NOMINATION OF ADMIRAL MICHAEL G. MULLEN, USN, FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF ADMIRAL AND REAPPOINTMENT AS THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2009

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:32 a.m. in room SD–106, Russell Senate Office Building, Senator Carl Levin (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Levin, Lieberman, Reed, Akaka, Bill Nelson, E. Benjamin Nelson, Webb, McCaskill, Udall, Hagan, Begich, McCain, Sessions, Chambliss, Graham, Thune, and Collins.

Committee staff members present: Richard D. DeBobes, staff director; and Leah C. Brewer, nominations and hearings clerk.

Majority staff members present: Howard H. Hoege III, counsel; Jessica L. Kingston, research assistant; Gerald K. Leeling, counsel; Peter K. Levine, general counsel; William G.P. Monahan, counsel; Russell L. Shaffer, counsel; and William K. Sutey, professional staff member.

Minority staff members present: Joseph W. Bowab, Republican staff director; Adam J. Barker, professional staff member; Michael V. Kostiw, professional staff member; Daniel A. Lerner, professional staff member; David M. Morriss, minority counsel; Richard F. Walsh, minority counsel; and Dana W. White, professional staff member.

Staff assistants present: Kevin A. Cronin, Jennifer R. Knowles, and Christine G. Lang.

Committee members' assistants present: James Tuite, assistant to Senator Byrd; Vance Serchuk, assistant to Senator Lieberman; Carolyn A. Chuhta, assistant to Senator Reed; Nick Ikeda, assistant to Senator Akaka; Christopher Caple and Madeline Otto, assistants to Senator Bill Nelson; Ann Premer, assistant to Senator Ben Nelson; Nathan Buniva and Patrick Haynes, assistants to Senator Bayh; Gordon I. Peterson, assistant to Senator Webb; Tressa Steffen Guenov and Elizabeth McDermott, assistants to Senator McCaskill; Jennifer Barrett, assistant to Senator Udall; Roger Pena, assistant to Senator Hagan; Brandon Andrews, assistant to Senator Inhofe; Lenwood Landrum and Sandra Luff, assistants to

Senator Sessions; Clyde Taylor IV, assistant to Senator Chambliss; Adam G. Brake, assistant to Senator Graham; Jason Van Beek, assistant to Senator Thune; Erskine W. Wells III, assistant to Senator Wicker; and Rob Epplin and Chip Kenneth, assistants to Senator Collins.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARL LEVIN, CHAIRMAN

Chairman LEVIN. Welcome, everybody. Today the committee meets to consider the nomination of Admiral Michael Mullen to a second term as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The team of Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen has proved and provided excellent leadership and great continuity of leadership across two generations. Admiral, it is a strong vote of confidence in you that President Obama has put your name forward for a second term. The committee appreciates the service that you have provided and your willingness to continue to serve and to lead.

We also thank your wife Deborah and your family for their support to you and their sacrifices along the way. We know how vital that support is to someone with the responsibilities that you shoulder. On behalf of the committee, please pass along our appreciation to the great soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines under your command throughout the world and to their families for their dedication and sacrifice.

As he enters into a second term, Admiral Mullen will focus on an array of challenges. Foremost among these is the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan. While the security situation in Afghanistan is difficult, we still have important advantages there. The Taliban are detested by Afghans, who have experienced life under their brutal regime. The Afghan people know the bleak and hopeless future that the Taliban seeks to impose.

Another strong building block for a successful outcome in Afghanistan is that the Afghan military is a motivated force of proven fighters and is highly respected by the Afghan people. If we take the right steps, we can help ensure that Afghanistan does not revert to a Taliban-dominated government that once again provides a safe haven for al Qaeda to terrorize us and the world.

The Obama administration's new strategy, announced in March, refocusing on securing the Afghan people and partnering with the Afghan security forces, is an important step in reversing the spread of insecurity. The change in strategy has led our forces, in the words of General McChrystal, to ″live, eat, and train together with the Afghan security forces, plan and operate together, depend on one another, and hold each other accountable and treat them as equal partners in success.″

General McChrystal's guidance to the troops goes on to say that the success of the Afghan security forces is ″our goal.″ To achieve that goal, I believe we should take several vitally important overdue steps. First, we need a surge in the numbers and strength of the Afghan security forces. We need to expand the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police well beyond the current target of 134,000 soldiers and 96,000 police personnel by 2010. Most of the members of this committee urged 4 months ago in a letter the establishment of a goal of 250,000 Afghan troops and 160,000 Af-

ghan police by 2013. Hopefully, that goal will be adopted and the target set for the end of 2012.

Our own military in Afghanistan has repeatedly pointed to the need for more Afghan forces. As Colonel Bill Hicks, former commander of the Afghan Regional Security Integration Command, put it: ″The U.S. force is growing down here, but the Afghan force is not growing nearly as fast. We have people who are bleeding and dying and we need to look hard at how we generate Afghan forces.″ A Marine company commander in Helmand, Captain Brian Houseman, put it this way: ″The lack of Afghan forces is absolutely our Achilles heel.″

In the sector of Helmand Province that Senator Reed, Senator Kaufman, and I visited earlier this month, our marines outnumbered Afghan soldiers by five to one.

We've been assured by Afghan Defense Minister Wardak that there's no shortage of volunteers to reach this goal. We will need significantly more trainers to achieve this. We asked General Formica, who is in charge of the American effort to train the Afghan security forces, to assess what would be required, including NATO and U.S. trainers, to meet that timetable. In the meantime, we should also press our NATO allies much harder to provide more trainers.

A larger Afghan military will require more equipment. There needs to be a major, urgent effort to determine these requirements and to transfer equipment coming out of Iraq to Afghan security forces to meet their requirements. A plan for that needs to be developed immediately.

We also need to plan for separating local Taliban fighters from their leaders. In Iraq large numbers of young Iraqis who had been attacking us switched sides and became the Sons of Iraq. A similar prospect exists in Afghanistan. Afghan leaders and our own military leaders say that local fighters, most of whom are motivated not by ideology or religious zeal, can be brought over to the government's side if offered the right incentives. General McChrystal has said: ″There is significant potential to go after what I call mid- and low-level Taliban fighters and leaders and offer them reintegration into Afghanistan.″

We can draw on the lessons from the Sons of Iraq in working with Afghan leaders to adopt and implement a plan without delay for turning some enemies into allies in Afghanistan. Such a plan requires assurances of protection and non-retribution, as well as prospects for jobs, including in the Afghan army and police. The potential positive impact of such a concerted effort should be taken into account in considering the need for additional U.S. combat forces.

The Afghan people want to provide for their own security. In a tiny village in Helmand Province, the three of us met with the elders at their village council, or their shura. 100 or so men sat on the floor and talked with us about their future and their country's future. When asked how long the United States should stay, they said: ″Until the minute you make our security forces self- sufficient. Then you will be welcome to visit us, not as soldiers, but as guests.″

Providing the resources needed for the Afghan army and Afghan police to become self-sufficient would demonstrate our commitment to the success of a mission that is in our National security interest, while avoiding the risks associated with a larger U.S. footprint. I believe these steps should be urgently implemented before we consider a further increase in U.S. ground combat troops beyond what is already planned to be deployed by the end of the year.

I'm going to place the balance of my statement in the record and call on Senator McCain.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN

Senator MCCAIN. I thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I join you in welcoming Admiral Mullen and thank him for his service and his family for their support.

Admiral, I believe that you and Secretary Gates have done a superb job and obviously you are extremely well qualified for a second term as Chairman and we're grateful for your long years of service to our country in uniform.

