

**HEARING TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATIONS  
OF: GENERAL DAVID D. McKIERNAN, USA,  
FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF  
GENERAL AND TO BE COMMANDER, INTER-  
NATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE FORCE,  
AFGHANISTAN; LIEUTENANT GENERAL RAY-  
MOND T. ODIERNO, USA, FOR APPOINT-  
MENT TO THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO  
BE VICE CHIEF OF STAFF, UNITED STATES  
ARMY; AND LIEUTENANT GENERAL WALTER  
L. SHARP, USA, FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE  
GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO BE COM-  
MANDER, UNITED NATIONS COMMAND/COM-  
BINED FORCES COMMAND/UNITED STATES  
FORCES KOREA**

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**Thursday, April 3, 2008**

U.S. SENATE  
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
*Washington, D.C.*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:34 a.m., in room SD-106, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Carl Levin, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Committee Members Present: Senators Levin [presiding], Reed, Warner, Inhofe, Graham, Cornyn, and Thune.

Committee staff members present: Richard D. DeBobes, Staff Director.

Majority staff members present: Jonathan D. Clark, Counsel, Daniel J. Cox, Professional Staff Member, Evelyn N. Farkas, Professional Staff Member, Michael J. Kuiken, Professional Staff Member, Peter K. Levine, General Counsel, Michael J. McCord, Professional Staff Member, William G.P. Monathan, Counsel, and William K. Sutey, Professional Staff Member.

Minority staff members present: Michael V. Kostiw, Republican Staff Director, William M. Caniano, Professional Staff Member, Paul C. Hutton IV, Research assistant, Lucian L. Niemeyer, Professional Staff Member, Lynn F. Rusten, Professional Staff Member, Diana G. Tabler, Professional Staff Member, and Richard F. Walsh, Minority Counsel.

Staff assistants present: Fletcher L. Cork, Kevin A. Cronin, and Ali Z. Pasha.

Committee members' assistants present: Sharon L. Waxman, assistant to Senator Kennedy, Jay Maroney, assistant to Senator Kennedy, Elizabeth King, assistant to Senator Reed, Christopher Caple, assistant to Senator Bill Nelson, Jon Davey, assistant to Senator Bayh, Gordon I. Peterson, assistant to Senator Webb, Sandra Luff, assistant to Senator Warner, Anthony J. Lazarski, assistant to Senator Inhofe, Brian Polley, assistant to Senator Cornyn, Jason Van Beek, assistant to Senator Thune, and Brian W. Walsh, assistant to Senator Martinez.

### **OPENING**

#### **STATEMENT OF HON. CARL LEVIN, U.S. SENATOR FROM MICHIGAN**

Chairman LEVIN. Good morning, everybody.

Today the committee considers the nomination of three distinguished senior military officers: General David McKiernan, the nominee for Commander, International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan; Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno, the nominee for Vice Chief of Staff, United States Army; and Lieutenant General Walter Sharp, the nominee for Commander, United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, United States Forces Korea.

We all know that the long hours and the hard work put in by our senior military officials at the Department of Defense require commitment and sacrifice not only from our nominees, but also from their families. And we appreciate your and their willingness to bear that burden.

Each of our nominees has served this country in the military for more than 30 years. Their successful careers can be seen in the positions in which they serve today: Commanding General, U.S. Army Europe, and 7th Army Germany; Commanding General, III Corps and Commander Multinational Corps Iraq; and Director of the Joint Staff at the Pentagon.

When confirmed, each of our nominees will be responsible for helping the Department of Defense face critical challenges. General McKiernan would take command of the International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan, at a time when independent reviews indicate that the mission to stabilize Afghanistan is faltering, leading to a strategic stalemate between coalition forces and the Taliban-led insurgency, and that in the words of one of those independent reviews, the violence, insecurity, and opium production have risen dramatically as Afghan confidence in their government and its international partners falls.

The next ISAF commander will face significant challenges within the NATO alliance as well. The Bucharest Summit has resulted in some additional troop commitments by allies to the Afghan conflict, but shortfalls remain in NATO members' commitments to provide the troops, helicopters, and other assets needed to meet ISAF mission requirements.

In addition, some nations place restrictions on the use of their national forces, which reduce the ISAF commander's ability to deploy these forces as necessary.

General Odierno would become Vice Chief of Staff at a time when the Army is highly stressed by continuing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Equipment and people are increasingly worn out, and the readiness of our nondeployed units has steadily declined.

General Casey, the Army Chief of Staff, has said that "today's Army is out of balance. The current demand for our forces exceeds the sustainable supply."

Earlier this week, General Cody, the current Vice Chief of Staff, testified before our Readiness Subcommittee that ongoing deployments are inflicting "incredible stress on soldiers and families and pose a significant risk" in his words to the all-volunteer Army.

As daunting as it will be to meet current readiness needs, the next Vice Chief of Staff will also be faced with the necessity to modernize the Army to meet national security requirements of the future. It will not be easy to modernize and transform the Army to meet these future requirements while improving current readiness and sustaining an Army fully engaged in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Finally, General Sharp would be the first U.S. Commander to assume command in Korea since North Korea became a nuclear weapons state. It will be his responsibility to ensure that U.S. conventional forces continue to provide a strong deterrent to North Korean military action and that the military alliance with South Korea remains robust.

I know our nominees look forward to these challenges.

We look forward to these hearings, and also we would welcome each of our nominees introducing any of their family members who might be with them today.

Senator Warner?

**STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN WARNER, U.S. SENATOR FROM VIRGINIA**

Senator WARNER. I think General Sharp is the only one that has them this morning. General, would you introduce your wife of 34 years?

General Sharp: Thank you, sir. I am honored to be joined today by my wife Joanne of 34 years. We were married right out of West Point, and I definitely would not be sitting here today without her support.

And, sir, with your indulgence, I would also like to introduce my executive assistant, Ms. Cherylanne Anderson, who is also here today with my wife and to thank her and really the thousands of others like her that work and make sure that our offices run smoothly so that we do what we can do to protect and defend. I would like to thank her and recognize her also.

Chairman LEVIN. We welcome both of them and thank both of them.

Senator WARNER. And General McKiernan, I believe your family is still in Europe where that is your residence at the time. Is that correct?

General McKiernan: Yes, Senator Warner. My immediate family could not join me today, but I am very proud that my sister, Kathe Carney, and one of her sons, Sean Carney, are here today. She is a special education teacher here in northern Virginia. I am very proud of her.

Senator WARNER. Well, we thank you.

General Odierno, in my visits with you, you always make reference to your family. They are somewhere today. Back at your post, I believe.

General Odierno: Yes, sir. My wife of 32 years Linda, who is my high school sweetheart and who has been through a lot and volunteered much of her time and her efforts to the Army and our soldiers and their families. I could not do it without her, as well as the dedication of my children, who have always been dedicated to the Army themselves.

Senator WARNER. And your son, sir? How is he?

General Odierno: Sir, he is doing very well. He is currently getting his masters at NYU in New York City, has done very well recovering from his injury, and I am very proud of his service and how he has handled his injury as part of the Iraq War.

Senator WARNER. Thank you, General.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to say much of my statement will go in the record. I have not too strong a voice here this morning, but I recognize 100 years of service to America in uniform before us and we are fortunate in this country to have individuals, together with their families, that provide this dedication. It is the very foundation of our National security, the men and women who proudly wear their arms and uniforms and their families.

General McKiernan, we had a very excellent consultation when you visited my office. We have visited together on previous assignments you have had. In fact, Senator Levin and I visited you on one of our trips to Kuwait and the Iraqi situation.

Now, in Afghanistan, General, as I talked with you, there is the problem, of course, of the force levels. The President of France, to his great credit I think, is announcing today an augmentation of forces. Two battalions of marines are going over as a consequence of the shortfall of other nations in their force levels. That was directly testified to before this committee here not long ago in another hearing.

But there is growing concern about the Taliban's resurgence and the presence of the cross-border sanctuaries in Pakistan and the easy access that the insurgents have to cross various parts of that border and severely complicate the ability not only to protect our forces but to conduct the campaigns over there to return to the people of Afghanistan this country.

I also addressed with you the question of narcotics related to by our distinguished chairman. I have spent a great deal of time in the past couple of months on this subject. I have had the opportunity to consult with prime ministers, ambassadors, a lot of senior officers of our uniformed forces, and junior officers. And what concerns me is that each year this level of narcotics has gone up. Now, that is hardly the image, the picture, a benchmark of achievement that our forces, together with NATO and the other combatant

forces, want to send to the world. We went there to enable that country to reestablish itself to have a democracy.

But my most severe concern is that the increase each year allows increases in money that is drained off of that from the farmer's field to the ultimate destination of those drugs. Those monies are providing arms. The Taliban and other insurgent groups are able to take their cut and buy arms and use those weapons against our forces.

Now, there is not any of us in this room who have not gone to the funerals of our brave men and women who have lost their lives, others who are wounded. And when we try to comfort them, I find it particularly difficult with this Afghani situation when I say to myself this soldier could well have lost his life, his limb as a consequence of weaponry directed at him and paid for out of this drug trade.

Now, I wrote the President a letter—I do not intend to release it, certainly at this time—urging that at this ongoing NATO conference, that he ensure that that is becoming a top-level agenda item. I will soon find out whether, in fact, without that letter those NATO heads of state address this problem. I think it is unconscionable not only for the United States but of all governments involved in this Afghani operation not to address full-level attention to it.

