

27 January 2015

**Statement of James N. Mattis before the Senate Armed Services Committee**

Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished Senators of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. I request that my statement be accepted for the record.

During my active duty years I testified many times before this committee and gained the highest regard for the manner in which you carried out your role. I also recall with gratitude your support for our armed forces through good times and bad and I'm honored to return here today.

I commend the committee for holding these hearings. As former Secretary of State George Shultz has commented, the world is awash in change. The international order, so painstakingly put together by the greatest generation coming home from mankind's bloodiest conflict, is under increasing stress. It was created with elements we take for granted: the United Nations, NATO, the Marshall Plan, Bretton Woods and more. The constructed order reflected the wisdom of those who recognized no nation lived as an island and we needed new ways to deal with challenges that for better or worse impacted all nations. Like it or not, today we are part of this larger world and must carry out our part. We cannot wait for problems to arrive here or it will be too late; rather we must remain strongly engaged in this complex world.

The international order built on the state system is not self-sustaining. It demands tending by an America that leads wisely, standing unapologetically for the freedoms each of us in this room have enjoyed. The hearing today addresses the need for America to adapt to changing circumstances, to come out now from its reactive crouch and to take a firm strategic stance in defense of our values. While we recognize that we owe future generations the same freedoms we enjoy, the challenge lies in how to carry out our responsibility. For certain we have lived too long now in a strategy-free mode.

To do so America needs a refreshed national strategy. The Congress can play a key role in crafting a coherent strategy with bi-partisan support. Doing so requires us to look beyond events currently consuming the executive branch. There is an urgent need to stop reacting to each immediate vexing issue in

isolation. Such response often creates unanticipated second order effects and more problems for us. The Senate Armed Services Committee is uniquely placed in our system of government to guide, oversee and ensure that we act strategically and morally, using America's ability to inspire as well as its ability to intimidate to ensure freedom for future generations. I suggest that the best way to cut to the essence of these issues and to help you in crafting America's response to a rapidly changing security environment is to ask the right questions. If I were in your shoes these are some that I would ask:

What are the key threats to our vital interests?

-The intelligence community should delineate and provide an initial prioritization of those threats for your consideration. By rigorously defining the problems we face you will enable a more intelligent and focused use of the resources allocated for national defense.

Is our intelligence community fit for its expanding purpose?

-Today we have less of a military shock absorber to take surprise in stride, and fewer forward-deployed military forces overseas to act as sentinels. Accordingly we need more early warning. Working with the intell committee you should question if we are adequately funding the intell agencies to reduce the chance of our defenses being caught flat-footed. We know that the "foreseeable future" is not foreseeable; your review must incorporate unpredictability, recognizing risk while avoiding gambling with our nation's security.

Incorporating the broadest issues in your assessments, you should consider what we must do if the national debt is assessed to be the biggest national security threat we face?

-As President Eisenhower noted, the foundation of military strength is our economic strength. In a few short years paying interest on our debt will be a bigger bill than what we pay for defense. Much of that interest money is destined to leave America for overseas. If we refuse to reduce our debt/pay down our deficit, what is the impact on national security for future generations who will inherit this irresponsible debt and the taxes to service it? No nation in history has maintained its military power if it failed to keep its fiscal house in order.

How do you urgently halt the damage caused by sequestration?

-No foe in the field can wreck such havoc on our security that mindless sequestration is achieving. Congress passed it because it was viewed as so

injurious that it would force wise choices. It has failed and today we use arithmetic vice sound thinking to run our government, despite emerging enemy threats. This committee must lead the effort to repeal the sequestration that is costing military readiness and long term capability while sapping troop morale. Without predictability in budget matters no strategy can be implemented by your military leaders. Your immediate leadership is needed to avert further damage.

In our approach to the world we must be willing to ask strategic questions. In the Middle East where our influence is at its lowest point in four decades we see a region erupting in crises. We need a new security architecture for the Mid-East built on sound policy, one that permits us to take our own side in this fight. Crafting such a policy starts with asking a fundamental question and then others:

Is political Islam in our best interest? If not what is our policy to support the countervailing forces?