At your last confirmation hearing in July 2007, I made a statement then, and things were certainly not clear as to what we were going to do in Iraq. I said: There are no easy choices in Iraq and the temptation is to wash our hands of this messy situation. To follow this impulse, however, would portend catastrophe. Withdrawing before there's a stable and legitimate Iraqi authority would turn Iraq into a failed state and a terrorist sanctuary in the heart of the Middle East. We have seen a failed state emerge after U.S. disengagement once before and it cost us terribly. In pre-September 11 Afghanistan, terrorists found sanctuary to train and plan attacks with impunity. We can't make this fatal mistake again.″

Despite our successes in Iraq and the hard-won understanding we have gained about what it takes to defeat an insurgency, it seems we now, regrettably, must have the same debate again today with respect to Afghanistan. In all due respect, Senator Levin, I've seen that movie before.

I've been encouraged over the past year by the statements and actions of the President and the unequivocal priority he has placed on achieving success in Afghanistan. In March the President acknowledged that the situation in Afghanistan is ″increasingly perilous″ and that the future of this troubled nation is inextricably linked to the future of its neighbor Pakistan. To the terrorists who oppose us, his message was: ″We will defeat you.″ The President's approval of increases in troop strength was needed then and I believe even more necessary now.

I've also been impressed, Admiral, by your commitment and that of Secretary Gates to success in Afghanistan. You've been clear that defeating the Afghan and Pakistan Taliban is a necessary component of the President's strategy. General McChrystal, as we know, has completed an assessment of the challenges still standing in the way of meeting the President's strategy, which clearly will be the requirement for increased troops. I want to emphasize, every day we delay in implementing this strategy and increasing the number of troops there, which we all know is vitally needed, puts

more and more young Americans who are already there, their lives in danger. I don't think we should do that.

Soon, General McChrystal recommends how many additional troops he thinks are necessary. I hope we won't delay the decision for long and will approve the troop increases that we know are being sought by General working with General Petraeus.

Senator Levin obviously, as he stated, supports a significant acceleration in the growth of the Afghan security forces and an increase in the number of trainers we should provide. I agree with this approach. I strongly disagree with the ″wait and see″ recommendation that we should deploy no additional U.S. combat forces to Afghanistan until this action has been taken. I believe that this position would repeat the nearly catastrophic mistakes of Iraq and significantly set back the vital war effort in Afghanistan.

The lesson of Iraq is that we make little progress merely by putting Afghan volunteers through a training course and releasing them into combat. In fact, when precisely this approach was tried in Iraq Iraqi units collapsed repeatedly in the face of attacks. It took mentorship at every level, including partnership in joint operations with U.S. forces, that built a capable Iraqi security force.

Similarly, mentorship at all levels is required to build a robust and capable Afghan military and pave the way for our eventual successful exit in Afghanistan. To do this, we will need more U.S. combat forces in Afghanistan, not less or the same amount as we have today.

Vital areas in Afghanistan are controlled by the Taliban and its surrogates today. It will require U.S. military force to shape, clear, hold, and build in these areas. If we await the day when the Afghan National Army is increased in size and capable of carrying out all of these operations fully on its own, it may well be too late.

Admiral, as I express these views I am mindful of the stress on our force and the tremendous sacrifices being made by the men and women of the Armed Forces and their families. Admiral, I think I speak for all Senators in thanking you for your personal efforts to address the welfare of our wounded warriors and to implement more effective policies aimed at providing improved resources to eliminate barriers to seeking help for the emotional trauma of combat, to prevent suicides, and to do better in evaluating and responding to disabilities suffered while on active duty.

I also want to express my appreciation for the efforts you and Secretary Gates are making to improve our acquisition process. We have a long way to go and, as the Secretary has indicated, our weapons systems must impose greater costs on our current enemies than they do on us. The recently passed legislation I hope will further our efforts in that direction.

I hope we will hear more today about what steps need to be taken to improve the requirements process and on the rapid acquisition process. I urge you and Secretary Gates to continue to advocate in the strongest possible terms for the weapons systems we need for the readiness and effectiveness against our current enemies.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Senator McCain follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator McCain.
Admiral Mullen.

STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL MICHAEL G. MULLEN, USN, CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

Admiral MULLEN. Mr. Chairman, Senator McCain, distinguished members of this committee: Thank you for hearing my testimony today. I also thank the President and Secretary Gates for their confidence in me. It's been my great honor to serve as Chairman these past 2 years and, if confirmed by the Senate, I will remain as humbled by the opportunity to continue that service as I will remain steadfast in the execution of my duties.

I'm joined this morning by my wife Deborah, who, as you know, has also been steadfast in her commitment to the welfare of our troops and their families, not only during my term as Chairman, but throughout this long military career we have shared. I value her counsel and her company. But more critically, I know I would not be here, that I could not have endured the challenges presented me over the course of these 41 years, without her love unfailing support.

I would add to that the love and support of our two sons, Jack and Michael, both serving today on active duty in the United States Navy. They are but two of the 2.2 million sons and daughters of America I strive best to represent. No decision I make or advice I give is done without thinking about the impact on our troops and their families.

The truth is, our people have been stretched and strained by 8 years of persistent combat in two theaters of war, not to mention the steady drumbeat of training and operations demanded by our security commitments around the world. This strain manifests in many ways: fatigue and stress, marital and family difficulties, homelessness, and an alarming number of suicides. We ought not forget as well the more than 5100 troops killed since 9–11 or the 35,000 wounded, each one a noble sacrifice worthy of our solemn attention.

Countless others suffer in silence with wounds we never see, with nightmares we never know. Physical or otherwise, these wounds of war represent a family's life forever changed.

As do you on this committee, I am committed to improving the care we provide now and into the future for all of these casualties and their families. And yet, for all this suffering and all this change, our people are the most resilient I have ever seen. They have endured much, yes, but they have also learned much and grown much.

Consider Iraq, where only 3 short years ago many people had given up on the effort. Today there's no question that security is much, much better and that the Iraqi security forces are increasingly more able to protect their own people. Violence persists and Al Qaeda still threatens, but we are now in a position, the Iraqis are now in a position, for us to continue drawing down our forces, due in large part to our great military men and women.

We have made great strides in wounded care, particularly on the battlefield. We have become more nimble in collecting, dissemi-

nating, and acting on intelligence. Our Army has restructured itself to be a far more expeditionary force. The Marines have refined a new concept of expeditionary maneuver warfare. Our Navy has taken back its riverine mission. And our Air Force is revitalizing its strategic nuclear rule.

But the biggest area of learning and growth has been in counterinsurgency warfare. Indeed, I believe we are today the best counterinsurgency force in the world, having learned anew so many valuable lessons over these last 8 years. As I noted, we didn't get here without great sacrifice in blood and treasure. Our knowledge came at a heavy price.

Now that we have shifted our main effort east to Afghanistan, where the Taliban insurgency grows in both size and complexity, we must apply that knowledge to the best of our ability. That is why I support a properly resourced, classically pursued counterinsurgency effort.

The President has given us a clear mission: disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaeda and its extremist allies and prevent Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven again. You can't do that from offshore and you can't do that by just killing the bad guys. You have to be there, where the people are, when they need you there, and until they can provide for their own security. This is General McChrystal's view and it is my view and that if General Petraeus in the Joint Chiefs.

Now, not every lesson from Iraq will apply, but the big ones will: protect the people, connect them to the political process, enable them to provide for their own security. The enemy in Afghanistan is not the insurgent. The enemy is fear. If you can remove the fear under which so many Afghans live, if you can supplant it with security and good governance, then you can offer them an alternative to Taliban rule. And if they have an alternative to Taliban rule, they will choose it.

