

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON UNITED STATES
CENTRAL COMMAND AND UNITED STATES AFRICA
COMMAND IN REVIEW OF THE DEFENSE REAUTHORIZATION
REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022 AND THE FUTURE YEARS
DEFENSE PROGRAM

Thursday, April 22, 2021

Washington, D.C.

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4 FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

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7
8 U.S. Senate

9 Committee on Armed Services

10 Washington, D.C.

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

15 Committee Members Present: Senators Reed [presiding],
16 Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Kaine, King, Warren,
17 Peters, Manchin, Rosen, Kelly, Inhofe, Fischer, Cotton,
18 Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Sullivan, Scott, Blackburn, Hawley,
19 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 This morning the committee will receive testimony from
5 General McKenzie, Commander, United States Central Command,
6 CENTCOM, and General Townsend, Commander, United States
7 Africa Command, or AFRICOM. Thank you both for your many
8 decades of military service, and please extend our
9 appreciation to the men and women serving under you. And we
10 appreciate very much their sacrifice and the sacrifice of
11 their families on behalf of the United States.

12 Last week, in one of the most challenging decisions
13 facing President Biden, he announced the withdrawal of all
14 forces from Afghanistan by September 11th, 2021. It appears
15 the President concluded that more troops might buy more time
16 and casualties, but more time would not create a government
17 that could defeat the Taliban and effectively govern
18 Afghanistan. The President's decision, however, should be
19 seen as a transition, not closure, and should not mean an
20 end to our counterterrorism efforts. Most importantly, we
21 must ensure that Afghanistan will not be a source of
22 planning, plotting, or projection of terrorist attacks
23 around the globe, including against the homeland. And,
24 General McKenzie, I would be interested in hearing your
25 thoughts on how best to transition to a new counterterrorism

1 architecture in the region to continue to degrade al-Qaeda,
2 ISIS of Khorasan Province, and other terrorist groups, and
3 prevent their ability to attack the homeland.

4 Additionally, support to the Afghan forces will remain
5 vital. The intelligence community's Annual Threat
6 Assessment for 2021 noted, "The Afghan Government will
7 struggle to hold the Taliban at bay if the coalition
8 withdraws support." I would like to understand plans to
9 continue training and assistance to the Afghan forces in
10 light of the transition, and how we will balance that
11 against the need to conduct robust oversight of funding that
12 we provide to the Afghan Government and forces.

13 General McKenzie, you are also facing a complex
14 challenge of deterring the threat from Iran and its proxies
15 while the Administration seeks a diplomatic solution to
16 contain the Iranian nuclear threat. I would be interested
17 to hear an update on your progress in meeting these
18 challenges, particularly against the backdrop of indirect
19 talks in Vienna, and the recent attack on the Natanz nuclear
20 facility, and Iran's announcement that they have begun
21 enriching uranium up to 60 percent, which would move it
22 closer than ever before to the 90-percent purity threshold
23 required for weapons-grade uranium.

24 Turning to AFRICOM, General Townsend, you have said
25 that Al-Shabab is the largest and most violent of al-Qaeda's

1 branches worldwide, yet the previous Administration chose,
2 with little notice, to remove the vast majority of U.S.
3 troops from Somalia. The Biden Administration is now
4 reviewing that decision as part of a larger assessment of
5 our strategy in Somalia. I hope you will share your views
6 on the current security situation as well as the status of
7 our engagement with our Somali partners, particularly in
8 light of news this week that the Somali federal government
9 has extended the mandates of the president and parliament by
10 2 years. This move directly undermines the progress made on
11 democratic processes and institutional reforms, and may
12 threaten international support.

13 As you noted in your testimony, Africa is a vast
14 continent of opportunity and promise, but one that includes
15 many strategic challenges, many of which are overlapping
16 also. Population growth, food insecurity, and impacts from
17 climate change increase instability, drive conflict, and
18 further threaten vulnerable populations. These challenges
19 do not lend themselves to geographic or bureaucratic
20 boundaries. They require well-resourced and well-integrated
21 whole-of-government solutions. I look forward to your views
22 on the importance of investing in diplomacy and development
23 to force long-term stability, as well as an update on
24 AFRICOM's support to the Interagency in these efforts.

25 Our competitors recognize that investing in Africa and

1 the Middle East is in their long-term interests, as
2 evidenced by Chinese and Russian military and economic
3 activity that continues to grow in these critical regions.
4 General Townsend and General McKenzie, I look forward to
5 hearing your views and how we best leverage U.S. views --
6 U.S. engagement, rather, and investments to create
7 attractive alternatives and ensure we maintain key
8 partnerships and access. I want to thank you again for
9 being here this morning, and I look forward to your
10 testimony.

11 And before I turn it over to the ranking member,
12 Senator Inhofe, I would like to remind my colleagues that
13 there will be an informal classified briefing immediately
14 following this session in SVC-217, the Office of Senate
15 Security Center. Senator Inhofe?

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES M. INHOFE, U.S. SENATOR FROM
2 OKLAHOMA

3 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Over the
4 past few years, this committee's top priority has been
5 ensuring that we implement the -- there it is -- this
6 document. It has been kind of a -- it is surprising that
7 something that was put together back in 2018 by an equal
8 number of Democrats and Republicans has been so accurate,
9 and we have been using that as a blueprint. And if we are
10 serious about the security of our Nation, we need resources
11 to make the -- this NDA happen, make it a reality. The
12 President's budget request does not meet this standard.
13 Instead, it represents a decline in defense spending, which
14 will have serious implications for our national security.
15 It also means our combatant commanders will have to do more
16 with less, so the standard that was put forth was not met by
17 the President. Our top military commanders have testified
18 in unison in recent weeks that the threats to the United
19 States are growing at an alarming rate. Cutting the defense
20 budget sends exactly the wrong signals to our allies and our
21 adversaries alike.

22 General Townsend, you highlighted China's growth in --
23 growing use in Africa as a power projection platform for the
24 military. They have secured their first overseas base in
25 Djibouti. We have been there. We have witnessed that. And

1 they are aggressively pursuing a base on Africa's west
2 coast, which would be the first time, giving China an
3 enduring naval presence in the southern Atlantic. With less
4 than 6,000 troops on the continent and the continued lack of
5 ISR, I hope DOD's Global Posture Review will ensure your
6 resource shortfalls are being addressed. In CENTCOM, we
7 have the opposite problem. It gets significant resources to
8 counter al-Qaeda, ISIS, and the Iranian-backed terrorists.

9 General McKenzie, in the last year, I understand you
10 have been able to reduce U.S. troop levels in the region,
11 but I worry this Administration's policies in your region
12 are driven more by politics than the national security.
13 First, in Afghanistan, the Administration is, by its own
14 admission, executing a calendar-based drawdown rather than a
15 condition-based one. We know this is true, and we have
16 talked about this for quite a period of time. General
17 McKenzie, you recently stated that the Taliban still has to
18 take action to meet the conditions for U.S. troop withdrawal
19 of the February 2020 agreement. And the arbitrary September
20 the 11th deadline for troop drawdown risks a power vacuum
21 that terrorists will dominate and use to threaten our
22 homeland again. I want to add here that I am extremely
23 disappointed that General Miller has not yet been scheduled
24 to testify publicly before this committee, and I hope that
25 you will work to fix that, General McKenzie.

1 Secondly, regarding Iran. The Administration is moving
2 quickly to negotiate a quick return to the failed 2015 Iran
3 deal granting Tehran large sanctions relief, even though the
4 nuclear limitations will begin to expire within the next 5
5 years. As we saw during the Obama Administration, Iran will
6 use sanctions relief to fund terrorist groups, including the
7 ones currently targeting the men and women in uniform that
8 you command. Third, in Yemen, the Administration is pulling
9 back from its -- from our Saudi partners, while, at the same
10 time, the Iran-backed Houthis are escalating their attacks.

11 We should not expect the Saudis to tolerate a perpetual
12 Houthi ballistic missile that -- and armed drone threat on
13 our border. We would not tolerate one on our border. So
14 the United States arms sales restrictions could very well
15 lead the Saudis to seek support from our peer competitors.
16 General McKenzie, I hope you will address these issues and
17 offer your views on how to heighten risk of that and manage
18 that in the year ahead.

19 So I thank both of you for your testimony and your
20 presence here today, and also in the closed session that we
21 will have, as the chairman mentioned. Thank you, Mr.
22 Chairman.

23 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Inhofe, and let me
24 concur with the ranking member. We have been pressing the
25 Department for General Miller to testify in an open hearing

1 on Afghanistan well before the decision was made by
2 President Biden with respect to forces in Afghanistan. And
3 now with that decision, it is even more important that we
4 receive direct, in-person communication from General Miller.
5 The last time we had such an open hearing was, I believe,
6 with General Nicholson in 2017, so we need to carry out our
7 duties, the direct contact. And I will once again, General
8 McKenzie, ask for your assistance and relay that message,
9 and hopefully General Miller will be here very shortly.

10 And with that, let me now recognize the witnesses,
11 beginning with General McKenzie. Thank you, sir.

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1 STATEMENT OF GENERAL KENNETH F. MCKENZIE, JR., USMC,
2 COMMANDER, UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND

3 General McKenzie: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member
4 Inhofe, distinguished members of the Senate Armed Services
5 Committee, I appear before you proudly representing the
6 70,000 men and women of the United States Central Command.
7 It is a great pleasure to be with you here today. It is my
8 duty to testify, of course, but I have to say it is also a
9 privilege to address this body, and all the greater honor to
10 do so beside the commander of U.S. Africa Command, General
11 Steve Townsend. I would also like to recognize my senior
12 enlisted leader, Fleet Master Chief Jamie Herdel of the
13 Navy, who is here with me today, as well as chief
14 legislative assistant, Air Force Colonel Jen Hlavaty.

15 Since my last testimony, the region has continued to
16 evolve, and it remains as dynamic as ever. With the
17 President's announcement last week, we are focused on
18 working closely with the Afghan Government and our NATO
19 allies to responsibly conclude our Resolute Support Mission
20 in Afghanistan. This is my main effort at present, but it
21 is not my only responsibility. My prepared statement
22 addresses our other missions in some detail.

23 The United States and our NATO allies sent forces to
24 Afghanistan nearly 20 years ago, and the President has
25 judged the time is now appropriate to redeploy and

1 reposition these forces so that they are better arrayed to
2 deter adversaries and respond to threats globally, including
3 those in the CENTCOM Command region. Our singular purpose
4 in Afghanistan has been to ensure that al-Qaeda and other
5 violent extremist organizations would never again plot,
6 prepare, and perpetrate attacks against the United States
7 and our allies from the refuge of that country. The
8 campaign has evolved considerably over the years, from
9 active combat operations with U.S. and NATO forces in the
10 lead, to advisory efforts designed to enhance the Afghan
11 national defense and security forces' ability to conduct
12 their own campaigns against violent extremist organizations.
13 That there has not been another 9/11 is not an accident. It
14 is the cumulative product of these efforts.

15 We will now conclude our Afghanistan-based advise and
16 support mission. We are further planning now for continued
17 counterterrorism operations from within the region, ensuring
18 that the violent extremist organizations fighting for their
19 existence in the hinterlands of Afghanistan remain under
20 persistent surveillance and pressure. Ever since 12
21 September 2001 when our allies invoked Article 5 of the
22 North Atlantic Treaty, we have done everything in
23 Afghanistan within a partnership framework, and that will
24 not change in the months ahead. We are planning
25 collaboratively with our interagency and international

1 partners and will take measures to ensure the safe and
2 orderly withdrawal of all of our forces and those of our
3 partners. This includes positioning significant combat
4 power to guard against the possibility that the Taliban
5 decides to interfere in any way with our orderly
6 redeployment.

7 I would now like to briefly summarize some other
8 challenges in the region.

9 While Iran has itself avoided state-on-state attacks on
10 U.S. forces since last January's strikes on the Al Asad and
11 Erbil air bases, it continues to menace regional partners
12 and the free flow of commerce through the use of proxies and
13 the proliferation of armed, unmanned aerial systems and
14 other munitions. Its pursuit of regional hegemony remains
15 the greatest source of instability across the Middle East.
16 In Iraq and Syria, the campaign to eliminate the threat
17 posed by ISIS has entered a new phase. In Iraq, we are
18 engaged in a strategic dialogue with the Iraqi Government to
19 determine the nature of our security relationship. ISIS'
20 physical caliphate is no more, but its toxic ideology lives
21 on. The problem is especially acute in communities ravaged
22 by conflict and its sprawling camps for displaced persons
23 where ISIS preys upon vulnerable populations.