It is primarily a problem that should be confronted by the Karzai government. I understand that there has been a battalion established to be in training to work on this problem at this time, but that should have been done years ago.

And I urge you, General McKiernan, as you take up your responsibilities, to unrelentlessly bring this to the attention of your superiors wherever they may be.

The national caveat issue I think is a subject at the NATO conference. Let us see what is provided because it puts an instability in the command and control of these forces where it is well recognized and known that certain nations do not have them and they are undertaking the majority of the high-risk operations. To me it conveys a completely inaccurate image of NATO and its ability to do out-of-area operations if some forces are going to be responsible for the heavy lifting and others to do whatever their countries permit them to do.

I commend Secretary Gates. I think he is one of the finest Secretaries of Defense we have ever had. I have had the privilege of working with and have known almost a dozen now, and I would put him at the very top in the way he has stood up for his forces and the principles for which we are fighting in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

General Jim Jones, the former NATO Supreme Allied Commander and Commandant of the United States Marine Corps; Ambassador Thomas Pickering of the Afghan Study Group sponsored by a distinguished organization, the Center for the Study of the Presidency, under the direction of David Abshire, published reports on these questions, and I am going to quote General Jones' report. "Make no mistake. NATO is not winning in Afghanistan." I hope you have the opportunity to review those reports. They are very clear in the concerns that they have.

I have also, Mr. Chairman, had the privilege of meeting with the Ambassador from Denmark and others connected with that country, and I want to say for the record here today Denmark has more than 600 troops in southern Afghanistan standing side by side with the British in one of the most dangerous areas in Afghanistan.

Again, Secretary Gates went by on his way to this NATO conference and visited the country of Denmark. He singled it out because it is a small country, but those forces are an integral part of the fighting force. They are there with no caveats. And unfortunately, some have mixed them in with that group of nations which have caveats. But let us make it clear on our record today. As Secretary Gates said—and I quote him—“This is an ally who, in my opinion, is really punching above its weight, and I want to visit and basically thank them for that.”

So, General McKiernan, we wish you more than good luck, but your distinguished career ably qualifies you to take on this responsibility and to move it towards achievement of our goals, and part of that will be the commencement of a significant lessening of the drug trade. It is not going to go away overnight, but it has been rising in output production every single year for the last 4 years.

General Odierno, Senator Levin and I have had the opportunity to visit you many times. I remember on my first trip, you were in the room. At that time, you did not have quite as many stars as you have now, and you were among the general officers who were in the back row, but I remember your impressive statements to us at that time. It is funny how you can remember those days to this day. Your career has won the hearts and minds of the soldiers and the families that you have been associated with these many years, and you will join the Chief of Staff of the Army in this challenging task of rebuilding our Army.

I would like to say at this time, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I think General Cody has done a fine job. One of the things I admire about Cody is he grabs that telephone, certainly in the 6 years I was chairman, and he rifles through his message without hesitation. And I hope you will follow on in that same way.

All the members of this committee and I think throughout the Congress, other members, are very conscious of the need to put a lot of emphasis on rebuilding this Army, to do what we can to see that our forces who are deployed not only have all the equipment they have, but have some certainty as to the time of that commitment they will be overseas.

While you may not be able to speak with specificity this morning, I did hear the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs last night state that in his professional judgment, we monitor daily the situation over there, but thus far, the turbulence that we have experienced—I say “we”—all the Afghan fighting forces experienced here in the past month or so in the Basra region—that is not going to change the schedule to bring back those brigades and take it down to 15 in July.

Now, he had to leave the door open, as any prudent chairman would, and I am sure you would. But I hope we can achieve that, and simultaneously with achieving that, I hope we can go from the 15-month tour to the 12-month tour and probably a slightly larger

period of time than 12 months back at home in retraining and spending some time with the family.

Mr. Chairman, I will close out here with a comment or two about General Sharp. I have had the privilege of visiting with him. You are taking on an interesting job in an area which I spent a little time as a youngster many years ago at page 22. It is still as cold over there today as it was when I was there, and I expressed that to your lovely wife.

But what troubles me about that situation over there is that we have been working—I left there in 1953. But it has been a half a century that our forces have been in there. We went in there in '50. I left in '52. A half century-plus. And yet we still cannot get their command and control, their training of the South Korean forces up to a level where they can take operational control. As I told you, the latest estimate is 2012. 2012. That is 62 years if you add it up from the date that we went into South Korea to help liberate that country.

I find that unacceptable and I hope that perhaps you, together with our diplomatic representatives over there, can shorten that time and let them get on with it because the people of our country, while we are ready to make the sacrifices to help others achieve their freedom and stability—certainly South Korea has an enormous economic stability. It ranks in the top 10 nations of the world in terms of their GNP, and they ought to be able to have a commensurate military establishment to support the growth and progress of that country. I hope you will accept my comments this morning as a challenge to work on reducing that date down from 2012.

I thank the chair and the indulgence of the members as I have chatted a few minutes here. [The prepared statement of Senator Warner follows:] [COMMITTEE INSERT]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you so much, Senator Warner.

General McKiernan?

**STATEMENT OF GENERAL DAVID D. McKIERNAN, USA, FOR RE-APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO BE COMMANDER, INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE FORCE, AFGHANISTAN**

General McKiernan: Chairman Levin, Senator Warner, other distinguished members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I am truly honored to be here today.

I would like to thank the Secretary of Defense and the President for nominating me for this important NATO command position. And if confirmed by the United States Senate, I can pledge to you that every ounce of my leadership ability will go into what is certainly a continuing tough, challenging mission set in Afghanistan, to include, as Senator Warner rightfully points out, the counter-narcotics challenges.

I also would like to take this opportunity to thank the Senate Armed Services Committee for your steadfast and truly magnificent support to all our men and women in uniform these past several years. We could not be doing what we are doing globally without your support.

With that, I will stand by for any questions from the committee this morning. [The prepared statement of General McKiernan follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you so much, General McKiernan.  
General Odierno?

**STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL RAYMOND T. ODIERNO, USA, FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO BE VICE CHIEF OF STAFF, UNITED STATES ARMY**

General Odierno: Chairman Levin, Senator Warner, and distinguished members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to be here with you this morning.

As Commander of Multinational Corps Iraq, I had the honor of speaking with many of you during my number of congressional visits to the Iraqi theater of operations, and I am so well aware of your dedicated support to our soldiers serving there, your faith in their outstanding abilities, and your understanding of the many sacrifices they and their families endure for the sake of their country comrades and loved ones. For all of this, I thank the members of the committee for your support and steadfast commitment of them.

I am humbled and honored on my nomination to be appointed the next Army Vice Chief of Staff. I serve with a tremendous sense of awe for the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, leaders and families who have served alongside of me, and I am inspired by what they have accomplished. And I am hopeful for what they will be able to accomplish in the years ahead. It is truly, without a doubt, the best army in the world. I consider myself blessed with the chance to continue serving in its ranks, and if confirmed, I will do so with the integrity, commitment, and drive that such a special position of trust and responsibility demands.

Thank you so much for allowing me to be here today. And with that, I look forward to answering your questions, Mr. Chairman. [The prepared statement of General Odierno follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, General Odierno.  
General Sharp?

**STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL WALTER L. SHARP, USA, FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO BE COMMANDER, UNITED NATIONS COMMAND/COMBINED FORCES COMMAND/UNITED STATES FORCES KOREA**

General Sharp: Mr. Chairman, Senator Warner, distinguished members of this committee, I also thank you for the opportunity to appear here today.

I am also deeply honored to be nominated by the President and the Secretary of Defense for the responsibility to serve as the next Commander, United Nations Command; Commander, Republic of Korea, United States Combined Forces Command, and Commander of U.S. Forces Korea.

And I would also like to thank this committee for your continued support to our men, women, and their families who selflessly serve our great Nation both at home and around the world.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee and its members and with our strong partner in the Republic of Korea during the challenges that we face in the months and years ahead.

Sir, I stand by for your questions. [The prepared statement of General Sharp follows:]

Senator WARNER. Mr. Chairman, would you indulge me for a minute?

Accompanying General Sharp today is Mrs. Abell, the wife of Charlie Abell, who was a former soldier and former presidential appointee to the Department of Defense, and most importantly, he was the Chief Counsel of the staff of the Armed Services Committee. So I welcome you, Mrs. Abell. Pass on the very best to your husband. We may have to recall him.

Chairman LEVIN. Give him the good news, though, would you? [Laughter.]

Chairman LEVIN. Let me ask you the standard questions first to each of our witnesses. You can respond together, however.

First, have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest?

General McKiernan: Yes, sir.

General Odierno: Yes, sir.

General Sharp: Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Have you assumed any duties or undertaken any actions which would appear to presume the outcome of the confirmation process?

General McKiernan: No, sir.

General Odierno: No, sir.

General Sharp: No, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Will you ensure that your staff complies with deadlines established for requested communications, including questions for the record in hearings?

General McKiernan: Yes, sir.

General Odierno: Yes, sir.

General Sharp: Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Will you cooperate in providing witnesses and briefers in response to congressional requests?

General McKiernan: Yes, sir.

General Odierno: Yes, sir.

General Sharp: Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Will those witnesses be protected from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

General McKiernan: Yes, sir.

General Odierno: Yes, sir.

General Sharp: Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify, upon request, before this committee?

