them to think they could get away
14 with this kind of action?

15 General Kurilla: I am not certain how much that
16 changed their current action.

17 Senator Cotton: Okay. They were recently designated,
18 specially designated a global terrorist organization, which
19 is a pale simulacrum of being designated a foreign
20 terrorist organization. That doesn't seem to have changed
21 their calculus, does it?

22 General Kurilla: It does not.

23 Senator Cotton: Thank you. One final follow up on a
24 statement you made earlier. You said, and this is close to
25 a direct quote, that we could see attacks against U.S. or

1 Western interests abroad with little to no warning in as
2 little as six months. Are you speaking there about ISIS
3 and al-Qaida from Afghanistan?

4 General Kurilla: ISIS-Khorasan specifically, and also
5 out of Syria, which they are trying to factor into
6 predominantly European countries.

7 Senator Cotton: So, ISIS out of either Afghanistan or
8 Syria, attacks against U.S. interests and Western interests
9 abroad in as little as six months. Now abroad can mean a
10 lot of things. Abroad could mean, you know, our embassy in
11 Tajikistan. It could also mean Western Europe or North
12 America. Can you be more specific --?

13 General Kurilla: Europe and Eurasia.

14 Senator Cotton: Okay. What is the timeline you
15 foresee in which those terrorist organizations could launch
16 an attack with little to no warning against the American
17 homeland?

18 General Kurilla: I think it is that a lot more
19 difficult for them to be able to do that and requires
20 substantially more resources.

21 Senator Cotton: Okay, so six months anywhere across
22 Eurasia and indeterminate time in North America?

23 General Kurilla: Yes.

24 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

25 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Cotton. Senator

1 Duckworth, please.

2 Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I slid
3 right in there, didn't I, John?

4 [Laughter.]

5 Senator Duckworth: Good morning, General Kurilla,
6 General Langley. Thank you for appearing today. I have
7 the honor of being a member of both the Senate Armed
8 Services and the Senate Foreign Relations committees.

9 And because of this, I have a responsibility in
10 ensuring strong inter-agency coordination to address
11 pressing National Security challenges. We continue to see
12 increasing PRC investments in the CENTCOM and AFRICOM AORs
13 that involve economic, diplomatic, and military activity.

14 This poses a threat to our National Security,
15 requiring strategic coordination across the interagency.
16 So, we must also leverage our allies and partners to
17 counter this PRC activity. General Kurilla, General
18 Langley, can you explain the importance of DOD working
19 across the interagency, especially with the State
20 Department and USAID, to counter maligned PRC activity in
21 your AORs, and how can Congress help you?

22 General Langley: Thanks for the question, Senator.
23 And so, collectively at our headquarters, we have
24 representation across the interagency and also USAID and
25 Department of State.

1 And collectively, when we campaign with our African
2 partners, we take this into effect. We do this to counter,
3 one, the information space. There is a number of things by
4 Russia and China that are pushing and shaping on to our
5 African partners, especially across our society, that
6 changes ways in a departure away from international norms.

7 So, what we are doing is, with activities and
8 investments across USAID and the State Department to employ
9 type of efforts that are unmatched, such as in global
10 health. You know, just strategic health and is unmatched,
11 but what -- just one thing.

12 When I was with, Minister Counselor Mark Berry, we
13 went to Zambia. We went to Zambia because we knew that
14 they had already put out information about the helicopters
15 that we delivered there for crisis response were all about
16 fighting a war.

17 That was a skewed message, but what it was -- I was
18 with, Minister Counselor Berry, and she used to say, tell
19 what the numbers for PEPFAR are about. We saved 25 million
20 lives. We increased the life expectancy by 20 years when
21 we started this 20 years ago with President Bush.

22 This was -- and others that supported this Congress's
23 supporting funding of PEPFAR. That is something that is
24 unmatched by our partners, by our competitors.

25 Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

1 General Kurilla: Thank you, Senator. Very similar in
2 that we also have interagency representation across all of
3 CENTCOM. And really, it takes a whole of Government
4 approach to solve all of the challenges we have in the
5 region.

6 Senator Duckworth: Thank you. And General Kurilla,
7 the PRC has continued to target the U.S. relationship with
8 our long standing allies. How can we strengthen our
9 military -- our mil to mil engagement with our partners in
10 the CENTCOM AOR?

11 General Kurilla: One of the challenges we have
12 sometimes is the bureaucratic process of our foreign
13 military sales, which goes across all of our elements of
14 the Government. What China does is they come in and they
15 provide basically like Amazon, anything in the catalog,
16 express shipping.

17 They give them funding, which they don't know there is
18 a little bit of a catch sometimes in their funding with no
19 end user agreement. The time it takes for us sometimes to
20 bring foreign military sales to actually deliver is a
21 challenge for some of our partners because they have real
22 security needs.

23 So, anything that we can do, and there is elements in
24 the Department of Defense, State, Congress, and industry,
25 to be able to get that to happen faster would be helpful.

1 Senator Duckworth: Thank you. Since October 2023,
2 there has been a significant increase of missile and drone
3 attacks in the CENTCOM AOR, leading to the tragic death of
4 three service members in Jordan back in January.

5 I worked with my colleagues to add a provision to the
6 Fiscal Year 2023 NDAA that would provide an assessment of
7 the Iraqi security forces, including the Kurdish Peshmerga
8 forces, air and missile defense capabilities, and would
9 provide a training and equip plan. Kurdistan has been
10 targeted with missiles and drone attacks for hosting U.S.
11 military forces.

12 That plan was due February 1st. The required
13 implementation timeline for the training is 90 days after
14 the development of that plan. General Kurilla, can you
15 provide my office an update on the status of this training
16 plan and what you are doing to ensure its full
17 implementation within the required timeline, or are you
18 going to miss the timelines?

19 General Kurilla: Senator, I will get that to you.

20 Senator Duckworth: Thank you, General. How is
21 CENTCOM working to ensure that it has an integrated air and
22 missile defense system to counter the increased threats
23 posed to U.S. servicemembers in the region?

24 General Kurilla: So that is one of our top things
25 that we are working on, Senator, through our regional

1 partners. One of the first things that we are trying to do
2 is come up with a common air picture.

3 You have to be able to see the threat before you can
4 defeat it, and where there is many elements that we are
5 doing in terms of radar sharing agreements with a lot of
6 our regional partners.

7 Senator Duckworth: Thank you. I yield back, Mr.
8 Chairman.

9 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Duckworth. Senator
10 Scott, please.

11 Senator Scott: Thank you, Chairman. First off,
12 thanks to both of you for being here. Thank you for your
13 service and the men and women that serve with you. Thank
14 you for what you do. First, General Kurilla, can you talk
15 about why we are -- you know, what is the cause for all
16 these assets in the Red Sea area -- why are you there?

17 General Kurilla: So, the U.S. economy relies on open
18 sea lanes. Right now, when you look at the Red Sea, 30
19 percent of all container traffic travels through there. 12
20 to 15 percent of the entire global economy flows through
21 there. And by our National Security strategy, we will not
22 allow a state or non-state actor to affect the freedom of
23 navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, the Bab el-Mandeb, or
24 the Suez Canal.

25 Senator Scott: How many of those container ships come

1 to states?

2 General Kurilla: I can't give you the exact number of
3 those container ships, but right now what we are seeing is
4 a diversion of not going through the Red Sea.

5 For instance, if you are talking oil that comes
6 through, we have seen a diversion of that, and it goes
7 around the Cape of Good Hope. What that is going to do is
8 bring products late to need to market and price increases
9 as well.