To be sure, the President's strategy is a regional one, recognizing that the ideology shared by Al Qaeda and the Taliban knows no border and that this area remains the epicenter of violent Islamic fundamentalism. An Afghanistan resistant to extremism, free of such sanctuary, will help bolster the efforts of neighboring Pakistan to become the same. On the other hand, if the Taliban succeed in governing at the state level, as they have already succeeded in many local areas, Al Qaeda could reestablish the safe havens they enjoyed in Afghanistan at the end of the last decade and the internal threat to Pakistan by extremism will only worsen.

So how best to prevent it? How best to provide for Afghan security and governance? Ultimately it should be provided by the Afghans themselves. As you rightly pointed out last week, Mr. Chairman, I share your view that larger and more capable Afghan national security forces remain vital to that nation's viability. I share your view and have stated publicly that the path to achieving the President's goal is through our training efforts there. We must rapidly build the Afghan army and police. And I agree that we must develop more and better ways to peel away those not ideologically committed to the insurgency and reintegrate them back into productive society.

But we cannot achieve these goals without recognizing that they are both manpower and time-intensive. More important than the size of the Afghan security forces is their quality. More important than the orders they follow is the leadership they exude. And more important than the numbers of Taliban we turn are the personal lives they themselves turn around.

Sending more trainers more quickly will give us a jump start, but only that. Quality training takes time and patience. Private trust by the Afghans, so vital to our purpose, is not fostered in a public hurry.

Now, I do not know exactly what additional resources General McChrystal may ask for and I do not know what ratio of training to combat units he really needs. We'll get to all of that in the coming weeks. But I do believe that, having heard his views and having great confidence in his leadership, a properly resourced counterinsurgency probably means more forces and without question more time and more commitment to the protection of the Afghan people and to the development of good governance.

We can get there. We can accomplish the mission we've been assigned. But we will need resources matched to the strategy, civilian expertise matched to military capabilities, and the continued support of the American people.

We also need to remember that we have other responsibilities, other threats to counter, and other missions to complete, and that as we responsibly draw down in Iraq and work towards success in Afghanistan we must remain ready to deter conflict elsewhere, improve the capacity of our allies and partners, and prepare for a broad spectrum of challenges, both conventional and unconventional.

Again, thank you for this opportunity and thank you for all you do on this committee to support the men and women of our military and their families as they protect our vital national interests in these very challenging times.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Mullen follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Chairman LEVIN. Admiral, thank you so much for your opening statement and again for your great service.

Let's try a 7-minute first round.

Admiral, has General McChrystal submitted yet a request for specific additional resources for Afghanistan?

Admiral MULLEN. No, sir, he has not.

Chairman LEVIN. Has a decision been made on whether to commit additional U.S. forces to Afghanistan beyond the 17,000 combat troops and the 4,000 trainers that the President approved in February?

Admiral MULLEN. No, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Has the recommendation been made by you or Secretary Gates to President Obama relative to sending additional troops to Afghanistan?

Admiral MULLEN. Sir, we've made our recommendation based on the assessment, but, not having received the request from General McChrystal yet, we've made no recommendation with respect to forces.

Chairman LEVIN. How many of the 17,000 combat forces and the 4,000 trainers that were previously committed, how many of them have arrived in theater and when will the balance arrive?

Admiral MULLEN. They are all just about there. The balance will be there by the end of this month. The last group is really the 4th of the 82nd trainers, who are at the end of their arrival getting in place and will take over the mission, the training mission of these 4,000 soldiers, very quickly.

Chairman LEVIN. You've testified, Admiral, that an essential step in regaining the initiative in Afghanistan and to succeed there is to build the capacity of the Afghan security forces, the Afghan army and police, and empowering them to provide security for their own country. Is the Afghan army respected by the Afghan people?

Admiral MULLEN. It is from my perspective the most respected institution in Afghanistan.

Chairman LEVIN. Are they committed fighters?

Admiral MULLEN. They are. They've been fighting for a long time.

Chairman LEVIN. How many additional trainers is it going to take to build the Afghan army to, let's say, 250,000?

Admiral MULLEN. The rough estimate is somewhere between 2 and 4,000 in terms of overall trainers.

Chairman LEVIN. Is that additional to what's there now?

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. What is there now?

Admiral MULLEN. Training-wise it's about—I think it's about 6,000, 6500.

Chairman LEVIN. How many of those additional trainers should be supplied by NATO?

Admiral MULLEN. As many as possible. Countries who are capable—and they are some very capable countries in NATO at training both police and the army—we would like to see them step up as much as possible.

Chairman LEVIN. When you gave a number for additional trainers for the army, did that include—does that include additional trainers for the police or is that a separate number?

Admiral MULLEN. No, that's inclusive, yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. On the equipment issue, would you agree that as we withdraw equipment from Iraq that a major priority should be transferring to Afghanistan the equipment needed to build the capacity of the Afghan security forces to provide for their security?

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. What is being done in that regard?

Admiral MULLEN. Well, in fact your question when you came back off this trip caused us to focus, to see exactly where we were. I met yesterday with General Petraeus and General McChrystal, had a VTC with them, where we discussed this. In fact, there are some 2,000-plus Humvees in Kuwait which are being refurbished, that will be accelerated into Afghanistan, and the required focus on this to make sure that we are moving that as rapidly as we can.

It's also tied to their ability to absorb this and train to it.

Chairman LEVIN. Is that review going to be conducted to determine what other types of quantities of equipment would be needed and usable?

Admiral MULLEN. Right. We're doing a full-scale review in that regard.

Chairman LEVIN. When will that review be completed?

Admiral MULLEN. I think we'll know that within the next couple of weeks.

Chairman LEVIN. You will you make that available to us?

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Is that going to take any additional legislation, do you know?

Admiral MULLEN. No, sir, I'm not aware of any right now.

Chairman LEVIN. General McChrystal has spoken and I think you have too, as a matter of fact, as has the Secretary, about the great potential for reintegrating local Taliban fighters and getting them to switch over to the government side. Now, there's a lot of differences between Afghanistan and Iraq, but one of the similarities could be that incentives for low and mid-level Taliban fighters to switch from enemies to allies could be put in place.

Number one, is a plan now going to be developed to put into place an approach in Afghanistan to reintegrate young Afghan fighters?

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir. There is a British general by the name of Graham Lamb who is working—who did this in Iraq and who is now working for General McChrystal, and has initiated—I don't want to overstate this—has initiated putting in place a program to focus on mid-level and lower level fighters who would like to turn themselves in and do so in a way, obviously, in which they are both protected and that they have a future, so in that regard similar to Sons of Iraq.

Chairman LEVIN. Has that plan been worked out with Afghan leaders?

Admiral MULLEN. It includes Afghan leaders in its initial inception, which we're really at the beginning of right now. So we're not very far down that road.

Chairman LEVIN. What's been the delay in getting that done?

Admiral MULLEN. Actually it has not been an area of focus and we haven't had somebody there like Lamb to focus on it.

Chairman LEVIN. This committee, over two-thirds of us, signed a letter back 4 or 5 months ago on the question of the size of the Afghan forces and we pointed out that the Afghan defense minister has called for an army of between 250,000 and 300,000 soldiers. The minister of interior in Afghanistan supported a strategic increase in the size of the army. We urged you to declare a target at that time for end strengths for the army and the police to those levels.

I'm just wondering what has been the delay in adopting goals for the increase in the size of the Afghan army, given what our people on the ground say, which is that their presence with us, obviously as mentors, as partners, is critical to the security for Afghanistan. What has been the delay in establishing the larger goals?