General McKiernan: Yes, sir.

General Odierno: Yes, sir.

General Sharp: Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Do you agree to give your personal views when asked before this committee to do so even if those views differ from the administration in power?

General McKiernan: Yes, sir.

General Odierno: Yes, sir.

General Sharp: Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Do you agree to provide documents, including copies of electronic forms of communication, in a timely manner when requested by a duly constituted committee or to consult with the committee regarding the basis for any good faith delay or denial in providing such documents?

General McKiernan: Yes, sir.

General Odierno: Yes, sir.

General Sharp: Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you all.

We will have a 10-minute round for our first round.

Admiral Mullen was quoted in the press yesterday as saying, "Having forces in Iraq at the level that they're at doesn't allow us to fill the need that we have in Afghanistan."

Let me ask both General Odierno and General McKiernan. Do you agree with Admiral Mullen, General Odierno?

General Odierno: Sir, what I would say initially is we do understand that what the Army is able and the Marine Corps is able to provide now is about at the level we can sustain over time. And so in order to provide additional forces, there would be some give and take between priorities in other contingencies. So I think we would have to consider that as we continue to provide forces, if an increase in forces is necessary.

Chairman LEVIN. When you say there has to be some give and take, in other words, you are saying, in terms of the allocation of force to Iraq and Afghanistan. Is that what you are referring to?

General Odierno: Yes, sir, or other contingencies as well.

Chairman LEVIN. And what would the other contingencies be?

General Odierno: Well, for example, you know, Korea. If we would decide to take risk there or some other place where we might have to have forces available in the future. But as of today, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Chairman LEVIN. General McKiernan, do you agree with Admiral Mullen?

General McKiernan: Mr. Chairman, I do agree with Admiral Mullen, and the challenge is exacerbated by the current shortfalls in filling the combined joint statement of requirements by NATO.

Chairman LEVIN. Now, in terms of more troops going to Afghanistan, is that going to be difficult to pull off if the force levels in Iraq are maintained at the pre-surge level of about 140,000 troops, General McKiernan?

General McKiernan: Sir, I think it will continue to be a challenge for all the reasons that General Odierno just mentioned.

Chairman LEVIN. Now, what about trying to reduce the dwell time—excuse me—reduce the deployment tours from 15 months to 12 months. If all we are going to have is a 12-month dwell time for the Army, is that going to be difficult? Is that going to be possible if we are going to have more troops going to Afghanistan or if we keep our force level in Iraq at 140,000, General McKiernan?

General McKiernan: Sir, the senior leadership I think unanimously agrees that 15-month deployments are too long, and they are not sustainable. Our goal is certainly to reduce the boots-on-the-ground time to 12 months and try to get eventually to a 1 to

2 ratio, but with the requirements as they are today, that is extremely hard with the size of the military we have.

Chairman LEVIN. Will that be extremely hard if we keep that troop level in Iraq at the pre-surge level of 140,000?

General McKiernan: I think it will be challenging, sir. I cannot answer whether we can get it down to 12 months.

Chairman LEVIN. General McKiernan, the deployment of an additional 3,200 marines to Afghanistan was announced as a one-time deal for the next 7 months. If there are no further large troop reductions in Iraq, will there be U.S. forces available to replace those marines at the end of the current 7-month deployment?

General McKiernan: Sir, in terms of brigade combat teams or replacement for the 24th MEU, not to my knowledge is there a force that can be missioned for that following the deployment of the marines.

Chairman LEVIN. General Odierno, General Cody yesterday testified before our Readiness Subcommittee that the ongoing deployments are inflicting "incredible stress on soldiers and families," and in his words, "pose a significant risk to the all-volunteer Army." He said also that he has never seen our lack of strategic depth to be where it is today.

Do you agree with General Cody?

General Odierno: What I would say is I have had a chance to experience this in my most recent assignment, first as the Multinational Corps Iraq Commander and also as a III Corps Commander as a force provider, that we are, in fact, out of balance. What I have got to see as the Commander, Multinational Corps Iraq is that we receive forces that are, in fact, well trained, equipped, and at the proper levels, but as the III Corps Commander, I also see that the forces that are left behind do not have all the equipment they need. They do not have the people they need to help to respond to other contingencies. So there is a stress there on the force that is fairly consistent.

Mr. Chairman, I would also say—

Chairman LEVIN. Fairly consistent. What does that mean? You mean fairly heavy, fairly—

General Odierno: Fairly heavy, yes, sir.

I would also say that one of the hardest recommendations I had to make as the Multinational Corps Iraq Commander was the extension of the surge forces that I knew would lead to 15-month tours in Iraq as I made that recommendation up my chain of command. And I realized that, in fact, 12 months is our goal and 12 months is what we need to try to get to in order to have a viable, sustainable Army over the long term. And we have to continually work to move towards that. There are a number of ways we can do that, by reducing the requirements and also to continue to grow the Army, that it gives us the additional forces in order to continue to meet the needs of our National security.

Chairman LEVIN. General Odierno, when these recent events took place in Basra, I think you were already gone, but I think you have enough background and you were close enough to it to perhaps be able to answer this question. Do you know whether or not Prime Minister Maliki took the steps that he took in Basra after consultation with the U.S. Army?

General Odierno: Mr. Chairman, I do not know for sure. I really only know about the reports that we both have read probably in the newspapers. So I have not talked to any of the leaders there to know, in fact, if he did operate independently without consultation or not.

Chairman LEVIN. Do you think it would have been wise for him to consult with us prior to his venture into Basra, if in fact he did not?

General Odierno: Yes, I think it is important, our partnership with us working these issues. First, it is a positive step that we want to try to deal against these nongovernmental groups, militias. That is a very important piece. But it is also important with the partnership that we have, that we have full consultation as we conduct operations within Iraq.

Chairman LEVIN. And that that consultation take place sufficiently prior to the action on his part so that he can consider whatever advice we give him?

General Odierno: Yes, it should. And we should be part of that process.

Chairman LEVIN. General Odierno, do you think it is useful to keep pressure on the Iraqi political leaders to reach political settlements on the outstanding key issues?

General Odierno: I think it is important. As I have stated before, Mr. Chairman, we have got security to a certain level now. In order to continue to improve the security in Iraq, it not only takes the use of continued military forces, but also improvement in economic, political, and basic services, and it is important that the Government of Iraq and its leaders step up and continue to work these very significant issues to the Iraqi people themselves. And I believe by doing this, it would continue to reduce the passive support for any insurgent forces or militias that are left within Iraq.

Chairman LEVIN. And do you think it is useful for us to remind them of the importance of their doing that?

General Odierno: I think it is always important to do that, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. General McKiernan, I want to discuss the drug issue in Afghanistan with you. Senator Warner has laid out the problem, and that problem is real and apparently growing.

But part of the solution relates to going after the labs that produce these drugs. The small farmers are looking for small amounts of money that they get, which is more than so far they are able to get from other crops, and we obviously want to try to work with them to substitute crops. But the big money is made by the people who run these laboratories, the higher-ups, and we have not gone after the labs. There have been some rumors that some of these labs are off limits because of some kind of political connections with leaders in Kabul.

I am wondering whether you are willing to look at that issue to report to us whether or not there is any reluctance or restraint or restriction on our forces in terms of going after those labs where most of the problem resides and where most of the money is being produced? Would you make an independent assessment of that and give us your assessment as to whether there is any truth to the fact that there is some reluctance or restraint upon our forces or

Afghan forces or any other forces in terms of shutting down those labs?

General McKiernan: Mr. Chairman, I can assure you, if confirmed, I will certainly make that assessment and provide that information back to this committee. I share your concern, Senator Warner's concern that this problem is a problem for the international community. It is a problem for Afghanistan. ISAF has a mandate to provide certain support to the Afghan Government to work the counternarcotics problem, and if we have actionable intelligence of opium labs, I certainly think that that should be part of the ISAF mandate. And I will make that assessment and come back to this committee.

Chairman LEVIN. That is very important that you do that, and we are counting on you to do that. Thank you.

Senator Warner?

Senator WARNER. Mr. Chairman, I would like accommodate our colleague from Texas, as I will be here with you until the conclusion of the hearing.

Chairman LEVIN. I am happy to do that.

Senator Cornyn?

Senator Cornyn: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Senator Warner, I appreciate your usual courtesy.

Gentlemen, thank you for being here today. Again, let me reiterate what we have all said, but we cannot say enough. Thank you for your service to our country and the people that serve under your command. We are in their debt.

I wanted to ask two lines of questions. First, General McKiernan, perhaps as Commander of U.S. Army Forces in Europe, you would be able to comment on a story that appeared today in the New York Times where the President had secured the backing of NATO for a robust missile defense system. And NATO leaders adopted a communique saying that ballistic missile proliferation poses an increasing threat to allied forces' territory and populations. It will also recognize the substantial contribution to the protection of allies to be provided by the U.S.-led system, according to senior officials who spoke on condition of anonymity ahead of the statement's release.

First of all, do you agree that ballistic missile proliferation poses a threat to the United States, as well as our allies?

General McKiernan: Sir, I certainly agree with that statement. I have not worked personally with the theater missile defense question in Europe to any great degree. So I am not familiar with too much of the specifics about that. But the threat is certainly there.

Senator Cornyn: I appreciate that very much.

General Odierno, let me ask you. We talked briefly about this in my office when you were kind enough to drop by. Welcome back to the United States.