10 Senator Scott: Do you have -- do you have a feel for
11 how much money we are spending right now with all the
12 assets we have added since the Houthis started shooting at
13 us?

14 General Kurilla: I don't have an exact number for
15 you, Senator.

16 Senator Scott: Do you have any feel for how much they
17 are spending?

18 General Kurilla: I don't have an exact number for
19 you, Senator.

20 Senator Scott: So, the attack on the ship that killed
21 the Filipinos, how is that -- how is that going to change
22 anything?

23 General Kurilla: In what sense, Senator?

24 Senator Scott: Are going to get more international
25 support or -- are you getting that much international

1 support or is this really borne by the American taxpayer?

2 General Kurilla: There's 24 countries right now that
3 are providing support in Operation Prosperity Guardian.
4 The first ship that responded to that was an Indian ship,
5 an Indian destroyer.

6 There was an Iranian ship 30 nautical miles away from
7 that that sat and watched. And another thing I have never
8 seen is a Chinese ship respond to a safety of life.

9 And all these ships that we have out there from all
10 these 24 different nations, whether it is ships or
11 servicemembers participating in this, we work together to
12 be able to defend those ships or respond.

13 Senator Scott: Do you have any feel for what
14 percentage of the cost is being borne by our military
15 versus the Indian military, the British, anybody else?

16 General Kurilla: I am assuming that the cost of a
17 ship is roughly the same to operate. So, I would have to
18 look at that by the number of ships that are out there. We
19 see several Indian ships that are out there right now.
20 There are several European ships that are out there as
21 well.

22 Senator Scott: So, what we have done so far, do you
23 feel like -- it is not stopping anything, right. The
24 Houthis haven't changed.

25 General Kurilla: So, if we look at the campaign of

1 for establishing freedom of navigation, protect those ships
2 and we protect -- our U.S. ships, we are escorting, to
3 degrade Houthi offensive capability. One of the challenges
4 is determining the exact number of what they had to start
5 with. And I can talk about that in a closed session.

6 And then really, the most important thing is to deny
7 their ability to resupply from Iran. The Houthis are not
8 building -- they are putting it all together and
9 assembling, but they don't create inertial navigation
10 systems.

11 They don't create medium range ballistic missile
12 engines. They don't create the stage separations on these
13 medium range ballistic missiles or the anti-ship cruise
14 missiles.

15 Senator Scott: Do you know of any products that we
16 would miss if the Red Sea was -- there was no travel
17 through the Red Sea?

18 General Kurilla: I think you would have a lot more
19 expensive products and it would affect the global economy.

20 Senator Scott: So, do you have any examples?

21 General Kurilla: I think the stuff that flows through
22 the Red Sea in terms of products. I think you would see
23 products late to need. You also have shipping containers
24 that -- there will be a shortage. The market will adjust.
25 Free markets adjust. And what you will see is a higher

1 price of commodities.

2 Senator Scott: Yes. Thank you. General Langley, can
3 you talk about why we have -- why we care about what is
4 happening in Africa right now. I mean, what -- can you
5 tell the American taxpayer, why are we there? Why are we
6 spending the money we are spending there?

7 General Langley: Thanks for the question, Senator.
8 For access and influence. I would say that a number of
9 countries are at the tipping point of actually being
10 captured by the Russian Federation, as they are spreading
11 some of their false narratives across Libya.

12 And from a strategic answer of peace, access,
13 influence across the whole Maghreb, that is NATO's Southern
14 flank. We need to be able to have -- maintain access and
15 influence across the Maghreb from Morocco all the way to
16 Libya.

17 Excuse me, the PRC and Russia are also remaining
18 exploitative where possible and coercive when necessary.
19 They want that ground. They want power projection
20 capabilities. So, for the most part, the rest of the
21 continent is also for mining concessions, whether it be
22 gold or rare earth minerals.

23 Both of them have a long range plan, but I think at
24 the accelerated pace, a Russian Federation is really trying
25 to take over Central Africa as well as the Sahel.

1 Senator Scott: Thanks both of you.

2 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Scott. Senator
3 Blumenthal, please.

4 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank
5 you both for your service and all the men and women who
6 serve under your command. I recently visited the region,
7 particularly our face in Jordan, the MSAB base jointly
8 manned by our Air Force and Armed services and the
9 Jordanians.

10 And read also Tom Friedman's piece in New York Times
11 detailing his travels with you, General Kurilla, through
12 Western Jordan and Syria. What I saw there and heard from
13 our commanders was about the small, nimble Iranian drones,
14 Shahed 101s, that were apparently used in the attack that
15 killed three of his service people, and the potential for
16 those small, cheap drones to swarm and to strike targets
17 because of their number and because of the difficulty of
18 detecting them.

19 They fly low and they are slow. We have apparently a
20 counter weapon called the Coyote, which has been produced
21 apparently in limited numbers. I wonder if you could talk
22 a little bit about the use of these small drones in that
23 setting and elsewhere in the region where our forces and
24 our allies forces may be at risk because of those small,
25 inexpensive Iranian drones like the Shaheds that are being

1 shipped all over, and what we can do to counter that
2 threat.

3 General Kurilla: Thanks, Senator. Appreciate that.
4 That is one of the top threats because it is inexpensive.
5 It is a precision guided weapon. Iran produces some that
6 can go over 2,000 km with those weapon systems.

7 The bigger concern is if you start talking about
8 swarms. So, we need to continue to invest in things like
9 high powered microwave to be able to counter a drone swarm
10 that is coming at you. I mean, in a classified setting, I
11 can talk about some of the activities also that we can do
12 against them.

13 But when you look at things like the Coyote missile
14 has been very effective. I mean, nothing is 100 percent,
15 and at some point the law of statistics will come up
16 because you have to have a layered defense. And they are,
17 you know, certain systems cost more than others. What we
18 want to get to also is directed energy where it costs \$1 or
19 \$2 a round.

20 We do have those right now in the Middle East that the
21 Army has provided us. And what we are going to do is they
22 are transforming in contact and be able to provide that
23 feedback back to them of what is working well.

24 What I asked the Chief of the Army is, don't give me
25 something to replace it. Give me something to augment and

1 I will tell you how it works, because it is a pretty rough
2 and harsh environment to operate there.

3 Senator Blumenthal: Do you think that there are
4 sufficient countermeasures underway right now, or should we
5 be focusing more resources to develop?

6 General Kurilla: So, one of the things I would ask is
7 to pass the supplemental, because I have \$531 million in
8 counter UAS technology that I need to get forward into the
9 theater that will save lives. And there is the technology.
10 There are things out there. We have to continue to
11 experiment.

12 We are experimenting right now with a system that
13 actually can go after both UAVs and land attack cruise
14 missiles, because it can go 300 knots. But if you go out
15 there and you decide not to engage, you can bring it back
16 and have it land.

17 What we have to get better at is the cost curve on
18 that to get those systems to be less expensive.

19 Senator Blumenthal: In response to some of my
20 colleagues' questions about Iranian oil, you have rightly
21 observed that it is not simply or solely a military
22 problem. Obviously, a lot of it is sold to China. So, it
23 is an export control or sanctions issue. But at the same
24 time, this regime employs a fleet of rogue vessels that use
25 a myriad of evasive technologies.

1 And those practices include, for example, turning off
2 GPS trackers before docking in Iran, at sea transfers of
3 oil between tankers, repainting vessels mid journey,
4 labeling oil as different types of fuels.

5 I think that clamping down on these practices to
6 intercept the shipments requires investment of American
7 military resources, correct me if I am wrong. Do you think
8 we have invested enough?