24 What has accelerated in the last year is the influence
25 of China and Russia, who, each in their own way, are

1 attempting to subvert the rules-based international order
2 and to gain strategic influence in the Middle East. China's
3 activity in the region takes the form of economic
4 investment, arm sales, and other overtures. Russia has made
5 an 18th century power play in Syria, propping up the
6 murderous Assad regime. The Middle East remains key
7 terrain, and I believe China and Russia will continue to
8 expand their efforts to improve their position in the region
9 and diminish U.S. standing wherever possible.

10 The CENTCOM area of responsibility is the most cyber-
11 contested theater in the world. It is also the proving
12 ground for the proliferation and employment of unmanned
13 weaponized systems, many emanating from Iran. This
14 difficult and complex operational environment provides units
15 inside CENTCOM opportunities to operate and to conduct
16 realistic training within an environment that exists nowhere
17 else in the world. I can state as a matter of fact that the
18 units and ships assigned to CENTCOM are as ready as any in
19 the Joint Force.

20 The weeks and months ahead will see us execute a very
21 complicated and demanding military operation to withdraw
22 U.S. and NATO forces from Afghanistan. This is presently
23 the main effort of my command, and we have the tools
24 necessary to accomplish this task. With that, I look
25 forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of General McKenzie follows:]

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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, General McKenzie.
2 General Townsend, please.

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1 STATEMENT OF GENERAL STEPHEN TOWNSEND, COMMANDER,
2 UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND

3 General Townsend: Can you hear me?

4 Chairman Reed: Yes, sir.

5 General Townsend: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member
6 Inhofe, and members of the committee, good morning, and
7 thank you for the opportunity to appear today. It is a
8 privilege to represent America's exceptional men and women
9 at U.S. Africa Command, who are dedicated to securing U.S.
10 interests and preserving our strategic options on the
11 African continent. This morning I am accompanied by
12 AFRICOM's senior enlisted leader, Marine Corps Sergeant
13 Major Richard Thresher, and one of my key staff advisors,
14 Air Force Colonel Jacqueline Breeden. I am also here this
15 morning with my colleague and friend, General Frank
16 McKenzie, the CENTCOM commander, to discuss shared
17 challenges and opportunities in our areas of responsibility
18 and the high return the American people give of their
19 defense investments around the globe.

20 Historically, America has not been penalized for
21 underestimating the importance of Africa. Today, we can no
22 longer afford to underestimate the economic opportunity and
23 the strategic consequence that Africa embodies, and which
24 competitors, like China and Russia, fully recognize. Africa
25 is a crossroads of the globe. The recent blockage of the

1 Suez Canal not only demonstrated the importance of critical
2 sea lines of communication flowing through the Mediterranean
3 and Red Seas, but also around the Cape of Good Hope.
4 Violent extremist organizations, competitor activities, and
5 fragile states are among some of the threats to U.S.
6 interests.

7 Beyond geography, global population growth is largely
8 African. By 2050, 1 in 4 people on the planet will live in
9 Africa. Rapidly-growing markets, 60 percent of the world's
10 arable land, and vast untapped resources, including
11 strategic rare earth minerals, provide tremendous economic
12 potential. Thirteen of the world's 25 fastest-growing
13 economies are in Africa. Africa's tremendous opportunities
14 are offset by significant challenges, including climate
15 change, food shortages, poverty, ungoverned spaces, historic
16 grievances, and other factors, that make the continent also
17 home to 14 of the world's 20 most fragile countries.

18 Our strategic competitors are very active in Africa.
19 China has invested heavily in their second continent, where
20 some think tanks call it China's fifth island chain. Russia
21 seeks to exploit instability and fragility for their own
22 gain and at U.S. expense. Iran is increasingly active on
23 the continent. At the same time, African-based violent
24 extremists, like Al-Qaeda affiliates, Al-Shabab and ISIS,
25 thrive in the government's -- in the continent's ungoverned

1 spaces. They provide the greatest threat to many of our
2 African partners and aspire to kill Americans in Africa, as
3 well as here at home.

4 Across the diverse continent, U.S. AFRICOM operates
5 with .3 percent of DOD's budget and .3 percent of DOD's
6 manpower. This tiny investment pays enormous dividends as
7 just under 6,000 servicemembers, civilians, and contractors
8 work with our partners, both interagency and foreign, to
9 counter malign actors and transnational threats, respond to
10 crises, and strengthen security forces to advance U.S.
11 interests and promote regional security, stability, and
12 prosperity. AFRICOM works every day to protect America's
13 security and advance our access and influence. We do this
14 arm in arm with the U.S. Interagency and through coordinated
15 action with our allies and partners. What AFRICOM
16 accomplishes with a few people and a few dollars on a
17 continent 3-and-a-half the size of the continental United
18 States is a bargain for the American taxpayer and a low-cost
19 insurance policy for America's security.

20 Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thanks for
21 your continued support to our armed forces, and I look
22 forward to your questions.

23 [The prepared statement of General Townsend follows:]

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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, General Townsend,
2 and let me remind my colleagues, because this is a hybrid
3 hearing, of our procedures. Rather than using the early
4 bird rule, we will recognize individuals by seniority. We
5 will do the standard 5-minute rounds of questioning, and I
6 ask my colleagues to keep track of the clock. And finally,
7 for everyone to be heard effectively, I would ask all
8 colleagues to please mute your microphones when not
9 speaking. Thank you very much.

10 General McKenzie, the intelligence community in the
11 2021 Estimate indicated that al-Qaeda and ISIS remain among
12 the greatest threats to the United States overseas, and also
13 continue to have the intent to project power into the United
14 States. In addition, the Afghan Study Group, led by General
15 Dunford and Senator Ayotte, concluded that U.S. withdrawal
16 -- a complete withdrawal, which is -- I do not think you are
17 contemplating -- a complete withdrawal would allow Al-Qaeda
18 and other elements to restore themselves within 18 to 36
19 months. Do you agree with these assessments, one, that al-
20 Qaeda and ISIS are probably among the greatest threats, and,
21 two, if unchecked they will revitalize themselves?

22 General McKenzie: Chairman, I do agree that al-Qaeda
23 and ISIS remain -- have aspirational goals of continuing to
24 attack us, so I completely agree with the intelligence
25 community's estimate.

1 Chairman Reed: And Director Burns of the CIA indicated
2 in testimony that the very nature of the withdrawal will
3 diminish, to a degree, our ability to collect intelligence.
4 Do you concur with that assessment, too?

5 General McKenzie: Sir, I do concur with that
6 assessment. We will have -- we will lose the abilities to
7 see completely into Afghanistan.

8 Chairman Reed: And so the issue before us, very
9 practically, is how do we compensate for those facts on the
10 ground and here. Perhaps you might reserve some more
11 comments to the classified section. How do you intend to
12 compensate so that we can effectively disrupt Al-Qaeda and
13 ISIS?

14 General McKenzie: Chairman, I will have more pointed
15 comments in our closed session, but briefly, I would tell
16 you it will be difficult. It is not impossible to
17 accomplish this task. A couple of things have changed since
18 2001 when we were last attacked from Afghanistan. First of
19 all, the United States itself is a far harder target than we
20 were in September of 2001. It is more difficult to operate
21 in the United States. It is more difficult to gain access
22 to the United States. So a variety of things have changed
23 inside the United States, and we should always keep that in
24 mind. Additionally, although we are going, in fact, to pull
25 out of Afghanistan, and I am operating under the concept

1 that for U.S. military presence, zero is going to be zero,
2 and we can talk a little bit more about that in the closed
3 session. We will have -- we will have an architecture in
4 the theater that will allow us to look into Afghanistan. It
5 will not give us the same picture that we have got now. It
6 will allow us to see in. The ranges will be greater, the
7 resources will be greater, the risks will all be greater,
8 but it will be possible to do those things. It is -- it is
9 certainly not impossible, but we will not have the vision
10 that we have now.

11 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, General McKenzie.
12 General Townsend, again, thank you for your -- both of you
13 gentlemen for your leadership and your advice to the
14 committee. We have withdrawn, effectively, our forces from
15 Somalia. Can you assess what is the operational effect?
16 And one of the factors that I think you both recognize is
17 that the terrorist threat once was -- seemed to be solely
18 located in the mountains of Afghanistan, but now it is
19 dispersed throughout the entire CENTCOM region. Syria has
20 the capability of generating forces, and Somalia also, with
21 Al-Shabab, has that capability. So can you give us a sense
22 of the effect of the withdrawal on your operations?

23 General Townsend: Thank you, Chairman. So in the last
24 60 to 90 days of the previous Administration, we were
25 directed, as you stated, to reposition our forces out of

1 Somalia. We left a small footprint behind in Mogadishu tied
2 into the embassy there of less than 100. Since that time,
3 we have been commuting to work. We work virtually with our
4 partners from bases in the region, and then we fly in to
5 conduct training and to advise and assist our partners. We
6 have done four such operations in the last roughly 90 days.
7 One of them is ongoing right now, and we are continually
8 revising and improving the way that we do that to make it as
9 effective as we can.

10 There is no denying that repositioning forces out of
11 Somalia has introduced new layers of complexity and risk.
12 And, as General McKenzie said, our understanding of what is
13 happening in Somalia is less now than it was when we were
14 there on the ground physically located with our partners, so
15 we are working to make this new mode of operation work. At
16 the same time, we are participating in the Global Posture
17 Review with the Department of Defense, and we are presenting
18 -- will be presenting options to the Secretary of Defense on
19 the way ahead. And, of course, I do not want to get ahead
20 of my civilian leadership to address that, but we are
21 working to make it work.

22 I would say that probably, though, the biggest impact
23 to security in Somalia right now is less Al-Shabab and more
24 so the political dysfunction that exists between the federal
25 government of Somalia and the federal member states, and, as

1 you mentioned in your opening remarks, the extra-
2 constitutional extension of the president's term in office.
3 That is our biggest challenge, I think, right now.

4 Chairman Reed: Thank you. Ironically or
5 coincidentally, what you are anticipating and actually
6 experience at this moment is very much the same situation
7 that General McKenzie might face, having withdrawn forces
8 from the most -- from the target country, for want of a
9 better word. You have to operate on the periphery. You are
10 doing that, and you face political/cultural issues, and
11 General McKenzie will face political/cultural issues. So,
12 again, I think this is a -- we look forward to the
13 classified session to get more into detail of these
14 questions. Thank you. Senator Inhofe, please.

15 Senator Inhofe: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chairman. You
16 hit it right on there. The term that is being used, "over
17 the horizon," which merely means that you are taking troops
18 out of the area and conducting your activity from another
19 country, and that is something that I disagreed with in the
20 previous Administration. The last Administration pulled
21 nearly all of the 200 troops that we had in Somalia out, and
22 that was the previous Administration. I disagreed with that
23 at that time, and I really think that we were right in
24 disagreeing with that. History has shown that it does not
25 work as well from an adjoining country as it does from the

1 country where the activity is. So I would say -- I would
2 ask them the -- General Townsend, I know you are going to be
3 able to do this and will continue to do it, but does an
4 over-the-horizon counterterrorism strategy in Somalia not
5 make your job harder? General Townsend.

6 General Townsend: Ranking Member, I would agree with
7 the General McKenzie's characterization. It makes it more
8 difficult. It does not make it impossible.

9 Senator Inhofe: Yeah, well, I understand that, and I
10 would say the same thing. I know that General McKenzie has
11 already expressed, yeah, it makes it more difficult, but it
12 does not make it impossible. You guys are soldiers and you
13 have a duty to do it, and you will do it. Now, General
14 McKenzie, are you concerned that we will not be able to
15 secure and maintain the U.S. embassy? Tell me what -- if
16 all this happens as it is designed to happen in Afghanistan,
17 what will be our situation with the embassy?

18 General McKenzie: Sir, I believe it is -- it is our
19 desire to retain an embassy presence in Afghanistan.

20 Senator Inhofe: You got to protect it, right?

21 General McKenzie: So we do, and of course.

22 Senator Inhofe: You got to secure it.

23 General McKenzie: Sir, we do. Of course, protection
24 of an embassy is the responsibility of the host nation.
25 Most of our embassies around the world have very little

1 military presence there because the host nation lives up to
2 their obligations. It is a matter of very much great
3 concern to me, and I think everyone, whether or not the
4 future Government of Afghanistan is going to be able to do
5 that after we leave. That will be determined here over the
6 next -- over the next few weeks as we begin our drawdown and
7 we evaluate the security platform that is there.

8 Senator Inhofe: Will you be able to make that
9 determination as the drawdown is occurring? My concern is,
10 if we get to the point where we do not have that help, we
11 would be depending on another country to do what we always
12 do on our own, and that is defend and secure the embassies.
13 That concerns you?

