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Madame Chairwoman, Senator Reed, members of the Committee. Thank you for your essential and enduring support for our men and women in uniform and the opportunity to address this distinguished body and to offer my perspective on current threats to national security, American Foreign Policy and National Defense topics.

There are certainly many areas of concern around the world and we see the most spectacular and troubling highlighted regularly in the media. I believe that a coherent national security strategy requires a long term focus with well thought out objectives. We should resist reactive responses and attempts to find near term fixes for pop up issues which arise continuously and compete for attention with what we should determine are higher priority interests.

In surveying the worldscape today, I would suggest that we focus on where we, as a nation, want to be in the future. My vote would be for improving world security and stability with more people around the world enjoying a better life in conditions of their choosing, with responsible elected leaders providing good governance and respect for human dignity. This scenario, clearly in our better national interest, is not going to happen without lots of hard work, informed and guided by an effective national security strategy.

The United States government has provided, and must continue to provide; leadership, good example and active political, economic and military security assistance in working toward these desired objectives.

The fundamental prerequisite for any successful national security strategy is a sound and strong domestic foundation. Our credibility in the world is based on the example of our actions and how people perceive we might act in current and future situations. It is fair to wonder if people in other parts of the world take us seriously when they observe partisan political bickering preclude agreement on fundamental issues like national operating budgets or cyber policies, and seemingly ever changing policies and priorities.

Our military capability is an essential element of national power but only one of many key tools which include diplomacy, development, economic, financial and political and certainly, moral leadership. We face tough choices ahead, about when, where and if to engage our forces. We also face tough choices about capabilities and what to acquire. We cannot afford everything.

As we contemplate myriad challenges to world stability and U.S. security, we should first acknowledge, distasteful as it might be, the reality that nuclear weapons, and aspirations for them, continue to proliferate. In this regard, it is discouraging to note that after more than two decades of nuclear counter

proliferation progress, fueled in large measure by the Nunn-Lugar initiative, Russian-U.S. cooperation appears to have ground to a halt in the wake of dangerous Russian bad behavior.

U.S. strategy for dealing with the potential use of these weapons of mass destruction has been our heretofore successful National Strategic Deterrent Force. But the critical components of this force have been aging without significant upgrade. Modernization of the force, particularly the survivability of the sea based deterrent, should be a top priority consideration for us to remain credible in deterring worst case scenarios.

In my view, one of our most important strategic interests, with huge implications for national security and the stability of the vast Asia-Pacific region, is our long term relationship with China. Mutually beneficial in many respects, it has other dimensions, notably in the areas of cyber security, military expansion and regional disputes with neighboring countries, which are a cause for concern and need to be addressed.

A key focal point of this hearing is conflict in the Middle East and the spread of violent extremism in the region, and from it, to other places in the world. The Middle East, an area of high interest to us for many reasons, continues to be buffeted by challenges which have vexed years of U.S. attempts to improve stability in the area. Nonetheless, we should continue to engage in the region, using all aspects of national power, but with the understanding that we are not likely to be successful by mandating U.S. solutions. People in the region are sooner or later going to have to step up and address the issues which torment and divide them. We can and should assist but we are not going to resolve their problems.

Some recommendations for addressing the current challenge from the so called Daesh in Iraq and Syria include; (1) Recognition that success in Iraq will rest on the ability of the new government of Haider al Abadi to convince the majority of his countrymen, particularly the Sunni minority, that they will get a fair shake going forward. Absent this political foundation, nothing we do will be effective in the long term. (2) Getting Islamic leaders, the elites of the Arab countries, to actively counter the extremist ideology and cut funding to Daesh and other extremists. In a positive note here, I would highlight recent remarks by Egyptian leader Abdel al Sisi. And (3) Continue U.S. military efforts to work closely with the Iraqi military to enhance capabilities, increase combat effectiveness and support them with training, airpower and SOF as required to defeat Daesh and reclaim areas overrun last summer. Simultaneously pressing Daesh rear areas in Syria to degrade and deny their ability to expand or sustain operations in Iraq. No single one of these actions will defeat the threat. All need to occur.

Combating violent extremism worldwide will be a long term effort requiring close cooperation with allies and willing nations, especially in areas of intelligence sharing and U.S. military training and assistance for less capable colleagues.

In summary, strategic coherence in foreign policy and national security would benefit from strong, credible and consistent domestic policies and actions to return this great nation to the position of exemplary leadership it earned and enjoyed not that long ago. Building on this position of domestic strength, a thoughtful, focused and collaborative strategy formulation process to agree on a relatively few high priority national security goals and objectives should set us on a fair course.

At the international level, active engagement using all aspects of national power underpinned with a strong forward presence by U.S. military forces, with credible capabilities, is our best deterrent and response to security threats.

Thank you. I will be pleased to address specific questions you may have.