Admiral MULLEN. I think if there's been any reason for a delay it's been where we are now in terms of our overall numbers, which is at 93,000 in the army and about 90,000 in the police. The timing of your letter came right about at the time we were making a leadership change out there.

General McChrystal has embraced the requirement to grow these forces and grow them more rapidly, and I'm sure that that will be part of the output of the assessment, if you will, because we're all very committed to making that happen. I would assume that as a result of this assessment we will establish those goals and I wouldn't expect them to be far off from what we're recommending, what was recommended before.

Chairman LEVIN. Senator McCain.

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Admiral Mullen. On this issue of simply relying on the buildup of the Afghan army, we tried that for several years in Iraq. As you may recall, by April 2004, in fact, the Department of Defense reported that there were 208,000 Iraqis either on duty or being trained for security units. The same month, attacks by Sunni and Shia; basically, the Iraqi army collapsed. What we found out, that we succeeded only after we instituted a practice of mentorship, including joint operations with U.S. combat forces at every level, that we saw marked improvement in the Iraqi forces.

Is there any, under any reasonable scenario, Admiral, prospect that trained Afghan security forces can handle the bulk of the fighting over the near to medium term?

Admiral MULLEN. No, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. If we followed such a course, do you think the situation in Afghanistan would improve or get worse?

Admiral MULLEN. I think it would probably continue to deteriorate.

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you.

General McChrystal—excuse me. Admiral, General McChrystal's assessment of our strategy in Afghanistan has been closely held and is currently under review, as you stated, both in the Pentagon and the White House. The assessment as I understand it contains no resource requirements or requests for additional troops, but is instead being described as a new strategy for the President's consideration and endorsement.

Yet last March didn't the President adopt a new strategy for Afghanistan with considerable fanfare?

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir. I think that the description of General McChrystal's assessment that it's a new strategy—and in fact he uses those words, but his use of those words is really focused on a new implementation strategy for the President's strategy, which is the baseline for his review as he arrived in command and conducted it.

So General McChrystal's assessment assesses the President's strategy in terms of—the implementation strategy required to execute the President's strategy which he rolled out at the end of March. His is not a new strategy.

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you.

Obviously, a strategy in order to succeed requires an assessment of resources needed, right?

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. And resources, a vital component of that is manpower, personnel, right?

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. Now, help me through why we have a restatement of the President's strategy which was announced in March and yet there is no recommendation on what is obviously the most important aspect, both strategically and domestically? I'm talking about politics here in the United States. Why would it take weeks and weeks to make an evaluation and reach a decision?

Admiral MULLEN. The process that we are going through is to have General McChrystal assess it both for the President as well as for NATO. It's a dual assessment in that regard. And quite honestly, he found conditions on the ground tougher than he had thought. He went with General Rodriguez, who had been absent about a year out of Afghanistan. He found it tougher. And the importance of the fullness of that assessment and what it was going to take the President's strategy, to include a second part, which is, okay, here's how I found it and these are the resources that I need.

Now, he's done extensive analysis to underpin those force options. My expectation is that they will be submitted in the very near future. The administration wanted time to review it in terms of what General McChrystal found and then—one of the things that is very important to me is that, whatever the strategy is, and right now it's the 27 March strategy, is that we properly resource it.

So that's where we are today. I would anticipate he will be submitting that request in the very near future.

Senator MCCAIN. As you stated this month, and I quote: ″Time is not on our side.″

Admiral MULLEN. No, sir. I have a sense of urgency about this. I worry a great deal that the clock is moving very rapidly. There are lots of clocks, as you know. But the sense of urgency, I, believe me, share that with General McChrystal, who, while he is very focused on a change which includes partners, a focus on the Afghan people, he is alarmed by the insurgency and he is in a position where he needs to retake the initiative from the insurgents, who have grabbed it over the last 3 years.

Senator MCCAIN. I thank you, Admiral. But then I am frustrated and curious as to why the President's spokesperson yesterday should say it takes weeks and weeks. We're restating a strategy. We know what the resources are that are required. And yet it would take weeks and weeks.

Meanwhile, "weeks and weeks" go by and without the new strategy and the implementation of it or, excuse me, the implementation of the resources recommendation; there are more and more Americans who are at great risk. That is really, really bothersome. Already in the media there's speculation that the President doesn't want to make an announcement on troop increases because of the present debate on health care. I believe that the President can do both.

Let me finally ask, what do you anticipate the level of fighting to be as we get into the winter months here?

Admiral MULLEN. Well, each winter the fighting recedes, but last winter it was significantly more than the previous one. In discussions with General McChrystal, there's a term that we use and have used in Afghanistan, which is the "fighting season," but in fact we don't believe there's a fighting season. We think it's a 365

day a year fight for the people and for their support and for them to be able to be put in the position to be governed by their country, by the institutions in their country.

So much of the combat recedes, but, quite frankly, in the winter it is just as important to be engaged with the people as it is right now.

Senator MCCAIN. And the sooner we get immediate resources over there, the sooner we can turn this situation around.

Mr. Chairman, I would strongly recommend that we do as we have in the past and ask General McChrystal and General Petraeus to come before the committee and testify so that we can better understand the situation both there in Afghanistan and what we can expect in the future.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator McCain.

Senator Lieberman.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

First, Admiral Mullen, let me thank you for your really extraordinary service to our country. I think you've done just a great job as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs in every way. You haven't always given us the answers that we have been looking for, but that really is exactly what we expect you to do. And you've shown great leadership here, really grace under pressure maybe is the way I will put it. So I will enthusiastically support the President's renomination of you for a second term. I appreciate it. Your wife has urged me to think twice about my support of that, but nonetheless I'm going to go forward.

In the opening statements of Chairman Levin and Senator McCain, we I think see the dimensions of the beginning of a very serious national debate about our presence in Afghanistan. It's an important national debate that has to happen here in Congress and hopefully throughout the country, and in some senses it is a debate that has not yet occurred in all the time we've been in Afghanistan. Our support of the war in Afghanistan was a natural response to the attacks against us of 9–11. Then after we went into—so there was almost total support of that.

After we went into Iraq, Afghanistan in many ways, including in the debates here in Washington, became the other war. It was even so during the campaign last year, where the differences—for President—became Senator McCain and Senator Obama really had to do with Iraq, and both generally agreed on Afghanistan. In fact, then-Senator Obama was really quite strong in stating that Afghanistan was the central front of the war on terrorism, a war of necessity we could not muddle through. And to now President Obama's credit as far as I'm concerned, he's followed through on those statements, particularly with the announcement of the new strategy in March and the deployment of 21,000 additional American troops to back up that deployment.

I appreciate the clarity that's emerged in the discussion that we've had here this morning, that what General McChrystal has been asked to do is not develop a new strategy for Afghanistan, because that's been done. It's to give a strategic assessment of where we are now and what we need to succeed. In some sense for us to reject that assessment and the reports that are necessary to carry

it out would be a change in the strategic decision that President Obama made earlier this year.

The strategic policy we're following in Afghanistan does learn from the lessons of Iraq, although this is a different battlefield. The good news here is that there's no dissent, even as we listen to the different positions that Chairman Levin and Senator McCain have articulated, about the need to succeed in Afghanistan, both because it would be inexcusable to allow the Taliban to regain control of that country and bring back al Qaeda, which of course planned the attacks on us of September 11 and trained for them from there.

It's also true, and I want to stress this—and you've said it yourself here, I think quite eloquently—a failure in Afghanistan would have, I think, a devastating effect on our efforts to stabilize neighboring nuclear Pakistan. There's just no question about it.