-Violent terrorists cannot be permitted to take refuge behind false religious garb and leave us unwilling to define this threat with the clarity it deserves.

-We have potential allies around the world and in the Middle East who will rally to us but we have not been clear about where we stand in defining or dealing with the growing violent jihadist terrorist threat.

Iran is a special case that must be dealt with as a threat to regional stability, nuclear and otherwise. I believe that you should question the value of Congress adding new sanctions while international negotiations are ongoing, vice having them ready should the negotiations for preventing their nuclear weapons capability and stringent monitoring break down. Further question now if we have the right policies in place when Iran creates more mischief in Lebanon, Iraq, Bahrain, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the region, recognizing that regional counterweights like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council can reinforce us if they understand our policies, clarify our foreign policy goals beyond Iran's nuclear weapons program.

In Afghanistan we need to consider if we're asking for the same outcome there as we saw last summer in Iraq if we pull out all our troops on the Administration's proposed timeline. Echoing the military advice given on the same issue in Iraq, gains achieved at great cost against our enemy in Afghanistan are reversible. We should recognize that we may not want this fight but the barbarity of an enemy

that kills women and children and has refused to break with Al Qaeda needs to be fought.

More broadly, is the U.S. military being developed to fight across the spectrum of combat?

-Knowing that enemies always move against perceived weakness, our forces must be capable of missions from nuclear deterrence to counter-insurgency and everything in between, now including the pervasive cyber domain. While surprise is always a factor, this committee can ensure that we have the fewest big regrets when the next surprise occurs. We don't want or need a military that is at the same time dominant and irrelevant, so you must sort this out and deny funding for bases or capabilities no longer needed.

The nuclear stockpile must be tended to and fundamental questions must be asked and answered:

-We must clearly establish the role of our nuclear weapons: do they serve solely to deter nuclear war? If so we should say so, and the resulting clarity will help to determine the number we need.

-Is it time to reduce the Triad to a Diad, removing the land-based missiles? This would reduce the false alarm danger.

-Could we re-energize the arms control effort by only counting warheads vice launchers?

-Was the Russian test violating the INF treaty simply a blunder or a change in policy, and what is our appropriate response?

The reduced size of our military drives the need to ask other questions:

Our military is uniquely capable and the envy of the world, but are we resourcing it to ensure we have the highest quality troops, the best equipment and the toughest training?

-With a smaller military comes the need for troops kept at the top of their game. When we next put them in harm's way it must be the enemy's longest day and worst day. Tiered readiness with a smaller force must be closely scrutinized to ensure we aren't merely hollowing out the force. While sequestration is the nearest threat to this national treasure that is the U.S. military, sustaining it as the world's best when smaller will need your critical oversight.

Are the Navy and our expeditionary forces receiving the support they need in a world where America's naval role is more pronounced because we have fewer forces posted overseas?

-With the cutbacks to the Army and Air Force and fewer forces around the world, military aspects of our strategy will inevitably become more naval in character. This will provide decision time for political leaders considering employment of additional forms of military power. Your resourcing of our naval and expeditionary forces will need to take this development into account. Because we will need to swiftly move ready forces to act against nascent threats, nipping them in the bud, the agility to reassure friends and temper adversary activities will be critical to America's effectiveness for keeping a stable and prosperous world. Today I question if our shipbuilding budget is sufficient, especially in light of the situation in the South China Sea.

-While our efforts in the Pacific to keep positive relations with China are well and good, these efforts must be paralleled by a policy to build the counterbalance if China continues to expand its bullying role in the South China Sea and elsewhere. That counterbalance must deny China veto power over territorial, security and economic conditions in the Pacific, building support for our diplomatic efforts to maintain stability and economic prosperity so critical to our economy.

In light of worldwide challenges to the international order we are nonetheless shrinking our military. Are we adjusting our strategy and taking into account a reduced role for that shrunken military?

-Strategy connects ends, ways and means. With less military available, we must reduce our appetite for using it. Connecting the dots is appropriate for this committee. Absent growing our military, there must come a time when moral outrage, serious humanitarian plight, or lesser threats cannot be militarily addressed. Prioritization is needed if we are to remain capable of the most critical mission for which we have a military: to fight on short notice and defend the country. In this regard we must recognize we should not and need not carry this military burden solely on our own:

Does our strategy and associated military planning take into account our nation's increased need for allies?

