

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATION OF
LIEUTENANT GENERAL LAURA J. RICHARDSON, USA
TO BE GENERAL AND COMMANDER, UNITED STATES
SOUTHERN COMMAND

Tuesday, August 3, 2021

Washington, D.C.

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1 HEARING TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATION OF
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4
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6
7 U.S. Senate

8 Committee on Armed Services

9 Washington, D.C.

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11 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m. in
12 Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Jack Reed,
13 chairman of the committee, presiding.

14 Committee members present: Senators Reed [presiding],
15 Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Kaine, King, Warren, Peters,
16 Manchin, Rosen, Kelly, Fischer, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis,
17 Sullivan, Scott, Blackburn, Hawley, and Tuberville.

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

3 Chairman Reed: Let me call the hearing to order.

4 Good morning. The committee meets to consider the
5 nomination of Lieutenant General Laura Richardson, to be
6 promoted to four-star general and to be the next commander
7 of the United States Southern Command.

8 If confirmed, you will be the second female, four-star
9 general officer currently serving in the United States
10 military and the second female officer to command a
11 geographic combatant command.

12 I am glad to preside for this well-deserved nomination
13 and I thank you, General, for your continued service and
14 willingness to lead in this important position.

15 I would like to welcome your husband, Lieutenant
16 General James Richardson, United States Army, and your
17 daughter, Lauren Richardson. We thank them for your
18 continued support to our nation.

19 You have most recently served as the commander of the
20 U.S. Army North and senior commander of Fort Sam Houston and
21 Camp Bullis in Texas. That experience, along with your
22 distinguished career of service across multiple theaters,
23 and commander at all levels, will serve you well in this new
24 role.

25 Security issues in the U.S. Southern Command, or

1 SOUTHCOM, are challenging and increasingly complex.
2 SOUTHCOM has traditionally focused on counter-drug and
3 counter-transnational criminal organization missions, while
4 making the most of limited resources; recently, however, the
5 SOUTHCOM region has experienced a rise in political
6 instability, including the presidential assassination in
7 Haiti, political protest in Cuba, and continuing economic
8 and political degradation in Venezuela, as the Maduro regime
9 clings to power.

10 Further, the security situation in the northern
11 triangle countries, Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador,
12 continues to deteriorate, exacerbated by the corruption of
13 these governments, human rights violations, and criminal
14 violence. It is critical that the root causes of this
15 instability be addressed comprehensively. I would be
16 interested in your views and the role that SOUTHCOM might
17 play in those efforts.

18 The political and economic instability in these
19 SOUTHCOM nations presents a situation that China, Russia,
20 and other near-peer rivals are now seeking to exploit to
21 increase their own strategic influence. In March, Admiral
22 Faller, the current SOUTHCOM commander, provided this
23 committee a classified briefing on the growing malign
24 influence of China in the region and the consequential
25 threat this poses to the United States.

1 A critical task to the next SOUTHCOM commander will be
2 to focus on countering these efforts by near-peer rivals to
3 coerce our allies and partners. We need to find ways to
4 complete and compete successfully, short of armed conflict,
5 including by addressing sources of insecurity and other
6 vulnerabilities that near-peer rivals exploit to gain
7 leverage or sow division.

8 It will also be important to strengthen the resilience
9 of the U.S. partner security forces, including by building
10 defense institutional capabilities for adherence to the rule
11 of law and respect for human rights.

12 General Richardson, I am interested in your assessment
13 of the spread for near-peer competition in the SOUTHCOM area
14 and how we might work strategically with partners in our
15 neighboring region to build resilience to China and Russia's
16 malign activities.

17 Finally, the DOD's response to COVID-19 must remain a
18 priority. As the current Army North commander, you led
19 NORTHCOM's Joint Force land component, which has provided
20 COVID-19 response support to civilian hospitals nationwide,
21 assisted FEMA and HHS with distribution, and provided
22 personnel for community property vaccination centers in
23 multiple states and U.S. territories.

24 General, on behalf of the committee, please thank the
25 men and women under your command who have participated in

1 this heroic response to the pandemic and thank you for your
2 extraordinary leadership.

3 I would ask that you share how you plan on leading the
4 U.S. COVID-19 response in the SOUTHCOM area based on the
5 lessons learned over the past year and a half.

6 General Richardson, if confirmed, you will lead
7 SOUTHCOM in an incredibly consequential time. We thank you,
8 again, for your continued willingness to serve.

9 Senator Inhofe has requested that I submit his
10 statement for the record and I will do so at this time.

11 [The statement of Senator Inhofe follows:]

12 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman Reed: At this time, General Richardson, your
2 introductory statement, please.

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1 LIEUTENANT GENERAL LAURA RICHARDSON, NOMINEE TO BE
2 GENERAL AND COMMANDER, UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND

3 General Richardson: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member
4 Inhofe, and distinguished members of the committee, I am
5 honored and humbled to appear before you today as the
6 nominee to lead United States SOUTHCOM.

7 I would like to thank President Biden, Secretary
8 Austin, and General Millie for their trust and confidence in
9 nominating me for this position. I would also like to
10 recognize Admiral Faller, the current U.S. SOUTHCOM
11 commander and his wife, Martha, for their loyal and
12 dedicated service to our nation.

13 If confirmed, I will build on their efforts and work
14 diligently together with our partners to ensure we fully
15 account for the defense challenges and opportunities in
16 Central and South America and the Caribbean.

17 I would like to thank my family for their love and
18 support throughout my military career. With me today is my
19 husband Jim, our daughter Lauren. Jim has been my strongest
20 advocate for 33 years and we have proudly served side-by-
21 side, tackling the challenges of a dual-military family and
22 I would not be the officer that I am today without him.

23 Lauren, who I am so proud of, she deserves so much
24 credit for her support and sacrifices along the way. It is
25 often the service members who receive praise, but I believe

1 our military kids deserve more credit for their support and
2 sacrifices, as well.

3 I would like to thank my parents watching from
4 Colorado. They have truly been instrumental in establishing
5 a family virtue of service to our country. Thanks, Mom and
6 Dad.

7 In this era of long-term strategic competition, the
8 United States must remain the partner of choice throughout
9 the Western Hemisphere. As this committee knows, the
10 Southern Command region is of strategic importance to U.S.
11 vital interests, and if confirmed, I will synchronize our
12 approach to Security Cooperation, working across all
13 combatant commands to narrow the gaps and seams our
14 competitors are exploiting.

15 Today, many of our closest partners in the region are
16 still fighting bravely against COVID. We are all too
17 familiar with the devastation caused by this deadly
18 pandemic, and I empathize with those who have felt its
19 horrific impacts. More than a humanitarian crisis, this
20 devastation is changing the geopolitical landscape.

21 Authoritarian regimes and transnational criminal
22 organizations, enabled by China, and encouraged by Russia,
23 are attempting to consolidate power in the region and free
24 societies are being directly challenged. While our
25 competitors are extending hands of exploitation, attempting

1 to profit from our partners' vulnerable circumstances, if
2 confirmed, I stand ready to support the coordinated and
3 prioritized whole-of-government effort in support of partner
4 nations on vaccine distribution.

5 I will focus on rebuilding regional resilience by
6 expanding our Security Cooperation efforts and multilateral
7 exercises, increased International Military Education and
8 Training exchanges, and work with the Department of Defense
9 and Congress on innovative methods to increase levels of
10 interoperability and global integration.

11 Through a comprehensive and multilateral approach, we
12 can strengthen regional resilience by denying freedom of
13 movement to transnational criminal organizations by reducing
14 exposure to the corrosive efforts of external state actors
15 in our shared hemisphere and, thereby, improving security of
16 our southern border.

17 We draw upon the strength in the Western Hemisphere
18 from partner nations who share our values of freedom,
19 democracy, respect for human rights, and the rule of law.
20 We cannot, however, take these relationships for granted or
21 let our guard down, as our competitors vie for influence.
22 We must hasten it pick up the pieces left by the pandemic
23 and transform our relationships to meet 21st Century
24 security challenges; put simply, winning together with our
25 allies and partners matters.

1 If confirmed, I look forward to continuing to serve the
2 American people by leading the great team at U.S. Southern
3 Command. Just as I have worked with numerous agencies
4 within our U.S. borders, I will work with our interagency
5 partners abroad.

6 Whether against COVID, transnational criminal
7 organizations, the predatory actions of China, the malign
8 influence of Russia, or natural disasters, there is nothing
9 we cannot overcome or achieve through an integrated response
10 with our interagency allies and partners.

11 Thank you, again, Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe,
12 and members of the committee for this opportunity. I look
13 forward to your questions.

14 [The prepared statement of General Richardson follows:]

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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, General
2 Richardson. I will begin the questioning.

3 Security and human rights in the Northern Triangle of
4 Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador have been deteriorating
5 for many, many years and I have worked closely with the
6 Sisters of Mercy, particularly with their mission in
7 Honduras. They have raised serious concerns about our
8 security assistance to the Northern Triangle countries,
9 whose governments continue to commit human rights abuses and
10 undermine the international efforts.

11 If confirmed, will you agree to review the security
12 systems approach in the SOUTHCOM area, particularly, the
13 Northern Triangle, to ensure that our assistance is
14 bolstering their commitment to human rights and to civil
15 order and not disorder?

16 General Richardson: Yes, Senator, absolutely.

17 Human rights is a core principle of the U.S. military
18 and I will absolutely do that if confirmed as the SOUTHCOM
19 commander.

20 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much.

21 I have jumped ahead in my questions without asking
22 significant questions we ask all nominees, so you will let
23 me step back and ask the questions I will do so. You can
24 respond in the affirmative or appropriately.

25 Have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations

1 governing conflict of interest?

2 General Richardson: Yes, Senator.

3 Chairman Reed: Have you assumed any duties or taken
4 any actions that would appear to presume the outcome of the
5 confirmation process?

6 General Richardson: No, Senator.

7 Chairman Reed: Exercising our legislative and
8 oversight responsibilities makes it important that this
9 committee and subcommittees and other appropriate committees
10 of Congress receive testimony, briefings, reports, records,
11 and other information from the Executive Branch on a timely
12 basis.

13 Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify
14 before this committee when requested?

15 General Richardson: Yes.

16 Chairman Reed: Do you agree, when asked before this
17 committee, to give your personal views, even if your views
18 differ from the administration?

19 General Richardson: Yes.

20 Chairman Reed: Do you agree to provide records,
21 documents, electronic communications in a timely manner when
22 requested by this committee --

23 General Richardson: Yes.

24 Chairman Reed: -- and subcommittees or other
25 appropriate committees of Congress and to consult with the

1 requestor regarding the basis for any good faith delay or
2 denial in providing such records?