General Odierno: Thank you, sir.

Senator Cornyn: And thank you for your service in III Corps and Fort Hood, as well as Commander of Multinational Forces in Iraq.

I asked you in my office, when you were kind enough to come by about the Iraqi assault on Basra, how you viewed that. I mentioned to you that while there is some indication in the New York Times today that the Iraqis did not necessarily consult with their Amer-

ican allies, that it actually, to my perception, demonstrated the sort of acceptance of responsibility and an Iraqi initiative against these Iranian-backed militias that actually could be viewed as a positive development, while we recognize they were not able to handle this independently and required U.S. support, which is frankly not a surprise.

Could you tell me whether you believe that this sort of initiative against Iranian-backed militias, euphemistically called “special groups,” is a positive or a negative?

General Odierno: If I could just say as the conflict in Iraq continues to evolve, it changes over time. Although there still is terrorism and insurgency, it is much less than it was. The bigger threat is the communal struggle for power which in my view is being fueled by Iranian support to the special groups. And one of the things that will have to be tackled is these militias that are equipped, funded, and trained by either Iran’s Qods Force or Iranian surrogates within Iraq.

The Government of Iraq stepping up to take action against these groups in my mind is an important step of eliminating these non-governmental security organizations that are trying to sustain control over the population. So I think for that, it is a very important step forward. Obviously, we would much rather be able to resolve these through reconciliation and peaceful ways instead of having to use force. So in that way, I think it is a positive step forward.

Senator Cornyn: Prime Minister Maliki called these militias criminals and gang leaders. Would you agree or disagree with his—

General Odierno: Well, I think there is a mixture. I think as we continue to analyze the threat, there are some that I believe are clearly Iranian surrogates that have a very specific purpose to destabilize the Government of Iraq because Iran thinks a weak Government of Iraq is in their best interest. Then there are criminals that are out there that, in fact, are thugs, have organized crime, and are flat-out criminals trying to extort money from the population. So it is a mixture of both.

Senator Cornyn: I have just two more questions for you, General Odierno.

First of all, let me just quote the words of President John F. Kennedy who once remarked that “the cost of freedom is always high, but Americans have always paid it. And one path we shall never choose and that is a path of surrender or submission.”

There are some who suggest that the cost of the war in Iraq is too high, and that we should spend the money that we are spending supporting the troops and on ongoing operations in Iraq on other things here domestically. But as a military leader, without commenting maybe on the specifics, I would like for you to comment on how you view the cost of protecting our freedom and that of our allies and whether you feel like we can put a cost/benefit analysis on that from a strictly financial point of view.

General Odierno: Senator Cornyn, first of all, I want to make sure it is clear that I understand the costs involved, the cost monetarily, but more importantly to me, the costs in lives of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, as well as those who have been wounded and who will forever have a scar to bear because of this war and will never forget their sacrifices.

But it is always difficult to put a price tag on what I believe to be our security of our Nation. I do believe that the Middle East is an extremely important place for us to ensure that we maintain the security of our country. So I will leave it at that, sir.

Senator Cornyn: And my last question really has to do with that. I think there are some who have suggested that what we are doing in Iraq is irrelevant to our security here on the mainland of the United States. What is your opinion?

General Odierno: Well, I would just say that Iraq is an important place, as well as Afghanistan, in the Middle East. The Middle East is a place that we all know there has been a lot of violence over the last several years. It has created violence around the entire world. And I think it is important for us to establish what I believe to be a self-reliant government that is stable, that is committed to governance representing all its people, denied as a safe haven for terrorists, and integrated into the National community as an engine of security and economic development. And I believe establishing a strategic partnership within the Middle East with these countries is extremely important for the security of the United States.

Senator Cornyn: Thank you very much, each of you, and good luck. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Cornyn.

Senator Warner?

Senator WARNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General McKiernan, when I look back on the history of the United States participation in terms of operating as a part of a coalition force, we certainly did it in France. We did it in World War II. We did it in Korea, as a matter of fact.

NATO evolved out of that concept of coalition forces operating together. And it took a long time before NATO realized that it had to expand its authority to what we term "out-of-area operations." And you know the history of that as well as I do. Europe had certainly a comparative period of stability that enabled NATO to take on these out-of-area.

The first was the Balkans, and I believe on the whole that the record of NATO's performance there was quite good. It continues to some extent.

But this question in Afghanistan has not worked as we had all hoped. And I am wondering if you would join me in saying that if we do not succeed—I do not call it winning and victory, but just succeed with the basic goals of enabling the Afghan government to establish a democratic form of government. They have it in framework now and they are trying to work the pieces together.

As a matter of fact, in my last trip over there, they just finished putting the legislature together. I remember President Karzai grumbling about the insubordinate members of their legislature. Do you recall that, Senator?

Chairman LEVIN. I do and it reminded me of home.

Senator WARNER. Yes, yes, it did.

But I fear that if NATO does not enable this country to succeed in its goals, that the commitment of the Nations of the world to continue NATO will be truly tested. Or to put it in a blunt way,

this could end up with the demise of NATO as we have known it these many years, a half a century.

Where do you rank the seriousness of attaining the goals in Afghanistan in relation to the continuation of NATO?

General McKiernan: First of all, I share your sentiments. I think that the success of the NATO mission of ISAF in Afghanistan is directly linked really to the relevancy of NATO as a global security means in the 21st century. As you know, sir, I served in the NATO headquarters in the early days in the Balkans, and I think NATO was successful and continues to be successful in the Balkans, specifically Kosovo, today.

I think there is certainly the capacity and the capability for NATO to succeed in Afghanistan. However, there is a question of will in terms of getting all the right contributions so that we build the right capacity to execute the mission.

Senator WARNER. And I would go so far as to say that that will, which you properly and carefully pointed out, is not among the uniformed persons of NATO. It, frankly, resides in the several governments that train, equip, and send those troops to NATO. And I am not about to open up all the chapters of European history, but frankly, their legislatures, the heads of state and government of many of the European nations simply are not able. They may well have the will, the heads of those governments, but the legislatures, for whatever reason, are not giving those heads of state and governments the type of support they need.

But I think, from time to time, some of us have to sound the alarm because while NATO is the most extraordinary and the most successful military alliance in the history of mankind in my judgment, there could well be a reexamination of the very significant participation, about 25 percent, of this Nation in NATO.

I can remember—and I am sure the chairman can remember, if you will listen to what I am saying here, when we were young Senators, I can recall going to the floor to defend NATO. And there were some of our most distinguished colleagues questioning the continuation of NATO at a great cost to the American people and the major portions of our military. I will not name the names, but it is in the record if anybody wants to look at it. They said NATO has finished its mission. Europe is secure and it is time that we redirected those expenditures and those forces to other requirements of the United States.

So maybe out of this hearing can come some little message to NATO. They are not there forever. They are there only so long as they can perform and achieve the goals that we have assigned to them. I say “we.” I mean collectively the 25 member nations.

So unless you have a comment, I will move to another question. Do you basically endorse what I had to say?

General McKiernan: I do, Senator Warner.

Senator WARNER. Thank you.

General Odierno, another great institution we have is the all-volunteer force, and some of us are getting somewhat concerned about the absolute necessity of the Army to begin to somewhat lower the requirements of those recruits coming in to meet the needs as established by quotas. I for one—and I would state it right here—would rather have a smaller Army composed of the right people

who can continue to preserve the concept of the all-volunteer force than to begin to bring in people that fall considerably below the standards that we have been able to maintain for this Army and the other military forces, the Navy, the Air Force, the Marines, these many years.

First, your own view about the all-volunteer force.

General Odierno: Senator Warner, first, I think it is critical that we continue to maintain an all-volunteer force. I think it has proven over time the quality of the force that we have been able to put together and the dedication of the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines that are a part of it and how they have been able to perform over, specifically here recently, the last 7 years. I think it is important that we want to maintain that for the long term, sir.

Senator WARNER. Well, I can just speak for myself. You will recall in World War II, the draft was adopted by Congress by one vote. Today, I do not think the Congress would consider, under the current circumstances and the commitments we have abroad now, any concept of returning to compulsive military training, be it a draft or some other concoction that we might come up with. That is not going to be the case.

And that puts a special responsibility on your shoulders. You are a trustee of that Army. You are not just the Vice Chief. The long-term view of what you are doing today is going to shape that Army of tomorrow and the future. I, frankly, urge you to make certain that whatever requirements you have to readjust, let us say, in terms of recruiting will not result in any risk to the all-volunteer force or bring the perception and quality of the Army down.

After all, the concept of military training, military operations is very simple. It is dependent on the person that you are working with. You call it an Army of one, which is quite a good slogan, but it is really in that foxhole. One sleeps while the other is on duty. Aboard ship, some sleep while the others are on duty. You are dependent on your fellow soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines to do their duties at such times as you may have to get the needed rest that you need to carry out. And if you begin to put into that foxhole people who cannot establish that mutual trust and bond, I think you will see this thing getting worse. It is a problem.

How would you judge the morale of the Army today? It is really interesting, the quotes of Eisenhower and George Marshall. I love history. Marshall said morale is a state of mind. It is steadfastness and courage and hope. It is confidence and zeal and loyalty. Eisenhower once said in war morale is everything. And after 6 years of now conflict, what is your judgment as to the morale of the United States Army?