9 General Kurilla: So right now, we do not do any of
10 the seizure of any of that oil. It is Generally done by
11 the Department of Justice and Treasury.

12 But Justice then usually contacts the master of that
13 ship and tells that ship that they are carrying -- if it is
14 on a larger commercial ship, they tell them they are
15 carrying sanctioned Iranian oil. But then there is this
16 whole ghost fleet that you mentioned that is out there, and
17 we can talk about that, I think, best in a closed session.

18 Senator Blumenthal: And wouldn't our interceptions be
19 more effective if it were more than just the Department of
20 Justice?

21 I worked for the Department of Justice as a
22 prosecutor. I have great faith in the lawyers there. But
23 they are not military people. I don't know how much they
24 understand the logistics or the force requirements.

25 General Kurilla: And Senator, if I was given that

1 mission and the appropriate resources to accomplish it, I
2 am certain that we could accomplish the task given to us.

3 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you. Thank you both again
4 for your service. Thanks.

5 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.
6 Senator Tuberville, please.

7 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. Good morning. How
8 are you. Commander Langley, you stated that you seamlessly
9 integrated CENTCOM regarding activity with Red Sea. What
10 type of support are you giving them? And would you support
11 an increase if the activity continued to increase?

12 General Langley: Senator, I can get more explicit in
13 closed session, but I can tell you both myself and General
14 Kurilla can always use more intelligence, surveillance, and
15 reconnaissance assets.

16 That is something that is in high demand globally,
17 with the challenges and the emergent threats are across the
18 globe. That is just one of the areas that would actually
19 help us in protecting the force, and also indications and
20 warnings against attacks on America.

21 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. China has been
22 investing in economic infrastructure developments in Africa
23 since the 90s. What are the operational advantages that
24 China has over our efforts in Africa, and what are we doing
25 to help out on that?

1 General Langley: So, Senator, right now, China has a
2 plan, a long range plan, but they are coming in with their
3 Belt and Road initiatives, but I think they do have global
4 aspirations for a security construct to get a decisive
5 advantage over the United States.

6 We need activities and investments to deter that,
7 especially engaging with our partners, our African
8 partners, telling them to ensure that they are not
9 militarize. So, this takes information campaign that is
10 successful, but also assurance actions of building
11 partnership capacity where they won't need China and their
12 false offerings of security construct.

13 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. General Kurilla, I
14 feel your pain on needing more money. We are all -- most
15 of us for the Israeli supplemental. I know we have a
16 disagreement on all of it up here, but we surely want to
17 help. I am going ask you, you might not want to answer
18 this one, ask about your rules of engagement for our
19 military forces. They appear to be very lax. What is your
20 thoughts on that?

21 General Kurilla: Senator, in terms of where or what?

22 Senator Tuberville: Engagement with --

23 General Kurilla: The Houthis?

24 Senator Tuberville: Anybody that attacks our forces
25 in the Middle East.

1 General Kurilla: Senator, when I look at the Houthis,
2 for instance, I think in the last 72 hours we have
3 destroyed under my authorities and really all the way down
4 to the individual self-defense authorities, we have
5 destroyed probably 8 anti-ship missiles, shot down one way
6 attack UAS explosive, unmanned surface vessels.

7 They have all the authority they need to protect
8 themselves. The other strikes that we do, those are
9 Presidentially approved strikes.

10 Senator Tuberville: Any other bases in the Middle
11 East we have different rules of engagement?

12 General Kurilla: The rules of engagement -- everyone
13 has the right to self-defense. And those are the strikes
14 that we take. Other than that, those are Presidentially
15 approved strikes.

16 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. You know, most of us
17 up here, we don't really get it when it comes to this
18 Administration's support of Iran.

19 Seems like we are fighting on both sides of the coin
20 here. You know, I have talked a lot of people that have
21 even been in the fight for Israel, been in Gaza, and it is
22 horrific. We all know that. But I think they need to
23 focus more on survival than they do winning, because there
24 is going to be a gang up here and, you know, we need to
25 fund this fight. There is no doubt about it.

1 So, and I don't think either -- and I am going to ask
2 you to comment on this. This is not an Israel problem when
3 it comes to Palestine, this is an Arab problem. Arabs need
4 to take care of their business over there. If they want to
5 help the people of Palestine, they can help them. They
6 need to get them out.

7 And I totally agree with the problem of genocide. So,
8 that is all the questions I have got, but I have got a few
9 in classified. Thank you.

10 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Tuberville.
11 Senator King, please.

12 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen,
13 thank you for joining us this morning. General Kurilla,
14 one of the -- one of my nightmares is terrorists getting
15 hold of nuclear weapons. Deterrence has been our strategy
16 for 80 years and it has worked, but it doesn't work if
17 somebody doesn't have a capital city or care about dying.

18 What are we -- share some thoughts. I mean that is
19 one of the things that worries me about Iran moving toward
20 a nuclear weapon, North Korea, countries that may not be as
21 responsible as others in regards to the security of their
22 nuclear weapons. Thoughts on that issue?

23 General Kurilla: Senator, I will just speak for
24 CENTCOM in terms of Iran. As you know, Iran has kind of a
25 three pronged approach. One is to remain a nuclear

1 threshold country. They do not have a nuclear weapon right
2 now and I don't believe they have made the decision to go
3 to a nuclear weapon.

4 There are advanced standoff weapons and then use of
5 their proxies. They have, and this is open source and
6 unclassified, their production of 20 percent enriched
7 uranium has increased by 64 percent. And their production
8 of 60 percent highly enriched uranium has gone up 39
9 percent over the last year.

10 And that is all creating the highly enriched uranium,
11 but it is not the nuclear weapon. You would then have to
12 weaponize that. But is the assessment that they could
13 create enough highly enriched uranium, i.e. 90 percent, in
14 a matter of weeks of approximately three systems, and then
15 they would have to weaponize that going forward.

16 Senator King: And then the question if they go -- if
17 they take those steps, what about Hezbollah, Hamas? I
18 mean, that is -- the danger that I am worried about is,
19 Iran has to worry about Tehran and deterrence is a factor.
20 If it gets into the hands of a terrorist, that is -- then
21 deterrence doesn't work. And that is --

22 General Kurilla: That is a great concern. But a
23 nuclear armed Iran would change the Middle East overnight
24 and forever.

25 Senator King: It would probably lead to

1 nuclearization of other neighboring states.

2 General Kurilla: 100 percent.

3 Senator King: Of course, one of the issues in Gaza
4 right now is humanitarian aid. Very complicated, difficult
5 to get in, checkpoints, trucks lined up. What about the
6 option of seaborne humanitarian aid? And also, Admiral
7 Stavridis suggested a hospital ship coming to Gaza to
8 provide medical care, which would avoid some of these
9 problems of Hamas being embedded underneath hospitals.

10 General Kurilla: So, Senator, I was in the region
11 last week. I will tell you the suffering in Gaza is
12 significant, the human suffering. I was in Al Arish in the
13 Rafah gate. I saw 2,500 trucks loaded with humanitarian
14 aid waiting to go in.

15 The challenge is the security and distribution
16 internal to Gaza. Just this morning, about several hours
17 ago, we did another third drop to the Northern part of
18 Gaza. That is where the human suffering is the greatest.
19 That is North of the Wadi Gaza. That is an area that kind
20 of cuts the Gaza in half.

21 There is about 300,000 individuals that live there.
22 There used to be 1.4 million. There is no Israeli presence
23 in the North. They have predominantly defeated that by
24 getting the distribution of the aid up to there.

25 So, I have also stood at the Arabs Crossing last week,

1 and I was down at the central crossing into Gaza to look at
2 options of how do we increase the land based trucks going
3 into there, then can get into the North.