3 General Richardson: Yes.

4 Chairman Reed: Will you ensure that your staff
5 complies with the deadlines established by this committee
6 for the production of reports, records, and other
7 information, including timely responding to hearing
8 questions for the record?

9 General Richardson: Yes.

10 Chairman Reed: Will you cooperate and provide any
11 witnesses and briefers in response to congressional
12 requests?

13 General Richardson: Yes.

14 Chairman Reed: Will those witnesses be protected from
15 reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

16 General Richardson: Yes.

17 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, General, and I
18 apologize for the going out of sequence, but let me continue
19 my questioning.

20 You have played a critical role in the border security
21 efforts by supporting DHS and getting back to the Northern
22 Triangle, that seems to be the root of many of the
23 individuals seeking entrance into the United States.

24 What lessons have you learned from your
25 responsibilities along the border that you will apply to the

1 Northern Triangle and other areas?

2 General Richardson: Well, Senator, having performed
3 this mission, I have been in command just over 2 years now
4 and I am very proud of our soldiers who have served in this
5 mission in a Title 10 status in support of Department of
6 Homeland Security and CBP. And their primary mission has
7 been detection and monitoring on the Southwest Border in
8 support of them and, certainly, again, I visited the border,
9 I visited the soldiers on the border performing this mission
10 and I am very proud of the role that they have played in
11 support of DHS and CBP.

12 Chairman Reed: And this observation, has it given you
13 any insights to what you might try to accomplish in the
14 Northern Triangle in terms of stopping the flow at the
15 source?

16 General Richardson: Well, certainly. The migration
17 problem is a confluence of many different issues, Senator,
18 and that is violence, corruption, trafficking of arms,
19 personnel, as well as poverty. And, certainly, with COVID
20 and the COVID impacts, as I said in my opening statement,
21 changing the geopolitical landscape, all factor in to having
22 high migration efforts.

23 Certainly, working with, I have a professional working
24 relationship under the Theater Security Cooperation. We do,
25 under U.S. NORTHCOM, running the Border Commanders program

1 with the Mexican Army, SEDENA, and certainly, when I came
2 into command, they were not along our, on the other side of
3 the border, and since then, they now patrol on the other
4 side of the border, acting as a deterrent, as well.

5 So, certainly working with our partner nations, working
6 with our partner militaries, and strengthening them,
7 bolstering them to be able to handle their own security
8 problems is really what can help curb the situation. We
9 have to have a persistent presence, though; it can't be, it
10 has to be routine, it has to be persistent, and it has to be
11 sincere.

12 Chairman Reed: Thank you.

13 And just quickly, your general impressions of the
14 malign influence of Russia, China, and other countries in
15 your AO?

16 General Richardson: So, certainly, China and Russia,
17 China is a reemerged, long-term, strategic competitor,
18 rapidly asserting itself. It is the only competitor that is
19 capable of using its instruments of power, economic,
20 political, technological, to challenge our rules-based
21 international order.

22 Certainly, the Secretary of Defense has identified
23 China as a pacing threat. They have been aggressively
24 modernizing their military at a serious and sustained rate.
25 And as I look at this from the military lens, all to, for

1 the PLA, or the People's Liberation Army, to project and
2 sustain military power.

3 And so, certainly, obviously with Russia, the malign
4 influence of Russia, they continue to undermine the U.S.
5 globally. They try to separate democracies and sow discord
6 and certainly in Latin America, tried to create a friction
7 point and use that as pressure upon the United States.

8 If confirmed as the SOUTHCOM commander, I will utilize
9 security, cooperation, and engagement to counter these and
10 work with our partner nations to counter this malign
11 influence.

12 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, General.

13 And I think we are all very enthused about your
14 nomination and I wish you well. Thank you.

15 General Richardson: Thank you, Chairman.

16 Chairman Reed: I will now recognize Senator Rounds.

17 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 Good morning, Lieutenant General Richardson. First,
19 let me begin by saying thank you for your service to our
20 country, as well as your family's continued service to our
21 country.

22 I would like to follow-up a little bit with your
23 comments just now with regard to the Chinese challenges that
24 we have. With regard to Chinese influence and Latin
25 America, since the end of World War II, the SOUTHCOM AOR has

1 been a secondary concern to military planners, but I wonder
2 if it deserves more focus.

3 According to a July report by CRS, total Chinese-Latin
4 American trade increased from less than \$18 billion in 2002
5 to almost \$316 billion in 2019. And the Chinese have a
6 clear strategy of investing in minerals and agricultural
7 commodities throughout South America.

8 As we saw in Africa, economic engagement will precede
9 closer military engagement and, indeed, Admiral Fallor told
10 this committee earlier this year that China has increased
11 its port calls in the region by 70 percent over the last 5
12 years.

13 Reports from CSIS last year suggested that if war broke
14 out with China, the PRC may have enough sway already in some
15 Latin American capitals, Caracas, Quito, Havana, and La Paz,
16 to use ports, airfields, and other facilities in support of
17 operations against the United States.

18 Do you have a reason to believe this is an accurate
19 depiction of Chinese influence in Latin America and how can
20 our Armed Forces work to minimize this potential threat?

21 General Richardson: Well, thank you, Senator.

22 I share your concern and certainly with the expansion
23 of China across the Latin American region is concerning, and
24 so just with the Belt and Road Initiative, the BRI, 19
25 countries have signed up for infrastructure loans, billions

1 of dollars in loans for infrastructure projects across the
2 region, and so, quite honestly, very concerning. And I look
3 at that all as, even though those are Chinese State
4 enterprise companies, still, they can use those as dual-use
5 facilities and utilize that as global logistics and basing
6 infrastructure as they expand to project and sustain
7 military power globally, and certainly within the region.
8 So, again, I share your concern.

9 The way that we counter that is through the Security
10 Cooperation engagement. We do have a lot of levers to
11 utilize. Admiral Fallor and the great team at SOUTHCOM have
12 been doing a very good job of aggressively getting after
13 those levers with Security Cooperation, whether it is with
14 the institutional Capacity Building, multinational
15 exercises, they picked back up with three big exercises in
16 the last 6 months. They have four more on the horizon in
17 the next 6 months. This trains thousands of soldiers. It
18 increases readiness, interoperability, domain awareness,
19 sharing of information, and so if confirmed, Senator, I will
20 certainly take on this role to do what the SOUTHCOM team has
21 done before and continue to have persistent presence in the
22 region.

23 Senator Rounds: Thank you for that answer.

24 Let me change topics a little bit. Reports out of Cuba
25 suggest the protests have been quelled for now, however,

1 there is no end in sight to Cuba's economic failure. Most
2 citizens lack access to basic necessities. Nor is there an
3 end in sight to Cuba's current COVID surge, which is getting
4 worse by the day and which will likely further erode public
5 confidence in Cuba's Communist government.

6 Assuming the unrest has merely hit a pause, is SOUTHCOM
7 well-positioned to act in support of our relevant government
8 agencies if waves of refugees head for U.S. shores or if the
9 country devolves into a civil war? And I guess I would pose
10 the same question in regards to Haiti, given the ongoing
11 unrest there following the assassination of President
12 Jovenel Moise.

13 What are your thoughts?

14 General Richardson: So, Senator, certainly, this is a
15 very fluid and dynamic situation and it requires a whole-of-
16 government approach, absolutely, with diplomacy in the lead.
17 Certainly, if confirmed as the SOUTHCOM commander, I would
18 be ready to respond with whatever was asked of Southern
19 Command to be able to do in terms of either one of those
20 situations.

21 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 My time is expiring.

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

24 Let me now recognize Senator Kaine, please.

25 Senator Kaine: Mr. Chair, thank you so much.

1 General Richardson, congratulations on your nomination.
2 I hope to work with you.

3 I guess all of our favorite AORs is NORTHCOM, but next
4 to NORTHCOM, SOUTHCOM is my favorite AOR. I was a
5 missionary in Honduras. I am the chairman of the Western
6 Hemisphere Subcommittee of Senate Foreign Relations. We
7 have a huge Latino population in Virginia who have family
8 all over the Americas.

9 But I feel like our military operations, as well as
10 diplomatic and other operations, in the Americas are often
11 underresourced and our attention, often, is episodic; we pay
12 attention if there is a crisis and then we drift back to
13 focusing on an east-west axis of the world, rather than our
14 neighbors in the Americas.

15 Over the years, as I have been on this Committee and
16 Foreign Relations, I have often heard from Latin American
17 heads of state: We would much rather deal with the United
18 States than with China. We are worried about Chinese
19 motivations. They put us into debt traps that we don't
20 like, but they are present and they are putting resources on
21 the table and you are not present.

22 Recently, I returned from codel to the Americas, four
23 nations, Mexico, Guatemala, Ecuador, and Colombia, with six
24 senators, three Democrats, three Republicans. And I was
25 very struck that we had a moment in time where a window is

1 really open for the United States. They are thrilled about
2 the U.S. delivery of vaccines, vaccine diplomacy. You
3 mentioned this in your opening statement. They look at the
4 U.S. gifts of vaccines, and President Biden is making an
5 announcement today, I think, about delivery of 100 million
6 vaccines around the world. But they look at the U.S. gift
7 of vaccines and they say these are the highest-quality
8 vaccines in the world and they compare it with the China or
9 Russia willing to sell them vaccines that they don't think
10 are so high quality and they are incredibly grateful.

11 You and I talked briefly, and, again, you referred to
12 it in your opening statement. I visited U.S. military
13 operations in Honduras, for example, that are doing remote
14 medical clinics in rural regions of Honduras that not only
15 train us to quickly set up mobile medical units, but also
16 perform humanitarian work to build goodwill.

17 Throughout the Americas, there is a need for help in
18 deploying vaccines into rural areas far away from central
19 cities. In Guatemala, we arrived in the codel the same day
20 that one and a half million American vaccines were
21 delivered. Senator Coons asked a really challenging
22 question to President Giammattei: How many of these
23 vaccines will get more than 20 minutes from the
24 International Airport? How many will get to indigenous
25 communities or places in Guatemala that don't have good road

1 network?

2 I see a massive opportunity for the U.S., as part of
3 this vaccine diplomacy, to regain lost ground in the
4 Americas and build goodwill, and I actually think the U.S.
5 military has expertise in this way. I see my Virginia Guard
6 at everything during COVID, from the testing clinics to the
7 food distribution to the vaccine clinics, and so I know it
8 is an expertise.

9 Share a little bit about how, should you be confirmed,
10 you might want SOUTHCOM to be involved, as you say, in a
11 whole-of-government exercise to accelerate American vaccine
12 diplomacy in the Americas.