So we start with those similar goals and it seems to me the question now is how do we succeed. Chairman Levin has offered an alternative, which is to go with trainers for at least a year and no additional combat troops. Senator McCain has said we need combat troops now, we need more of them, and as quickly as possible, and I agree with Senator McCain, as you know.

I hear you to say this morning, Admiral Mullen, that, based on the strategy that the President adopted, the new strategy he adopted in March, and the strategic assessment that General McChrystal has now given the President and you, Secretary Gates, from the battlefield, though you have not seen and General McChrystal has not submitted a specific request for specific numbers of troops, that your conclusion is that we need to send more combat troops to Afghanistan.

Admiral MULLEN. I've said in my opening statement that it's very clear to me we will need more resources to execute the President's strategy from the end of March. I really await the submission from General McChrystal, which I think is going to occur here very quickly, to evaluate specifically what that means and to look at the risks associated with various options.

So it is—and maybe I can give a little better answer to the chairman on why we weren't doing a program like the one Graham Lamb is now in charge of. We very badly underresourced Afghanistan for the better part of 4 or 5 years. I've spoken about a culture of poverty. That's been interpreted to focus on the poverty level in the country. That isn't what I meant. Certainly that is a problem, but we have a culture of poverty there amongst us in terms of being underresourced, an economy of force, for this extensive period of time, to get to a point where we didn't have the wherewithal to create a program like that, not that we didn't think it would be needed.

The totality of that underresourcing is something we're just coming to grips with. It's not as simple as trainers or not as simple as combat troops. It's are you committed, as the Afghan people look at it, are you committed as the Paks look at it. This is a regional area that is the epicenter of terrorism.

Every time I go—and I'm sure it happens to you as well—when you're in Afghanistan or Pakistan, the question that is on their lips is: Are you staying or are you going?

Senator LIEBERMAN. Are you staying or are you going to go?

Admiral MULLEN. Are you with us or not?

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right. And my concern is that Chairman Levin I know is well intentioned, but if we just send trainers and don't send more combat troops, particularly if it's clear that General McChrystal has requested them, then I believe the Afghan people and the Pakistani people are going to decide we're essentially on our way out, and they're going to make some judgments based on that and take actions that will not be what we want them to do.

Do you agree?

Admiral MULLEN. I'm very concerned about—the Afghan people are waiting on the sidelines for how committed we are and, quite frankly, so are the people of Pakistan. I said in my opening statement I believe in a fully resourced counterinsurgency. These are the lessons from Iraq that we have learned. They have been very painful and, quite frankly, we need those lessons in a timely manner applied right now, with the level of deterioration that we've had in Afghanistan, particularly over the last 3 years.

Senator LIEBERMAN. I agree.

The last question, because I think you've said clearly today that the momentum, the initiative right now in Afghanistan—and General McChrystal told us that when we visited him in August—is not on our side.

Admiral MULLEN. Right.

Senator LIEBERMAN. And sending more trainers and more combat troops gives us a much higher probability of regaining the initiative in this critical battle.

Admiral MULLEN. The issue of regaining the initiative is absolutely critical. General McChrystal, I spoke to him yesterday. He emphasizes that each time that I engage with him.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Final question. Isn't one of the lessons we learned from Iraq and Anbar Province that the Sons of Iraq turned away from Al Qaeda in our direction after they were confident that we were not leaving, in fact we were going to surge our troops there? And isn't it true that any effort to break away local Taliban who are not Islamic fanatics requires us similarly to convince those local Taliban that we're committed to this fight and if they come to our side they're going to be winners, not losers?

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thank you.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Lieberman.

Senator Sessions.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Admiral Mullen, for your leadership and service, and all the people that serve under you, your leadership. They've put their lives on the line to effectuate American policy that this Congress has directed them to do. Having sent them, we do need to listen to their advice about how to be successful.

I know sending more troops to Afghanistan is a bitter pill to me, but I do think that Senator McCain, Senator Lieberman and others have made the case in Iraq at a very, very difficult time that we needed to strengthen our presence and if we did we could be suc-

cessful, and actually things went better than we could have expected at this point in Iraq.

I'm inclined to think that we need to listen to that wisdom again. But I do believe that every area of the world is different. I think Afghanistan is different to some degree than Iraq, but there are a lot of lessons that we can apply there. I won't go into details about that today, but I do look forward to hearing from Generals McChrystal and Petraeus, and we can fulfil our role, constitutional role in this process, to examine the facts and make sure that we're supporting a good policy that will be successful.

Admiral Mullen, you signed off on the President's budget this year, I suppose it's fair to say? Is that correct?

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir. I'm not sure a signature, but I'm certainly supportive of it.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, I don't, and I'm worried about it. What is the personnel increase that we expect to occur as a result of this budget? How many? Is it 30,000 troops, or how would you—

Admiral MULLEN. The one that I think you're asking about is an increase of 22,000 for the Army, a temporary increase over a period of about 3 years. What it really addresses is the need to make up for losses which are occurring principally in our large units. So a brigade of 3500, now it's taking—the number of soldiers who are falling out before deployment has about doubled since the war started. So we're rushing other people into these brigades.

That 22,000 will essentially greatly reduce the churn at a time where we're transitioning out of Iraq, we obviously don't know what our final level or our level in Afghanistan is going to be, and as we work to, given the overall requirement, get to a dwell time that's increased from one to one to one to two. But principally it's focused on getting at the churn that's in the system. It's not going to add any additional capability. That's why it's temporary.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, we authorized, I believe Senator Lieberman's legislation authorized, up to 30,000.

Admiral MULLEN. I think, yes, sir.

Senator SESSIONS. So that you've decided or the Defense Department's decision is to do 22. Does that mean that we will have 22,000 more people on the payroll?

Admiral MULLEN. Over the next—I think it's going to take about—I think we'll get an additional 15 next year in '10, with 7 more after that in '11. Then literally to get back down you've got to start coming down pretty fast.

Senator SESSIONS. So you don't see this as a permanent thing?

Admiral MULLEN. No.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, I'm inclined to think the personnel certainly are needed today and I support that, and I am worried about the dwell time of our soldiers and the redeployment rate. But I've just got to say what's worrying me in another area is that the amount of money once you fund this new surge of troops and you get a 3 percent increase in your budget and certain costs go up each year in maintaining your personnel and all the matters from energy to whatever in the defense budget, that procurement and research and development are the things historically we see that get squeezed too much.

We have an obligation, this President has an obligation, this Congress has an obligation, to fund the development and procurement of weapons systems today that we may not see in the inventory 5, 10, 15 years down the road.

Isn't it fair to say that we should be concerned and very observant about the impact of this tight budget for the Defense Department on procurement and research and development and perhaps other?

Admiral MULLEN. A lot of my life in Washington over the last decade has been spent in programming and budgeting, and the work that—I worked very closely with Secretary Gates to submit the budget amendment, and I'm very supportive of the decisions, hard as they were, that he made for programs that were running out of control, way overdue, costs increasing, etcetera, and others that didn't conceptually make sense. A lot of very tough decisions, but it's the best work I have seen since the mid-1990s from my own personal point of view.

Yes, clearly if you have—and I am concerned about increasing personnel costs. When I was the head of the Navy, 60 to 70 percent of my budget went to personnel costs. That's military, civilian, and direct support of contractors who helped us in carrying out our mission. That's gone up, and health care is a big part of that, but it's not exclusively that.