-The need for stronger alliances comes more sharply into focus as we shrink the military. No nation can do on its own all that is necessary for its security. Further, history reminds us that countries with allies generally defeat those without. A

capable U.S. military, reinforcing our political will to lead from the front, is the bedrock on which we draw together those nations that stand with us against threats to the international order. Our strategy must adapt to and accommodate this reality. As Churchill intimated, the only thing harder than fighting with allies is fighting without them. This committee should track closely an increased military capability to work with allies, the NATO alliance being foremost but not our sole focus. We must also enlist non-traditional partners where we have common foes or common interests.

-In reference to NATO and in light of the Russian violations of international borders, we must ask if the Alliance's efforts have adjusted to the unfortunate and dangerous mode the Russian leadership has slipped into?

-With regard to tightening the bond between our smaller military and those we may need at our side in future fights, the convoluted foreign military sales system needs your challenge. Hopefully it can be put in order before we drive more potential partners to equip themselves with foreign equipment, a move that makes it harder to achieve needed interoperability with our allies and undercuts America's industrial base. Currently the system fails to reach its potential to support our foreign policy.

As we attempt to restore stability to the state system and international order, a critical question will be, Is America good for its word?

-When we make clear our position or give our word about something, our friends (and even our foes) must recognize that we are good for it. Otherwise dangerous miscalculations can occur. This means that the military instrument must be fit for purpose and that once a political position is taken, our position is backed up by a capable military making clear that we will stand on our word.

When the decision is made to employ our forces in combat, the committee should ask if the military is being employed with the proper authority. I believe you should examine answers to fundamental questions like the following:

-Are the political objectives clearly defined and achievable? Murky or quixotic political end states can condemn us to entering wars we don't know how to end. Notifying the enemy in advance of our withdrawal dates or reassuring the enemy that we will not use certain capabilities like our ground forces should be avoided. Such announcements do not take the place of mature, well-defined end-states, nor do they contribute to ending wars as rapidly as possible on favorable terms.

-Is the theater of war itself sufficient for effective prosecution? We have witnessed safe havens prolonging war. If the defined theater of war is insufficient, the plan itself needs to be challenged to determine feasibility of its success or the need for its modification.

-Is the authority for detaining prisoners of war (POs) appropriate for the enemy and type war that we are fighting? We have observed the perplexing lack of detainee policy that has resulted in the return of released prisoners to the battlefield. We should not engage in another fight without resolving this issue up front, treating hostile forces, in fact, as hostile.

-Are America's diplomatic, economic and other assets aligned to the war aims, with the intent of ending the conflict as rapidly as possible? We have experienced the military alone trying achieve tasks outside its expertise. When we take the serious decision to fight, we must bring to bear all our nation's resources. You should question how the diplomatic and development efforts will be employed to build momentum for victory and our nation's strategy needs that integration.

Finally the culture of our military and its rules are designed to bring about battlefield success in the most atavistic environment on earth. No matter how laudable in terms of a progressive country's instincts, this committee needs to consider carefully any proposed changes to military rules, traditions and standards that bring non-combat emphasis to combat units. There is a great difference between military service in dangerous circumstances and serving in a combat unit whose role is to search out and kill the enemy at close quarters. This committee has a responsibility for imposing reason over impulse when proposed changes could reduce the combat capability of our forces at the point of contact with the enemy.

---

Ultimately we need the foresight of this committee, acting in its sentinel and oversight role, to draw us out of the reactive stance we've fallen into and chart a strategic way ahead. Our national security strategy needs your bi-partisan direction. In some cases you may need to change our processes for developing an integrated national strategy, because mixing capable people and their good ideas with bad processes results in the bad processes defeating good peoples' ideas nine times out of ten. This is an urgent matter, because in an

interconnected age when opportunistic adversaries can work in tandem to destroy stability and prosperity, our country needs to regain its strategic footing. We need to bring clarity to our efforts before we lose the confidence of the American people and the support of our potential allies. This committee can play an essential strategic role in this regard.