General Odierno: I would just comment, Senator Warner, that over the last 15, 16, 17 months, as I have observed up close and personal the performance of all our service members of all the services in Iraq, their dedication, their steadfast commitment, their loyalty to their mission, and their dedication to complete their mission has never wavered. We can talk a lot about how you show morale, but how you show it is doing your job every single day without hesitation, the fact that you want to follow your leaders, the fact that you will do anything for your teammates, the person to your right,

the person to your left, under very difficult conditions. And we witness that every single day.

I used to tell people when I was the corps commander over there that when I was feeling bad or I thought I was down, the first thing I would do is go visit our soldiers or our marines.

Senator WARNER. That would build you back up.

General Odierno: And it built me back up when I had a chance to hang out with them because of their dedication and loyalty.

Senator WARNER. Let me close out here on my time. We have talked this morning about the necessity to go from the 15-month to the 12-month tour. To what extent can you say now your level of confidence that we can achieve that transition from 15 to 12 by early this summer?

General Odierno: Senator, I am going to leave that to others to make that determination, but I would just say that—

Senator WARNER. Well, you will be a part of that decisionmaking.

General Odierno: I will.

I would just say our goal is to get down to 12-month tours as soon as we possibly can. We fully realize that 12-month tours is the maximum length that we should have our tours, and so our goal is to push that as fast as we possibly can.

Senator WARNER. Good.

And, General McKiernan, back to the drug thing. We have had programs here in American agriculture where we put land into retirement and pay farmers a certain amount of money for keeping it in retirement.

Now, it seems to me that we could establish sort of a delta between what that farmer is getting for an opium crop and what he would get for another crop which is less cash, and we would just go in there and subsidize the difference between those two crops. And if you look at the dollars involved, it is nickels and dimes compared to the overall value of that crop as it begins to move up and eventually is dispersed, a lot of it, into Europe.

I cannot understand why Europe does not see this Afghanistan operation as central to their security not only from the standpoint of a breeding ground for terrorism, but also the drugs that are infiltrating into Europe.

Start with some very simple program. Stop the poppies. Try turnips, whatever, potatoes. And whatever you get for that crop of potatoes, if it is less than the poppy crop, here is the cash. If we can choke it off right there in the field, I think we could make some progress.

I do not feel that we should do the spraying because I have done some agriculture myself. That could result in working to the detriment of the water supply for human consumption if you put that much spray around in some of those provinces.

So I just think we ought to come up with some innovative ideas, and I am ensured by our discussions together and your testimony this morning you are going to devote your time to it. But as one old farmer who lost a lot of money farming, I can tell that is one way to get at it. Retire that land or pay them the delta between the crops.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Warner.

Senator Thune?

Senator WARNER. There is a man down there that understands agriculture, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Thune: Not tobacco farming, however, Senator.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to associate myself with the remarks of the Senator from Virginia with regard—

Senator WARNER. We had a lot of peanuts, and you have eaten those.

Senator Thune: That is exactly right.

But I do want to associate myself with the comments from the Senator from Virginia with regard to NATO. NATO is a club that everybody wants to be in but nobody wants to do the work. The numbers keep getting larger. We keep adding member nations to that organization, but its effectiveness I think is very much in question if we are not able to step up to some of the challenges we face around the world, particularly in places like Afghanistan.

General McKiernan, General Odierno, and General Sharp, thank you. Each of you has had incredibly impressive and distinguished careers, and we thank you for your service to the country. Each of you has spent a long time overseas in support of your country, and we thank you for your and your families' sacrifice. And we appreciate everything you do for our country's freedoms.

General McKiernan, you stated in your response to the committee's advance policy questions that some of the challenges that you will face as Commander of ISAF are under-resourcing and constrained forces. You also go on to state that fully resourcing military requirements and removing remaining caveats will be a major focus, and that we should look closely at options for deploying additional brigade combat teams to Afghanistan.

How many more brigade combat teams do you anticipate you will need to continue the mission?

General McKiernan: Sir, if confirmed, I would need to be on the ground to make an assessment for specific numbers, but again, it is a matter of the fact that the requirements stated by current commanders there in Afghanistan—that those requirements have not been filled through the NATO force generation process. So specific numbers of brigades or other military capabilities—I cannot give you the exact numbers today. It would be part of an assessment I would need to make. But we certainly need to build more capacity not just in the military line of operation, but also in the developmental and governance lines of operation. But there is more capacity that has to be built there in Afghanistan.

Senator Thune: What else do you anticipate requesting that has not already been identified, if confirmed in the position?

General McKiernan: Senator, I am not sure if there is anything besides what has already been identified, but what has already been identified, as you correctly state, is more combat capability, but it is also more aviation, more ISR capability, additional operational mentoring and liaison teams, PRT's, et cetera. So those requirements that are already validated and are waiting to be filled I think is the starting point.

Senator Thune: You also stated that there have been recent reductions in the number and severity of caveats with regard to some

of our NATO allies in Afghanistan. Could you describe in more detail what those reductions are?

General McKiernan: I really do not think there necessarily have been reductions in caveats. I think what I meant to say, if I did not, in that statement is that we need to continue to work to remove caveats because what they end up ultimately doing is degrading NATO's advantages in terms of mobility and fire power and sustainment and intelligence. And we have got to, I think, work to continue to remove those caveats.

Senator Thune: Are some of the caveats worse than others?

General McKiernan: I think so. Certainly military contributions that are precluded really from conducting combat operations make it very difficult for those same forces to be effective in a counter-insurgency environment.

Senator Thune: General Odierno, General Casey has argued that we are in an era of persistent conflict. Assuming that he is correct, do you see any utility to the concept of standing provincial reconstruction teams, in other words, teams that are ready to deploy on a moment's notice?

General Odierno: One of the recommendations I made coming out of Iraq was that we should take a look at how we might do that so they can be deployable, no notice, as we continue to look at potential contingencies in the future because I believe with any contingency we might run into, it would be important for us to immediately be able to have an interagency team on the ground to help us work the socioeconomic, political issues that ultimately are linked to operations.

Senator Thune: What about standing operational mentor teams or standing embedded training teams? Is that something you foresee?

General Odierno: The one thing I would say is what I want is the Army has centered around brigade combat teams, and I believe our brigade combat teams we want to be full spectrum in nature where they can accomplish a variety of missions. It is important for us to do that to get the efficiency out of our Army. And so in order to get the efficiency out of our Army, what we want is units that can do a number of things. And I think through task organization and other kinds of things, they can conduct those type of operations as well as combat operations. So we want that flexibility within our force so we get the most out of our leaders and our soldiers.

Senator Thune: General Sharp, one of the questions that was posed to you by the committee in its advance policy questions regarded the missile defense systems and capabilities that you believe are needed to meet the operational needs of U.S. Forces Korea and Combined Forces Command. And that is, I think, on page 6 of your advance policy questions responses. You responded that among other things, continued development of the airborne laser is needed to provide the layered, systematic missile defense capability required to protect critical United States facilities in the Republic of Korea.

Could you expand a little bit further on why you believe development of the airborne laser is needed to meet the operational needs of U.S. Forces Korea?

General Sharp: Sir, I think as you look across the entire missile defense spectrum, you have to have a layered defense that starts from space and works all the way down to Aegis and other ground-based systems to intercept the missiles. And I believe the airborne laser is a critical part of that ballistic missile enterprise to be able to allow for that effective defense.

Senator Thune: Looking at the readiness challenge, what do you see as the major challenge to readiness? Are the challenges with personnel, equipment, or training, and given events in Iraq and Afghanistan, are we resourcing our forces in Korea correctly?

General Sharp: Sir, the forces that are in Korea today, the U.S. forces that are there today, are properly trained and equipped to be able to accomplish the task and the mission that we have working with our Republic of Korea allies to defend the peninsula. Likewise, the Republic of Korea forces are also very well trained and very well equipped. They are an outstanding military, and they are also prepared to defend the Republic of Korea.

The forces that we would deploy from the United States, if we had to go do that conflict today, are not as well trained, as General Casey has said, because they are training on the missions that they have to do in Iraq and Afghanistan. They are counter-insurgency experts of the world. But we are confident that we would be able to deploy those forces and we would be able to win in the Republic of Korea with our Republic of Korea allies.

And one other point I would like to make. Because of the amount of Reserve Forces that we have deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, Reserve and National Guard, I personally believe right now they are the best trained that they have ever been trained because we have used them in combat environments. They would be also a key component of any conflict in Korea.

Senator Thune: Do you have any major concerns with transferring wartime operational control to the Republic of Korea?

General Sharp: General Bell has worked very closely with our allies, and I believe that he has an excellent plan of exercises. He has an excellent plan working with the Republic of Korea to make sure that they have the capabilities that they need from surveillance to command and control to the ability to be able to, at a high level, command the fight. I am confident that by 2012, which is the currently agreed upon time to transfer, we will be ready and the Koreans will be ready to take control of that fight.

Senator Thune: Well, thank you all very much and thanks again for your service. We look forward to a speedy confirmation process, and godspeed in your new endeavors. Thank you for what you do.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Thune.

Senator Inhofe?

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I came at the beginning of this and then left and went to the floor and talked for 30 minutes, just having come back 3 days ago from Iraq and from Africa, giving my assessment of it. This was my 18th trip into that theater, that area. And so I do not think I am going to ask you what you have already been asked before because my staff has kind of gone over some of the interests that I had.