4 And then we have provided options of a maritime based
5 option to be able to bring humanitarian aid into Gaza as
6 well.

7 Senator King: And a hospital ship would be an option?

8 General Kurilla: I mean, there are obviously many
9 wounded. If that is a direction, I know that there is
10 hospital ship on the East Coast. If I was given that, I
11 would figure out the best way to utilize that.

12 Senator King: Let's move to Yemen for a minute. I
13 have been surprised, frankly, that once identified that
14 Yemen was firing these missiles into the Red Sea, that it
15 has taken so long to disable them, and I understand they
16 are continuing to make those kind of attacks.

17 First question is, why is it taking so long? I
18 thought we had fantastic intelligence and targeting
19 ability. How come a small country like Yemen is still at
20 it?

21 General Kurilla: So, what I would tell you, the
22 Houthis, well they are a tribal force up in the Northwest
23 of Yemen, they are fighting with the most advanced weapons
24 that Iran has, and they are being provided by Iran.

25 So, we are basically fighting the Iranian weapons

1 through the hands of the Houthis. You know, in the closed
2 session I will go into great detail the challenges right
3 now internal to targeting inside of Yemen.

4 Senator King: Well, I think Senator Fischer mentioned
5 this, but directed energy -- this is a place where directed
6 energy would really pay off, because those missiles that we
7 are firing to knock down their relatively inexpensive
8 missiles are \$2, \$3, \$4, \$5 million a pop. Directed energy
9 is about \$0.50. So, I think that is something -- I hope
10 that there can be an acceleration of the development of
11 that capacity.

12 General Kurilla: I am 100 percent supportive of that,
13 Senator.

14 Senator King: When he is 100 percent supportive of
15 something I suggest, I will -- that is a good time to stop.
16 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

17 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator King. Senator
18 Warren, please.

19 Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So, the
20 United States has put a number of rules in place to ensure
21 that we don't inadvertently contribute to civilian
22 casualties. But rules on the books are not enough.

23 I want to make sure that these rules work and that our
24 military leadership is putting the protection of civilians
25 at the forefront. Defense Secretary Austin has said

1 preventing civilian harm is, "a moral and strategic
2 imperative."

3 And during your confirmation hearing, General Kurilla,
4 you agreed, and you said you would work to improve those
5 processes. And the DOD has taken an important step in that
6 direction when it issued the Civilian Harm Mitigation and
7 Response Instruction last December to provide guidance on
8 how the department should prevent and respond to civilian
9 harm. And I want to thank you for that.

10 Among other things, the guidance directs the
11 department to identify whether the partners and allies we
12 provide weapons to will mitigate civilian harm. Now,
13 General Kurilla, can we get an accurate picture of whether
14 U.S. arms transfers contribute to civilian harm if we don't
15 collect information about how these weapons are actually
16 used?

17 General Kurilla: Yes. So, Senator, I am not involved
18 in the advising of the ground operation --

19 Senator Warren: I understand that. I understand.
20 But do you need information about how the weapons are used
21 to figure out if the rules are effective?

22 General Kurilla: To be able to answer that last
23 question, we would.

24 Senator Warren: Yes. All right. It would seem to me
25 to be crucial, but the Government Accountability Office

1 identified significant gaps in our oversight about how the
2 weapons are used, particularly in Yemen.

3 And in response, the Department of State established a
4 civilian harm incidence response guidance to investigate,
5 and it created an internal database to track reports of
6 partner governments suspected of using U.S. weapons against
7 civilians.

8 And yet, the Department of Defense has not created a
9 similar process or committed to work with the State
10 Department on its efforts to get the information needed for
11 civilian harm. So, General Kurilla, why is that? Why
12 wouldn't DOD want the information on whether our partners
13 are using U.S. weapons against civilian populations?

14 General Kurilla: I can't speak for why the Department
15 of Defense does not have that, Senator.

16 Senator Warren: But I take it you would like to see
17 it?

18 General Kurilla: I think any time we can do anything
19 to do civilian harm mitigation -- so once, as you
20 mentioned, we stood up our own civilian harm mitigation
21 response team. We have hired 9 of the 10 individuals --

22 Senator Warren: And I am grateful for that. I am
23 just asking about getting the data. More data helps us
24 make more -- better decisions.

25 General Kurilla: Better data always does. I will

1 tell you it will be a difficult data to get though.

2 Senator Warren: Okay. I understand that but State
3 Department is committed to that. I would like to see DOD
4 committed as well. Now, another tool that we have for
5 preventing civilian harm is Leahy laws, which require DOD
6 and State to vet foreign forces for any gross violations of
7 human rights before providing U.S. funded assistance.

8 This vetting process is a cornerstone of our human
9 rights policy, and it is supposed to ensure that we don't
10 contribute to human rights abuses abroad. However, DOD
11 seems to find ways around it.

12 And I just want to take one example. General Langley,
13 should the U.S. provide assistance to a military that is
14 notorious for targeting civilians, or that recently
15 overthrew its democratically elected government?

16 General Langley: Senator, no.

17 Senator Warren: No. Good. I like that answer. That
18 is exactly right. And yet, the U.S. military's exercises
19 last year and planned exercises for this year included Mali
20 and Sudan, where that has occurred.

21 DOD claims that under the Leahy law, it does not need
22 to fit that foreign forces for human rights abuses when it
23 engages in activities such as joint military exercises
24 because DOD does not technically categorize that help as
25 assistance.

1 Now, when Secretary -- when Senator Cardin and I found
2 out about this practice, we sent a letter to DOD raising
3 our concerns, and I am glad that DOD stopped its exercise
4 plans in Mali and Sudan. But we need to proactively close
5 this gap and protect civilians going forward. The
6 protections that we have for civilians, both in the statute
7 and in guidance can't just be pieces of paper.

8 They need to have a real impact. We need to
9 strengthen our tools for preventing civilian harm and I
10 look forward to working with the committee and with you to
11 do that. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

12 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Warren. Senator
13 Peters, please.

14 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen,
15 welcome and thank you for your service. General Langley,
16 you briefly mentioned earlier the states partnership
17 program that the National Guard has and how they work with
18 our global allies and partners to make sure we have
19 stronger relationships between them.

20 As part of the State partnership with Liberia, the
21 Michigan National Guard engineers have trained and they
22 built critical military infrastructure, as well as help to
23 combat infectious diseases in Liberia. That has gone
24 through some significant challenges, as you know, in years
25 past.

1 These partnerships advance State partnership
2 priorities as well as objectives of combatant commands,
3 including AFRICOM. So, my question for you, General, is if
4 you would expand before this committee on your earlier
5 comments about the strategic importance of the National
6 Guard State Partnership Program and your command, and
7 specifically, how have Liberia and other countries
8 benefited from this ongoing relationship with the Guard,
9 and how do you see that developing in the future?

10 General Langley: Senator, thanks for that question
11 because what myself and General Hokanson have been laying
12 out into the rest of the decade is a plan that will get
13 more State partner programs across the continent.

14 And here is how it helps. In our overall competition
15 with the PRC and Russian Federation, they can't match that.
16 The way we build and partner with our countries -- build
17 with our African partners, builds capacity and
18 capabilities, and also gives them an appreciation for the
19 rule of law, law of armed conflict in working with our
20 partners, and makes them even more resilient in getting
21 into their own civil society and closer to closing the gap
22 between civ-mil, some of the drivers of instability.

23 Partnering with it -- just California and Nigeria, and
24 others, have been the bedrock of stabilizing and increasing
25 capability in our African partners. That is unmatched by

1 our competitors.