So I think one of the biggest issues we have actually in the defense budget is how do we control that, how do we come to grips with those costs? I need every single person I need and not one person more. That's very difficult, particularly when it takes up so much. I've got to pay for my operations. That's another big undertaking. What's left is procurement and R and D. So when a budget gets tighter, clearly that's where the pressure is going to be felt.

We do have to watch that. At the same time, I think the budget focuses on, first of all, people, which is—if you want me to bet on the future, that's where I would put my next marginal dollar. Second, it focuses on the wars that we're in and I think the wars that we're in have a lot to do with our future as well. We've learned an awful lot. Then obviously it focuses on what we see in the future.

We're trying to bring it into balance, not try to undo the future. I think it took a significant step in that direction. I'm mindful that it's a lot tighter than it was and that we have to be very vigilant about the things that we do, the things that we buy and the things that we don't buy.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, thank you. I know you understand that, as the senior top uniformed military leader in the country, you have a serious burden in that regard, and I hope that you will examine the impact of this very tight budget. I think our discretionary spending 7, 8, 9 percent increase this year, not counting the stimulus, and the military got very little, almost nothing, out of the stimulus and only a 3 percent increase in DOD total budget.

So I hope that you will, and I expect that you will, evaluate that and let us know to what extent some of these decisions are impacting adversely the military of the United States. Will you do that?

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir. I'd only add that as budgets have gone up over the last decade one of the characteristics that evolves, or at least I watched it evolve, is we become less disciplined in our

prioritization. We become less disciplined in our analysis, because there are resources there that don't have to be justified as much as when there's additional pressure on us.

So we've got to bring all those skills back to the fore, to the front, in order to make the right decisions. Senator McCain talked about and Senator Levin both this acquisition legislation, which is very powerful. Now we need to get at that. We need to execute it. We need to make hard decisions. We don't need the perfect solution. I don't need the 100 percent solution each and every time that I'm developing something. I need some high end stuff, there's no question about that, and it's very expensive.

So all those things are in play right now and we, believe me, take that all very seriously.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Sessions.

Senator Reed.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral, thank you for your great service to the country over many years. Your family and you have led with great not only vision, but decency, and I appreciate it very, very much.

Let me just as a first point, I would think that in trying to resource Afghanistan the first place would be within CENTCOM. Is that your emphasis, to see if there are assets within CENTCOM, not only those that are presently there, but those that are scheduled to go there, which should be diverted into Afghanistan?

Admiral MULLEN. In fact, we've done a great deal of that already inside the foot print that the President has approved for Afghanistan, to move resources, intelligence, reconnaissance, surveillance, ground convoy, IED, counter-IED capability, to focus on force protection, the MRAP, meeting the MRAP requirement there as well. So we are very focused on moving people and capability from Iraq to Afghanistan.

General Odierno has been terrific in looking at his risk, understanding what the need is, and been very supportive.

Senator REED. There seems to be an emerging consensus on increased trainers. Just for the record, I think there's, as you point out, an increased need for enablers. Where do we stand in terms of the enablers, the road- clearing teams, the IR platforms?

Admiral MULLEN. Those that General has asked for for this year are on the way, basically through the end of this calendar year.

Senator REED. But he will presumably ask for additional.

Admiral MULLEN. That again clearly will be a part of this request. We just don't have the details yet.

Senator REED. One of the areas that has plagued us throughout our presence in Afghanistan is the lack of unity of effort. First there's the command and control problem. Second, there's I think a lack of coordination between our COIN operations and our counternarcotics operations. Then there's a certain lack of coordination between Afghan security forces and ISAF forces and our forces. Then also, our conventional forces and our special operations forces.

Can you comment on—there's no silver bullet here, but unless we get these issues improved dramatically, increased resources won't help as much.

Admiral MULLEN. I agree, and General McChrystal has made this one of his top priorities, focus on the people, partner with them, and really the other one is to fix the unity of command. He's very clearly going to put whoever the senior person is in battle space in charge of all forces, including the special forces.

We are standing up this three-star command, operational command, if you will, or tactical command. But General Rodriguez is standing it up as a NATO command. It will stand up by the 12th of October and we're on track to do that.

We all agree that the command and control has been far from ideal and that these steps and others to make sure that our unity of command and unity of effort is very visible, and particularly to the Afghan security forces who we are working so closely with. So he's making major changes to address that issue. I don't think it'll ever be perfect, but it will be much, much better than it has been.

Senator REED. Regardless, I think, of the presence of U.S. forces there, the limiting factor appears to me to be the Afghan forces, not only in the long run, but in the short run. We're operating now typically, as we saw in Helmand, with an American battalion and one Afghan company. But the impression I got from our commanders on the ground is that unless there's an Afghan presence it's hard to operate, not only tactically, but psychologically and symbolically you send a very wrong signal, that this is our war, not their war.

Admiral MULLEN. I think the chairman pointed out, I think the stories that came out when the marines initiated their first operation, and General Nicholson talked about what I recall is about a ten to one ratio. Certainly we've got Afghans present, but they are very thin. That gets to the whole issue of needing to build up those forces.

Senator REED. Let me just on one point. When we discussed on our return the training of the Afghan army, are we training, are we trying to train, an army with battalion, brigade, division staffs, or are we, because of this emergency, trying to focus on infantry companies and infantry company commanders, which you could probably produce much quicker than talented staffers?

Admiral MULLEN. General McChrystal's intent—I'll take the 4th of the 82nd as an example. They're going to break down into platoon-sized units and they're going to focus at the platoon and company level specifically. There will be training certainly at company, battalion, and brigade headquarters level, but the main effort is going to be at that level.

Senator REED. The civilian surge. To be blunt, military forces can buy time, but the success there ultimately will be some type of political accommodation. Right now the government of Afghanistan is dysfunctional within Kabul and not even present outside of Kabul. Is this civilian surge going well? If it's a function of resources, should DOD kick in the money? I know Secretary Vilsack, for example, wants to send more Agriculture people there, but he wants you to pick up the tab.

Admiral MULLEN. The best I know, there's no shortage of funds to do this. I liken it to Iraq. We are surging. It is not happening fast enough. It's got Secretary Clinton's attention, it's got Ambas-

sador Holbrooke's attention. There are an awful lot of people working on it.

We're just not a government that has been constructed to do this quickly. There is a plan and I think we're a little bit behind that plan, to surge upwards, like 500 or 600 to be there in the spring. But it's the spring. They're not there now. There are additional civilians who have arrived. There has been a major change in the embassy. But it's not happening as rapidly as it could.

We can't do it without that help, first of all. Second, you talk about governance. I consider the threat from lack of governance to be equal to the threat from the Taliban. Both of those things have to be addressed.

Senator REED. The presidential election is grinding to a conclusion. To what extent will that affect the situation within Afghanistan in your view? There is a possibility that there could be a serious crisis of legitimacy that will impair the ability of a very dysfunctional government to function at all. Is that a factor that we have to consider?

Admiral MULLEN. I think the legitimacy of the Afghan government at every level, not just the National level—that's where the election is—is a real concern, and that there needs to be a level of legitimacy that the Afghan people see in their government, whether it's local to national. There's a great question about that now and so far the elections have not helped.

I think we need to get through these elections, see what there results are, see who we're dealing with, what's the government look like, and move forward accordingly. But that issue of legitimacy is a huge, huge issue.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Reed.

Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We all appreciate your service and I think you will be confirmed, hopefully with everyone's vote. I think you've earned that.

Quite frankly, this is an opportunity to do an assessment about Iraq and Afghanistan. Football season's here at home and I'm trying to think of an analogy. From Senator Lieberman's question, it seems like we're on the defense in Afghanistan; is that fair to say?

Admiral MULLEN. I think that's probably fairly characterized.