But I would like to start off by, General McKiernan—and I appreciate your coming by so we had a chance to visit before this meeting. A lot of reports claim that the insurgency is growing in Afghanistan and that the security situation is deteriorating. However, in December, General McNeil said—and I was there at that time in December—“My view of the security situation is that it is not deteriorating like other people say. It is showing exactly what it is. There is insurgency here. There is a strong international and indigenous force going after it, and you are going to have contacts.” Do you generally agree with that statement?

General McKiernan: I do generally agree with that, sir. I think there are certainly no signs that the insurgency is ready to collapse, and I believe that the environment there in Afghanistan today reflects an interlinkage between the insurgency, terrorism, corruption at various levels, and criminal activity. And I think all of those have to be factored into the approach that ISAF takes in the mission.

Senator Inhofe: Well, when you say the criminal activity, it is my observation that one of the differences between Iraq and Afghanistan is that there is just no central authority there. Afghanistan is kind of a convoluted grouping of cities and local administrations, and there is a lot of corruption there and there is no central place where you can really attack this. Is that accurate?

General McKiernan: I would agree that the history of Afghanistan is really a history of local autonomy. So a strong central government is not exactly the historical trend in Afghanistan.

Senator Inhofe: Does that not create a problem, though? You do not have a strong Federal Government where you can go to one place as opposed to trying to work around the edges.

General McKiernan: I think it is part of the challenge. The challenge is not only building capacity and coherence between governance development and security. But it is developing institutions that were not there previously.

Senator Inhofe: A few months ago I was privileged to go with General Jones. It was his last trip there. And that is essentially the assessment that he had of the situation.

And 3 days ago, when I was over there, I met with your replacement at the Multinational Corps, General Austin, and we talked about the recent violence down in Basra. I know you have already talked about this before I came in. But we were down at Buka, which is right next to Basra, and we had talked to an awful lot of people, even a lot of the troops on the ground. The response that Prime Minister Maliki had down there and the fact that he took a level of control I thought was good, but some people are criticizing the fact that he was the one who went down and did it and he did not do the job properly.

What is your assessment of what he did on that crackdown in Basra?

General Odierno: Sir, I would just say again, as I said earlier, the communal struggle for power is growing more and more within Iraq. We still have some terrorism and insurgency. But it is about Shia-on-Shia violence. It is about those non governmental entities that are trying to exert their influence. Some of them are Iranian-supported and backed by funding, weapons, equipment from Iran.

And it is important that the government understands that they have to take action against these groups in order for the governmental entities, the police force, the army, and others, to be the ones who in fact provide security. So from that aspect, I think it is important that they understand this problem and they understand that action has to be taken.

Having not been there, I am not sure what the level of coordination was that went on, but I do believe it is a partnership and we should do all of these things as partners.

Senator Inhofe: Yes. It appeared that that is the first time they really did take the initiative. At least, it seemed that way to me.

Just for a minute—I was talking about this on the floor a minute ago—the Iranian threat that is over there. Back when there were a lot of resolutions of leaving, it got a lot of attention there. About that time, Ahmadinejad made the statement that when they leave—at that time, he was convinced that we would leave and that would create a vacuum and he would be able to fill that vacuum. I agree that he would like to do it.

But what would the Iraqi people's response be if they were to look at the Iranians coming in and filling that vacuum?

General Odierno: My assessment is that I believe the Iraqi people, the large, large, large majority, are very nationalistic, and they want Iraqis to solve Iraqi problems. They do not want interference from Iran and want them filling any vacuums. So I believe, for the most part, the Iraqis want to be involved in the solutions.

I would just say that I get some concern because you could make the argument that, in fact, through some of the Iranian support that goes on in Iraq, they are creating the instability. Then they are saying they want to come in and fill the vacuum to correct the instability. So I think we have to make sure we understand that very carefully, and I think we have to watch that extremely carefully.

Senator Inhofe: Well, it was not too many years ago that they were launching missiles back and forth on each other, killing hundreds of thousands of people.

I heard Senator Thune talking to you, General Sharp, a little bit about some of the things that were going on over there in terms of Korea and Korea's capability. I have always been concerned about their capability. I always remember, because I was on this committee, and I remember in August of 1998 when we were trying to get an assessment. We had come out with our assessment at that time—that was '98—as to how long would it be until the North Koreans would have a multistage rocket that could reach the United States. And they came back. I got the documentation. It was around 12 to 15 years. That was on the 24th of August of 1998. On August 31st, 7 days later, they fired one.

I say that because how comfortable are you and our intelligence as to exactly what capability they have and what they are going to do with it.

General Sharp: Sir, we are never comfortable that we have enough intelligence. They do continue to surprise us. That is why we and the Koreans need robust capability in order to be able to defend that peninsula. You have seen—and I think we have got fairly good evidence—that we do believe there is enough plutonium

that they could have and probably have created some nuclear weapons that are in North Korea right now.

And so in a closed session, we could go into more details of exactly what we do know and where we think we have holes in that intelligence. But there are holes, and as I said, we need to make sure that we, the United States and the Republic of Korea, are prepared to win that conflict, which I do believe we are today, but it requires the continued commitment of all of us and the Koreans.

Senator Inhofe: The other day in a subcommittee hearing, I commented that I did not think they were making the progress they should be making with the Czech Republic and Poland. I found out later that it appears that they are making great progress right now, and I am glad I was wrong.

Lastly, General Sharp, several of the programs that I have really pushed hard are the 1206, 1207, 1208, 1210 train and equip programs, the IMET programs. In fact, it was our attitude up till the last reauthorization bill that when we invite people to come over—and I do not think there is anything that solidifies for the future better relations for their officers, whatever the country is, Africa or anyplace else, to be training with ours. I think the IMET program has been very successful.

But we kind of had the attitude that we are doing them a favor when we do that, and that is because we had this restriction that you cannot do that unless they sign an Article 98. Well, I put language in last time with the argument that they are doing us a favor more than we are doing them a favor because if they are not over here training with us, there is always the Chinese and others who would like to get their hands on them and participate in that kind of training activity. So we have taken away that requirement.

And lastly, we want to increase that program.

What is your feeling about that program and the success of it?

General Sharp: Sir, thanks to your leadership, I agree completely with the way you are going. I think it is critical for us and really for the world. One of the critical things that came out of the findings of the last Quadrennial Defense Review was that we really need to build partnership capacity around the world. We are no longer having programs just to give money away to buy friends. We need to have programs so that militaries around the world are prepared, capable, and willing to be able to go and help in all types of conflicts from peacekeeping operations to what we are doing in Iraq and Afghanistan today. The programs that you mentioned are critical to that.

IMET is critical specifically because of its ability to be able to fund military officers and NCO's to be able to come to the United States to go to our schools so that we can learn from each other and to be able to better interoperate in present and future conflicts.

And, sir, I thank you for your leadership.

Senator Inhofe: And those relationships endure.

Do you agree generally with what General Sharp is saying?

General McKiernan: I do, sir, absolutely.

Senator Inhofe: The last thing I would say—my time is expired—would be on the CERP program which we have been wanting to expand both in the funding level as well as the geographic level, to

be able to get other places—the Commanders Emergency Relief Program. Would each one of you agree that that is a good idea?

General Sharp: Absolutely.

General Odierno: If I could, sir. I would just say it becomes even more important as we look at the reduction of our forces, that in fact the use of our money in order to move forward, as I talked earlier about continued economic revitalization of basic services becomes more important. And so the money that the commanders have to do that becomes an important tool.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Inhofe.

Senator Graham?

Senator Graham: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I get to walk in and ask questions. That is great.

To all of you, thank you for your service.

General Odierno, congratulations on what I think is going to be seen in history as a very eventful tour of duty regarding the last year.

The one thing that I have on my mind is this tension we have with the pressure on the Army and the outcome in Iraq. From a morale point of view, I know that the force has been strained, but generally speaking, how does the force feel, from your point of view as a commander, about the operations and the reasons we are there?

General Odierno: What I would say first is, again, I judge morale on how soldiers, marines, and others perform on the ground, and every day that they are there, they are dedicated to doing their job. They are dedicated to protecting each other. I would say that over the last 12 months for sure, that they really have seen some viable progress going on inside of Iraq, and they understand that, in fact, that progress has been made. And they feel that they can continue to make that progress.

Senator Graham: Regarding Iran, as I understand Iraq in the last year, Anbar Province has substantially changed for the better. Is that correct?

General Odierno: Yes, Senator.

Senator Graham: And the awakening, as it is being called, the Sunni Awakening—I think the event that started it was a sheik came to a colonel and said, I have had it with these Al Qaeda guys. I am ready to help you. Is that generally what happened?

General Odierno: Much communication. That is correct, sir.

Senator Graham: And the colonel, pretty much on his own initiative, said, okay, we are going to put a tank in front of your house.

General Odierno: Well, that is pretty close, sir.

Senator Graham: Well, the point is that you had Al Qaeda overplaying their hand, driving the population toward us, and the reaction of the colonel was to provide that individual better security, to reinforce his willingness to fight Al Qaeda. Is that correct?

General Odierno: It is, sir.

Senator Graham: And that general model was sort of used in Anbar that we would increase military capacity and try to peel people away from Al Qaeda. And from that, we have gotten now what is called the Sons of Iraq. Is that correct?

General Odierno: Yes, sir.

Senator Graham: Tell me how the Sons of Iraq has changed things in Anbar?