2 Senator Peters: That is great to hear. Great. Thank
3 you, General. General Kurilla, CENTCOM has become a
4 proving ground, I think, for new operational concepts, for
5 technologies, weapon systems as well as formations.

6 Whether it is deterring the Houthi attacks that were
7 out of Yemen, or countering Iranian proxies, CENTCOM
8 provides a valuable operational environment for
9 experimenting with some cutting edge innovations.

10 And what is, without question, as realistic and as
11 relevant as you can possibly get, CENTCOM Task Forces 39,
12 59, and 99 are combining AI, they are combining that with
13 unmanned systems, as well as some commercial technologies
14 that clearly will give the DOD an edge in future conflicts.

15 So, my question for you, sir, is what lessons learned
16 are you sharing with other combatant commands as they stand
17 up similar task forces, and how are you helping to
18 accelerate the adoption of these commercial technologies
19 into the broader DOD mission?

20 General Kurilla: Thank you, Senator. Appreciate
21 that. When I look at something like Task Force 39, what we
22 are doing with robotic logistics, or what they are doing,
23 they have just stood up an additive manufacturing 3D
24 printing center in the CENTCOM AOR, and how we are going to
25 then use that to distribute so I don't have to do a

1 logistical convoy to get parts out somewhere when I can
2 actually build those parts right on site.

3 They don't have to wait for those parts to come. Or
4 Task Force 59, which right now we have dozens of unmanned
5 surface vessels out on the ocean right now, providing
6 indications and warnings in real time back to our maritime
7 operations center to help feed that intelligence picture.

8 What we can do in the central region sometimes
9 -- right now, if you were to put some of the systems out in
10 the middle of the South China Sea, they might not last very
11 long right now, where we can put those out and be able to
12 learn and experiment and then figure out how best to use
13 them in all the combatant commands, and we do share our
14 lessons learned.

15 Senator Peters: Right. Thank you, General. General
16 Langley, African military leaders are enrolled, to my
17 understanding, in as many as -- in many of China's 34
18 military officer academic institutions and their associated
19 noncommissioned officer schools.

20 In fact, I think the PLA annually educates roughly
21 2,000 African military leaders, currently. And I am
22 certainly troubled by that and concerned that these
23 training efforts are clearly part of the PLA's broader
24 efforts to have control or have significant influence in
25 Africa.

1 So, my question for you is, how is AFRICOM
2 establishing military academic partnerships with African
3 nations to counter China's efforts in this area?

4 General Langley: Senator, thanks for that question,
5 because that leads into my request for more international
6 military and education training for our African partners.
7 They treasure our values.

8 They acknowledge and best practices of a civilian led
9 military. And what we offer in our value proposition is
10 why they keep asking me for more seats. Morocco, I was
11 there a few weeks ago and talked to their higher learning
12 of their command and staff and top level schools.

13 And they said, we are replicating what you guys do in
14 the United States because they keep asking us for more
15 seats, because United States doesn't offer enough. That is
16 also competing with the Russian Federation.

17 They are beating us 12 to 1, Senator. Well, so 12 to
18 1. And then all the statistics you just stated there and
19 the PRC trying to get influence. They are trying to unseat
20 us as a security answer of building capacity and capability
21 to meet all the threats these African countries have to
22 endure.

23 Senator Peters: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Peters. Senator
25 Sullivan, please.

1 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 Senator Sullivan: General Kurilla, I want to go into
3 our approach towards Iran and the region. Thomas Friedman,
4 a very astute observer and a New York Times piece entitled,
5 A Titanic Geopolitical Struggle Is Underway. Mr. Chairman,
6 I would like to put this in the record. This Thomas
7 Friedman article.

8 [The information referred to follows:]

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1 Senator Sullivan: He says that today, while U.S. is
2 indirectly degrading Russia's capabilities through its
3 proxy, Ukraine, things are different in the Middle East.

4 There, it is Iran that is sitting back comfortably,
5 indirectly at war with Israel, at war with the United
6 States, at war with Saudi Arabia by fighting through
7 Tehran's proxies, Hamas in Gaza, the Houthis in Yemen,
8 Hezbollah in Lebanon, Syria, and Shia militias in Iraq.

9 Iran is reaping all the benefits and paying virtually
10 no costs for the work of its proxies. And the U.S.,
11 Israel, and their tacit Arab allies have not yet manifested
12 the will or the way to pressure Iran back. Do you agree
13 with that, General?

14 General Kurilla: I think Iran is using all of its
15 proxies in the region.

16 Senator Sullivan: But are they paying no cost?

17 General Kurilla: I think they are not paying the
18 cost.

19 Senator Sullivan: Okay. Well, let me get into some
20 specifics, and one that I just cannot fathom we have not
21 undertaken yet. Vice Admiral Brad Cooper, the former
22 Commander of the U.S. Fifth Fleet, now the Deputy Commander
23 at CENTCOM, recently appeared on 60 minutes.

24 When asked if the Houthis could execute these attacks
25 against U.S. Navy vessels in the Red Sea and international

1 shipping without Iran's support, he said, "no, Iranians
2 have been supplying the Houthis, resupplying them, they are
3 advising them, and they are providing them target
4 information. This is crystal clear."

5 So let me go into that. This is -- I have raised this
6 with the Secretary of Defense, the Deputy Secretary, the
7 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, we have the biggest terrorist
8 group in the world providing targeting information on the
9 USS Eisenhower, the Carney. The Carney shot down three
10 different missiles from the Houthis.

11 Why are we not sinking those Iranian ships? If there
12 is an Iranian spy ship providing targeting information to
13 kill sailors from Alaska and North Dakota, why aren't we
14 sinking those ships? By the way, isn't that part of ROEs?
15 You don't even have to ask the President for that
16 permission.

17 General Kurilla: That is not accurate, Senator. That
18 I wouldn't have to ask the President to do that.

19 Senator Sullivan: Okay. That is not part of your
20 ROEs, third party targeting? You have third party
21 targeting Americans to kill them. You don't have the
22 authority to take that target out?

23 General Kurilla: Not on the Iranian ships.

24 Senator Sullivan: Okay. Have you made a
25 recommendation to take out and sink these Iranian ships

1 that are targeting our sailors?

2 General Kurilla: I provide options ranging everything
3 from cyber to kinetic. And I also identify the risk of
4 escalation in all of those options.

5 Senator Sullivan: And we always talk the risk of
6 escalation. The Iranians are escalating on us. We have it
7 backwards. I talked to the chairman about this. This is
8 not useful when you guys start by saying the risk of
9 escalation.

10 The Iranians are killing our servicemembers. They are
11 escalating. Hamas is escalating. I think we need to drop
12 that talking point. In your personal opinion, do you think
13 the best way to get the Houthis and the Iranians to stop
14 shooting at American ships is to covertly or overtly
15 announce that the next time you target an American ship
16 with an Iranian spy ship, we will sink that ship. In your
17 personal opinion, what do you think that will do from a
18 deterrence standpoint?

19 General Kurilla: Senator, I think there needs a whole
20 of Government approach --

21 Senator Sullivan: I know, but I am asking about.

22 General Kurilla: -- to -- on Iran.

23 Senator Sullivan: I am going to get to the whole of
24 Government here. I got 50 seconds left. On that issue, in
25 your personal opinion, is that how you -- you heard the

1 ranking member talk about Operation Praying Mantis. Are
2 you familiar with that operation?