13 General Richardson: Thank you, Senator, for the
14 opportunity to talk about that.

15 And as NORTHCOM and Army North have been dealing with
16 the effects of COVID across our nation with our military
17 medical providers and hospitals and then everything that we
18 learned with that, as well as across the United States with
19 vaccine centers, and so we have learned an awful lot. But
20 this is absolutely an area with COVID distribution and I
21 know the administration has talked about giving out 500
22 million vaccine doses across the globe over the next year.

23 And so, quite honestly, as we were looking to
24 desperately create the vaccine last December, for example,
25 and getting that out and getting shots in arms as quickly as

1 possible, I know that in SOUTHCOM and the capabilities that
2 the military has with distribution, logistics, lessons
3 learned, being able to provide PPE, and those sorts of
4 things, and so I think this is a huge opportunity for the
5 United States, allies, and partners, with vaccine
6 distribution.

7 I think the other very important point is that with the
8 United States, there aren't strings attached. There is no
9 fine print, small print. We don't use this as leverage;
10 whereas, the Chinese and the Russians are using this as
11 leverage to change, you know, a country's mind: we will
12 give you a vaccine if you take on our 5G from Huawei, for
13 example. And so, we don't do that. We don't have strings
14 attached when we are talking about vaccine diplomacy.

15 Senator Kaine: I think, General, that last fact is not
16 lost on these leaders and they are really seeing an America
17 that wants to help them out of this "once in a century"
18 healthcare crisis in a way that China and Russia are not.
19 Let's take advantage of the moment. SOUTHCOM has a big role
20 to play in it. I look forward to supporting your
21 nomination.

22 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

23 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Kaine.

24 Senator Ernst, please.

25 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

1 And thank you very much, General Richardson. I am so
2 pleased to see your nomination in front of this committee.

3 I also want to thank your family, as well. General
4 Richardson, Lauren, thank you so much for the support of
5 your wife and your mother. We know how important our
6 military families are. So, thank you for being here today.

7 General Richardson, again, congratulations, and we know
8 that we do have a lot going on in this hemisphere, and
9 focusing on SOUTHCOM is extremely important, as Admiral
10 Faller has told us over and over again. We have many malign
11 actors that are engaging in our own neighborhood and we
12 certainly need to make sure that our interests and our
13 country are protected.

14 So, we do see those new threats coming from Chinese and
15 Russian influence; in particular, we have many of these
16 transnational criminal organizations that are engaging and
17 what we have seen coming from those TCOs, about \$90 billion
18 of annual revenue generated from those TCOs. And just last
19 week, we saw the Coast Guard cutter Harriet Lane
20 interdicting \$16 million worth of illicit drugs, which were
21 likely moving towards America in the Caribbean Sea. So, we
22 do have a lot of risk from these TCOs.

23 Can you maybe talk a little bit about how they are
24 working with those malign actors like China and Russia and
25 the implications that has to the United States.

1 General Richardson: Certainly. Thank you, Senator.

2 And with the TCOs, transnational criminal organizations
3 threaten partner nations' stability, as well as regional
4 security. And, certainly, the violence that they create,
5 quite honestly, they feed off of each other, the TCOs or the
6 external state actors of China, Russia, and Lebanese
7 Hezbollah. And so, certainly, again, they are expanding,
8 they are diversifying, they are destabilizing in the region,
9 they are a major security threat in the AOR.

10 And drug trafficking is their number one funding
11 source, and so, certainly, what SOUTHCOM has as its, are the
12 levers that it utilizes for Security Cooperation and, again,
13 that has to be a persistent presence. And, certainly, we
14 would like our allies and partners to join us in the region,
15 too, so it is not just the United States.

16 But, quite honestly, the multilateral exercises that I
17 spoke about before, really a "low-cost, high return on
18 investment" to train with our partner nations, increases the
19 readiness, the interoperability, the domain awareness,
20 because we have to be able to have the security advantage in
21 all domains, as well as the sharing of information and
22 intelligence.

23 Senator Ernst: Thank you.

24 And even to build further on that, one of my favorite
25 topics when we have commanders in front of us is our state

1 partnership programs through the National Guard.

2 And I am very proud of our own partnership. Iowa is
3 partnered with Kosovo, and we have seen a great return on
4 investment with a tremendous country in Europe.

5 We see that, as well, in South America with many of our
6 state National Guards partnering with host nations; the best
7 bang for the buck, coming from those types of agreements.

8 You also mentioned allies and partners, other countries
9 that are engaging with us. I think it is important to
10 remember that we do have to continue to collaborate with
11 others that have our shared interests and values in the
12 region.

13 Can you talk about some of the great partnerships we do
14 have with allies, as we are engaging against some of the
15 malign actors and TCOs that we see, maybe some of the key
16 partners we would have.

17 General Richardson: So, certainly, in the current
18 position that I am in, in Army North and under U.S.
19 NORTHCOM, we have the theater security relationship with our
20 ally Canada and our partner, Mexico, but, specifically,
21 being able to work with them, have them train at our
22 training centers, for example, our Joint Readiness Training
23 Center at Fort Polk, which the Canadians routinely train
24 there, battalion level.

25 We are going to have a company, our partner nation,

1 Mexico, a company participate in the first-year TC rotation
2 next spring, and then by 2024, we hope to have a battalion-
3 level participation.

4 So, I think it just helps us. I look at it as an
5 integrated deterrence when we work with our allies and
6 partners together, because we are much stronger and more
7 powerful together to counter the external influence.

8 Senator Ernst: Thank you very much, General
9 Richardson.

10 My time has expired. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 I look forward to supporting your nomination. Thank
12 you.

13 General Richardson: Thank you, Senator.

14 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Ernst.

15 Now, let me recognize, via Webex, Senator King.

16 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 First, I want to congratulate General Richardson and
18 her husband. I think in your family there are more stars
19 than the Milky Way. I mean, this is extraordinary. I don't
20 think we have ever had this many, this high level in both
21 sides of a family. So, congratulations on your nomination.

22 I have been asking this same question for about 5
23 years. It maybe is getting marginally better, but what
24 really frustrates me is that we know about 100 drug
25 shipments from the Latin American AOR and we have the

1 capacity to interdict 25, maybe 30 percent of them. I hope
2 that you will advocate for more resources, whether it is
3 naval training vessels, additional Coast Guard, whatever it
4 is. Given the tragedy that is going on, we are losing tens
5 of thousands of people every year; I think 90,000 this year,
6 including four or 500, I think over 500 in my state of Maine
7 to overdoses. Please amp up the, ramp-up the capacity to
8 interdict these shipments and also the ISR to know where
9 they are.

10 General Richardson: Well, thank you, Senator.

11 And certainly as Admiral Faller has said, is we can't
12 interdict our way out of this, and so not only will I, if
13 confirmed, work very aggressively on this way forward,
14 through JIATF-South, which is the Joint Interagency Task
15 Force-South, under SOUTHCOM that has the air and maritime
16 mission for detective monitoring for this, but also the
17 whole-of-government approach. You have the interagency that
18 is integrated within JIATF-South, as well. You have partner
19 nations that are part of this team.

20 Partner nations participated in 60 percent of the
21 interdictions that occurred last year. And so, I think that
22 just continuing to work on that, but, absolutely, I will
23 advocate for that, Senator.

24 Senator King: Well, we may not be able to interdict
25 our way out of it, but we can do a heck of a lot more

1 interdiction than we are doing, and that is just a lack of
2 facilities, of ships. So, I hope that you will be very
3 aggressive with your colleagues in the Navy and the Coast
4 Guard, that we just need more resources.

5 It is inexcusable that we know of 100 shipments and we
6 only interdict 30. I mean, that is, it is one thing if we
7 don't know about them, but if we know about them and can't
8 stop them and people are dying up here, that is not
9 acceptable.

10 Let me change the subject for a moment. How do we
11 bolster the Northern Triangle countries economically, in
12 terms of internal security, in order to slow the flow of the
13 migrants to our border, how do we do that while dealing with
14 what are often, essentially, corrupt governments? How do we
15 get around the government?

16 It doesn't do any good to send millions or billions of
17 dollars to these countries if it gets siphoned off by
18 regimes that aren't serving the people, only themselves.

19 General Richardson: Well, Senator, certainly through
20 Institutional Capacity Building is extremely important and
21 working, not giving up with our partner nations and
22 continuing to try to work with them. As I said before, a
23 core principle in the U.S. military is human rights and the
24 rule of law, and we have to continue to have this within all
25 of our training, which it is, and continue to leverage that.

1 Not just Institutional Capacity Building, but the
2 militaries are very well respected in this region and, quite
3 honestly, a lot of the people look at the militaries as a
4 way to have a better life and a way to get out of the
5 poverty and the violence and things like that. And so,
6 again, persistent engagement with Security Cooperation, the
7 exercises, the train and equip, foreign military sales,
8 foreign military financing. Senator Ernst mentioned the
9 National Guard State Partnership Program. Nine members on
10 this committee have state partnerships with the countries in
11 Latin America. So, there are a lot of levers that we have
12 to continually be persistent about utilizing in this region.

13 Senator King: Well, I hope you will -- we are asking
14 you questions as if you have been there 3 years, and I hope
15 these are things that will be on your mind.

16 We have to figure out how to support and encourage and
17 rebuild though countries without, sometimes, outside of the
18 corrupt local governments.

19 The other thing that I am interested in following as
20 you are on this job is the course of Chinese influence and
21 whether they can maintain their influence when the bills
22 come due, because what they are really engaged in now is
23 debt diplomacy and I think some of those deals aren't going
24 to look as good to those countries as the Chinese are
25 looking for repayment.

1 But in any case, I appreciate your testimony, General.
2 Congratulations. And I, too, look forward to supporting
3 your nomination.

4 General Richardson: Thank you, Senator.

5 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator King.

6 Let me recognize Senator Tuberville, please.

7 [Pause.]

8 Chairman Reed: No, sir, not yet.

9 Senator Tuberville: There. Maybe that will work.

10 General, thank you for being here today and your
11 husband and your daughter.

12 My two kids grew up with a coach as a dad,
13 disciplinarian. I can't imagine your daughter growing up
14 with two generals. That would be very interesting. I would
15 love to be around the breakfast table sometimes. I know she
16 has got some stories.

17 I appreciate your training in Fort Rucker in Alabama,
18 too, your aviation training; that is awesome.

19 You know, your area of responsibility of Southern
20 Command sometimes gets overlooked, but it is getting more
21 important every day and we can just see the drugs in this
22 country. Being a coach, I have seen over the years, and of
23 all the kids that we are losing to drugs just in my career.
24 I can imagine now with what is coming across the border;
25 that has got to be a huge undertaking in the future because

1 there is so much money involved in it.