General Odierno: Well, first, I would say, again, it was about, first, people willing to come forward and looking for security, rejecting Al Qaeda. The change that occurred was the rejection of Al Qaeda throughout Iraq, starting in Anbar, the elimination of the passive support that Al Qaeda had for a long time. What I mean by passive support is not that you supported them, but you did not do anything to help us to get after them. That changed. Like you said, they got tired of how Al Qaeda was treating them and rejected their ideologies and what they stood for.

So what happened was once they were able to get security provided to them and they came to the coalition forces to help, once we continued to provide security for them, they then continued to come forward more and more and they wanted to be part of the process of going after Al Qaeda in Anbar Province.

Senator Graham: Would you say there is a direct link between our willingness to reinforce and provide security to Anbar Province and the population's boldness to say no to Al Qaeda?

General Odierno: As we became more aggressive in what I call liberating the major cities in Anbar, finishing with Ramadi in March/April of 2007, they started to come more and more forward. And one of the key components, as we asked for additional forces, was the addition of two Marine battalions that we would put in Anbar so we could control the Euphrates River Valley and all of the population centers along the Euphrates River Valley in order to exploit the success that had begun by this action you talked about.

Senator Graham: Let us talk about Baghdad. The strategy in Baghdad, as I understand it, was to get troops out into joint security stations, out behind the walls into neighborhoods. Is that correct?

General Odierno: It is, Senator.

Senator Graham: Can you tell us about a joint security station? Why such a thing exists, and how that has affected the battle in Baghdad?

General Odierno: And not only was it additional forces but it was our change in strategy to get our forces among the population to create confidence between the population and security forces.

The joint security stations were established so we could have a place where coalition forces, Iraqi Army, Iraqi police would operate together, would operate among the population. So they felt more secure so they could come forward with information, feel more secure about opening shops, feel more secure about their daily lives, and then also build confidence between Iraqis and their own security forces, confidence with their own police and their own army over time.

It also developed better relationships between coalition forces and the Iraqi population because on a daily basis, they would interact with each other, and it made a very significant difference as we continued to move forward in Baghdad.

Senator Graham: Now, there is a statement being made that sectarian violence in the last year of Sunni and Shia violence has dramatically been reduced. Is that an accurate statement?

General Odierno: That is correct, Senator.

Senator Graham: What do you account for that?

General Odierno: It is a number of things. I think, again, it is first providing security to each other. It is a fact that people realize that in the beginning of '07, we would not tolerate sectarian violence from either side, either Shia or Sunni. Most Iraqis are not sectarian. There were a few conducting many of the operations.

So we went after the leaders who in fact were in my mind encouraging sectarian violence for their own gains. Al Qaeda was trying to accelerate sectarian violence because they saw that as a way to continue to destabilize Iraq as it continued to move forward. So we went after Al Qaeda. We had some Shia extremists that were supported by Iranians and others who were conducting sectarian violence. We went after them.

And so the population realized this and they started to understand this. And they realized that we were going to eliminate this sectarian violence. And so since then, it has dropped dramatically.

Senator Graham: Mr. Chairman, I do not mean to take much time. How long do we have? 5 minutes?

Chairman LEVIN. 10.

Senator Graham: 10, okay. Just let me know.

Economic activity in Iraq. You know, I flew over Baghdad with General Petraeus in February, just a little over a month ago. You said you saw 180 soccer games? I stopped counting, but it was a lot. And we all know Baghdad. There is no place in Iraq that is completely normal in terms of what we would like it to be. But it was astonishing to me, in flying over Baghdad, the amount of activity.

Have you seen an economic improvement as a result of better security?

General Odierno: Well, obviously, we have seen the markets grow. In fact, most of the time, it is about 10- fold. We saw places where, frankly, there were no shops open to where now there are 300 to 400, whether it be the Doura market in southern Baghdad, Shorja market in eastern Baghdad, and Shula in western Baghdad. So a significant increase. So what you had was an increase in goods being sold, but also, obviously, a precipitate increase in retail goods that would be developed.

Senator Graham: As you know, I have been very interested in the prisoner issue, and I want to compliment you and General Stone for coming up with—I think it will be seen in history as one of the most novel approaches to dealing with the prison population, having a counter- insurgency program in the prison where you educate prisoners. We are providing education to every prisoner at Camp Buka and Camp Crawford. Exposure to moderate influences in terms of the Koran, and basically trying to give people a second chance on life for those that we feel like we can let go. So I just want to recognize your work there and compliment you.

On the political front, the amnesty law, the de- Baathification law, the provincial elections, and a \$48 billion budget. In your opin-

ion, what does that mean, if anything, for the future of Iraq? And what would account for these breakthroughs?

General Odierno: Well, first again, I believe the fact that we improved the security, it enabled the political factions within the Iraqi Government now to start focusing on what I believe to be significantly important political issues. One is, obviously, the distribution of the wealth to all of the provinces through the budget, through the allocation of reconstruction funds. Second was the passing of the provincial election law. In addition, the accountability and justice law, which was basically the old de-Baathification law, then the amnesty law.

Now what we have to continue to focus on is the implementation of these laws, which is now the next step. We have the laws passed. It is now most important that we go through now the implementation of these.

Senator Graham: Very briefly, as I understand the law about a limited amnesty, the Shias and the Kurds are saying to at least some Sunnis, we are going to create a process where you were fighting us last year, but we are going to let you go home and start over.

General Odierno: That is right. Not only Sunnis, but also Shia and other people. That is correct.

Senator Graham: Finally, in the south, the Iranian influence in Iraq is constructive or not?

General Odierno: Well, for the most part, I would say that it is clear to me that they continue to fund. They continue to train. They continue to provide weapons to extremist groups in order, in my mind, to destabilize and weaken the Government of Iraq.

Senator Graham: Finally, if Iran were engaging in constructive behavior as a neighbor, what impact would it have on Iraq, if any?

General Odierno: It could have significant impact. I mean, they are neighbors. They can help each other. It is important for stability of the region. And I see it as a critical piece as we move forward, that they become much more constructive in their help with Iraq.

Senator Graham: Thank you, General.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Graham.

Senator Warner?

Senator WARNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me to ask this additional question.

General McKiernan, as we look back over the history of our operations in Afghanistan—I saw “our.” That is the combined operation of forces that are aligned with us—we see, I think, an ever-increasing dependence upon support, a strong partnership with Pakistan. And the relationship between Karzai and Musharraf was not the best of times. It is a little early, I expect, for us to try and assess how the new government is going to work in this area.

But I think this record should reflect what you know very well. Our supply lines are dependent in large measure on the cooperation of the Pakistan Government and people. We use its ports, its airfields to logistically care for our forces and, I presume, the greater proportion of the NATO forces.

Now, you are going to have to be a part-time ambassador. Let me ask that question. Are you prepared to become a part-time ambassador? Should we call the Foreign Relations Committee up and just have you have a second hearing on this?

General McKiernan: Sir, I am not advocating a second hearing on anything. [Laughter.]

General McKiernan: But there is a quarterly Tripartite Commission which as you know, the Commander of ISAF and the Chief of Defense in Afghanistan and the Chief of Staff of the Army in Pakistan get together and talk about mutual security interests along the border. And I for one—and I know General McNeil agrees that there can be no successful, by any metrics, outcome in Afghanistan without dealing with the sanctuaries right across the border in the Fata and the northwest frontier province.

Senator WARNER. We currently have in the United States a very competent U.S. Ambassador, Ambassador Wood, a personal acquaintance, as I understand, of our Chief of Staff, Mike Kostiw. We were talking about him yesterday. Have you worked with him thus far?

General McKiernan: Sir, I have not, but I could tell you, if confirmed, I would hope to have an absolutely linked-at-the-hip relationship with the United States Ambassador.

Senator WARNER. Well, I appreciate that. I think one of the great high water marks has been Petraeus and our U.S. Ambassador in Iraq, and I think it is essential that you have a comparable relationship with Ambassador Wood.

Thank you very much and good luck to all of you, each of you. I think the record should also show—how much time have you spent in your AOR before your new AOR, Afghanistan?

General McKiernan: Sir, I have probably made about half a dozen trips over there to see U.S. forces that we have provided from Europe that are operating in Afghanistan.

Senator WARNER. And General Odierno?

General Odierno: Well, I have spent a little over 30 months in Iraq over the last several years both serving there, then also several months visiting around the region.

Senator WARNER. When you were in your capacity as a military advisor to the Secretary of State, you spent a lot of time.

General Odierno: I have spent a lot of time in the Middle East, in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, all of those countries, sir.

Senator WARNER. General Sharp, you had a tour in Korea.

General Sharp: Yes, sir, almost 2 and a half years working for a former boss. General Tilleli was the commander in chief there at that time, and then also 17–18 months up in the 2nd Infantry Division as an assistant division commander.

Senator WARNER. Thank you. We are fortunate, Mr. Chairman, of that background of experience.

I thank the chair.

Chairman LEVIN. We are, indeed. Thank you, Senator Warner.

General Odierno, I think what you testified to, if I understand it, is that there is a number of reasons for the reduction in violence in terms of sectarian violence that we saw, one of them being the increase in the number of U.S. forces, another one being the change in the strategy for those forces, another one being the ability to ex-

plot the success of the event that took place when the Sunni Awakening took place. Is that fair?

General Odierno: That is fair, sure.

Chairman LEVIN. So there is a number of reasons for the reduction in that sectarian violence.