14 General McKenzie: Ranking Member, it does concern me,
15 but I would -- I would say if we have concerns about the
16 physical security of the embassy, the United States will
17 take whatever measures are necessary to ensure the safety of
18 our diplomats. So we will do that based on the security
19 situation as it exists on the ground in Kabul.

20 Senator Inhofe: And I would hope that you would
21 anticipate that if there are going to be problems or signs
22 of problems as the drawdown continues, that you would be on
23 top of that, and I am sure you will be. In AFRICOM, General
24 Townsend, the Administration is conducting a global force
25 posture review. Now, that actually started in the previous

1 Administration, and I can remember at that time cautioning
2 the then Secretary of Defense that we do not have a lot of
3 assets there, and we do not have a lot of protection there,
4 and that is something that has concerned me before, and the
5 same concern is out there right now. We have less than,
6 what, 6,000, I guess, personnel? We face the shortfalls and
7 ISR capability. These things are there. What would you
8 say, General Townsend, is your biggest resource gap that we
9 would be -- that would impact your ability to do your job?

10 General Townsend: Thanks, Ranking Member. As you
11 pointed out, we underwent the blank slate review, or a COCOM
12 review, in the previous Administration, and by the time we
13 got to the end of that, AFRICOM was still largely intact. I
14 think we removed about 365 troops from the continent. As
15 you pointed out, there is just no fat to cut there, and we
16 did lose some funding in the various programs. Again, I do
17 not want to get ahead of the -- my civilian leaders on the
18 Global Posture Review, so I will -- I will defer discussing
19 options about forces and posture.

20 But I would say that wherever we have forces in Africa,
21 there are three things that we will need there. First would
22 be the proper amount of personnel recovery and casualty
23 evacuation of medical treatment to make sure our troops are
24 properly protected. Second, as you mentioned, is ISR, and
25 with the loss of the OCO and the ISR Transfer Fund, that

1 puts at risk one of our primary sources of ISR, which is
2 contracted ISR in Africa. And then the third thing I would
3 say would be funding for building partner capacity and
4 exercises with our partners. We do everything in Africa
5 through partners. There is no activity that America
6 conducts unilaterally in the lead for, so building partner
7 capacity is how we help the Africans and our international
8 partners the most. So I would say those are the three
9 things we will need regardless of what our future posture
10 might be.

11 Senator Inhofe: And I agree wholeheartedly with that,
12 and I am glad that you are coming out forcefully in making
13 those statements. And when you point out that we are in a
14 continent, they are 3-and-a-half times the size of our
15 country. I had not heard that before, and I -- we have got
16 to be aware of that. This is a problem. We need to have
17 resources in there to do the job. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Inhofe. Senator
19 Shaheen, please.

20 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, and thank you, General
21 McKenzie and General Townsend, for your service and for
22 being here this morning. And I especially appreciate
23 whoever at DOD heard us when we said please give us a map
24 that shows not just Russia and Chinese activity, but also
25 shows U.S. activity, and it is pretty dramatic. It does not

1 take much to take a look at those pictures and see China's
2 influence all in red in Africa and our influence, and that
3 picture says it all. So I very much appreciate that and
4 have used the map that we got from SOUTHCOM to make the
5 argument that we need more investment in Latin America in
6 the Foreign Relations Committee. Can I just ask for whoever
7 is listening, if there are acronyms on the maps, that you
8 give us a key to tell us what those acronyms mean for those
9 of us who are not dealing with them on a daily basis? I
10 would appreciate it.

11 General McKenzie, I want to begin with you because in
12 your testimony before this committee last year, you
13 indicated that there had been an increase in Iranian
14 activity in Afghanistan, and that posed a potential risk to
15 U.S. forces. Obviously, the decision to withdraw American
16 troops, which I have expressed concern about, has an impact
17 not just on what happens with Afghan forces and the Afghan
18 people, but it also creates a vacuum that allows regional
19 actors, like Iran, and Pakistan, Russia, and China, to fill
20 that vacuum. Can you talk about what you see happening
21 after the U.S. withdraws and what the potential is for those
22 regional actors to come in and influence what happens?

23 General McKenzie: Certainly. After we complete our
24 withdrawal, I think the country that is probably going to be
25 most affected is Pakistan because of their long contiguous

1 border with Afghanistan, the fact that the Taliban, largely
2 centered in eastern Afghanistan, nonetheless maintains some
3 presents in Pakistan as well. So I think Pakistan is
4 interested in stability in Afghanistan, and I think it is
5 going to be very difficult for that stability to remain
6 after we leave, so I think Pakistan will be very concerned
7 by that. I would say, frankly, that it is a situation they
8 have not been terribly helpful on over the last 20 years, so
9 that is unfortunate for them that some of this is now going
10 to come back home in a way that they perhaps did not
11 anticipate.

12 As for Iran, you know, Iran does not wish us well, has
13 always wanted to have the ability in Afghanistan to attack
14 us or to have others attack us should they choose to do so.
15 That capability remains, is as extant now as it was last
16 year. Their interest in Afghanistan is the same as
17 Pakistan's. They want stability in that region. I think
18 everyone is concerned that, should we leave, should a civil
19 war ensue, there is the possibility of a mass refugee
20 movement that could affect all of the nations around
21 Afghanistan. So I think they are very concerned by that
22 because they do not see a clear way forward after we reduce
23 our presence.

24 Senator Shaheen: And you mentioned ISIS camps in your
25 opening remarks. One of the concerns, having visited Syria,

1 that I have, given our withdrawal -- precipitous withdrawal
2 from Syria, has been the failure to address those camps from
3 family and former ISIS members that continue to have
4 thousands of people in them. And is there any international
5 effort to address those camps and to try and resolve how the
6 international community is going to deal with them before
7 they become another threat?

8 General McKenzie: I wish I could tell you a better
9 news story there, Senator, but I cannot. It is one of my
10 very highest concerns. Al-Hol camp, which you are very
11 familiar with, is probably the poster child for that --
12 62,000 people, principally women, principally young children
13 -- and they are at an immediate risk from disease, cholera
14 or coronavirus. But the long-term threat is ISIS
15 radicalization which goes on in that camp, and unless we
16 find a way to pull these children out of that camp, get them
17 back to the nations that they came from, find a way to
18 reintegrate them into civil society, and de-radicalize them,
19 we are giving ourselves a very significant military problem
20 10 years down the road.

21 And I know that our diplomats and our people in USAID
22 are working on this very hard. Nations need to step up,
23 claim their people, repatriate those that they can bring
24 home. Unfortunately, there is not a lot of progress on this
25 front. It is one of my very highest concerns in the region.

1 Senator Shaheen: We actually created a coordinator
2 through the defense authorization bill -- not last year, I
3 think the year before -- to try and address that. I am not
4 aware that anybody has been appointed to that position yet,
5 so hopefully the Administration will move on that. Before I
6 am out of time, General Townsend, I wanted to ask you about
7 what is happening in Ethiopia in the Tigray region, and to
8 what extent the instability there has the potential to
9 create instability in the surrounding countries, and how
10 concerned you are about that.

11 General Townsend: Ma'am, that probably takes longer
12 than the 10 or 15 seconds I have to give the -- give the
13 answer. Ethiopia is in the midst of several challenges,
14 three or four significant challenges on multiple fronts. It
15 definitely will affect security and stability in the region,
16 and I can answer that more in another venue.

17 Senator Shaheen: Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr.
18 Chairman.

19 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Shaheen. And now
20 let me recognize via Webex, Senator Fischer.

21 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank
22 you, gentlemen, for being here today. General McKenzie,
23 what is your understanding of the assistance that we will be
24 providing to the Afghan security forces after we withdraw?
25 Secretary Austin, he discussed some of this last week at the

1 joint press conference at NATO. He spoke about training,
2 securing their borders, and saying we will continue to
3 support them in those efforts, also about funding
4 capabilities, to continue paying salaries for the Afghan
5 security forces. So what types of assistance are you seeing
6 that we are still going to be providing and be responsible
7 for?

8 General McKenzie: Ma'am, let me just begin by saying
9 we are going to go to zero solution in Afghanistan, so
10 whatever we do, it will largely not be done by people on the
11 ground in Afghanistan. We can still do some things from
12 remote locations. We can -- we can work the administration
13 of the Afghan security force funding, which is sort of the
14 bedrock programmatic weapon or tool that we use to support
15 the Afghan military and other things. We will not be able
16 to do it as efficiently as we do now where we have people in
17 the country that can really follow the -- follow the money
18 all the way to its destination, but we can still follow it
19 into the country at least. And we will work tools to mentor
20 from remote locations that will allow us to work with --
21 work with the Afghans themselves.

22 Some of this will be contingent on how big the embassy
23 is that remains, and that is still something that is going
24 to be worked out over the next few weeks. So we could have
25 a -- we could have a security cooperation office in the

1 embassy. We may not have a security cooperation office in
2 the embassy. That will be ultimately a Department of State
3 decision informed by our assessment of the security
4 situation that is there. It will be far more difficult than
5 the way we do business now. Again, it is certainly not
6 impossible. We will not have the oversight that we have now
7 just because we will not have the people on the ground to
8 actually perform those functions.

9 Senator Fischer: Now, as look at these force posture
10 options over the horizon, I hope you will certainly keep
11 this committee informed about that as plans are finalized.
12 So I would appreciate that from you.

13 General McKenzie: Yes, ma'am.

14 Senator Fischer: For both of you, we talk a lot about
15 ISR shortfalls, and I understand that demand always exceeds
16 supply, but can you share with us what percentage of your
17 ISR needs are being met? And also talk a little bit about
18 the operational impact that this has.

19 General McKenzie: Sure. I will begin. The majority
20 of my operational ISR requirements are being met, not all of
21 them. They are being -- and I will give you a little bit
22 more in the -- in the closed session. You know, we use a
23 variety of manned and unmanned resources to look at -- to
24 look at our problems, and we are most particularly concerned
25 with ISR in areas where we have U.S. and coalition forces in

1 combat. And, of course, that is in Afghanistan and in Iraq
2 and Syria, and occasionally in Yemen. So there, we very --
3 we work very hard to make sure we have got the ISR needed to
4 do those things. We take risks sometimes in the ISR that we
5 apply to the Iran problem, simply because I place a higher
6 priority on ensuring that Americans -- where we have
7 Americans on the ground, we want to make sure we have got
8 the resources there that we need to take a look at in order
9 to protect them.

10 Senator Fischer: Thank you. General Townsend?

11 General Townsend: Senator, the joint staff has a
12 formula by which they validate our ISR requests. By that
13 formula, we are resourced to about 30 percent, a little less
14 than one-third of our requirement. If I take a hard look at
15 that formula, I could probably get by with less than that.
16 If I take that into account, our resourcing levels approach
17 40 or 80 percent. Every day in Africa, we have to make
18 decisions about what we will do and what we will not do
19 based on how much ISR we can apply to the day. And we have
20 a -- we do not need a tremendous amount of gray tail or
21 military ISR platforms. We need some of that to protect our
22 troops, but we can do a lot of our work with contracted
23 solutions, which are a good bargain for the taxpayer.

24 Senator Fischer: But do you -- I guess, do you both
25 believe that having that presence of ISR used against

1 hostile nations or their proxy forces, that that does act as
2 a deterrent? General McKenzie, would you say that has
3 happened with Iran?

4 General McKenzie: I can say unequivocally that the
5 maneuver of ISR assets in the summer of 2019 deflected
6 imminent Iranian attack planning.

7 Senator Fischer: Thank you. General Townsend, do you
8 have any instances of that?

9 General Townsend: Yes, Senator. So we know that Al-
10 Shabab looks over their shoulder every day at our -- looking
11 for our ISR, and so we know that they limit their activity
12 because of the presence of our ISR.

13 Senator Fischer: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator. Now let
15 me recognize via Webex, Senator Gillibrand.

16 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General
17 McKenzie, I have several questions for you related to
18 Israel. What is the status of Israel being moved to
19 CENTCOM, and what do you see as the benefits for Israeli
20 inclusion in CENTCOM? Also, Israel and EUCOM coordinated
21 very closely on ballistic missile defense, including Aegis
22 support from the Mediterranean. How will you ensure
23 continuity of ballistic missile defense with Israel, and
24 will this continue through EUCOM or move to a different
25 direction with CENTCOM?