2 You know, I told Admiral Faller when he testified in
3 March that dealing with criminal organizations, Haiti, Cuba,
4 China, and Russia, coming our way, their presence every day,
5 you have got your hands full. And I believe sooner or later
6 the American people are going to wake up to what is going on
7 in our Caribbean and our southern part of the country and I
8 hope it doesn't take for China to float an aircraft carrier
9 between Miami and the Bahamas for us to wake up, because it
10 is coming.

11 I think in the next 3 years, you are going to see a lot
12 of changes and you are going to be right on top of it. So,
13 I am anxious to watch and see what you do and how you do it,
14 because we are all going to be counting on you.

15 And if you ever need anything, you know, please let
16 this committee know, because sometimes the Southern Command,
17 along with, you know, with all the drugs and so many
18 different factions that is challenging our country, you are
19 going to need more and more every day and that can't be
20 overlooked.

21 What do you think is going to be your biggest obstacle,
22 you know, when you take this job, when you are confirmed,
23 what do you think your number one concern will be when you
24 look at it?

25 General Richardson: Well, Senator, thank you for the

1 question.

2 And I share your concern about the area of operations.
3 It is a huge area and quite a lot of ground to cover. Just
4 to use a sports analogy, you have got to have your jersey
5 on, you have got to have your number, and you have got to be
6 on the field. And you can't just be on the field once every
7 couple of months engaging with countries; it has got to be
8 consistent, it has to be persistent, and constantly engaging
9 with our partner nations.

10 I think it also sends that the U.S. is committed to
11 this region and so a lot of levers are available. And so
12 utilizing those "low-cost, high return on investment"
13 initiatives and certainly working cross contraband command,
14 as well, because I think a lot of things that are happening
15 in different AORs in the Indo-Pacific and to the European
16 Command, AFRICOM, certainly. Everything is very globally
17 interconnected these days, and so working with my fellow
18 combatant commanders, and, obviously, with the commander of
19 U.S. NORTHCOM to help strengthen those relationships and our
20 commitment in the region.

21 Senator Tuberville: I don't think it is fair to ask
22 you this question today, but when you come back for another
23 hearing in the future, I want to know your thoughts about
24 Guantanamo Bay. I want to know what you think about it,
25 what the future for it is. I think that is a huge region

1 for us down there.

2 I spent a lot of years in Miami. I have a lot of Cuban
3 friends and they are very passionate about their country in
4 Cuba, and I think you are going to be right in the middle of
5 that because you see things are starting to happen down
6 there.

7 My time is almost up. I take a little controversy over
8 this question, but I am going to ask you, our military needs
9 to grow. We are losing more and more in our military to be
10 able to get them into the military because of either
11 education, drugs, felonies. We don't have a lot to choose
12 from. And we have a lot of bright young men and women in
13 this country. What do you think about drafting women in the
14 future or having them at least sign up for the Selective
15 Service?

16 General Richardson: Well, certainly, for women, and
17 having been in the military, there are just huge
18 opportunities to serve in the military. I am very thankful
19 that I have been able to do that. I have been a helicopter
20 pilot for 34 years. I have been able to build and train
21 teams to fight and win in combat and, quite honestly, it is
22 just my honor to be able to serve with America's sons and
23 daughters in the U.S. military.

24 Senator Tuberville: Thank you very much. Thank you
25 for your service, and I look forward to working with you.

1 Thank you.

2 General Richardson: Thank you, Senator.

3 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Tuberville.

4 Let me recognize, via Webex, Senator Warren, please.

5 Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 And thank you for being here, General Richardson, and
7 congratulations on your nomination.

8 As you know, many Central and South Americans,
9 particularly from the Northern Triangle countries, have
10 migrated north in the last few years. Rampant corruption,
11 criminal gangs, some of the world's highest rates of gender-
12 based violence in their countries are among the reasons why
13 so many of them are embarked on such a long and dangerous
14 journey.

15 As I have been saying for years now, dealing with these
16 factors is crucial for responding appropriately to
17 migration. Last week, the Biden administration published
18 its strategy for addressing the root causes of migration in
19 Central America and one of the pillars it identified was
20 combatting organized criminal organizations that have driven
21 hundreds of thousands of innocent people from their homes
22 through the persistent use of violence.

23 Admiral Faller also identified these criminal
24 organizations as a national security threat to the United
25 States. As the combatant command responsible for Central

1 and South America, can you describe the role SOUTHCOM should
2 play in President Biden's strategy to address the root
3 causes of migration.

4 General Richardson: Yes, Senator. Thank you for the
5 question.

6 And I share your concern in terms of, and I agree with
7 Admiral Fallor in his assessment of transnational criminal
8 organizations in this region. They sow violence. There is
9 corruption; again, trafficking. And when you are dealing
10 with nations with poverty, and then, of course, COVID has
11 just exacerbated all of that.

12 And, quite honestly, with the whole-of-government
13 approach, I look at it from the military perspective,
14 Senator. Obviously, all the tools that I would have
15 available, if confirmed as the SOUTHCOM commander, to be
16 able to be persistent and engaged with our partner nations
17 in order to stem the flow of migration and all of the root
18 causes that affect that.

19 I look forward, if confirmed, to be part of the whole-
20 of-government solution to that, but, again, I think that we
21 have good, strong partnerships and we have got to just,
22 again, keep our jersey on, be on the field, do that
23 persistent engagement, and work towards an integrated
24 deterrence against these external influences, while also
25 bolstering our partner nations to be able to take care of

1 their security problems, as well.

2 Senator Warren: Well, you say, all the tools. You
3 know, one of the additional tools the administration
4 identified was engagement with regional partners across and
5 beyond Central and South America. Last year Admiral Faller
6 highlighted the importance of these alliances and
7 partnerships saying, and I think I have a quote here,
8 strengthening partnerships is the best way to counter
9 threats, enhance our collective readiness, and capability to
10 meet global challenges, end quote.

11 One tool that SOUTHCOM has available is the
12 Humanitarian Assistance Program. The program funds supplies
13 and infrastructure to help nations prepare and respond to a
14 wide range of emergencies like natural disasters or the
15 ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

16 General, if confirmed, can you tell me, what role do
17 you envision for this program in helping address the root
18 causes of migration and how can Congress ensure that this
19 program is as impactful as possible?

20 General Richardson: Well, thank you for the question,
21 Senator.

22 And, certainly, I have seen where Admiral Faller and
23 the SOUTHCOM team have utilized the Humanitarian Assistance
24 aid in order to counter some of the effects of COVID-19 and
25 certainly with donating field hospitals for those

1 ventilators, PPE, and lessons learned. And so, I believe
2 the numbers were somewhere over 400 projects, 54 million to
3 the Latin American region that they have done.

4 And, certainly, if confirmed, Senator, I pledge that I
5 will absolutely continue with that aggressive use of
6 Humanitarian Assistance funding as a lever for Security
7 Cooperation with our partner nations.

8 Senator Warren: Thank you.

9 I think that having strong and stable partners
10 throughout Central and South America is in the United
11 States' best interests and the best way to strengthen these
12 partnerships is to de-emphasize military tools and refocus
13 our efforts on human rights, on any corruption, on
14 humanitarian and development assistance programs led by
15 state and USAID. But I am very glad to hear that SOUTHCOM
16 is also committed to playing its part in ending this
17 violence.

18 Thank you very much. Thank you for being here.

19 And thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back my time.

20 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Warren.

21 Let me now recognize Senator Blackburn, please.

22 Senator Blackburn: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 And, General, congratulations. I look forward to
24 working with you and I appreciate your time for a phone
25 call.

1 I know you have been asked about China and the malign
2 influences that are there. We are all concerned about that
3 issue, are fully aware. Let me just follow on with that.

4 In planning for a conflict with the PRC, the U.S.
5 should realistically work through scenarios that go beyond
6 those for INDOPACOM and should take into account other areas
7 in which the PLA forces are operating.

8 So, how will you approach that as you look at SOUTHCOM,
9 knowing that China is trying to plant their flag in so many
10 different countries?

11 General Richardson: Well, thank you, Senator.

12 I share your concern with that, and as we watch the
13 Belt and Road Initiative, the BRI, and 19 countries in Latin
14 America that have signed on to that with infrastructure
15 projects. They come with very sophisticated plans in order
16 to capture the interests of the countries, willing to loan
17 billions of dollars, as well.

18 And, again, I look at that from the military lens of
19 projecting and sustaining military power for the PLA with
20 this expansion. So, not just in the Indo-Pacific region or
21 Africa, but also in the region. So, we have to aggressively
22 continue to work with our partner nations, show that the
23 U.S., allies, and partners are committed. Work with our
24 interagency, whole-of-government approach with the
25 Department of State and USAID, and just continue to be

1 persistent.

2 Senator Blackburn: I appreciate that.

3 I am pleased to know that you are attentive and
4 thoughtful about how that would be approached.

5 We discussed ISR when we talked and my concern about
6 the lack of attention on ISR and the SOUTHCOM AOR and the
7 President's new "over the horizon" strategy that relies on
8 basing ISR support far away from the battlefield is
9 something that is of concern to me because it will put
10 constraints on DOD's ISR availability, and this compounds
11 the challenges that SOUTHCOM already has with its ISR
12 allocation.

13 Are you prepared to operate with even ISR support than
14 SOUTHCOM has right now?

15 General Richardson: Senator, certainly, that is a
16 concern, and as Admiral Faller has said, being able to
17 interdict is very important. Obviously, you can't interdict
18 what you can't see.

19 So, going forward, as I have seen with Southern Command
20 has done, being innovative with the tools that are
21 available, 21st Century tradecraft of being able to use AI,
22 machine learning, to be able to datamine open-source
23 information, utilizing the interagency, as well as partner
24 nations, and their sharing of information and things like
25 that in the AOR.

1 But if confirmed, Senator, I will absolutely,
2 aggressively work towards that, and I will do an assessment
3 immediately upon taking command, if confirmed, and come back
4 to the Secretary of Defense with whatever is needed, in
5 addition to that.

6 Senator Blackburn: I appreciate that.

7 I would like to get your assessment. This could be a
8 question for the record or, Mr. Chairman, we may want to
9 have this as something right after you are confirmed. I
10 think it is important to have an assessment of the ISR
11 availability and it needs to be a "compete and win" strategy
12 in the utilization of ISR.

13 And I am concerned that we are not setting you and our
14 troops up for success in the SOUTHCOM AOR. We know that
15 China is very aggressive in this area, so I am going to
16 continue to work to focus on these.