3 General Kurilla: I am very familiar with it.

4 Senator Sullivan: And so, what is your personal
5 opinion on getting the Houthis and Iran to stop trying to
6 kill our sailors? I had a meeting with the CNO recently.
7 She mentioned that the Navy worries about one of these
8 missiles slipping through.

9 General Kurilla: As do I.

10 Senator Sullivan: Okay, so how do we get them to stop
11 doing it? It is obviously not working.

12 General Kurilla: There has to be cost imposition on
13 Iran.

14 Senator Sullivan: And there hasn't been. Thomas
15 Friedman and all of us believe there has been no cost. I
16 am not blaming you, General. I am sure you have had strong
17 meetings where you say, of course we should sink these
18 ships. They are targeting our sailors.

19 But so, I am asking you not what advice you have given
20 to the President. Remember, when you got confirmed here,
21 we gave you a letter saying we can ask you in your personal
22 opinion. You don't have to talk to us about what you said
23 to the President.

24 What are you, as a 40 year General, decorated, knows
25 about combat, what is your personal view on whether we

1 should be sinking intel ships from Iran who are providing
2 targeting information to the Houthis to kill American
3 Sailors and Marines?

4 General Kurilla: I think it is best if in a closed
5 session, I can talk you through the intelligence of what we
6 know Iran is providing and the implications and what we can
7 do about that.

8 Senator Sullivan: I think this is a scandal and to
9 me, it is shocking, and I am sure you probably in the
10 closed session will tell me, of course you think we should
11 sink their ships. But I just don't understand it.

12 One final question. I have talked to the President
13 directly and Jake Sullivan and their whole team about non-
14 kinetic actions like reimposing sanctions on the oil and
15 gas regime of Iran. At the end of the Trump
16 Administration, the Iranians had \$4 billion in foreign
17 reserves. That is not a lot.

18 Now they have about \$75 billion because we lifted
19 sanctions in essence. Have you recommended -- and by the
20 way, the President said he thought it was a good idea.
21 Said look, there is the National Security Advisor. Talk to
22 Senator Sullivan and the team on this. That was in
23 December. We are not doing that.

24 Have you recommended non-kinetic options like stronger
25 sanctions against the Iranians and their oil and gas

1 regime?

2 General Kurilla: My recommendations are military in
3 nature, but I do recommend a whole of Government approach
4 for cost imposition on Iran.

5 Senator Sullivan: Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
6 Chairman.

7 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General
8 Langley, General Kurilla, good to see both of you again.
9 So AFRICOM and CENTCOM have seen conflicts involving
10 extremist terrorist organizations for decades now.

11 And the recent wave of coups, especially in West
12 Africa, is creating, you know, some fertile ground for
13 VOEs, and it is creating a big problem. I was there in the
14 region last January. Iranian backed extremists continue to
15 wreak havoc in the Middle East as Senator Sullivan, was
16 talking about.

17 And it is a problem that I think requires some new
18 solutions. As we are currently pivoting to fifth
19 generation fighters for readiness against pure adversaries
20 like China, it is critical that we don't lose sight of the
21 very real threat that we face every single day from
22 extremists in Africa and the Middle East. And General
23 Langley, you have previously highlighted the need for more
24 ISR capability, calling ISR an active deterrent in Africa.

25 Yet there are limited number of ISR aircraft to go

1 around. They are also limited number of assets that can
2 provide any kind of close air support in the region. So,
3 and then SOCOM has begun its acquisition of the new light
4 attack aircraft, the OA-1K for armed overwatch and close
5 air support.

6 And it seems to be capable and filling, you know, some
7 of this gap. And it does seem to be an aircraft that is
8 uniquely positioned to excel in AFRICOM. Just a few months
9 ago, I was flying an F-16 in Arizona, and I was reminded
10 how difficult it is to do close air support in a really
11 fast moving airplane like an F-16, F-35.

12 So, can you talk a little bit about how platforms like
13 Armed Overwatch can provide, you know, some important
14 capability against extremist groups?

15 General Langley: Yes. Yes, Senator. Because as I
16 was saying that, you know, in my statements that, we need
17 more capability, capacity, and especially in our
18 positioning on the continent and especially in the Sahel.

19 Because like I said, we are at a tipping point and
20 there is modest investment for us to do the whole tasking
21 for indications and warnings, especially with the Metaxas,
22 with the violent extremist groups, Jama'at and ISIS-Sahel,
23 bordering towards the Northern borders of the Gulf of
24 Guinea countries.

25 Any increased ISR, expanding my ability to give a

1 persistent stare, if you will, Senator, is going to be
2 helpful.

3 Senator Kelly: What do you have now doing that
4 mission?

5 General Langley: Right now, we just have like
6 -- contractor owned, contractor operated ISR, and a B350,
7 which is actually a co --

8 Senator Kelly: So, how many aircraft total?

9 General Langley: Right now -- I would cover that with
10 you in closed session, and as far as how many a platform we
11 have --

12 Senator Kelly: Do you feel what you have is enough?

13 General Langley: At this time, given this emergent
14 threat, Senator? No, I don't.

15 Senator Kelly: And General Kurilla, can you talk a
16 little bit about the importance of an armed overwatch
17 capability in CENTCOM?

18 General Kurilla: Yeah. Anytime you can have armed
19 overwatch overhead that also provides an ISR, and
20 intelligence capability is beneficial. The only thing we
21 have to watch for is the ability of the air defense systems
22 that could take that down because it is a slow mover.

23 Senator Kelly: And do both of you think that the air
24 tractor, the OA-1K K is appropriate for this mission?

25 General Langley: Senator, I would have to do a full

1 assessment on it based on the threat that we have, because
2 there are other characters in the -- on this AOR,
3 especially in the West.

4 General Kurilla: It depends on the region we would
5 operate it with.

6 Senator Kelly: I was in Jordan about six weeks ago.
7 Saudi Arabia, Israel as well, but in Jordan they had some
8 of these on the flight line. Not ours, but the Jordanian
9 Air Force, and they had a lot of stuff hanging on it.

10 General Kurilla: The King's daughter flies one of
11 them.

12 Senator Kelly: Oh, really? I did not know that.
13 Yes, and it seemed like you could hang a lot of stuff on it
14 and it has a lot of, you know, loiter time and can fly to
15 pretty low altitude even. You know, an airplane like that
16 that is designed initially as a crop duster can fly around
17 and turn really effectively, you know, below 50ft.

18 So I was, just looking at it. I haven't flown it
19 either, but it seemed quite impressive. And for the kind
20 of missions that you are involved in, in your AORs, it
21 seems appropriate. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Kelly. Senator
23 Cramer, please.

24 Senator Cramer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you,
25 Generals, for being here. I am just, I am going to follow

1 up with Senator Kelly's line of questioning and going back
2 a little bit to Senator Fischer's with regard to ISR, now
3 that we are getting a little more specific.

4 And I will try to, you know, avoid having to get into
5 secrets, but you mentioned in your opening statement,
6 General Kurilla, that the continued threat from
7 Afghanistan.

8 Have you had to divert ISR from Afghanistan or from
9 anywhere else to cover other areas? I mean, remember
10 Afghanistan was to be protected by Over the Horizon. I
11 mean, I just, I worry that we are so thin. So, give me
12 some specifics about diversion of ISR, providing gaps.

13 General Kurilla: So, every day, Senator, I have to
14 provide I have to determine where the risk is. And I have
15 to move intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
16 assets around, just like I do with my defensive counter air
17 fighters.

18 And the only places I was being shot at the time were
19 Iraq and Syria and in the Red Sea. So, for a period of
20 time, I did divert ISR out of Afghanistan to be able to
21 cover down on those areas that are most critical.