1 General McKenzie: Senator, we are in a planning phase
2 right now to move Israel into U.S. Central Command. We are
3 on about a 6-month planning timeline for that. There are --
4 as you have noted, a number of things have to happen in
5 order to -- in order to make sure that that move goes
6 seamlessly, and I will dress those here in just a moment.
7 But we work closely with European Command and the joint
8 staff based on guidance we have gotten from the Secretary to
9 make sure that that move is -- that move is proceed -- that
10 move proceeds very smoothly and nothing falls through the
11 cracks, particularly those things related to the defense of
12 Israel.

13 The principal benefit of Israel coming into the Central
14 Command AOR is the fact that most of Israel's threats -- all
15 of Israel's threats really -- emanate from the East, which
16 is in the CENTCOM area of responsibility. Today, I talk a
17 lot to the -- to the Israeli chief of defense. I talk a lot
18 all throughout my command at all levels of the Israeli
19 military about the threats that emanate against them because
20 the threats to Israel have morphed from being, at one time,
21 a purely ballistic missile threat, now to a UAS and a land
22 attack cruise missile threat. So now the threat is far more
23 -- far more diffuse and actually dangerous, so we need -- we
24 need to make sure that we are coordinating fully on all
25 those matters.

1 We work with European Command to make sure that we
2 transition the defense of Israel to CENTCOM when we are
3 ready to do it. That does involve questions of water space
4 management in the eastern Mediterranean, questions of what
5 ships are going to be available and when. And I am in close
6 contact with General Walters actually as we work through
7 those problems, and we will present a plan to the Secretary
8 a little bit later this year for an initial date when
9 combatant command authority will shift for Israel.

10 The last point I would just like to make is, the
11 benefit of -- the other benefit of bringing Israel into the
12 -- into the Central Command AOR is it allows further
13 normalization of relations between Israel and various Arab
14 states in the -- in the CENTCOM area of responsibility, and
15 this just recognizes that by placing them all under one
16 combatant command. We were not able to do that in the past,
17 particularly because of strains between Egypt and Israel.
18 We are now well past that. Egypt and Israel function very
19 well together on a -- at a variety of levels, including
20 joint -- including operations against threats in the Sinai.

21 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you. General Townsend, in
22 the last decade, China has made significant investments in
23 Africa, and it has been in the form of infrastructure and
24 military installations, as well as significant investment
25 from private firms. I am concerned with perceptions of the

1 U.S. presence when we are conducting major air operations
2 with significant collateral damage while China builds roads
3 and bridges. What is AFRICOM's strategy for breaking this
4 dynamic? Is this a problem that has a military solution?

5 General Townsend: Senator, you are right. China has
6 been aggressively investing in the continent with
7 infrastructure, bases, arm sales, training, et cetera. We
8 do not have to compete with China head-to-head, dollar-for-
9 dollar. We can target where our investments are best made.
10 I would not characterize it the way you did about our
11 strikes with significant collateral damage. We do not do
12 very many strikes in Africa. They are limited to Al-Shabab
13 areas in Somalia, and we have very low collateral damage
14 when we do those strikes. I agree with your point, though.
15 There is not a military solution to any of these challenges
16 on the African continent.

17 Senator Gillibrand: Right.

18 General Townsend: It is a whole-of-government approach
19 that will be necessary to solve these challenges.

20 Senator Gillibrand: I was encouraged by your
21 commitment to working with African Union security forces and
22 other nations' militaries, and I do appreciate the fact that
23 we can fight terrorism, but we have to actually stop the
24 social problems at the source. In your opinion, how can we
25 increase cooperation with the African standby force and the

1 African Union Peace and Security Council? And just to note,
2 in your written statement, you listed extreme poverty, more
3 frequent and intense weather events, and vulnerable and
4 marginalized populations as issues that are contributing to
5 instability in the region and, as a result, terrorism.
6 These obviously sound like political problems and
7 potentially a vacuum that China will be happy to fill with
8 their own investments. So what are your thoughts on this
9 issue, and how do we confront China and make the territory
10 less fertile for VEOs?

11 General Townsend: Regarding the -- confronting China
12 here, I think we can do that in a targeted way in certain
13 selected countries, and that way we can make our investments
14 count for more. You mentioned several partners -- African
15 partners. We work with all of those partners to advance
16 what we are doing. The United States does not lead any
17 activity. We work through African partners first and
18 international partners second, and I think that is -- and
19 then you mentioned several political problems. I think our
20 administration strategy is the right one: lead with
21 diplomacy, follow with development, secure with defense.

22 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
23 Chairman.

24 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Gillibrand. Let me
25 know recognize via Webex, Senator Rounds.

1 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen,
2 thank you both for your service to our country. Let me
3 begin with a question for General Townsend.

4 General, the last time that I had an opportunity to
5 visit Djibouti, I noted that at that time, we had a chance
6 to observe the operations that the Chinese were doing with
7 regard to the creation of a naval base, or at least a port
8 there at Djibouti. Can you share with us the current status
9 of the Chinese operations in Djibouti right now with regard
10 to their port and what they are capable of doing with it?

11 General Townsend: Thank you, Senator. The base in
12 Djibouti -- the Chinese base in Djibouti is named Doraleh
13 Port, or Doraleh Base. What they have done in the last 2
14 years is completed a very large and capable naval pier that
15 has joined their -- joins their base. This pier has the
16 capability to dock their largest ships to include the
17 Chinese aircraft carrier as well as nuclear submarines.
18 Now, they are finishing that pier now. They are applying
19 the final coats of paint to this thing. I expect that we
20 will see increased Chinese naval presence there. Their
21 presence at Doraleh Base in the past has been largely to
22 secure and sustain their small naval task force that
23 operates in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. I anticipate
24 now with this pier being recently completed, they will
25 increase their naval activity into Djibouti soon.

1 Senator Rounds: Thank you, General. General McKenzie,
2 I would like to visit with you with regard to the difference
3 between a conditions-based withdrawal and a withdrawal with
4 a date certain, and I recognize that your role here is to
5 follow the directions of the Commander-in-Chief. I respect
6 that, and I know that the President has made the decision to
7 move from a conditions-based withdrawal to a date-certain
8 withdrawal. There is a reason why I think many of us had
9 talked about, and I believe a number of the military
10 officials in the past have discussed the validity of a
11 conditions-based withdrawal, while at the same time
12 recognizing that there is no real good answer to the
13 Afghanistan questions.

14 Respecting the President's ability to make and having
15 to make this decision, can you share with us a little bit
16 about some of the concerns that you have expressed with
17 regard to the ability of the existing Afghan national forces
18 to be able to respond to aggression by the Taliban, and what
19 the impacts could be in those areas that are not currently
20 under Taliban control with regard to the stability in those
21 villages, those communities, and the impact that could occur
22 for women and children in those regions?

23 General McKenzie: Senator, thank you. First of all,
24 the decision-making process was very inclusive. I had
25 multiple opportunities to make my views known, and I

1 appreciate the opportunity to have had those views known. I
2 cannot share those views with you in this forum, but I would
3 just tell you that the inclusion and the deliberate and
4 methodical way that this decision was approached was
5 heartening for me, at least. I would tell you that my
6 concern about leaving with a date certain is that after we
7 withdraw, and we have talked about we are going to go to
8 zero means zero, that there will be no real U.S. enablers in
9 Afghanistan. My concern is the ability of the Afghan
10 military to hold the ground that they are on now without the
11 support that they have been used to for many years, which we
12 have weaned them off direct support -- U.S. and coalition
13 soldiers being present with them on the ground to a point
14 where now it is intelligence, it is fire support. It is the
15 enabling things that actually give them an edge over the
16 Taliban. Now all that will be gone, so I am concerned about
17 the ability of the Afghan military to hold on after we
18 leave, the ability of the Afghan air force to fly, in
19 particular, after we remove the support for those aircraft.

20 All of those things are factors that will be worked out
21 here in the -- in the next few months, and we will get an
22 opportunity to see how the Afghans do.

23 Your last point on conditions for women and children,
24 and women, in particular, and the strides -- the great
25 strides that have been made in education and human rights in

1 Afghanistan, the levers that we have now will be reduced,
2 but I believe there will still be levers that we can apply,
3 and those levers will be principally diplomatic and economic
4 because if the Taliban or whatever future hybrid government
5 exists in Afghanistan wants to gain global recognition and
6 receive some form of international support, they are going
7 to have to take some actions that would tend to protect
8 those groups. Again, those are things we just cannot know
9 right now.

10 Senator Rounds: Thank you, General. I most certainly
11 appreciate your responsible comments, and I understand that
12 you did have the ability to give input. And I just simply
13 think that it is important for the American people to
14 understand that the repercussions of this are not going to
15 be pretty, and that we will see reports of atrocities in
16 those areas as committed by the Taliban if these Afghan
17 national forces are not able to hold their own without those
18 U.S. supports that they have become very dependent on.
19 Thank you.

20 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator. Now, let
21 me recognize Senator Blumenthal.

22 Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thank you
23 both for your service and to the men and women under your
24 command. I do not need to tell either of you that the
25 definition of success in Afghanistan has changed over the 20

1 years that we have been fighting wars in that part of the
2 world. In October 2001, President Bush set the terms for
3 victory in Afghanistan as bringing Al-Qaeda to justice and
4 ensuring that they could no longer use Afghanistan as a base
5 to launch terrorist attacks on the United States. Coming
6 right to the point, General Townsend, public press reporting
7 states that after a withdrawal from Afghanistan, it would be
8 a 4-hour flight for an MQ-9 to be on station in Afghanistan
9 to do a counterterrorism mission. And my question is, how
10 does that compare to the flight to be on station in Somalia,
11 or Libya, or other places under your command where
12 countering terrorism is a similar mission?

13 General Townsend: Senator, we also have some pretty
14 long legs to get our ISR on station, although I do not
15 believe 4 hours. Our transit times or more in the realm of
16 1 to 2 hours one way. We spend 4 hours probably, on
17 average, back and forth, but not as long as you just
18 described.

19 Senator Blumenthal: General McKenzie, would that
20 length of time enable effective counterterrorism in
21 Afghanistan using the kind of air resources that we have in
22 General Townsend's command?

23 General McKenzie: Senator, right now in Afghanistan,
24 we principally use MQ-9s and MQ-1s, and the newspaper -- the
25 newspaper story may have said 4 hours. If we get out of

1 Afghanistan, most likely the transit time will be
2 considerably longer than 4 hours to get in, and I can talk
3 about this in a closed session in a little bit more detail.

4 So I can, in fact, give the persistent overhead coverage
5 that is required. It will simply require far more platforms
6 operating at greater range in order to accomplish that same
7 mission that you can do with fewer platforms because, as you
8 know, the airplane has so long to fly. You can either --
9 you are going to use that flight time either getting to the
10 objective or what you do on the objective. We want to
11 maximize what you can do on the objective. It will be
12 difficult.

13 Senator Blumenthal: I would like to hear, and probably
14 it should be in a closed setting with the chairman's and
15 senator's support, what specifically by way of
16 counterterrorism can be done, what the plans are to do it,
17 because I think that is an essential feature of our
18 withdrawal. You said "if," but it is right now planned for
19 September 11th, and I would like to know what our
20 preparations are.

21 General McKenzie: Sure, I will be happy to discuss
22 that in closed session.

23 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you. I think Senator Inhofe
24 alluded to this topic, but, as you know, there have been
25 various reports about attacks on American personnel,

1 diplomats, members of the intelligence community, perhaps
2 even military, some of it referred to as the Havana
3 Syndrome, referring only to those public reports. If there
4 is any truth to those reports about attacks on American
5 personnel, do not you think the American people deserve to
6 know about it?

7 General McKenzie: Sir, I do, and I track that very --
8 and I can only speak, of course, to the U.S. Central Command
9 area of responsibility, and I can give you a little bit more
10 information in a closed -- in a closed session, but I have
11 found no evidence of those attacks in U.S. Central Command.
12 But I can talk a little bit more about it, and I would like
13 to do so in a closed session.

14 Senator Blumenthal: I would like to hear about it in
15 closed session, but I would also like for the American
16 people to know about it because I think they need and
17 deserve to know about it. General Townsend, do you have any
18 comment?

19 General Townsend: Senator, we have not seen that
20 phenomenon in AFRICOM in any significant number; in fact,
21 any number that I am aware of.

22 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you. General McKenzie, what
23 have you seen by way of the Iranian support for proxies and
24 their attacks on United States personnel under your command,
25 the malign influence of Iran and their support for those

1 kinds of attacks on our personnel or our allies and
2 partners?