17 I am about out of time. I will send to you, for the
18 record, Senator Warren touched on the trafficking and border
19 security and I do have some concerns about the drug
20 trafficking, the human trafficking, the efforts that we have
21 going on dealing with this illicit trafficking and the
22 effectiveness. So, I will come to you with that as a
23 question for the record. Thank you.

24 I yield back.

25 Chairman Reed: Thank you, very much, Senator

1 Blackburn.

2 Now let me recognize, via Webex, Senator Gillibrand,
3 please.

4 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

5 General, your predecessor, Admiral Faller testified to
6 this committee that Russia has eagerly flooded online
7 communities in Latin America with disinformation, intended
8 to undermine faith in Democratic institutions and the United
9 States.

10 Separately, China is investing heavily in their
11 information technology that can be easily manipulated by the
12 Chinese Government at their direction for espionage or cyber
13 intrusions.

14 Do you feel that SOUTHCOM is adequately equipped to do
15 its part to handle the separate, but overlapping risks posed
16 by these efforts?

17 General Richardson: So, Senator, I share your concern
18 with that, and if confirmed, I will, that will be one of the
19 first things that I assess when I get to U.S. Southern
20 Command. The disinformation and the information operations
21 that are occurring, I will definitely do an assessment and
22 come back to the Secretary of Defense with whatever
23 resources might be required to counter that.

24 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

25 General, as you pointed out, while China's economic

1 coercion practices are only one element of its strategy to
2 exert influence in the region, it certainly is an important
3 one.

4 Is there a way for SOUTHCOM and other U.S. entities to
5 facilitate opportunities for economic engagement where we
6 can highlight the benefits of working with the United
7 States, as opposed to China?

8 The Bahamas come to mind, where China has filled a gap
9 left by previous administrations after Hurricane Dorian in
10 2019.

11 General Richardson: So, certainly, Senator, with the
12 Security Cooperation levers that are afforded to U.S.
13 Southern Command to be able to counter that, the exercises,
14 the International Military Education and Training program,
15 IMET, we also have the National Guard State Partnership
16 Program, and the Section 333, train and equip. Also,
17 foreign military sales, foreign military financing are also
18 tools that are available to utilize, as well.

19 Also in the region, Senator, Security Force Assistance
20 teams from the Army, which are also very effective on the
21 ground, I think, you know, that goes to that persistent
22 engagement with our partner nations to counter the external
23 influence.

24 Senator Gillibrand: As we have seen by recent events
25 in Haiti and Cuba, there are plenty of humanitarian and

1 governance concerns within the SOUTHCOM domain that are in
2 close proximity to the U.S. First, what role do you foresee
3 SOUTHCOM playing in providing humanitarian support to our
4 neighbors, and, two, in what ways can SOUTHCOM partner with
5 other agencies to be helpful to people suffering from
6 instability, corruption, or climate change?

7 General Richardson: Senator, I do agree that this is
8 requires a whole-of-government approach with diplomacy in
9 the lead, absolutely, and then, certainly, from the military
10 perspective, being able to provide that Humanitarian
11 Assistance, if required. And I know that U.S. SOUTHCOM is
12 always ready to be able to do that and, if confirmed, I
13 certainly will be ready to do that, as well.

14 Senator Gillibrand: President Biden has made it clear
15 that the current situation in Haiti doesn't necessitate U.S.
16 military assistance at this point.

17 Do you agree with that assessment, and if so, what
18 signals will you be looking for that might change your
19 advice on this matter?

20 General Richardson: So, Senator, I certainly support
21 the President and the administration in terms of the
22 diplomacy, leading with diplomacy and the whole-of-
23 government approach, and being ready to, if required,
24 provide Humanitarian Assistance, or whatever assistance
25 would be required. And if confirmed, Senator, I pledge that

1 I will be ready to provide that, provide, as a combatant
2 commander, options for the President and the Secretary of
3 Defense.

4 Senator Gillibrand: Last, I saw in your written
5 statement, comments about your support for the IRC
6 recommendations and Secretary Austin's decision to remove
7 sexual assault and domestic violence prosecution from the
8 chain of command.

9 As a convening authority yourself, your voice on this
10 issue is very important. I did have one question for you
11 about our policies. If you agree that sexual assault
12 prosecution will be improved by leaving it to trained
13 military prosecutors, is there a reason why you wouldn't
14 also improve the prosecution of other serious crimes?

15 General Richardson: Well, Senator, as a commander, I
16 am responsible for standards and discipline within my
17 command and within my organization. And, certainly, as the
18 Secretary of Defense had said that he supports the change
19 for sexual assault and sexual harassment, I agree with that,
20 as well.

21 In terms of other crimes, I think that, in support of
22 the Secretary of Defense, I do think we need to review that
23 and study that, because to me, it is very important that I
24 be able to have the ability for, and the responsibility to
25 provide standards and discipline within the organization. I

1 think that is very important. That is a commander's role,
2 and so I do believe that that requires further study.

3 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

4 Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

5 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator,
6 Gillibrand.

7 Let me recognize Senator Hawley, please.

8 Senator Hawley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 General, thank you for being here. Thank you for your
10 service to our country. Thank you for being willing to
11 continue that service.

12 Let me start, if I could, with the problem of drugs
13 coming across our southern border. I represent the state of
14 Missouri. We have been deeply harmed, my state has, by the
15 amount, the volume of drugs pouring across the southern
16 border, and pouring into, unfortunately, every part of my
17 state's schools, neighborhoods, small towns, big towns,
18 everywhere.

19 If you are confirmed, how do you intend to work with
20 countries in the SOUTHCOM AOR to counter narcotics and to
21 make sure that that effort is strong?

22 General Richardson: So, thank you, Senator, and I
23 share your concern, as well.

24 We work very closely with partner nations and the
25 interagency to counter this. I think that it just stems and

1 creates violence, corruption, trafficking, poverty. It
2 just, it is a recipe of a lot of things coming together
3 which are all very negative and create insecurity and
4 instability in the region.

5 Senator Hawley: And do you have any thoughts about how
6 you might work with the countries in the AOR to bolster the
7 counter-narcotics effort to make it stronger than it
8 currently is?

9 General Richardson: Well, certainly, Senator, through
10 our Security Cooperation programs and being able to do the
11 subject-matter expert exchanges. In the Section 333, the
12 train and equip, there is counter-narcotics training,
13 military intelligence-operations training, continuing to
14 reinforce the rule of law, human rights as we go forward
15 with the training.

16 But it is persistent. We try to do that with allies
17 and partners, as well; not just the U.S. alone. And so, to
18 bolster that, and to have an integrated deterrence in this
19 region.

20 Senator Hawley: Very good.

21 Let me shift gears to talk about China. Earlier this
22 year, Admiral Fallor shared with this committee his going
23 concern about China's military presence in Latin America. I
24 want to ask you if you are worried that China might one day
25 seek to establish a regular or permanent military presence

1 in our hemisphere in the SOUTHCOM AOR?

2 General Richardson: Well, certainly, I look at their
3 Belt and Road Initiative. Nineteen countries in Latin
4 America have signed onto that, as well as the 29 deepwater
5 port deals, newer or improved ports that they have invested
6 billions of dollars in, as well. And I look at this as the
7 PLA looking to project and sustain military power eventually
8 in the region, and so I think that we have to be very
9 concerned about that.

10 Senator Hawley: Would it be a violation of the Monroe
11 Doctrine if the PLA did, indeed, attempt to project and
12 sustain, as you say, a military presence in this hemisphere?

13 General Richardson: I think as Chinese State-owned
14 enterprises come in and look as if they are commercial
15 enterprises creating the infrastructure goes to that global
16 logistics and basing infrastructure, but also to dual-use
17 facilities. So, they might look like their civilian
18 facilities, where actually, they could be used by the PLA.

19 Senator Hawley: If you are confirmed, how would you
20 seek to counter China's efforts to expand its military and
21 intelligence efforts in what would be your AOR?

22 General Richardson: So, Senator, the levers that
23 SOUTHCOM has to compete with China in this region is
24 Security Cooperation and engagement, and it is having your
25 jersey on, having your number, and on the field with our

1 partners each and every day. As I talked about before,
2 having allies and partners is also part of that, so it is
3 not just the United States.

4 But these exercises that SOUTHCOM has done three in the
5 past 6 months has four more on the horizon in the next 6
6 months, trains thousands of soldiers in our partner
7 militaries, but also ally and partner nation militaries, as
8 well.

9 Senator Hawley: If you are concerned, General, would
10 you commit to informing us, informing Congress of any
11 attempt by China to deploy missiles to the SOUTHCOM AOR that
12 could range the U.S. homeland or other American forces in
13 the Western Hemisphere?

14 General Richardson: Senator, I would, absolutely, if
15 confirmed, as the SOUTHCOM commander, would make sure that I
16 inform the Secretary of Defense and the administration and
17 Congress of that.

18 Senator Hawley: Very good.

19 Finally here in my last remaining seconds, still on the
20 subject of China, can you just give us a sense, if I could,
21 of the challenges that are posed. We talked about China
22 trying to project its military influence, but also its
23 economic influence. You mentioned the Belt and Road
24 Initiative.

25 So, describe for us, the challenges that are posed by

1 their efforts, especially when it comes to port access,
2 telecommunications infrastructure, the Panama Canal, give us
3 a sense of the challenges there.

4 General Richardson: Certainly. If I just take the
5 Panama Canal, the two ports on either end of the canal are
6 owned by Chinese state-owned enterprises, and so that is
7 very concerning. Again, I go back and I look at it through
8 the military lens of the PLA trying to project and sustain
9 power within the region and having the capability to do so
10 under the cover of global logistics and basing
11 infrastructure that looks benign because it looks
12 commercial, but, again, could be used for dual use.

13 Senator Hawley: Very good. Thank you very much,
14 General.

15 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Hawley.

17 Let me recognize Senator Blumenthal, please.

18 Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

19 I was alarmed, as I know many at the Pentagon were, by
20 reports about Iranian --

21 Chairman Reed: Senator, is your mike on?

22 Senator Blumenthal: It is on. I will begin again.

23 I know many were alarmed by the reports of Iranian
24 missiles, Iranian vessels carrying arms, potentially
25 including missiles to Venezuela. It was speculated that

1 those shipments were designed to fulfill a deal that Iran
2 and Venezuela made a year ago and the types of weapons might
3 include long-range missiles.

4 Commercial satellite imagery of one of the ships showed
5 fast-attack boats loaded on the deck of those vessels.
6 Ultimately, as you know, the vessels were re-routed and
7 didn't transmit anything to Venezuela, but given the
8 volatility of oil prices and the current situation in
9 Venezuela, how concerned are you that the Iranians will,
10 again, attempt, possibly, to complete a shipment of arms to
11 Venezuela?