Senator GRAHAM. In Iraq we're on offense? The Iraqi people, the Iraqi security forces?

Admiral MULLEN. I'm not sure I'd draw—clearly we're on a path to success with them.

Senator GRAHAM. Are we driving the ball in Iraq?

Admiral MULLEN. In that regard, we're certainly moving in the right direction.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you think we're inside the 20?

Admiral MULLEN. I'm not sure I'd say 20.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

Admiral MULLEN. But we're moving toward the red zone.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay, good. That's good. There we go. I got something I can understand here.

The combined Afghan security forces and all coalition forces at this moment are not enough to reverse the lost momentum, is that correct?

Admiral MULLEN. From what General McChrystal says and what I said earlier about a fully resourced counterinsurgency, we are extremely concerned about the momentum that the Afghans have.

Senator GRAHAM. How many—okay. Well, the answer then would be that, no, the combined coalition forces and Afghan security forces are not enough to change the momentum?

Admiral MULLEN. They have not so far.

Senator GRAHAM. So there's two paths we can take. We can wait and get more Afghans or we can send more coalition forces and do the training.

Admiral MULLEN. Right.

Senator GRAHAM. Now, let's flesh that out a bit. How many tanks do the Taliban have?

Admiral MULLEN. I'm not aware they have any.

Senator GRAHAM. How many airplanes?

Admiral MULLEN. None.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, how are they doing this?

Admiral MULLEN. They've watched us. They're very good at it. It's their country. They know how to fight. They choose when to stay and when to go. They're not a—but they are—

Senator GRAHAM. Do they have popular support?

Admiral MULLEN. More than anything else, they're intimidating the Afghan people. And no, they're not held in high regard at all by the Afghan people.

Senator GRAHAM. So they're not held in high regard, they don't have an air force, they don't have any armor, but they're winning. So that makes me conclude something has gone awry in Afghanistan, and the biggest threat in my opinion is not the Taliban, it's the governance. The only reason they possibly could have come back is because there's been a vacuum created. Is that fair to say?

Admiral MULLEN. I would agree with that.

Senator GRAHAM. And that vacuum is a combination of poor governance and a lack of troop presence. Would you agree?

Admiral MULLEN. It is clearly the lack of legitimacy in the government at every level. The people don't get services from their government.

Senator GRAHAM. Let's find some common ground there. We could send a million troops and that will not restore legitimacy to the government; do you agree with that?

Admiral MULLEN. That is a fact.

Senator GRAHAM. Now, as to civilians, I just got back from a visit and I appreciate all of our civilians who are over there from different agencies. They're very brave. But quite honestly, they can't go anywhere. You could send 10,000 lawyers from the State Department to deal with the rule of law programs, but they're sitting on the base because if they leave the base they're going to get shot. Do you agree with that?

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. The only way they get off the base is they have a military convoy; is that right?

Admiral MULLEN. Right.

Senator GRAHAM. The same people who are driving them to meet the tribal leaders are also basically the same people training the Afghan army and the police forces; is that right?

Admiral MULLEN. Yes.

Senator GRAHAM. They're the same people fighting at night when they get attacked. So I just want our colleagues to know that the security environment in Afghanistan from my point of view will prevent any civilian success until we change the security environment.

How long would it take to train enough Afghan troops to change the momentum in your view, if you just did it with Afghan forces?

Admiral MULLEN. I think it'll take 2 to 3 years.

Senator GRAHAM. What will happen in that 2 or 3-year period, do you think, in terms of the security environment while we're training?

Admiral MULLEN. If we're just training?

Senator GRAHAM. Yes.

Admiral MULLEN. I think the security environment will continue to deteriorate.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, it seems to me that we've got one more shot at this; is that right, Admiral Mullen?

Admiral MULLEN. Well, we're looking at a big shot right now.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you understand you've got one more shot back home? Do you understand that?

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. About 55 percent of the American people in polls said that they did not support us staying in Afghanistan. What would you tell them as to why we should?

Admiral MULLEN. I'd say it is the epicenter of terrorism right now. It's very clear that in fact Al Qaeda has diminished while it's living in Pakistan, and this is a Pakistan-Afghanistan issue. They are by no means dead. It's a very serious threat, and that if we allow the Taliban to take control and run Afghanistan again I think the likelihood that they would return to that safe haven would be high. I'm very concerned about the deterioration, not just in Afghanistan, but also in Pakistan.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you believe we have the right strategy with the appropriate resources to win?

Admiral MULLEN. I believe we have the right strategy. The resource request will come in. What I've said, what I said earlier and will recommend in the future is this is how you properly resource this strategy.

Senator GRAHAM. But the point I'm trying to make to the American people, you're our top military commander.

Admiral MULLEN. Right.

Senator GRAHAM. You're our leader. You're telling us that we've got a strategy you believe in. If we get it resourced the way that General McChrystal needs, you think we can win?

Admiral MULLEN. We can succeed, yes, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. Do our troops believe that?

Admiral MULLEN. Yes.

Senator GRAHAM. Now, the rules of engagement. I've been informed by some colleagues over there that if an insurgent is captured, under the ISAF rules of engagement, the NATO rules of en-

gagement, they can be detained for 96 hours and then they have to be released?

Admiral MULLEN. Correct.

Senator GRAHAM. And we're limited to tactical interrogation during that 96 hours.

Admiral MULLEN. Correct.

Senator GRAHAM. That basically is how you do it?

Admiral MULLEN. Correct.

Senator GRAHAM. Not much more.

Has this resulted in a catch-and-release dynamic?

Admiral MULLEN. There is concern about that, although since you came back I've discussed this with the leadership. There is an option to certainly, both inside ISAF—there is an option to stay longer. I'm much more—we get much more intelligence—and you could argue this both ways—much more intelligence from our special forces as a result of—

Senator GRAHAM. Who are not under these rules?

Admiral MULLEN. That's correct.

Senator GRAHAM. They're not under this rule.

Admiral MULLEN. And yet they—

Senator GRAHAM. And they shouldn't be under this rule, should they?

Admiral MULLEN. However, there is—and this is General McChrystal. There is a strategic vulnerability by longer term detention in terms of being able to identify who's been captured and who isn't with the Afghan people.

Senator GRAHAM. And I agree with that.

Mr. Chairman, I just want to wrap this up for the benefit of the committee.

In Iraq we had 20,000-something Iraqis in Camp Bucca and Camp Cropper, is that right?

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir. Actually, we're going to close Camp Bucca here momentarily.

Senator GRAHAM. I would argue we put too many in jail, but it did help clear the battle space in Anbar to have some breathing room to get some of these folks out of Anbar so we could kind of do our job.

The balance that we're trying to achieve is not to put everybody in Afghan in jail because that's counterproductive, but to make sure that the really bad ones don't come back after 96 hours.

So I look forward to working with you and General McChrystal, and I think you're doing a heck of a job, and there's no easy way forward, but there's two outcomes. You either win or you lose, and I think everybody wants to win. We can have differences on how to get there, but I believe we can win and we must.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Graham.

Senator McCaskill.

Senator MCCASKILL. Admiral, I am going to go back to a familiar subject for me, which is contracting. I know we're in LOGCAP–4 and that it was competed and that we have a number of companies working on it. Let me start with this. Can you today or for me at a later date tell me exactly how large is the contracting oversight on LOGCAP–4?

Admiral MULLEN. I'd have to get back to you with the details.
[The information referred to follows:]
[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Senator MCCASKILL. How about, who is the number one military commander responsible for oversight of LOGCAP–4? Who would be at the top of the org chart?