3 General McKenzie: So I think, first of all, Iran is
4 not seeking state-on-state conflict with the United States
5 right now. I think they would like to see how the Biden
6 Administration's approach on JCPOA works out for them. At
7 the same time, and this just reflects the contradiction
8 inherent in the way the Iranians think about many of these
9 problems, they want us out of places like Iraq, and they are
10 prepared to take kinetic activity, which they believe they
11 can disavow by their actors, their proxies, acting on the
12 ground to conduct low-level attacks against us. Over last
13 year, in 2020, the Iranians believed they had a political
14 solution to eject us from Iraq. That no longer appears to
15 be a viable way ahead for them, so we are seeing a return to
16 a more kinetic approach, and that has been manifested here
17 over the last few weeks as low-level attacks have begun to
18 crop up in Iraq, attacks that the Iranians would disavow
19 themselves from. We carefully look for attribution in these
20 attacks, and national leadership will eventually make a
21 decision on how to respond.

22 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you. Thank you both. Thank
23 you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal. Now let
25 me recognize Senator Ernst, please.

1 Senate Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and, gentlemen,
2 thank you very much for your testimony today. And I do want
3 to take time to thank you, your senior enlisted members, and
4 all of the men and women within your commands for their
5 continued service to our Nation. And I will move into my
6 questions, but what we are doing today, we are obviously
7 discussing the significant challenges that both of you have
8 within your commands. Our national defense strategy is
9 still targeted towards five very real threats -- China,
10 Russia, Iran, North Korea, and then, of course, violent
11 extremist groups -- and four of those five challenges
12 operate in both of your AORs, and, of course, the way that
13 we operate and resource your AORs is very different. But,
14 General Townsend, I would like to start with you.

15 Within AFRICOM, we do have various pockets of activity,
16 and we do engage our special operations forces in those
17 areas. The Lake Chad Basin is a very volatile region, and
18 there are a number of those violent extremist organizations
19 there, such as ISIS, Boko Haram. They are operating within
20 the region, and they are exploiting, of course, the economy,
21 the terrain, and the vulnerable population there. And what
22 is the assessment of the risk these various organizations
23 pose to the U.S., and have we allocated the proper resources
24 necessary to defeat their threats?

25 General Townsend: Thanks, Senator. You specifically

1 addressed the Lake Chad Basin, and there we see operations
2 by Boko Haram and ISIS West Africa. A couple of years ago,
3 those two organizations had joined in league with one
4 another. They have split in the last year or two, again,
5 apart. My assessment is that neither -- although they
6 caused tremendous problems there for the countries that all
7 adjoin in the Lake Chad Basin, which is Niger, Nigeria,
8 Chad, Cameroon -- all come together right there -- they
9 caused tremendous problems for them. It is my assessment
10 that neither Boko Haram nor ISIS-West Africa today pose a
11 significant threat to U.S. interests. That is not true of
12 other violent extremist organizations in Africa.

13 Senate Ernst: Mm-hmm. Thank you very much, General.
14 How can we help those countries in that area, be it military
15 or other resources available, through our Federal
16 Government? There are a few of those countries that do have
17 significant resources that could be exploited by China or
18 Russia. What ways can we further support that region, not
19 just military, but other types of supports?

20 General Townsend: Well, just exactly what you said
21 along the lines of not just military. So there -- a whole-
22 of-government approach in that region would help. We have
23 that now to some degree. I think we can make that more
24 robust. There is a partnership between our Department of
25 State and Department of Defense to provide security

1 assistance to those countries there. We do that on a
2 bilateral basis directly with those countries. There is a
3 Multinational Joint Task Force that operates in the Lake
4 Chad Basin region. It would not be hard to increase some of
5 our efforts there. I think what we see, particularly with
6 Nigeria, is they are struggling with that particular threat
7 in the Lake Chad Basin and northeast part of their country.

8 Senate Ernst: All right. Thank you, General. General
9 McKenzie, it was my great honor just several days ago to
10 spend some time in the company of some truly extraordinary
11 women, and these women are -- were Gold Star Wives, and many
12 of them came from our Special Operations Forces. We had an
13 Air Guard member as well as an Army Guard member. And part
14 of the conversation obviously flowed towards the close down
15 of Afghanistan, the withdrawal of troops, and, of course,
16 what we would hope to see as the end to the Global War on
17 Terror. I have concerns about it. I have concerns that we
18 are conceding territory at a great loss of lives. And so if
19 you could indulge me, sir, and address these extraordinary
20 women and their families all across the United States, and
21 just let them know your thoughts and how we can recognize
22 the ultimate sacrifice that their husbands made, and to
23 please let them know that those sacrifices were not in vain.

24 General McKenzie: Senator, thank you, and certainly
25 the sacrifices have not been in vain. And particularly the

1 family members of those people who have gone forward to
2 defend this Nation and have died in so doing, are going to
3 carry those memories with them for the rest of their lives,
4 and there is nothing I can do to really make that better.
5 But what I can tell them is I believe we went to Afghanistan
6 in a good cause, and I believe we have, in fact, prevented
7 attacks on the United States from being generated from
8 Afghanistan for over the last 20 years, and that was
9 ultimately our base mission for being there.

10 The long-term view for the War on Terror is this: it
11 is not going to be bloodless. The War on Terror is probably
12 not going to end. What we actually seek is the creation of
13 local security where the threats, as they arise, can be
14 dealt with indigenously by those countries themselves
15 without a significant U.S. presence there. We will see a
16 test of that hypothesis in Afghanistan and in the months
17 ahead. We also tested it in Iraq where it is moving towards
18 success. We also tested in Syria and in other places.
19 Nothing will ever compensate for the loss of a loved one,
20 and I would not attempt with any words I can say here to try
21 to -- to try do that.

22 Senate Ernst: God bless you. Thank you so much.

23 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Ernst. Senator
24 Kaine, please.

25 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair and Ranking Member

1 Inhofe, and thank you, Senator Ernst, for asking that
2 question to the witnesses who are before us today. We
3 appreciate your service. Just a comment. I think we have
4 had a good discussion about the big issue that is, you know,
5 dominating our attention right now -- Afghanistan -- and
6 every concern that anyone I know that has expressed about it
7 is a very legitimate one. There are a lot of concerns. I
8 do support the President's decision, but believe it was a
9 decision made with no particularly wonderful options out
10 there on the table. And I honor the 20 years of service, 10
11 years to find and kill Bin Laden, and then 10 years to train
12 hundreds of thousands of Afghan security forces. And,
13 General McKenzie, as you mentioned, there will be a test of
14 that security apparatus to determine its efficiency to
15 counter the threat that the Taliban poses, and we will all
16 be paying attention in a significant way.

17 One thing I would like to just caution against is
18 sometimes, particularly in a military hearing, we will talk
19 about the state beginning on September 11th as a zero
20 solution, and it is true that the President's announced
21 intention is a zero solution with respect to military
22 presence in Afghanistan, except for that necessary to
23 protect our embassy and, if needed, for counterterrorism
24 operations as they arise. But I think it is important for
25 the American public to know that it is not a zero solution

1 if you look at it from the whole-of-government standpoint,
2 because I think it is very likely that the United States is
3 going to continue to provide significant security assistance
4 to Afghanistan. It is highly likely that we are going to
5 provide significant assistance in the humanitarian,
6 economic, trade, development, and diplomacy space.

7 And so it is not a zero solution in terms of America's
8 partnership with Afghanistan. I would imagine that when we
9 get to a new status quo in terms of the relationship, the
10 support that we provide for our partner, Afghanistan, will
11 be significant and may be significantly greater than sort of
12 the support we provide to other nations. That remains to be
13 seen, and obviously the effect of that support is being
14 tested, as General McKenzie mentioned.

15 General McKenzie, you mentioned something about
16 Afghans' neighbors, and I wanted to just dig into that a
17 little bit. You indicated that while they have not all been
18 helpful to the United States, not by a long shot, and they
19 have not necessarily even done what we would hope they might
20 do to assist in Afghanistan, they do help with stability in
21 Afghanistan. They do not see instability there as
22 furthering their interests. And just quickly, I was looking
23 at who Afghanistan -- the Afghan neighbors are. Afghanistan
24 is bordered by six countries: Pakistan, Turkmenistan,
25 Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, China, and Iran. Very different

1 nations, those six, but can I just dig in a little bit with
2 you, General McKenzie, on that? As different as these
3 nations are from each other, and as different as they are in
4 their relationships with the United States, would you say
5 that they all, for their own reasons, would desire stability
6 in Afghanistan and would feel threatened by instability in
7 Afghanistan?

8 General McKenzie: Senator, I would agree with you
9 completely. I think all, for their own reasons, and, as you
10 noted, those reasons are very different, they all want
11 stability in Afghanistan. And the other thing some of them
12 want, too, is they recognize the vast natural resources that
13 are inherent in Afghanistan, and they seek access to that.

14 Senator Kaine: In terms of wanting stability, I would
15 imagine that they want stability, again, for their own
16 reasons, but some of the common reasons would be instability
17 could lead to unacceptable refugee flows into neighboring
18 nations if that is not managed, and instability could also
19 lead to the possibility of terrorist or other attacks in
20 their own nations if that is not managed correctly. Are
21 those two of the reasons that they want stability, and are
22 there others why they would want stability?

23 General McKenzie: Senator, I think those are the two
24 principal reasons, the movement of -- the movement of
25 refugees across national borders, and also the threat of

1 exportation of ISIS or Al-Qaeda's ideology, you know, from
2 inside Afghanistan. I think those are the two principal
3 reasons.

4 Senator Kaine: And in terms of those threats, the
5 threat of refugee flows and the threat of terrorist attacks,
6 in many ways, they have more of an existential connection to
7 stability in Afghanistan than the United States does, just
8 because of their proximity to Afghanistan. Is that not
9 correct?

10 General McKenzie: Senator, I would agree.

11 Senator Kaine: All right. Thank you. Mr. Chair, I do
12 not have other questions.

13 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Kaine. Let me now
14 recognize via Webex, Senator Tillis.

15 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you
16 for holding the hearing, and, gentlemen, thank you for being
17 here and for your years of service. General Townsend, I
18 want to talk a little bit about China. In your opening
19 comments, you talked about China's move, I think, in
20 Djibouti as a power projection platform. We know that there
21 is even talk about an Atlantic Coast naval base. How does
22 this play out over the next several years if they continue
23 at their current pace, and what are the real threats to our
24 own national security as a result?

25 General Townsend: Thanks, Senator Tillis. So we know

1 that the Chinese desire a network of bases around the globe.
2 How that plays out in Africa is, first, with their base at
3 Doraleh in Djibouti. They have been working on a number of
4 options to get a base elsewhere in Africa, Tanzania --
5 primarily on the east coast -- the Indian Ocean, and then
6 they have placed a number of bets down along the Atlantic
7 coast. My concern is the greatest along the Atlantic coast
8 of Africa. This is probably -- this is the most significant
9 threat, I think, from China would be to gain a militarily
10 useful naval facility on the Atlantic coast of Africa. And
11 by "militarily useful," I mean something more than a place
12 that they can make port calls and get gas and groceries. I
13 am talking about a port where they can rearm with munitions
14 and repair naval vessels. They are working aggressively to
15 get that, but we have not seen any of that come to fruition
16 yet, and it is my number one global power competition
17 concern.

18 Senator Tillis: Thank you, General Townsend. General
19 McKenzie, with the withdrawal of troops in Afghanistan, we
20 have received, you know, various estimates of how that is
21 going to play out over the next year or so. I, for one,
22 think that we are going to run into -- that Afghanistan is
23 going to run into serious problems after we completely
24 withdraw our troops, but I am primarily concerned with force
25 protection as we withdraw from the forward-operating bases

1 and, ultimately, Kabul. What are we doing? Are we just
2 going exploit the resources we have on the ground for force
3 protection? Are we going to surge a bit as we withdraw?
4 Can you give me some sense and some confidence that we are
5 going to be able to do this with the full expectation that
6 the Taliban may take some shots at us on our way out the
7 door?

8 General McKenzie: Senator, first of all, we are
9 prepared if the Taliban want to take shots at us, today, or
10 after 1 May, or at any point during the withdrawal. The
11 plan that we have designed and that General Miller will
12 begin execution of is designed to come out with or without
13 pressure from the Taliban. And, yes, we will bring
14 additional resources in in order to protect the force as it
15 comes out. That is normal in any kind of disengagement
16 operation. I do not want to go into the details of those
17 operations right now, but we will bring -- we will have
18 additional capabilities, and I am confident that we will be
19 able -- that we will, and our coalition partners will be
20 able, to extract ourselves. And we look every day, every
21 hour at force protection in Afghanistan. It has the
22 complete, undivided attention of General Miller and myself.

23 Senator Tillis: Well, I hope that any malign
24 activities on the part of the Taliban are met, and that you
25 have the authority to exact a cost for any of those.