12 General Richardson: Senator, I only heard part of that
13 last part of your question, and so I think that has to do
14 with the concern of Iran with Venezuela in the region and
15 those two ships that were headed for Venezuela but ended up
16 not arriving there?

17 Senator Blumenthal: Let me shift to a different
18 microphone.

19 [Pause.]

20 Senator Blumenthal: How concerned are you that Iran
21 may, again, attempt, possibly, to ship missiles or other
22 arms to Venezuela?

23 General Richardson: So, very concerned. Obviously,
24 they are the largest state sponsor of terror. They will
25 continue their malign influence in the region.

1 And, certainly, they exchange with Venezuela, petroleum
2 for arms to avoid sanctions, and so I expect this would
3 probably continue and, certainly, it is very concerning in
4 the region.

5 Senator Blumenthal: What action would you suggest the
6 United States ought to take in response to another ship?

7 General Richardson: So, I look at this, Senator, as a
8 whole-of-government approach that has to lead from the
9 front. And, obviously, in terms of, if confirmed as a
10 SOUTHCOM commander, I would work with the international
11 agency, as well as our partners, in the sharing of
12 information and intelligence. As long as we have the 5G
13 clean path of entry and exit of data, sharing of intel
14 within this region to continue to be able to see what is
15 occurring.

16 Senator Blumenthal: In your posture statement, you
17 stated that China and Russia are using the COVID-19 pandemic
18 to gain greater influence in South America.

19 Can you give more specifics about how that is
20 occurring.

21 General Richardson: Yes, Senator, thank you.

22 And I think, quite honestly, they are using, there are
23 strings attached. There are, as I said in my opening
24 statement, it is the hand of exploitation; we will give you
25 this vaccine, but you need to pay for it and we will provide

1 it.

2 And so, it comes with strings attached. It comes with
3 fine print and/or to be used later as leverage to coerce the
4 country or partner nation into something else.

5 Senator Blumenthal: Is that happening with any
6 specific nations that you can cite?

7 General Richardson: Senator, I believe it is, with
8 vaccine, Brazil and I believe it is the Dominican Republic
9 that if China would provide some vaccine if they agreed to
10 the 5G with Huawei.

11 Senator Blumenthal: Finally, and I apologize if this
12 question has been asked, are you familiar with the so-called
13 Havana Syndrome and do you think that the United States
14 should be taking additional efforts to counter it, to
15 understand it, to study it, and will you commit to
16 undertaking it?

17 General Richardson: Senator, I share your concern on
18 the Havana Syndrome.

19 I have seen the news reports on the Havana Syndrome and
20 the effects that it has, and I am absolutely committed, if
21 confirmed, to being part of that whole-of-government
22 approach, as that is addressed.

23 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you.

24 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.

1 Senator Tillis, please?

2 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 General Richardson, thank you for being here and for
4 your years of service.

5 You know, I have been here for 6 and a half years and
6 every time I meet with a SOUTHCOM commander, resources
7 always comes up as one of the top issues or lack of
8 resources, particularly around manpower and ISR.

9 Do you, going into this role, do you share that concern
10 that we need to really focus on resourcing and your future
11 area of responsibility?

12 General Richardson: Senator, I have seen Admiral
13 Faller talk about the resourcing constraints and the issues
14 and, certainly, if confirmed, I am committed to certainly
15 having a full review of the resources that are allocated to
16 U.S. SOUTHCOM and coming back to the Secretary of Defense if
17 I need additional resources.

18 Senator Tillis: Well, I have heard a number of them
19 express their frustration that they may have situational
20 awareness, but they don't have operational capacity to
21 interdict a number of illicit, what they believe are
22 ostensibly illicit actions in the area of responsibility.

23 What is your view of the Coast Guard and how important
24 they are in partnering with you in your, in SOUTHCOM?

25 General Richardson: Hugely important, Senator, and

1 thank you for asking about the Coast Guard.

2 And certainly, through our Joint Interagency Task
3 Force-South that is underneath U.S. SOUTHCOM, commanded by a
4 Coast Guard officer, and I understand, also, on the SOUTHCOM
5 staff, the operations officer is from the Coast Guard. But,
6 certainly with the ships, the cutters that are provided by
7 the Coast Guard, their ability to conduct their law
8 enforcement mission, as well as what the U.S. Navy provides
9 in terms of ships to U.S. SOUTHCOM, as well, hugely
10 important and helpful.

11 Senator Tillis: I know some of my colleagues have
12 asked questions about Russia, China, and Iran's activities
13 in your area of responsibility. Can you just briefly
14 explain in kitchen-table terms why the American people
15 should be as concerned as most of the members of this
16 committee.

17 General Richardson: Well, certainly, the SOUTHCOM AOR,
18 the proximity to the United States, this is, as Admiral
19 Fallor referred to it, our shared neighborhood, our shared
20 hemisphere, and so the proximity to the United States. The
21 economic ties that we have the region, as well, in terms of
22 just economy, trade, those sorts of things. Familial ties,
23 just off the charts in terms of the families that are
24 interconnected in this region. And certainly have China in
25 our neighborhood is a concern.

1 Senator Tillis: Between Russia, China, and Iran, what
2 can you tell us about disinformation, their open and
3 sometimes covert campaigns to misinform the folks that live
4 in your future area of responsibility. Is it rampant? It
5 seems to be.

6 General Richardson: Absolutely. The pace at which it
7 is expanding is, and far-reaching is very much concerning
8 and so, that China, Russia uses to exploit, deny, manipulate
9 U.S. allies and partners in the region in order to control
10 the attitudes, perceptions, and the behaviors. And so, very
11 concerning.

12 Russia Today, 2009 is when it entered in the region.
13 It has more than doubled now. It had seven million
14 listeners. Now, it is over 18 million. And so, this is
15 expanding at quite a large rate.

16 Senator Tillis: Last question is, you know, I have
17 heard other prior commanders in SOUTHCOM say that we really
18 need to focus on working with partner nations to, the best
19 way to secure our southern border is to work with Mexico and
20 nations on the southern border of Mexico.

21 Do you agree with that assessment, if we are going to
22 make headway on stemming the tide of what we are seeing for
23 the unprecedented border crossings right now?

24 General Richardson: Yes, Senator, I agree with that.
25 I think it is very important, our relationship with Mexico

1 and under U.S. NORTHCOM, I have the Theater Security
2 Cooperation responsibilities to partner with Mexico and the
3 Mexican Army, which we do, and operate the Border Commanders
4 program, as well, as Security Cooperation with SEDENA.

5 Senator Tillis: Thank you very much.

6 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Tillis.

7 Let me recognize Senator Rosen, via Webex.

8 Senator Rosen: Well, thank you, Chairman Reed, and
9 Ranking Member Inhofe. I appreciate the hearing.

10 And I want to thank General Richardson for speaking
11 with me, I guess it was last week, and, of course, for your
12 service to our country.

13 So, General Richardson, back in March, current SOUTHCOM
14 commander, Admiral Faller, well, he testified before this
15 committee and when I asked him about Hezbollah's presence in
16 Latin America, he mentioned their growing presence in
17 Venezuela and their continued involvement in the tri-border
18 region of Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil.

19 Since then, I have joined Senator Blackburn in
20 introducing the legislation that would shed light on
21 Hezbollah's operations in the region and provide authorities
22 in Latin America, and here in the U.S., with the tools
23 necessary to crack down on the group's agenda.

24 So, General Richardson, if confirmed, what strategy
25 would you deploy to disrupt Hezbollah's agenda in Latin

1 America, including coordinating with our regional partners?

2 General Richardson: Well, certainly, Senator, the
3 Security Cooperation and engagement that we do, how we
4 engage to counter those external influences, especially with
5 the Lebanese Hezbollah and, quite honestly, the connection
6 to the Lebanese diaspora in this region is nine million
7 people, which equates to about 200 million in remittance per
8 year, back to Iran. And so, I share your concern on this
9 issue.

10 And, certainly, the Security Cooperation, working
11 aggressively with our partner nation militaries and working
12 with our allies and partners to also participate with us in
13 the region, I think, is extremely important to create this
14 integrated deterrence across the region.

15 Senator Rosen: I appreciate that.

16 And I wonder if you could just update for everyone what
17 you think are some of the most concerning threats that
18 Hezbollah poses to the U.S. interests in the Western
19 Hemisphere.

20 General Richardson: Well, certainly, as they exchange
21 with Venezuela, exchange arms for petroleum, continue to sow
22 violence, corruption, and just create instability and
23 insecurity within the region, and we have just got to
24 counter this external malign influence that they continue to
25 create within the region.

1 Senator Rosen: Thank you, I appreciate that.

2 I would like to move on to talk a little bit about
3 Chinese and technology in South America, because it is no
4 secret that the Chinese have sponsored, they have State-
5 sponsored companies and those companies have ambitions of
6 assisting countries in South America and, of course,
7 building their infrastructure, building their communications
8 networks. ZTE and others are already helping Venezuela to
9 build a system that monitors people's behavior through a new
10 identification card called a fatherland card. Smart
11 countries are considering these vendors to close the
12 technology gap. I am deeply concerned about what this means
13 to us.

14 So, General Richardson, if confirmed, how will you work
15 with our partners in Latin America to prevent the widespread
16 deployment of Chinese technology that, we think is going to
17 pose a threat right here to us in America?

18 General Richardson: So, thank you, Senator. Again, I
19 share your concern on this.

20 And, certainly, with "smart city, safe city"
21 technology, the personnel surveillance technology that China
22 employs, safe city, smart city sound like a very nice term
23 in order to have this capability, but, in turn, turns out to
24 be a personnel surveillance technology.

25 Having voting records, as you mentioned, the fatherland

1 card that ZTE has produced, in Venezuela, it ties the voting
2 record to access to food and access to health aid and things
3 like that is extremely concerning. And so, certainly,
4 countering, working with our partners, having that
5 discussion and letting them know, we already have some
6 countries that have been told that don't like the fact that
7 they signed up for this originally and now see what it has
8 brought to their country and are interested in getting rid
9 of it. And so, quite honestly, I think having that frank
10 conversation about what this actually means for them.

11 Senator Rosen: Thank you. I appreciate both your
12 answers because I do believe that Iranian-backed terrorists,
13 other terrorists coming to the Southern Hemisphere, our
14 national security with Chinese technology get proliferated
15 throughout the Southern Hemisphere, as well, has deep
16 implications for our national security.

17 I look forward to your confirmation and working with
18 you on preventing that.

19 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Rosen.