22 I do know that when Iran-aligned militia groups or
23 Houthis are out and they are trying to launch UAVs,
24 rockets, missiles, that when we have ISR, we have
25 determined that has a deterrent effect. So, we do need,

1 and this is something that I do think we need to continue
2 to fund is additional capabilities.

3 Senator Cramer: And I worry about that because we are
4 going just the opposite direction. I mean, we are retiring
5 particularly unmanned systems at a very fast rate and not,
6 you know, not building more of them nearly fast enough.

7 And I worry that we are leaving a lot of really
8 expensive assets out there unprotected, the survivability
9 of the sea fleet, in some cases the carrier fleet, as well
10 as the, you know, the men and women on the ground.

11 With regard to AFRICOM, General Langley, now the MQ-9
12 Reaper is pretty important in your AOR. Can you just maybe
13 elaborate a little bit on the importance of that system?

14 General Langley: In comparison to the MQ-1, it just
15 has more on station time, let's just put it that way,
16 exponentially.

17 And, you know, given the tyranny of distance,
18 especially across the Sahel and even in East Africa, is
19 -- that platform is in dire need to continue with that.

20 I understand that there is going to be a transition
21 coming up, so we need other type capabilities that are
22 equivalent or even more given the emergent, threat that we
23 have across Africa.

24 Senator Cramer: What you just said is really, really
25 important. That the best we have is older maybe than the

1 threat requires, and we ought to continually be developing
2 more modern, more durable, perhaps more sustainable, more
3 lethal, as well as covert.

4 Maybe in the later session, we can talk more
5 specifically about potential solutions. That is all I
6 have, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

7 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Cramer.
8 Senator Rosen, please.

9 Senator Rosen: Well, thank you, Chairman Reed, for
10 holding this hearing. I would also like to thank General
11 Kurilla and General Langley for testifying today, and
12 always for your service to our country. Thank you.

13 I want to talk a little bit about Iran and the long
14 term strategy to deter Iran, because our brave service
15 members in the Central Command area of responsibility,
16 well, they are facing drone and rocket attacks on a regular
17 basis from both land and sea.

18 Recently, three U.S. soldiers were killed, dozens more
19 injured in an attack against our troops in Jordan. They
20 were Staff Sergeant William Rivers, Sergeant Kennedy
21 Sanders, and Sergeant Breonna Moffett. They all made the
22 ultimate sacrifice for our nation and their service will
23 never be forgotten.

24 And I am going to add, may their memories be a
25 blessing to all those who knew and loved them. But we know

1 where these attacks are originating, Iran's hostile regime
2 and its deadly proxies.

3 And yet, we lack a sufficient deterrence strategy.
4 That is why Senator Ernst and I have successfully led
5 initiatives to mandate CENTCOM air and missile defense and
6 maritime strategies to defend against Iran's regional
7 aggression and protect U.S. service members. So, General
8 Kurilla, please.

9 While recent U.S. strikes on Iranian aligned militias
10 may have degraded their short term capabilities, what is
11 our long term strategy to deter Iran and proxies? And for
12 what we can say here, I am sure we can have a classified as
13 well.

14 General Kurilla: Well, thank you, Senator. I mean,
15 deterrence is always temporary whenever you do establish
16 it. But we need to have a whole of Government approach in
17 our ability to deter Iran's malign behavior. They are the
18 epicenter of instability in the Middle East.

19 Senator Rosen: Well, and proactively, what are we
20 doing proactively to prevent these militias before they
21 attempt to harm us? I think that is -- deterrence is one
22 thing, but how do we proactively stop what they are doing,
23 try to cut them off before they can do anything?

24 General Kurilla: So, part of that comes with the use
25 of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets,

1 defensive counter --we know that has an effect. On a
2 classified session, I can tell you exactly how that works.

3 But in terms of our ability to stop them, we have
4 struck back. The last strike we did in Iraq and Syria hit
5 85 targets, and then we waited several days, and then we
6 killed the commander of Kataib Hezbollah in Syria, in
7 downtown Baghdad.

8 He was directly responsible for conducting attacks on
9 U.S. service members. That has had a temporal deterrent
10 effect. Right now, there has not been an attack in over 32
11 days in Iraq and Syria.

12 Senator Rosen: Well, good. I look forward to the
13 classified briefing so we can hear more.

14 And I want to also talk about CENTCOM's support for
15 Israel, because Israel is our closest and most reliable
16 ally in the Middle East, and in recent years, the Abraham
17 Accords and Israel's absorption into CENTCOM have enabled
18 unprecedented regional security cooperation between the
19 U.S., Israel, and some of our Arab partners.

20 At the same time, Israel faces, as we know, we are
21 seeing a coming from Iran, mounting threats from Iran and
22 its proxies. And General Kurilla again, how can CENTCOM
23 support Israel's defensive needs as they face a war with
24 Hezbollah up North?

25 General Kurilla: I think you are seeing that right

1 now in terms of the material support we are able to find
2 for their ability to defend themselves.

3 Senator Rosen: And so, when you think about the
4 Abraham Accords and what that means and what we have been
5 able to do so far -- of course, I started the Abraham
6 Accords caucus. We have traveled to the Abraham Accords
7 countries. How do you think that you can leverage Abraham
8 Accords and grow that relationship between Israel and
9 CENTCOM?

10 General Kurilla: I think we do that through
11 encouraging the relationships between those countries and
12 Israel.

13 Senator Rosen: Thank you. I am going to kind of keep
14 on this issue here and thinking about water and food
15 insecurity. There is a lot of things that make the region
16 unstable, right, terrorism, water and food insecurities.

17 And so, what are the security implications of the
18 scarcity of water and food in CENTCOM? How might a
19 regional -- when we think about the Abraham Accords, that
20 is what some of these things are built on.

21 How might a regional water and food security working
22 group help CENTCOM act and reduce the security risk caused
23 by lack of good, clean water and food?

24 General Kurilla: Water and food insecurity drive
25 migration which drives instability. I think a working

1 group could identify where the greatest need is, when we
2 work with our USAID partners and others to be able to
3 provide that aid to their.

4 Senator Rosen: Thank you. I appreciate that. I
5 think there is a lot to do with soft power, like food and
6 water and security, intelligence, and other things that we
7 do. I look forward to just having both of you come in
8 classified settings so we can ask some more detailed
9 questions.

10 General Kurilla: Thank you, ma'am.

11 Senator Rosen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

12 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Rosen. Senator
13 Schmitt, please.

14 Senator Schmitt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. During the
15 first few weeks in office, the Biden Administration ended
16 the sales of -- the sale of offensive arms to Saudi Arabia
17 and focused on achieving a cease fire in Yemen.

18 They also reversed the previous Administration's
19 -- the Trump Administration's designation of the Houthis as
20 a terrorist organization. To what extent do either one of
21 you believe that the Houthis exploited that ceasefire to
22 increase their missile arsenal and other capabilities?

23 General Kurilla: I am certain that Iran exploited
24 that and continue to provide funds and equipment to the
25 Houthis.

1 Senator Schmitt: Would you agree with that?

2 General Langley: Yes, Senator.

3 Senator Schmitt: Okay. If the Administration had
4 continued to sell Saudi Arabia offensive weapons, do you
5 think that the Houthis would be stronger or weaker now?

6 General Kurilla: I think Saudi Arabia would be
7 stronger right now.

8 Senator Schmitt: And in effect, do you think that
9 that would have weakened the Houthis?

10 General Kurilla: Are you talking if they did not stop
11 them, Senator?

12 Senator Schmitt: Yes. If we didn't stop the sale, if
13 Saudi Arabia continued to have offensive weapons that we
14 stopped selling them, and then we lifted the terrorist
15 designation from the Houthis, do you think the hoodies
16 would be stronger or weaker today?