1 Hopefully there will not be any, but I am afraid that we
2 will probably see some. General McKenzie, I also wanted to
3 talk about the Abraham Accords. Do you think the other
4 countries that have come to the Accords already, that it has
5 been a positive thing, and what other additional cooperation
6 or participants in the Accords do you think would be helpful
7 as a check against Iran?

8 General McKenzie: Sir, I think the normalization of
9 relationships between Israel and her Arab neighbors is a --
10 is a profound step forward. It represents really a new era
11 in the Middle East, and I think that is one of the things
12 that Israel coming into U.S. Central Command as part of a
13 unified command plan shift will also help. So I think, you
14 know, we have got to be patient. It will take time for this
15 to happen, but I would look over time for further nations to
16 join in normalization of relations with Israel, and I think
17 that is a net positive thing for the region.

18 Senator Tillis: The last question is, with the missile
19 attack or rocket attack out of Syria against Israel just
20 this week, do you -- is that potentially a part of a trend,
21 or do you think that maybe it was just a one-off activity?

22 General McKenzie: I think it reflects actually
23 incompetence in Syrian air defense where they were
24 responding to Israeli strikes on targets in Syria. They
25 fired their missiles. The missiles went ballistic,

1 literally, and followed the parabolic trajectory into Israel
2 where they were intercepted. I do not believe it was an
3 intentional attack, but just rather lack of capability on
4 the part of the Syrian air defenders.

5 Senator Tillis: Okay. Thank you both. Thank you
6 both, gentlemen. Thank you for your service and your
7 leadership. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

8 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Tillis. Now let me
9 recognize Senator King via Webex.

10 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There has been
11 a lot of discussion today about the September 11th date and
12 the calendar-based withdrawal. I think it is important to
13 recall that the prior Administration initiated a calendar-
14 based leaving -- withdrawal from Afghanistan, and, in fact,
15 that calendar date is 1 week from tomorrow. So we -- the
16 current Administration was, in a sense, boxed in by those
17 negotiations with the Taliban that took place last year, and
18 which, by the way, excluded the Afghan Government. General
19 McKenzie, you used a term earlier in your testimony, "if a
20 civil war ensues." Is there not a civil war going on right
21 at this very moment? There is no doubt that a civil war is
22 going on now and will continue. Is there?

23 General McKenzie: Sorry. I am probably not the best
24 person to give you an answer to this. I would defer to the
25 diplomats. But we have a constituted-elected government in

1 place in Afghanistan, and I would -- and so that we have a
2 -- we have a legal authority in place. So I am not sure
3 that I would refer to what is going on right now as a civil
4 war. Others might take a different view of that, but I am
5 not certain that I would refer to it in that way.

6 Senator King: It would not -- you do not think the
7 Taliban is a viable insurgency that is fighting against the
8 government and the government's reach into the provinces?

9 General McKenzie: I think the Taliban certainly have a
10 -- are militarily very capable. I do not know how much of
11 the actual Afghan population they represent. Polling data
12 would tell you it is a very low percent if you subjected it
13 to an honest -- to an honest election, which I know would be
14 very difficult to accomplish in Afghanistan. But I would
15 not confuse an insurgency, however capable and lethal, with
16 a civil war.

17 Senator King: Well, I will turn the question around.
18 We have been there 20 years. We have spent over \$1
19 trillion, lost lives, tens of thousands of injuries,
20 incredible support to the Afghan Government. Why has the
21 Afghan Government not been able to take hold? My
22 understanding is, General, that the Taliban controls more
23 land today than they did last year, and more last year than
24 they did the year before. They are, in fact, winning. Why
25 can the Afghan Government not defend itself successfully?

1 General McKenzie: Sir, our principal objective in
2 Afghanistan has been, and will remain, to prevent al-Qaeda
3 and ISIS from developing attacks against our homeland and
4 those are of our allies --

5 Senator King: No, I understand that, General. That is
6 not my question. My question is, in your military judgment,
7 why has the Afghan Government not, with all the support that
8 it has had from us, been more successful in beating back the
9 Taliban, when, in fact, over the last dozen years or so, the
10 Taliban has been making steady gains?

11 General McKenzie: I believe that right now, a rough
12 stasis exists between the Taliban and the Government of
13 Afghanistan forces. The Taliban has access to offshore
14 havens where they are able to reconstitute where the
15 Government of Afghanistan cannot reach, and it is always
16 very difficult in a counterinsurgency to fight when your
17 opponent has the ability to do those things.

18 Senator King: Well, I understand that, but it just
19 seems like with all the advantages of the Afghan Government,
20 I am just puzzled as to why they have not -- and you
21 testified that you thought they had the support of the
22 majority of the people -- why they have not been able to be
23 more successful. General Townsend, we have talked a lot
24 about the Chinese activity in Africa. You talked about the
25 purpose appears to be both economic and military. My

1 question is, do you discern any backlash in these African
2 countries where the Chinese have made these big loans and
3 big investments and now the bills are coming due? Are the
4 Africans having any second thoughts about their engagement
5 with the Chinese?

6 General Townsend: Thank you, Senator. Actually, we do
7 see some backlash. You know, you have famous -- heard of
8 the famous debt trap diplomacy that the Chinese have used.
9 That has actually worked against their efforts in a lot of
10 African countries. Our embassies have a very successful
11 program where we now will review any contracts. We have a
12 standing offer to review any contracts that these countries
13 are going to undertake with China to point out the
14 inconsistencies, the potential pitfalls, and the differences
15 often we find between the host nation language translation
16 and the Chinese translation. I think this is a great effort
17 by our Department of State to help these countries make
18 informed decisions on their own.

19 We see backlash, and we see it in the military sphere.
20 Their equipment frequently breaks within a year or two. It
21 is sitting rusting at the -- on the side of the airfield or
22 the port, and their training has been described to me by one
23 African leader as not much more useful than a Hollywood
24 demonstration. So we are starting to see some pushback by
25 African leaders on the Chinese.

1 Senator King: Well, I think one way to look at it, and
2 I have talked to leaders throughout Asia, is that we have
3 allies; China has customers. And I think to the extent we
4 can maintain those relationships with those African
5 countries in the long run, I think they are going to prefer
6 our model and our air support. Thank you very much,
7 gentlemen, for your service. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I
8 yield back.

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

11 Senator Scott: Thank you, Chairman. Thank both of you
12 for your service and all the men and women under your
13 command. Just to follow up with General Townsend with what
14 Senator King was saying. What do you -- how are they --
15 what are you hearing from these leaders in these Afghan --
16 African countries about how they are going to deal with the
17 debt that the Chinese have done or their relationship? Is
18 there much opposition to what China is doing right now?

19 General Townsend: I had an African leader tell me a
20 drowning man will reach for any hand, and so I think they
21 are faced with very difficult choices, many of these
22 countries. They have got extreme poverty. They have
23 climate challenges, food shortages. They want to advance
24 the -- their country for their people. Many of them have
25 challenges with violent extremist organizations, and they

1 need to secure their country, so they will reach out to any
2 offer. Frequently those offers are fastest from China and
3 Russia. We are slower to deliver, in their -- in their
4 estimation, and it is true, and we are more deliberate in
5 that way, and we have more strings attached than the Chinese
6 and the Russians. You know, our strings are related to good
7 behavior and things like that, democratic values, and the
8 Chinese and the Russians attach no such strings other than
9 loans -- loan shark type of lending.

10 So they reach for whatever assistance they can get.
11 They constantly tell us we would prefer you to be our
12 partner, and many of them do that when they have the ability
13 to do that. But they also will take help from any source,
14 and they will take help from us and help from the Chinese
15 and the Russians all at the same time, and they will
16 reassure us they can manage those relationships, and we try
17 to help them with that.

18 Senator Scott: So take the Chinese. Are they going to
19 be able to enforce the deals they have -- they have entered
20 into in these countries?

21 General Townsend: That is a great question, Senator,
22 and I do not know the answer to that. Probably best for the
23 Department of State.

24 Senator Scott: Okay. General Townsend, you know,
25 Israel -- it seems like Israel's reputation and presence in

1 Africa is growing, and with the Abraham Accord, you would
2 think it would be a positive. So are you seeing Israel's
3 involvement in Africa growing at all?

4 General Townsend: We do see Israel. Israel has always
5 been involved in parts of Africa, mostly the northeast and
6 along the Red Sea. We are seeing Israel reach out across
7 Africa in a fairly positive way in most cases, and there --
8 they are doing some arms sales there. And, quite frankly, I
9 would rather see our African partners buy Israeli drones
10 than Chinese drones.

11 Senator Scott: Thank you. General McKenzie, how
12 concerned are you about the relationship that Iran is
13 building with China?

14 General McKenzie: I am very concerned about it. It is
15 too soon to tell, though, if this latest agreement is going
16 to mount into something or nothing at all. I think Iran is
17 always seeking opportunities to buy weapons, you know, and
18 so I think it is interesting, but I am not yet prepared to
19 pass a judgment on it.

20 Senator Scott: Are you -- are you seeing China's
21 involvement grow -- continuing to grow militarily all across
22 the area you are responsible for?

23 General McKenzie: In Central Command, China's
24 involvement engagement is principally economic with the debt
25 trap diplomacy that General Townsend discussed in Africa.

1 We see the same thing across our region. You know, we
2 should not forget that China actually imports a significant
3 fraction of their hydrocarbons from the region, and through
4 the Strait of Hormuz, and from the Arabian Gulf, so they are
5 going to be -- they are very interested in the region. So I
6 think right now what we are seeing is the leading edge of a
7 long-term Chinese plan to firmly establish themselves in the
8 region.

9 Senator Scott: Thank you. Thank you, Chairman.

10 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Scott. Now let me
11 recognize via Webex, Senator Warren.

12 Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank
13 you, General McKenzie and General Townsend, for being here.

14 So, General McKenzie, President Biden recently announced
15 his plans to withdraw all U.S. forces from Afghanistan no
16 later than September 11th, 2021. That is going to mark our
17 longest war ever, so I just want to review what has happened
18 just over the past decade and where we stand right now.

19 General McKenzie, is it true that the Taliban has more
20 members today than it did 10 years ago?

21 General McKenzie: The Taliban has 50,000 or so members
22 today. I would have to come back to you on where that
23 stands compared to 10 years ago, Senator.

24 [The information referred to follows:]

25 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

1 Senator Warren: Well, actually, I think the number
2 could be as high as 85,000, according to the special
3 inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction, and that
4 is almost triple what it was in 2011. You might want to go
5 back and look at those numbers. And does the Taliban
6 control more of Afghanistan than it did 10 years ago?

7 General McKenzie: Yes, it does, Senator.

8 Senator Warren: Yes. And does Pakistan or elements of
9 the Pakistani government still provide support and sanctuary
10 to the Taliban?

11 General McKenzie: We believe that elements of the
12 Taliban are in Pakistan. Yes, Senator, we do.

13 Senator Warren: And is corruption in the Afghan
14 Government still endemic?

15 General McKenzie: The Afghan Government has
16 corruption, significant corruption.

17 Senator Warren: Yes. And after all this time and all
18 this work to prop up and support the Afghan Government, is
19 it fair to say that Afghans still have little trust in their
20 government and elections just as they did 10 years ago?

21 General McKenzie: Senator, I would defer to the
22 Department of State for a better commentary on that.

23 Senator Warren: All right. I think if you check their
24 commentary, they will say yes. The situation in Afghanistan
25 has not improved in the last 10 years, even with our troops

1 present, and it is clear there is little for us to be gained
2 by a continued U.S. presence there. I strongly support
3 President Biden's decision to withdraw U.S. troops. We
4 should have learned by now that a conditions-based
5 withdrawal is just a recipe for staying in Afghanistan
6 forever. Defense officials have come before this committee
7 year after year to proclaim that the U.S. has turned the
8 corner in Afghanistan, but all I see is a vicious cycle that
9 damages our Nation's reputation abroad and keeps our troops
10 in harm's way, while producing little tangible benefit for
11 our security.

12 Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I yield the
13 remainder of my time.

14 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Warren.
15 Now let me recognize Senator Sullivan.

16 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen,
17 thank you for your service. General McKenzie, I appreciate
18 our discussion yesterday. Let me start with a big kind of
19 picture issue. You are in the Middle East, a lot of energy
20 there. Does it help or hurt the United States of America
21 from a national security and foreign policy perspective that
22 we are now the world's energy superpower, producing more
23 natural gas than Russia, more oil than Saudi Arabia? Does
24 that help our national security posture in the Middle East
25 and other places in the world?

1 General McKenzie: I would say -- I would think that it
2 helps globally. It certainly helps in the -- in the CENTCOM
3 region.