20 Let me recognize Senator Sullivan, please.

21 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 And, General, congratulations. Congrats to your
23 family. I think you have a very strong background. You
24 have been a great example in many ways. I look forward to
25 being a strong supporter of yours and your confirmation.

1 I want to kind of take the questioning in a different
2 direction. I had Secretary Austin in Alaska. I hosted him
3 there about 10 days ago. You know, the best part of those
4 kinds of trips when our military leaders, civilian, or
5 uniformed come to my state and get to meet the community is
6 so supported. But really, really, the best part was just
7 meeting the troops and the Army, airmen, others, so
8 impressive, you know, black, white, native, non-native.

9 You know, in the military, we don't talk about skin
10 color; we talk about, are you good or not good?

11 And, damn it, these men and women are the best and
12 their families, too. I think they are the best and
13 brightest, most patriotic group of people we have in the
14 country. It was great to show them off to the Secretary of
15 Defense.

16 Would you agree with me on that, given your experience
17 and their families, by the way.

18 General Richardson: Absolutely.

19 Senator Sullivan: Good. I do, too.

20 You know, there has been this narrative, to be honest,
21 it is post-January 6 issues in the media. Some political
22 commentators, unfortunately, maybe even some elected
23 leaders, that somehow the military is filled with extremists
24 and supremacists and, you know, pick up the Washington Post,
25 they love to kind of fan the flames of this. No data ever

1 presented, but it is always out there. It is the new
2 narrative that our men and women, in fact, we had an Under
3 Secretary testify here that one of his top priorities was to
4 stamp out systemic racism within the ranks.

5 When I asked him, have you ever served in the ranks?

6 No.

7 Do you have data to back up that claim? It is a pretty
8 broad and aggressive claim.

9 No, I have no data.

10 So, there is even one bologna estimate out there, 10
11 percent of the force, supposedly, by some, I don't know who
12 estimated it, but it was repeated in a hearing here that 10
13 percent of the force is extremists in the military,
14 supremacists. That is hundreds of thousands of troops.

15 Do you believe that it is 10 percent?

16 I don't. I don't think it is, but I want to know what
17 you think.

18 General Richardson: Well, Senator, I can talk about
19 Army North, which is what I am in command of and Fort Sam
20 Houston --

21 Senator Sullivan: But, I mean, you are a three-star
22 general, getting ready to be a four-star general.

23 In your experience, do you think it is even remotely --
24 let me give you an example? We had two combatant commanders
25 here, I put that number out. They said not only no but

1 given the vetting that goes on in their commands, they doubt
2 there are any extremists.

3 What is your view?

4 General Richardson: Well, Senator, just in terms of my
5 perspective, I never say never, but in terms of my command
6 at Fort Sam Houston in Texas and the command of Army North,
7 and, certainly, we have gone through the extremism training,
8 how to identify it, how to report it, and those sorts of
9 things, and we have not had any reports within my command,
10 which is what I can speak about.

11 Senator Sullivan: But in your Army experience, 10
12 percent, do you think that is even remotely in the ballpark?

13 I don't.

14 It is really important to me and I think you can just
15 say it, say no, if you don't think so. Do you think tens of
16 thousands or hundreds of thousands of military members fall
17 into that category, in your experience?

18 General Richardson: In my experience, no, Senator.

19 Senator Sullivan: Yeah, me, either.

20 Now, when those generals made that statement,
21 evidently, some political guy in the Pentagon came out the
22 next couple of days saying, oh, the generals are wrong. I
23 think these generals had over 80 years of experience, but
24 somehow they are wrong.

25 Here is my question, and I think it should be an easy

1 one. Will you commit to me and this committee to stand up
2 for our troops, you know them, you are part of them, when
3 such unsubstantiated claims come from political appointees,
4 members of Congress, the media?

5 I think it is really important to have our uniformed
6 military, even though, you know, let's face it, in today's
7 environment, it takes a little courage to say, no, that is
8 not what I know. That is not what I understand.

9 Can you commit to me as you become a four-star general
10 and combatant commander to stand up for our troops on what
11 you think is really the truth on this, because it is really
12 important, and the narrative out there really undermines
13 morale of the troops and the families.

14 These are the best men and women in the country and
15 yet, they are being besmirched with no data on somehow they
16 are a bunch of extremists. Will you commit to me and this
17 committee, when that comes up, and it will, that you will
18 look whoever is telling you that in the eyes and say, no,
19 that is not true. That is not my experience. Get some data
20 and we can discuss it, but it is a really important issue.

21 Can I get your commitment on that, General?

22 General Richardson: Absolutely, Senator, I give you my
23 commitment.

24 And I will speak about what I know about and what I am
25 in command of, Senator.

1 Senator Sullivan: Good. I look forward to supporting
2 your confirmation and will be asking additional questions
3 for the record.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

6 Now, let me recognize Senator Manchin, via Webex.

7 Senator Manchin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 And thank you, Lieutenant General Richardson, for your
9 service to our country.

10 Can you hear me?

11 Chairman Reed: We can hear you now, Senator.

12 Senator Manchin: Okay. I am going to say it again.

13 Thank you, Lieutenant General Richardson, for your
14 service to our country.

15 My question is Russia has continued to destabilize
16 Venezuela in politics with its continued assistance to
17 Maduro. His leadership has effectively confirmed
18 Venezuela's status as an authoritarian nation.

19 My question is, how do you plan to increase our
20 engagement with partners in South America and Latin America
21 to stop the flow of narcotics out of Venezuela?

22 General Richardson: So, I share your concern, Senator.

23 And, certainly, Russia is Venezuela's number one
24 military partner, and Russia routinely conducts port calls
25 with its warships into Venezuela, as well as refueling of

1 strategic bombers, and Russia also sends military training
2 support to Venezuela, as well.

3 The Security Cooperation and engagement, Senator, is
4 what SOUTHCOM has to aggressively engage in this region.
5 Certainly, with partner nations around Venezuela that are
6 affected by what is going on, certainly, the humanitarian
7 crisis with what is occurring there, five million displaced
8 personnel, as well as one and a half million that have gone
9 into Colombia, alone. And so, working with our partner
10 nations, knowing that, making sure that they know that the
11 U.S. is committed with a whole-of-government approach
12 regarding all of the activity that is occurring in this area
13 of operations.

14 Senator Manchin: Thank you very much.

15 And in an effort to bring greater stability to the
16 Northern Triangle nations of Honduras, El Salvador, and
17 Guatemala, I was pleased to see that the State Department
18 restarts the Central American Minors program to allow for
19 the processing of refugees within their own nations instead
20 of participating in the dangerous trek across Central
21 America to the United States' southern border to claim
22 asylum.

23 Additionally, this program works with the United
24 Nations to settle eligible refugees in global nations,
25 instead of creating dangerous backlogs solely within the

1 U.S. immigration system. One issue I am worried about with
2 this program is the matter of security for these refugees in
3 their home nations before being sailed abroad.

4 So, can you commit to learning about the program and
5 how SOUTHCOM can work to support it?

6 I have always believed that we should have, for lack of
7 a better, like safe havens for these people as they are
8 going through the vetting process. We have been able to do
9 it in America with violence shelters, domestic violence
10 shelters all over our country and I can't see why we can't
11 find a better solution of how we can protect people who are
12 looking for asylum to see if they qualify. So, any thoughts
13 on that would be appreciated.

14 General Richardson: So, Senator, I do commit to
15 learning more about that program, as you described it, sir.

16 Senator Manchin: How has aggressively pursuing the
17 practice of predatory lending and infrastructure projects in
18 the SOUTHCOM area of operations creating what we call debt
19 traps, with port projects in Panama, Ecuador, and Honduras,
20 and infrastructure projects in over two-thirds, 23 of the 31
21 of the South American countries. If China gains control of
22 major ports and areas of commerce in SOUTHCOM, we risk
23 economic loss, intellectual property losses, and the ability
24 to effectively counter narcotics, including the Chinese-
25 supplied Fentanyl.

1 Are you familiar with the latest attitudes from our
2 allies in South America towards these predatory lending
3 behaviors?

4 General Richardson: So, Senator, I am aware of the
5 predatory lending behaviors of China and all of the
6 countries, the number of countries that have signed up for
7 the Belt and Road Initiative, all the infrastructure
8 projects with billions of dollars of loans, as well as a 5G
9 and Huawei and subsidiaries of Huawei, as well, for the IT
10 infrastructure, and I share your concern with that.

11 And, certainly, if confirmed as the SOUTHCOM commander,
12 I will work aggressively with our partner nations to counter
13 that external influence.

14 Senator Manchin: I think what has to be done there, if
15 they had a better alternative, do you believe that they
16 would turn to the United States, I mean, rather work with
17 the United States, as opposed to China, and if that is the
18 case and you know it to be so and true, are you going to
19 prioritize in your budgetary request for this type of
20 assistance?

21 General Richardson: Senator, if it -- absolutely. And
22 as I committed to you, I will look further into this
23 program, and if it, as you said, furthers along the cause
24 and working with our partner nations more closely to help
25 them bolster against the external influence.

1 Senator Manchin: You are going to have to be very
2 aggressive on that one. I appreciate it and will give you
3 all the support you need because I think it is very
4 dangerous to have our southern border being kind of
5 overcompensated by a foreign ally or a foreign adversary,
6 such as China, and what they are intent is. So, I look
7 forward to working with you on this.

8 General Richardson: Thank you, Senator.

9 Senator Manchin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Manchin.

11 Now, let me recognize Senator Scott.

12 Senator Scott: Thank you, Chairman.

13 Thank you, General Richardson, for your service and
14 congratulations on your nomination. You will love living in
15 Florida. You will love the Miami community. It is a
16 wonderful group of people who work at SOUTHCOM.

17 What would happen in Latin America if the Cuban regime
18 failed and we actually had democracy and freedom in Cuba,
19 what would happen in Venezuela or the attacks we are seeing
20 in Colombia or Ortega's power in Nicaragua?

21 General Richardson: So, certainly, Senator, we have a
22 long history with Cuba and they undermine the U.S. and are
23 an authoritarian advisor, so to speak, with Venezuela and
24 Nicaragua, and certainly prop up the Maduro regime in
25 Venezuela, and certainly, if we had democracy in Cuba, I

1 think that would change things dramatically in the AOR.

2 Senator Scott: So, how important do you think it is to
3 get the internet back on in Cuba to help the Cuban
4 population to be able to talk to each other, to be able to
5 confront what is going on with the Castro regime right now?

6 General Richardson: Well, certainly, Senator, I share
7 your concern about them being able to communicate with each
8 other. If confirmed, I commit to you to working
9 aggressively, as part of the whole-of-government approach,
10 as we deal with the Cuba.