17 General Kurilla: I mean, I think that is a
18 hypothetical without knowing exactly how they were going to
19 implement.

20 Senator Schmitt: Okay. Was this a mistake -- like,
21 right now, 15 percent of the world's commerce is being
22 disrupted by the Houthis.

23 And I don't pretend to know all the considerations the
24 Biden Administration put into this decision to do those two
25 things, which was to not sell arms to Saudi Arabia and also

1 lift the terrorist designation, but it hasn't worked out.

2 They have been emboldened. What is it that you think,
3 General, we should do right now to -- this can't go on.
4 This terrorist organization cannot hold 15 percent of the
5 world's commerce hostage. What is it that you suggest that
6 we do?

7 General Kurilla: I think we need a whole of
8 Government and an international approach to this.

9 Senator Schmitt: Maybe like sanctions? Maybe like
10 selling arms to Saudi Arabia? Would those two things be
11 included in your whole of Government approach?

12 General Kurilla: I think that would be something to
13 for the State Department and the Department of Justice and
14 Treasury. I can talk about the military aspects of this,
15 and what we do need though, as the international community,
16 just like we did for counter piracy, to stop the flow of
17 Iranian arms. But there must be a cost imposition on Iran
18 for what they are providing.

19 Senator Schmitt: I agree with you on that. And you
20 would agree that there is no cost right now on Iran for any
21 of this, correct?

22 General Kurilla: There is some, but not enough.

23 Senator Schmitt: Right. Like enforcing sanctions as
24 relates to them selling oil would be one of them, a whole
25 of Government approach, right?

1 General Kurilla: Well, I think sanctions have to be
2 international. There is one unit -- I mean, their oil is
3 sanctioned. All the oil they are selling to China right
4 now, 90 percent of Iranian oil that goes to China -- China
5 buys 90 percent of Iran's oil. That is all sanctioned oil.

6 Senator Schmitt: Yes. And I guess I have a limited
7 time, so I want to sort of turn the attention to Israel for
8 a second. What more can be done or what can be done to
9 bring our hostages home?

10 This sort of this gets lost, I think, a lot in the
11 news cycle, but there are Americans there. What can we do
12 to bring -- what more can be done to bring them home?

13 General Kurilla: I mean, our hope is that all of them
14 will be coming home. In the classified session, I can give
15 you a little more details of what is being done.

16 Senator Schmitt: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Schmitt.
18 Senator Budd, please.

19 Senator Budd: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General,
20 thank you for being here today. General Kurilla, as you
21 know, the United States must take a firm stance against
22 Iran and its proxies.

23 This is essential to get Iran to back down and to stop
24 its barbaric and destabilizing activities in the Middle
25 East. But how we achieve that goal is important -- as

1 important as achieving it in the first place. Europe and
2 the Middle East are at war. The Indo-Pacific looks like it
3 may not be far behind.

4 So, if we are going to avoid a war in the Indo-
5 Pacific, then we must defend U.S. interests in other
6 theaters without using up capabilities that are needed to
7 deter China. So, we know that long range missiles like
8 Tomahawks will be needed to deter or defeat Chinese
9 aggression. Other things like air and missile defenses
10 will be equally vital.

11 We also know that based on DOD and CENTCOM's public
12 statements, that CENTCOM is using significant numbers of
13 all these capabilities in its ongoing operations. So,
14 General, are you concerned that CENTCOM's use of these
15 capabilities, such as critical munitions, air and defense
16 missiles, and the like is coming at the expense of
17 America's ability to deter China?

18 I know not in your AOR, but the materials you use may
19 be of concern.

20 General Kurilla: I am concerned with defending our
21 Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines, and Coast Guardsmen
22 out there right now. What I would encourage is that our
23 defense industrial base ramps up production of these
24 systems.

25 I would like cheaper systems that we can use that are

1 just as effective. Things like directed energy and other
2 systems that can bring down the demand -- but there is only
3 one thing that can bring down a ballistic missile right now
4 from a ship, and that is an SM-6 missile.

5 Senator Budd: Thanks for that. General, continue on,
6 can CENTCOM achieve its objectives against the Houthis and
7 others in the region without using Tomahawks or other
8 weapons that are vital to deter China that already in short
9 supply? You touched on that a bit, but if you would
10 expand, please.

11 General Kurilla: Yes. In a classified session, I can
12 tell you the exact number we used. I can tell you why we
13 used them and when we did. But I don't think we fired a
14 Tomahawk missile any time recently.

15 Senator Budd: Has OSD or the Joint Staff directed
16 CENTCOM to stop or reduce the use of weapons required for
17 China contingency in CENTCOM's ongoing operations against
18 the Houthis?

19 General Kurilla: They have not.

20 Senator Budd: Can you provide this committee with a
21 full list of munitions -- I think you may have mentioned
22 that in the confidential setting, that CENTCOM has used
23 during operations in the aftermath of the October 7th
24 attack. Would you be willing to share that with us?

25 General Kurilla: Yes, I will provide that through the

1 department.

2 Senator Budd: Yes, thank you. General Langley, I am
3 very proud of the North Carolina National Guard State
4 Partnership Program.

5 As you mentioned in your written testimony, the North
6 Carolina National Guard recently expanded this program in
7 AFRICOM to include both the Republic of Malawi and the
8 Republic of Zambia, in addition to its current partnership
9 on the African continent with the Republic of Botswana.

10 Can you please provide an update on the State
11 Partnership Program in AFRICOM, particularly on the new
12 partnership with Malawi and Zambia?

13 General Langley: Yes, Senator. This was -- I was
14 just talking to General Hokanson, and especially at the
15 anniversary last summer. We see that outsized effects of
16 the Institution of State Partnership Programs.

17 I wish we had more, because in competing with our
18 competitors, the Russian Federation and the People's
19 Republic of China, they have nothing to match that. So,
20 these are assurance actions that really solidifies us as a
21 partner of choice. Other countries see this, and they ask,
22 when are they are going to get their country partnership.

23 So, this vastly outweighs some of their rhetoric, and
24 when I say their, I am talking about the competitors, of
25 how they are trying to replicate what we are trying to do.

1 Because we already know that Africa, within Africa, now the
2 Russian Federation wants to establish a grounding that
3 resembles a State Partnership Program, but it doesn't have
4 the values -- it doesn't have the democratic values of what
5 we bring.

6 That is intrinsic values for stability, security
7 -- and security and prosperity with our African partners.

8 Senator Budd: Thank you, General. So how do short
9 term continuing resolution, CRs, how do they impact the
10 execution of the State Partnership Program?

11 General Langley: They participate in building
12 resiliency and getting on the continent and partnering with
13 them. So, there is no new starts.

14 So, if they are going to be part of an exercise such
15 as like African Lion, I am not sure if the Utah National
16 Guard can actually come this year because that is on this
17 -- next budget's money that hasn't been appropriated yet.

18 Senator Budd: Thank you both. Chairman.

19 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Budd. And thank
20 you, gentlemen, for excellent testimony. For the benefit
21 of my colleagues, there is a vote on the floor now. We
22 will go to that vote.

23 We will reconvene in SV-217 at 2:15 p.m., which will
24 allow people to stop along the way -- 12:15 p.m., I am
25 sorry. I was going to give you a long break. You need it

1 after this session. But we will recess until 12:15 p.m.
2 at SVC-217. Thank you, gentlemen.

3 [Whereupon, at 11:56 a.m., the open session was
4 adjourned.]

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