4 Senator Sullivan: So do you think it makes sense from
5 a perspective to just unilaterally start reducing the
6 production of American energy? It kills jobs, but I am
7 talking about from the national security perspective, to
8 enable Saudi Arabia and Russia to be bigger energy producers
9 than us. Does that makes sense, from your perspective,
10 national security, your personal opinion?

11 General McKenzie: Sir, I would -- first, I would defer
12 to Commerce for a more informed opinion.

13 Senator Sullivan: I am asking as a --

14 General McKenzie: I would say -- I would say that it
15 is not helpful to the United States.

16 Senator Sullivan: Thank you. You know, General, this
17 is a very difficult decision, controversial decision.
18 Certainly I wish the President would not have picked
19 September 11th as some kind of date to celebrate. It is not
20 a good date in American history. I think the Taliban is
21 going to have a great propaganda victory by saying 20 years
22 ago there was a victory, now there is a victory. I do not
23 believe that it is a victory, but I hope in the future that
24 the President, Secretary of Defense, even you do not use
25 September 11th as some kind of date we are celebrating here

1 for 2021 on the withdrawal of troops. You do not need to
2 comment on that. I just think it is baffling that somehow
3 somebody in the White House thought that was a good day to
4 choose.

5 One thing that we are hearing, many of our bravest men
6 and women fought. Many died, sacrificed. You know, you
7 start to hear this mantra that, well, they -- if we are
8 pulling out, the Taliban takeover, which is a distinct
9 possibility, that these sacrifices, particularly those who
10 died, died in vain. You know, I had the honor of serving as
11 a staff officer to General Abizaid for 1-and-a-half years
12 when he was CENTCOM commander many years ago. He said
13 something once that really struck me. He said, no American
14 who has ever fought for freedom or the defense of the
15 national security of the United States has ever died in
16 vain. What would you say to the men and women who fought in
17 Afghanistan, wounded families who lost loved ones, about
18 their sacrifice, even though we are leaving?

19 General McKenzie: Senator, first of all, there is
20 really nothing I can say to replace the empty chair at the
21 table, the loss of a loved one, and I am very much humbled
22 by recognizing that. I cannot improve on what General
23 Abizaid said. In many ways, you know, to fight for freedom
24 is not to give something up in vain. I think it is -- but I
25 think it is a very -- it is still very hard on those people.

1 As you know, I have been to Afghanistan multiple times, as
2 has General Townsend seated beside me. My son has been to
3 Afghanistan twice, so I am well aware of the burden that has
4 been placed on families of this Nation to support our fight
5 there.

6 Senator Sullivan: I just want to make sure our message
7 to these families, to the men and women who served,
8 sacrificed, some gave their lives, that it is not going to
9 be your sacrifice did not mean anything. I would agree with
10 General Abizaid. I hope that can be the statement from our
11 military leaders. No American who has ever fought for
12 freedom in the security of this Nation has died in vain,
13 regardless of what happens in Afghanistan in the next 2 to 3
14 years. Would you -- would you agree with that?

15 General McKenzie: Senator, I would, certainly.

16 Senator Sullivan: Would you agree with that, General?

17 General Townsend: Senator, I would. Absolutely.

18 Senator Sullivan: Let me ask one final question.

19 General, you are a Marine. You know honor, courage, and
20 commitment is a cornerstone of our ethos. Semper Fidelis.
21 Do you believe nations have honor?

22 General McKenzie: I do believe nations have honor.

23 Senator Sullivan: So one thing that I worry about,
24 given this decision, is that a lot of people who worked with
25 our military, their lives are going to be at risk. The

1 women who are now parliamentarian, their lives are going to
2 be at risk if the Taliban takes over, which I think is a
3 distinct possibility. I think we should be doing much more
4 and planning much more to try to protect those lives, maybe
5 get them out of Afghanistan if needed. Would you agree with
6 that and if there is a plan to do that? Well, what is the
7 plan to do that right now, and if there is not a plan, would
8 you be able to execute a plan if we were able to keep our
9 word to people who sacrificed and worked with us, who, now
10 their lives are clearly going to be at risk, to help them?
11 Would that not help the honor of America despite leaving?

12 General McKenzie: Senator, I know the Department of
13 State is looking at a variety of venues, the Special
14 Immigrant Visa Program, among others, you know, to
15 potentially get people out. We have the capability to do
16 that if so directed.

17 Senator Sullivan: I certainly hope we look at doing
18 that in a big way. I think the idea of a year from now or a
19 year -and-a-half from now if the Taliban takes over, which I
20 think is a distinct possibility, and you have people who
21 worked with our troops who are lined up and shot or killed
22 because they worked with Americans, I think that would be a
23 stain on our honor as a Nation, and I hope that we are
24 making plans to avoid that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator. Now let me

1 recognize Senator Rosen via Webex.

2 Senator Rosen: Thank you, Chairman Reed, Ranking
3 Member Inhofe and -- for holding this hearing, of course,
4 and I would like to thank Generals Townsend and McKenzie for
5 testifying today, and, of course, for their service to our
6 country. I would like to speak a little bit about
7 maintaining Israel's QME because for decades, maintaining
8 Israel's qualitative military edge has been a bipartisan
9 American foreign policy priority. It has been codified in
10 law since 2008.

11 In recent years, the combination of Iran acquiring
12 advanced Russian and Chinese systems, transfers of arms to
13 terrorist groups, and an escalating weapons race in the
14 region undermine Israel's QME, and they pose a significant
15 conventional threat to the United States personnel. Just
16 last night, a Syrian surface-to-air missile exploded in
17 Israel, demonstrating the danger of advanced missiles
18 proliferating through the region. So, General McKenzie,
19 what is your assessment of Israel's current QME, and what
20 must be done to maintain it? And do you view the escalating
21 arms race in the region as having a negative impact on
22 Israel's QME?

23 General McKenzie: Senator, you know, I am newly
24 energized to study the Israeli question because of the
25 movement of Israel into the -- into the Central Command

1 under the recent UCP decision, although I have looked at it
2 for several years at U.S. Central Command. I am confident
3 that we will be able to preserve Israel's QME going forward,
4 even considering arms sales to various countries across the
5 region. And we should also reflect that the arm sales to
6 those countries across the region at least partially
7 reflects the increasing normalization of ties between Israel
8 and those nations. Nonetheless, I am absolutely confident
9 that we will be able to retain Israel's military advantage.

10 Senator Rosen: Thank you. I look forward to
11 revisiting that with you as you move forward. I would like
12 to move next to the MQ-9 production because the MQ-9 is
13 remotely piloted aircraft. It plays a critical role in
14 supporting our current intelligence surveillance and
15 reconnaissance requirements. A key part of the MQ-9's
16 architecture is the mission at Nevada's Creech Air Force
17 Base. As force drawdowns in CENTCOM's area of
18 responsibility have reduced human intelligence availability,
19 signals intelligence capabilities become even more
20 important. Despite this, the prior Administration tried to
21 cut MQ-9 production. So, again, General McKenzie, last year
22 you included additional MQ-9 funding at the top of CENTCOM's
23 unfunded priorities. So how would additional MQ-9 aircraft
24 support your ISR mission, and what would be the impacts or
25 the gaps in your ISR capabilities if that production were to

1 be suspended without a follow-up plan?

2 General McKenzie: Senator, the MQ-9, MQ-1, and various
3 other platforms are critical platforms for us in Central
4 Command, particularly for use in the VEO fight. They give
5 us the persistent overhead coverage that we need to go
6 through the find, fix, and finish part of the -- of the
7 equation. So we continue to use them, particularly in
8 Afghanistan, but also in Iraq and Syria, and we have also
9 found the MQ-9 to be valuable in use against Iran. In the
10 summer of 2019, the manipulation of ISR assets in and around
11 the Strait of Hormuz directly deflected Iranian attack
12 planning, so it is useful in a variety of venues for us.

13 Senator, I also recognize there is a global demand for
14 these resources. Other combatant commands need them. My
15 partner here, General Townsend, needs them in Africa as
16 well. It remains an invaluable platform for us. I also
17 recognize the platform is not viable in a -- in a high-end
18 fight, and there are parts of CENTCOM that could become a
19 high-end fight. There are parts of CENTCOM that are not a
20 high-end fight. The platform is going to remain vital to us
21 as we go forward, particularly as we pull out of
22 Afghanistan, and our ability to maintain persistent overhead
23 coverage will maybe -- will possibly require additional MQ-
24 9s in order -- because of the range of -- range from the
25 base to the place where we will actually be looking. We may

1 even need more of them in Central Command dedicated to that
2 particular task.

3 Senator Rosen: Well, thank you. I appreciate that,
4 and glad to do our part in signals and reconnaissance
5 intelligence, and the MQ-9s certainly helps us meet those
6 goals. Thank you. I notice my time has just about expired.
7 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 Chairman Reed: Well, thank you very much, Senator
9 Rosen. And there are several members that are endeavoring
10 to get here, and in order to allow them a fair opportunity,
11 let me ask an additional question or two, and Senator Inhofe
12 joins us. In fact, this is perfect timing because I can now
13 introduce and recognize Senator Kelly. Are you prepared,
14 Senator?

15 Senator Kelly: I am always ready.

16 Chairman Reed: Always ready.

17 Senator Kelly: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and,
18 General McKenzie, General Townsend, thank you for your
19 testimony today. So we have seen a range of Gray Zone
20 engagement activities by near peer competitors throughout
21 Africa and the Middle East, from China's pursuit of
22 strategic partnerships with the Iranians and attempts to use
23 infrastructure loans of medical supplies to gain favor on
24 the African continent, to Russia's efforts to establish a
25 foothold in critical mineral extraction and a presence on

1 NATO's southern edge. The national defense strategy speaks
2 of the need to expand the competitive space. With that in
3 mind, I would like to get both of your thoughts on how the
4 U.S. should be engaging in this environment to build
5 relationships in each of these areas of responsibility with
6 an eye towards countering the opportunistic influence-
7 seeking behaviors by our competitors and discouraging any
8 further escalation. General Townsend?

9 General Townsend: Thanks, Senator. So you have
10 correctly pointed out that Russia and China are competing
11 deliberately and hard in Africa with the United States. I
12 believe that they are determined to win. China is
13 determined to win that competition. I am a little less
14 concerned about Russia's competition, although it is -- it
15 is not helpful. I think they are exploitative. They are
16 self-interested. I think in many ways they can -- the
17 Russians can be their own worst enemies. I think they are
18 less of a longer-term concern to me than China is. China is
19 a concern today and longer term. They are a learning
20 organization. They are spending a lot of money in Africa.
21 We do not have to outspend them. What we have to do is
22 figure out where we need to out-compete them and how to do
23 that, and how to do that is a whole-of-government solution.

24 In my view, the first thing I am concerned about with
25 China, number one, is an Atlantic Coast naval base. Number

1 two, it is their activities in North Africa, and I can
2 discuss that more in a closed session. My third concern
3 would be the influence of Russia in Libya. As the Libyan
4 national government -- there is a sort of forming up now.
5 Maybe there is a path forward there that is better. And my
6 fourth concern would be a Libyan naval -- or a Russian naval
7 base in Sudan on the Red Sea. So those are my top four
8 global power competition concerns with those competitors,
9 and it is a whole-of-government approach I think that will
10 get us there. Most African partners want to partner with
11 us.

12 Senator Kelly: And when you are thinking about China's
13 desire to have an Atlantic Coast naval base, where do you --
14 where do you think the most likely place is that they are
15 exploring right now?

16 General Townsend: Senator, let me say this. They have
17 placed bets from Mauritania in the north to Namibia in the
18 south, and many countries in between. I would really rather
19 dig into those details in closed session.

20 Senator Kelly: Okay. Thank you. General McKenzie?

21 General McKenzie: Senator, when we talk about
22 competition against Russia and China in the gray space,
23 clearly we need to think globally, not just in the western
24 Pacific and not just in -- not just in Europe. The
25 principal tools that we use in Central Command range from

1 exercises with our partners. Everybody wants to exercise
2 with the United States, so we work those very hard with all
3 these partners. The other is IMET, bringing their officers
4 and NCOs to the United States for educational opportunities,
5 extremely low-cost, extremely high payoff. Everybody wants
6 to go to a U.S. school if they can have -- a military school
7 if they have -- if they can have the opportunity to do that.

8 Additionally, security cooperation. As Steve noted,
9 everybody wants our weapons. They would prefer to buy from
10 us. They accept the restrictions that we will place on
11 those weapons, but we have a variety of tools that we can
12 employ, and that is just in the military domain. On the
13 whole-of-government side, I would just call out, too, the
14 economic aid that we can offer and the work of USAID. All
15 of those working in concert with us give us significant
16 advantages that we can apply against Russia and China,
17 particularly in the Central Command AOR.