11 Senator Scott: So, is there anything that SOUTHCOM can
12 do on its own to try to get the internet back on in Cuba?

13 General Richardson: Senator, if confirmed as the
14 SOUTHCOM commander, I would definitely look into that and
15 find out what we could do or be a part of that whole-of-
16 government approach in addressing that with Cuba.

17 Senator Scott: As commander of SOUTHCOM, would you use
18 your pulpit to talk about the atrocities that are going on,
19 the tortures of dissidents, the attack on peaceful
20 protesters, and all the other atrocities that go on with the
21 Cuban Castro regime?

22 General Richardson: Certainly. The training that we
23 provide and the United States and the Security Cooperation
24 has, as its core principle, human rights, the rule of law,
25 and that is baked into all of the training, and we

1 aggressively work that with all of our partner nations and
2 our militaries that we conduct Security Cooperation with.
3 So, we would absolutely continue with that very
4 aggressively.

5 Senator Scott: But do you have the ability to speak to
6 the American public about what is going on in Cuba as
7 commander of SOUTHCOM and would you do that?

8 General Richardson: Well, certainly, Senator, probably
9 in support of the Department of State, who has the lead for
10 the diplomacy and engagement with Cuba, and supporting the
11 administration with what is occurring there, I would be in
12 support of that, if confirmed as the SOUTHCOM commander.

13 Senator Scott: And is there anything that you could
14 do, that SOUTHCOM has the ability to help get the internet
15 back on? Is there anything that they could provide? Are
16 there other resources?

17 General Richardson: In terms of engaging with the
18 Security Cooperation and engagement, Senator, I would have
19 to, if confirmed, look into that or take that for the
20 record, Senator.

21 Senator Scott: So, as commander of the SOUTHCOM, have
22 you already formulated your ideas of what you could do,
23 whether it is to eliminate the Castro regime, the Maduro
24 regime, the Ortega regime, or stop the attacks that are
25 going on in Colombia? Have you thought through what you

1 would be doing different than what Admiral Faller is doing?

2 General Richardson: Certainly. As I have looked at
3 how Admiral Faller and the SOUTHCOM team have engaged in
4 this region, I think that they have aggressively worked all
5 of the levers and continue to improve upon what they are
6 doing, working with our partner nations and our partner
7 militaries.

8 I think, also, the allies and partners, the more allies
9 and partners that are working alongside us to bolster that
10 integrated deterrence and helping to increase our partner
11 nations that are neighbors to Venezuela, as well as
12 Nicaragua and Cuba is extremely important.

13 Senator Scott: Admiral Faller has been vocal about the
14 malign Chinese influence in Latin America.

15 Are you willing to be as vocal as he is?

16 General Richardson: Senator, if confirmed as the
17 SOUTHCOM commander, I think Admiral Faller has called it
18 like it is, and if confirmed, I would do the same.

19 Senator Scott: What use do you think Guantanamo Bay
20 has, besides holding terrorists?

21 General Richardson: I'm sorry, Senator. Could you --

22 Senator Scott: What use does Guantanamo Bay have,
23 besides holding terrorists?

24 General Richardson: So, Senator, that would be used if
25 we had to conduct a noncombatant evacuation, Humanitarian

1 Assistance, for example, if there was a natural disaster or
2 something like that, that would be used as a staging area,
3 there, at the Naval Station Guantanamo Bay.

4 Senator Scott: Thank you.

5 Thank you, Chairman.

6 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Scott.

7 Let me recognize Senator Peters, via Webex.

8 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 And, good morning, General. Congratulations on your
10 nomination to this very important position. We certainly
11 appreciate your willingness to serve, plus your years of
12 service to date.

13 And that is where I want to begin. First, I would like
14 to recognize and thank Army North for all of its efforts
15 across the country during the pandemic, but especially, your
16 administration of the community vaccination center at Ford
17 Field in Detroit. That was an incredible operation and that
18 really jump-started our ability to get folks vaccinated
19 throughout Michigan. So, thank you for your leadership and
20 the men and women who you work with to make that happen.

21 General, last week, we discussed that what may be
22 probably the most fundamental challenge that you will face,
23 if confirmed, as commander of SOUTHCOM, and that is how to
24 apply the military instrument of power to non-military
25 problems that exist throughout the region, from corruption

1 to money-laundering, climate change, and, certainly, the
2 persistent requirement for Humanitarian Assistance.

3 As you well know, Honduras, the Hondurans, the
4 Salvadorans, the Guatemalans all routinely identify
5 government failures as one of the most significant
6 challenges that face their country. So, my question for you
7 is, how can you help build partner capacity to bolster the
8 capacities of these governments, not just of their military
9 or security services, but more broadly to help stabilize
10 this region, particularly, in Honduras, El Salvador, and
11 Guatemala?

12 As chair of the Senate Homeland Security Committee, we
13 are well aware that what happens in those countries has a
14 direct impact on our southern border.

15 General Richardson: Yes, thank you for the question,
16 Senator.

17 And, certainly, with the integration, I think working
18 with our partner militaries, but also with the integration
19 of Women, Peace and Security is extremely important, as well
20 as the NCO development that we can continue to foster within
21 these partner nation militaries is a way to do that. Also,
22 all domains, it is critical that we have domain awareness in
23 all our domains and protect against cyber, cyberspace, and
24 things like that, and I look forward to working with General
25 Nakasone from CYBERCOM and General Dickinson from SPACECOM

1 for furthering our efforts in this region, which is so very
2 important.

3 Senator Peters: Well, I appreciate that, General. I
4 appreciate your bringing up the cybersecurity aspects of it.
5 And from your answer it is clear that you believe that cyber
6 or security assistance should definitely include
7 cybersecurity. We know that our neighbors are under
8 constant attack by cyber criminals, as well as state-
9 sponsored actors, whether they be Chinese, Russian, or from
10 the Iranian government. So, that has to be a part of it.

11 And related to that is one aspect that I find very
12 concerning is the fact that we are seeing aggressive and
13 sophisticated disinformation campaigns being used around the
14 world by our adversaries and, particularly used during
15 election times. And if I look at your region, there are
16 nine "head of state" elections in Latin America over the
17 next 18 months, not to mention local, constitutional, and
18 legislative elections. And, certainly, these, the voters in
19 these countries deserve to participate in a democratic
20 process, free from disinformation operations.

21 If Cyber Command possessed the capacity and the
22 authority to empower regional allies with information and
23 training to deal with this threat, how can Southern Command
24 enable this effort?

25 General Richardson: So, certainly, Senator, if

1 confirmed, I will work this very aggressively, especially
2 with all the elections in the Latin American region that are
3 coming up in the very near future. And so, would work to
4 understand exactly how we can utilize, to the best of our
5 ability, what CYBERCOM has to offer, as well as SPACECOM.

6 But, also, you know, in terms of military information
7 support to operations is extremely important regarding
8 dynamic force employment and using, you know, the ability of
9 us to be able to get forces into the region when we are
10 doing multilateral training exercises, how quickly we can
11 get a force in and on the ground, and we need to be
12 highlighting all the aspects of that in these multinational
13 training exercises with all the capabilities that are
14 brought to bear there. And working with our partner nation
15 militaries, I think, can also help with that strategic
16 narrative and drown out our competition.

17 Senator Peters: Great. Thank you, General.

18 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Peters.

20 Let me recognize Senator Kelly, please.

21 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 General Richardson, congratulations on your historic
23 nomination to command the United States Southern Command and
24 your promotion to general.

25 Earlier, Senator Rounds and Senator Hawley had

1 questions about bases and weapons systems, specifically,
2 Senator Hawley, about missiles in the SOUTHCOM region. You
3 know, our partnership with South American nations are
4 critical to ensuring safety and stability in the region and
5 today we enjoy a relatively peaceful Western Hemisphere, so
6 I want to follow-up a little bit on, and go a little more in
7 detail on their line of questioning.

8 I am very concerned by China's efforts to pursue arms
9 deals with countries right in our backyard. The potential
10 of Chinese fighter jets in South America is of great concern
11 and we had a good discussion on the subject last week, and I
12 want to continue that here.

13 Argentina used to fly the Mirage III. It is a fighter
14 jet built by the French. I have flown it a couple times,
15 evaluated it. I could see why in 2015 they decided to
16 retire the Mirage III. They have been trying to acquire a
17 replacement, including western airplanes, but run into
18 roadblocks, because parts are often made in the U.K. and a
19 fallout of the Falklands War, which started and ended while I
20 was in high school, is still an issue, that we are having,
21 it is challenging to sell western fighter jets to Argentina.
22 And because of that, they are looked at and pursued
23 purchasing the JF-17 from the Chinese, which is of great
24 concern to me and others.

25 So, General, what do you think we can do with our

1 Argentinian partners here to assist them in meeting their
2 procurement needs with either our platforms or some of our
3 allies?

4 A good replacement option for the Mirage III could be
5 the F-16, but we have got this persistent issue surrounding
6 parts that are built in the U.K.

7 General Richardson: So, Senator, I share your concern
8 with Chinese military equipment being in this area of
9 operations, in the SOUTHCOM AOR. And, certainly, our
10 engagement with the country of Argentina and being able to
11 have the discussions with them, open discussions and
12 continue to work as part of the whole-of-government approach
13 with our foreign military sales, our foreign military
14 financial system, to be able to support this and counter
15 that external influence being in our shared hemisphere and
16 in our neighborhood.

17 Senator Kelly: General, do you think this is at the
18 level now of maybe this needs to be elevated to the State
19 Department to ensure that the JF-17 is not sold to
20 Argentina?

21 General Richardson: Certainly. If confirmed, Senator,
22 I will work very closely with the State Department on our
23 foreign military sales and FMF programs and work with our
24 partner nation of Argentina to try and counter against that.

25 Senator Kelly: And by the way, I haven't confirmed

1 this, but the JF-17 seems to have Martin-Baker ejection
2 seats in it, which is manufactured in the U.K., so it seems
3 to be a similar issue. But I hope we can overcome this. I
4 mean, they are an ally of ours. To have JF-17s in our
5 hemisphere, I think is, you know, just takes us down a road
6 that we do not want to go down.

7 So, thank you, General.

8 And, Mr. Chairman, I yield back the remainder of my
9 time.

10 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Kelly.

11 And General Richardson, thank you and your family for
12 your extraordinary service to the nation and the Army over
13 many years. We look forward to, I look forward to your
14 nomination and to your service. Once again, thank you.

15 With that, I will adjourn the hearing.

16 General Richardson: Thank you, Chairman.

17 [Whereupon, at 11:16 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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