General Odierno: That is fair.

Chairman LEVIN. At the same time, you told us today that the biggest threat now in many parts of Iraq is the increase in the communal struggle for power. Would you describe that struggle and why that is the biggest threat?

General Odierno: I would. Mr. Chairman, as we have been able to reduce the threat of Al Qaeda, although they are still capable of conducting attacks in Iraq—I do not want to ever downplay that at all. They are still capable, but their capacity has been reduced. The insurgency in itself, as it was in 2004–2005, is reduced.

So what we are seeing now is a struggle for power as the country moves forward, a struggle between Shia communities, some struggle between Shia and Sunni, struggle between the Kurds and the Sunnis. And it is about controlling parts of the country or having influence in parts of the country for the future as the country continues to move forward.

Our goal in all of this is for that to happen peacefully through communication, through diplomatic efforts internal to the country. However, the history of the Middle East and Iraq in some cases causes them sometimes to want to use violence, and we have to be able to continue to work that issue. I think as we continue to make progress in Iraq, again the threat will evolve. And this is what I believe to be how it is evolving today as a communal struggle.

The only other thing I would caveat, Mr. Chairman, is you have the external influences from Iran and also from other forces such as Al Qaeda and other forces still trying to influence using Syria and other places.

Chairman LEVIN. And for that violence to be resolved, is it still true that there needs to be a political settlement?

General Odierno: It does. A big part of it has to do with the political piece of it.

Chairman LEVIN. And there have been some progress, a couple steps forward and then some step back, on the political side, but is it still true that for there to be an election on October 1st, that there has to be a provincial elections law passed? Is that still true?

General Odierno: It is, Mr. Chairman. They really have to pass the specifics of how they will conduct the election, and it is about implementation, as I have talked about.

Chairman LEVIN. As well as implementation of the laws that have been passed. Is it still true that there has not been a provincial elections law passed? I think you misspoke. I think what has passed—and correct me if I am wrong. There is a provincial powers law.

General Odierno: I misspoke. That is correct, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. And that is passed. That is the one which requires implementation.

General Odierno: That is right.

Chairman LEVIN. That specified that there would be an election on October 1, but without a provincial elections law, that election will not take place.

General Odierno: That is correct.

Chairman LEVIN. And so we still have to put some pressure on the Iraqis to pass the critical provincial elections law for those elections of October 1 to occur.

How important is it that there be elections on October 1?

General Odierno: Well, I think, first, the provincial elections is one of the most important things that must take place. As most of us remember, there are Sunnis that did not participate, and in fact, there were many Shia who did not participate in the last set of elections that currently elected the provincial leaders. So the provincial elections happening as soon as possible in my mind will make people in the provinces believe they are represented by those who truly are part of their province and represent the people. So, therefore, it is extremely important it happens as soon as possible.

Chairman LEVIN. Well, but the date specified in the other law is October 1. Is that correct?

General Odierno: That is correct, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. It is important that that date be met?

General Odierno: I think it is very important we try to meet that date.

Chairman LEVIN. As I gather, there is a real possibility that that date will not be met. Would you say that that is a real possibility?

General Odierno: I cannot comment, Mr. Chairman. I do not know that.

Chairman LEVIN. All right.

Now, there are also constitutional changes which are supposed to have been considered by now. Is that correct?

General Odierno: They are supposed to continually review the constitution.

Chairman LEVIN. Has that commission met and made recommendations yet?

General Odierno: It is unclear. I can get back to you for the record on that.

Chairman LEVIN. All right. It is my understanding they have not, but you can confirm that for the record.

General McKiernan, you have spoken a lot about Afghanistan. I wonder if you can kind of summarize where we are on it. Would you say that the overall level of security among the Afghan people is moving forward, backward, or sideways?

General McKiernan: Sir, I think it depends on the geography. I think where we have most of our U.S. forces in Regional Command East, I think it is moving forward. I think in Regional Command South, specifically in the Helmand/Kandahar area, I think it is in question. So I think there is continued need, as I have said this morning, for building capacity, coherence, and dealing with the problem along the Pakistani-Afghan border.

Chairman LEVIN. Would you say that the insurgency has yet been contained in Afghanistan?

General McKiernan: Sir, until I have the opportunity to make an assessment on the ground, I do not know if I could say that it has been contained.

Chairman LEVIN. General, you and I spoke in my office about this question of decoupling the Iraqi and the Afghanistan issue because of the problem which exists in some countries in Europe where popular support has been lost for the Afghan mission based on opposition to the war in Iraq and that there might be value in decoupling rhetorically, perhaps budget-wise, but at least rhetorically, and in terms of diplomacy, for both reasons, we could perhaps get greater support in Europe, a greater focus on Afghanistan, if we made that decoupling. Would you comment on that?

And I believe you also in your answer to prehearing questions stated that the public opposition in a number of European countries has contributed to the loss of support for engagement in Afghanistan. Would you comment on that?

General McKiernan: Sir, I think from my experience in the last 2 and a half years in Europe, in terms of decoupling Iraq and Afghanistan in the minds of our European allies, I think that is certainly something we ought to try to do in our strategic communications.

I also think that we have got to continue to encourage our European allies to understand that the threat in Afghanistan and across the border to the south is their threat as well. And so I do see a need to decouple in the international community. Our discussions also were whether we decouple in some of our processes back here in the United States. And my statement at that time—and I continue to believe it—is in terms of application of resources, we have to balance, at least in the Department of Defense, globally. So it is very hard to decouple Iraq from Afghanistan.

Chairman LEVIN. In that sense.

General Odierno: In that sense.

Chairman LEVIN. General McKiernan, the Atlantic Council has found that less than 10 cents of every dollar of aid for Afghanistan goes directly to the Afghan people. Assistant Secretary of State Boucher at this committee's hearing in February endorsed a program that is intended to empower rural Afghan communities to manage their own development projects. And it is called the National Solidarity Program. This program is within the Afghanistan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and provides small block grants directly to locally elected community development councils. They are responsible for identifying, planning, and managing their own development projects. Funding for the National Solidarity Program comes from the World Bank and the International Development Association, bilateral donors through the Afghan Reconstruction trust fund.

According to a press release last December, the National Solidarity Program has provided \$400 million in payments which were disbursed to 16,000 local community development councils in Afghanistan, and those payments have financed more than 30,000 community development subprojects, which have improved access to infrastructure, markets, and services. Those councils are being established in all 34 provinces and the vast majority of the districts throughout Afghanistan.

A University of York study in Britain said that the National Solidarity Program has the potential to be a beacon of good practice among community-driven development programs.

So a couple questions. Are you familiar with the National Solidarity Program? And in your judgment, is it a good program?

General McKiernan: Sir, I have done a lot of reading about it, and the people that I have talked to that work it in Afghanistan—I would conclude that it has huge potential as a bottom-up approach for development. Coupled with programs like CERP and what provincial reconstruction teams do, I think in a bottom-up sense, it has huge potential.

Chairman LEVIN. Will you, when you get to Afghanistan, take a personal look at them? And if you continue to be satisfied with their value, can you find ways to encourage the support for those programs?

General McKiernan: Yes, sir, I will.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

General Sharp, Senator Warner commented on this 2012 date, and I happen to agree with him. As I mentioned to you in the office, I think that the Korean Army is capable to take command earlier and that the fears of symbolism when that happens are not justified by any actions which we have taken and that it is essential that you continue to see if that cannot be pushed forward. I know that date has been set, but that is a long way off. And there is no reason for 4 more years to pass in my judgment—and I concur with Senator Warner on this—before that operational control is transferred to the South Korean forces.

So I do not need you, unless you would like to, to respond, but I just simply want to add my voice to Senator Warner on that point and give you an opportunity, if you would like, obviously, to comment on it.

General Sharp: Sir, if confirmed, I do pledge to work with the Republic of Korea, Chairman General Kim, to continually push to make sure that they have the capabilities, the training necessary in order to be able to take OPCON change and to continually assess that between now and 2012 to make that goal.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, General.

The Six Party Talks. Would you view them, from what you know of them, as constructive?

General Sharp: Sir, they are constructive. They would be a lot more constructive if the North Koreans lived up to what they promised and gave a complete and open declaration, as they were supposed to do and they pledged to do by the end of last calendar year, which they have yet to do. But they are constructive.

Chairman LEVIN. And do you see value in military-to- military contacts with North Korea?

General Sharp: Sir, I do. I see that military-to- military contacts make sure that each side understands where each other stands so that there is less of a chance of missteps because of miscommunications. And I encourage that. The North Koreans cut off general officer-level talks several years ago, and I would encourage that to start back up again.

Chairman LEVIN. Do you believe the right number of ground forces are postured—and I am talking here to U.S. ground forces—to meet any warfighting requirements on the Korean peninsula?

General Sharp: Sir, I believe what we currently have on the peninsula—that General Bell has worked very hard, not just num-

bers, but more importantly the capabilities that we have there, in order to be able to do the requirements in order to be able to, with our Republic of Korea allies, win the war, win any conflict. We do have the right number and the right capabilities there at this time.

Chairman LEVIN. So you would not support further reductions?

General Sharp: Sir, again, if confirmed, I will continually assess that, but from what I have seen so far working with the Army, the capabilities that are there now are the ones that we need for the future.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you. We thank all of you and, again, your families for your service, for their service to this country, and we look forward to a speedy confirmation process.

And we will stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:25 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]