18 Senator Kelly: If we were able to expand those
19 educational opportunities for foreign, often, officers, but
20 just military personnel, is the demand -- I mean, how
21 significant is the demand right now?

22 General McKenzie: The demand is -- the demand far
23 outpaces supply. Far outpaces supply.

24 Senator Kelly: So we could double the --

25 General McKenzie: You could double, triple. You could

1 quadruple. You could do a lot of things. The problem
2 really is on our end. I mean, our institutions are good
3 because they are scoped in size, and we recognize that, but
4 nonetheless, there is enormous demand for these.

5 Senator Kelly: Thank you. I yield back.

6 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Kelly. Senator
7 Tuberville, please.

8 Senator Tuberville: Well, thank you very much. Very
9 quickly, thanks for being here today. General McKenzie,
10 what is the most important thing we can do to prevent a
11 resurgence of ISIS in Syria and Iraq, and are we doing
12 enough?

13 General McKenzie: I think we are on -- we are on -- we
14 are on track to do that. I think the Iraqis are a lot
15 better at fighting -- at fighting ISIS. We have pulled back
16 from accompanying them in the fight to high-level advising.

17 They can generally master the battlefield and protect their
18 own country, so I think we are in a good place. I think we
19 are in a good place in Iraq. In Syria, we work with our SDF
20 partners to continue the fight against ISIS remnants. They
21 do not hold any ground. You know, there are small, isolated
22 groups of them that operate up and down the Euphrates River,
23 and we go after them pretty hard. And because of that, they
24 are unable to generate attack -- effective attack plans
25 against the United States or our allies.

1 Senator Tuberville: General Townsend, how will China's
2 growing influence in the region disrupt the U.S.'s abilities
3 to impact long-term strategic goals?

4 General Townsend: Senator, I think our number one
5 strategic goal for Africa is to ensure that the United
6 States has the access and the strategic influence that we
7 need in the future. That is, I think, the number one
8 concern I have for China's activity in Africa is that they
9 will try to maneuver us or box us out of access and
10 influence. I would say that we have an edge still. As much
11 money as they have invested and as many activities that they
12 are doing, we still have an edge in access and influence.

13 An example I use is our rescue of an American citizen
14 that was held hostage in Nigeria just last October. In an
15 hour's notice, we asked seven countries for access to their
16 country for armed -- our armed forces to enter their country
17 and do some military activity. In many of these countries,
18 this was done over the phone with literally hours to give us
19 an answer. All seven said yes, and that is an example of
20 the access and influence the United States has today, and we
21 need to work to ensure we have that access and influence in
22 the future. And not all seven of those countries are what
23 we would consider strong and close partners, but they all
24 said yes to that request.

25 Senator Tuberville: Excellent. Thank you. General

1 McKenzie, are there effective measures being taken today by
2 CENTCOM to address the individual displaced persons crisis
3 along the Syrian and Iraqi border? If so, how?

4 General McKenzie: Senator, I remain very concerned
5 about displaced persons in northeast Syria. It is not a
6 military problem. It is really a whole-of-government, and
7 more than that, it is actually an international problem. We
8 have trained the people that were in those camps -- that is
9 our responsibility -- and we prevent external actors from
10 getting in there and causing harm. Nonetheless, those camps
11 are incubators for radical ideology. We need to find a way
12 to return, particularly the children, but also the other
13 members, back to the countries that they came from. And
14 that requires an international effort, and I know the
15 Department of State is working very hard to make that -- to
16 make that happen. It is a tough -- it is an uphill sled,
17 though, trying to make -- trying to achieve that. This is
18 one of my most significant concerns, sir.

19 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. General Townsend, as
20 we build relationships with African nations, such as Morocco
21 and Algeria, how does this -- how does this strengthen our
22 national security?

23 General Townsend: Both of those countries sit in a
24 geostrategically important part of Africa. They both have
25 -- Morocco directly watches over the Strait of Gibraltar,

1 and Algeria is close enough to influence the Strait of
2 Gibraltar in the western Med. So from a geostrategic
3 standpoint, we absolutely need working -- good working
4 relations with those two countries. Morocco is a very
5 strong partner of the United States, probably our number one
6 African partner as far as relationships go. They take great
7 pride in their military being equipped primarily with U.S.
8 equipment and operating at a standard that is equivalent to
9 a NATO standard, so they are very strong partner. Algeria
10 has been -- has had close ties with Russia for decades.
11 However, they have recently been expressing a desire to
12 increase their ties with the United States, and we do have a
13 good working relationship with Algeria on issues of mutual
14 concern.

15 Senator Tuberville: Do we sell Morocco a lot of arms
16 and equipment?

17 General Townsend: I am sorry?

18 Senator Tuberville: Do we sell Morocco a lot of arms
19 and equipment?

20 General Townsend: We do, and unlike a lot of African
21 partners, they purchase it all with their own money.

22 Senator Tuberville: Excellent. Thank you, Mr.
23 Chairman.

24 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Tuberville. And now
25 I would like to recognize via Webex, Senator Hawley, please.

1 [No response.]

2 Chairman Reed: I know Senator Hawley is trying very
3 quickly to get either to Webex --

4 Senator Hawley: There we go. Can you hear me now, Mr.
5 Chairman?

6 Chairman Reed: I can, Senator. Please proceed.

7 Senator Hawley: Okay. Thank you. Thank you so much.
8 Sorry. I could not hear you there. Thank you, gentlemen,
9 for being here, and thank you, Mr. Chairman, for being
10 patient with me.

11 General McKenzie, let me start with you, if I could.
12 Secretary Austin said recently that the United States will
13 be able to maintain counterterrorism capabilities in the
14 region sufficient to ensure Afghanistan cannot become a safe
15 haven for terrorists who threaten our security. Again, that
16 was Secretary Austin. Can you just give me a sense, do you
17 agree with the Secretary's assessment that we can achieve
18 our counterterrorism objectives in Afghanistan even once we
19 complete the drawdown that President Biden has directed?

20 General McKenzie: Senator, I do agree with that
21 assessment. You know, we will rely on our defense in depth.

22 The changes that have been made to security here in the
23 United States make our homeland a much harder target than it
24 was in 2001. Additionally, the re-basing that we will do
25 across the theater as we pull out of Afghanistan will give

1 us the capability to go back in as necessary to strike
2 targets when they need to be struck. I do not want to make
3 it sound too easy. It is going to be extremely difficult to
4 do that. It is certainly possible to do that, and we will
5 have the forces that will allow us to accomplish those
6 tasks.

7 Senator Hawley: Thank you for that answer. I am glad
8 to hear that. What are some of the options, can you give us
9 a sense, that CENTCOM is evaluating for finding and
10 neutralizing targets in Afghanistan once we withdraw our
11 forces?

12 General McKenzie: Sure. I would prefer to cover it in
13 detail perhaps in the closed session.

14 Senator Hawley: Sure.

15 General McKenzie: But just very broadly, I would tell
16 you that you always need a combination of -- you want -- the
17 formula is you have got to -- you got to find them, you got
18 to fix the target, then you have to finish the target. So
19 we tend to think in those terms when we talk about the
20 resources that we need -- that we will need. What you will
21 need is the ability to bring persistent overhead coverage
22 in, probably from extended ranges, to still loiter and take
23 a look at areas that you want -- you want to further
24 examine. And the reason you are going to need persistent
25 coverage is, if you plan to strike something, we are going

1 to strike it in full compliance with the law of armed
2 conflict: low collateral damage and the American way of
3 war. So we are going to make sure if we go after something,
4 it is really what we want to hit, and we are not going to
5 kill innocent people should that be necessary.

6 So we will do all that from extremely long range and it
7 will be a challenge, but we do have the capability to do it.

8 We have a number of ways to get to a fixed solution,
9 ranging from a precision strike at very long range to on-
10 the-ground options should those prove necessary. And I
11 would really prefer to talk a little bit more about those in
12 a closed session, sir.

13 Senator Hawley: Absolutely. Give me a sense, General,
14 if CENTCOM has done a similar analysis to identify ways that
15 we can achieve our counterterrorism objectives in Iraq,
16 should we withdraw our forces there.

17 General McKenzie: The logic -- the logic is the same.
18 We would -- we would certainly be able to do that, and the
19 logic would be the same.

20 Senator Hawley: Would you be willing in the
21 appropriate setting to share your findings with the
22 committee in terms of the analysis you have done about how
23 we might achieve that in Iraq?

24 General McKenzie: Certainly. Of course, right now we
25 do not anticipate withdrawing from Iraq. In fact, we

1 believe, as a result of the strategic dialogue that was just
2 completed in the last 2 weeks, we will maintain a footprint
3 in Iraq going forward. But certainly, pending approval of
4 the Secretary and further -- you know, and further approval
5 by the Department, we would be willing to do that.

6 Senator Hawley: Yeah, let me -- let me perhaps
7 rephrase my question. Has CENTCOM done a similar -- you are
8 doing this analysis now for Afghanistan because of the
9 President's order in terms of how we can reposition there to
10 achieve our counterterrorism objectives. Has CENTCOM done a
11 similar analysis for Iraq in the event that our force
12 posture there might change significantly?

13 General McKenzie: Senator, not vis-a-vis Iraq
14 particularly, although the logic of the argument, the logic
15 of the capability would be the same where there is a target
16 against Afghanistan or Iraq. So the work that we are doing
17 right now would be useful should that prove necessary at
18 some contingent time in the future as yet unplanned.

19 Senator Hawley: Do you anticipate doing an analysis
20 for the Iraq situation? The reason I am asking, General, it
21 seems that if we are going to have a meaningful discussion
22 about our continued military presence there, we are going to
23 need to know the options, what we can realistically hope to
24 achieve should we draw down or leave entirely.

25 General McKenzie: Sure. So right now we are not

1 planning for that in Iraq, is probably the best way to
2 answer your question. We could plan for it very rapidly if
3 so directed, but, again, I note that right now we do plan on
4 maintaining a presence in Iraq into the future, subject to
5 agreements and further discussions with the Government of
6 Iraq.

7 Senator Hawley: Let me just ask you in the few seconds
8 I have remaining, General, DOD budgeted about \$4 billion
9 last year for the Afghan Security Forces Fund. That is just
10 short of the amount that PACOM needs for this year's
11 installment of the Pacific Deterrence Initiative. And at
12 the same time, there is strong reason to believe that the
13 Afghan security forces will be significantly reduced,
14 harmed, or just collapse when U.S. troops depart. Here is
15 my question. From a military standpoint, under what
16 conditions would you say that it is no longer advisable for
17 DOD to be investing this amount -- these billions of dollars
18 each year in the Afghan security forces?

19 General McKenzie: Senator, that is a sort of a future
20 hypothetical question which I try to avoid answering, but I
21 can tell you this. If we do not -- if we do not provide
22 them some support, they certainly will collapse, and I think
23 that is not in our best interests.

24 Senator Hawley: Yeah. The reason -- as you can
25 probably anticipate, the reason I am asking is I am

1 concerned that we will continue to pour resources into the
2 security forces without much return on investment when we
3 need them. We need those resources very badly in other
4 theaters, particularly in our pacing theater. I have had
5 just about used up my time here, I think. In fact, I am
6 over my time. Thank you, General, for being here. Thank
7 you, General Townsend, as well. I will have some additional
8 questions for you in a written setting. And thank you, Mr.
9 Chairman.

10 [The information referred to follows:]

11 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Hawley. This
2 concludes the open session. Let me yield to Senator Inhofe
3 for any comments he might have.

4 Senator Inhofe: Yeah, I do. I want to make sure the
5 staff, anyone who is here, understands that we have a lot of
6 things -- a lot of questions we want to ask in a closed
7 session. That is going to take place in 217. We have four
8 votes coming up, so it is going to be very convenient to be
9 down there, run up and get our votes and come back, so I
10 would invite all of our members to come to that closed
11 session immediately.

12 Chairman Reed: Let me echo -- let me echo what Senator
13 Inhofe said. In fact, I was going to say that, but he --

14 Senator Inhofe: Oh.

15 [Laughter.]

16 Chairman Reed: This is sort of ESP, I think. I do not
17 know what is going on. But, yes, we are going to adjourn
18 immediately to SVC-217. We will have a closed session. It
19 will be people coming in and out to vote, but there are many
20 issues we want to cover there. Gentleman, thank you for
21 your testimony, thank you for your service, and for those
22 who serve in your commands.

23 The open hearing is adjourned.

24 [Whereupon, at 11:32 a.m., the committee was
25 adjourned.]