Admiral MULLEN. Well, really in Afghanistan it would be General McChrystal. In who is the senior officer specifically assigned that responsibility, I don't know.

Senator MCCASKILL. I think if possible, if we could get the information as to in theater who's the command staff on contract oversight on LOGCAP–4 and in civilian who is.

Admiral MULLEN. Sure.
[The information referred to follows:]
[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Senator MCCASKILL. And what interaction are they having with this new Contracting Command?

Admiral MULLEN. I can only say, as a result obviously of some very difficult lessons from Iraq, we're applying them directly in Afghanistan. There is a great deal more both focus on this and numbers of people who are assigned to make sure these contracts are not just let fairly, but executed as we want them to be.

The details of exactly who's doing that and how much we have and what the proportion is, I'd have to get back to you.

Senator MCCASKILL. Also, to the extent that you can today or for the record reassure us that you are being more aggressive perhaps than State has been in terms of the oversight of security personnel at your base camps. Clearly we had, after a lot of discussion about security contracts at the embassy in Kabul, an entire hearing on it in June in the subcommittee that I work on on contracting oversight. We had those pictures that—frankly, not only is it a matter of embarrassment for us in terms of the security of our embassy, but as you well know those pictures circulate quickly among our enemies, and it contributes to an image of America that doesn't help us in terms of fighting this war.

Admiral MULLEN. Certainly it's a priority for us in the Department of Defense to make sure that never happens. But I will also tell you, when I see an incident like that I start looking in my own house just to make sure I'm okay. So we're doing that right now to make sure that that possibility doesn't exist.

We have a great deal more focus on it. We are—we look at the contractors who are there very frequently to make sure they're the right ones. It is a large number. In Afghanistan it's some 71,000 right now. We don't want it to grow any further, any more than it needs to. Yet we are in many ways dependent on them.

So I will be happy to get back to you with more details on our review as a result of what happened with the State Department contractors, which has just been part of a prudent response as far as I'm concerned.

Senator MCCASKILL. As you well know, we have the highest percentage of contractors in a conflict in the history of our Nation right now. Never before have we been at this level. The interesting

thing is looking at the difference between Iraq and Afghanistan in terms of the makeup of that contracting force. I would like you to try to put your finger on the difference, in that in Iraq the vast majority of people that were hired by our contractors were third party nationals. In Afghanistan it's Afghanis.

In fact, in March—and I don't know what that number is right now. But in March the number of Afghani contractors was equal to the number of our troops. It was about a 52,000 to a 52,000. The vast majority of the contracting force in Afghanistan are Afghanis.

Can you explain to me what the difference is there and why is it that Fluor and the contractors—and I think Fluor is the one that's gotten most of the contracting so far on LOGCAP–4. What is the difference there? Why are we using so many Afghanis? Is this our substitute for Sons of Iraq?

Admiral MULLEN. This is a very clear strategic shift to focus on and guide—and the number I saw at the end of June was 52 million out of 71—I'm sorry, 52,000 out of 71,000. So it's about two-thirds are locals. Quite frankly, the strategic guidance there is invest in this country and invest in the people, and in that regard it does have the same kind of impact that Sons of Iraq does.

Senator MCCASKILL. Are you asking that the contractors hire Afghanis?

Admiral MULLEN. I think the guidance is to do that where they have the capability. I couldn't tell you what the contract says in terms of their requirements. But clearly the results are exactly that.

Senator MCCASKILL. Well, we may take a more extensive look at this down the line in another location, but I would be very interested in knowing how this came about. If indeed this is part of the strategy, I think it's something that we need to be aware of as to how it's working, because clearly—if we're fighting Taliban, the thing that worries me about this, they're good, they're smart. I just want to make sure we're having enough clearance here.

Admiral MULLEN. Sure.

Senator MCCASKILL. I mean, these people are coming into our bases. They're feeding, they're doing the food. They're constructing. We had bad things happen with electricity and showers in Iraq. I'm glad that we are using Afghanis, but it does concern me on the security end that we're taking the steps necessary to make sure that we inadvertently are not inviting some of the enemy up close and personal.

Admiral MULLEN. I've heard—I certainly understand your concern and I've heard of no examples of that. I've actually discussed this when I've been in Afghanistan with the leadership there, the military leadership, about how we assign or how we determine this. The feedback I got was again it's going to be Afghani first if they have the skills to do this, and that's where the contractors are headed.

Certainly those who are in charge are aware of what the possible threat could be. I know there is a very—I know there is a vetting process that they certainly go through to hire, and I just don't—I'm not any more versed in that right now.

Senator MCCASKILL. I'd like to be more comfortable about that vetting process. I'm a little cynical because I saw the kind of lack of oversight that occurred in Iraq. I trust that you're trying.

No one has talked about the recent allegations about the Pakistani army and what's going on in the Swat region as it relates to extrajudicial killings. My time is up, so I will leave that question to the next round or perhaps another member. But I'm interested in your take on that.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator McCaskill.

Senator Collins.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you.

Admiral MULLEN. Hi, Senator Collins.

Senator COLLINS. How are you?

Admiral MULLEN. Good.

Senator COLLINS. Good.

Let me begin by thanking you for your extraordinary service. We are so fortunate to have you at the helm. I just want to echo the praise of my colleagues and tell you that I look forward to voting to reconfirm you in the important position that you hold.

Admiral MULLEN. Thank you, ma'am.

Senator COLLINS. Counterinsurgency strategy requires a unity of the military and the civilian effort. We have heard and will continue to hear a great deal of discussion over the critical issue of whether or not we should send more combat troops to Afghanistan. But there has been relatively little discussion of the civilian side of the counterinsurgency effort, and that really concerns me.

When I visited Camp Leatherneck last month with my colleagues, I had lunch with a group of marines that had ties to my home State and they told me that they cleared the Taliban at great cost, incurring casualties, going village by village, and it was hard work, but they were successful, and they were proud of their success. But they told me that their frustration is after they cleared the Taliban out that there's no follow-up, that the civilian capacity does not come in to build the institutions that everyone agrees are essential to providing an alternative to the Taliban.

That has led me to conclude that we're not focusing enough on the civilian side. I left Afghanistan uncertain about the road ahead in terms of more combat troops, but I am certain that we need a surge in the Afghan army and I am certain that we need a civilian surge.

When I was in Helmand Province I learned that we had thousands of marines, like 10,000 marines; we only had like 800 Afghan troops, which infuriated me, and we only had dozens of American civilians. Perhaps there were more NATO civilians.

What should we be doing to surge the civilian side? Do you believe that we need to place more emphasis on a civilian surge?

Admiral MULLEN. There's been a great deal of emphasis placed by all of us, but in particular Secretary Clinton and Ambassador Holbrooke, Deputy Secretary Lu, etcetera. So there is a great deal of focus on this. As I look at the numbers, it is a matter of the machine just can't turn them out very quickly. I share your concern,

although I was with those same marines a month before and I was actually taken back by the civilians who rolled into those villages literally the next day. So it's very spotty. Some places we can do it and some places we can't.

But we have to have that. What ends up happening is if the civilians aren't there, we do it. In those same villages, I'm guessing the marines are now doing that until they're relieved. That's just not going to change, and that's what we did in Iraq. We're in some version of that right now. I think a lot more focus—I think they will get there more quickly than we did in Iraq.

The President's strategy was the 27th of March. General McChrystal got there the 13th of June. One of the challenges we have right now is we're just getting the pieces in place of the President's strategy. Ambassador Holbrooke has worked across an array of requirements to try to get the rest of the comprehensive piece of this strategy going, but it's just starting to get laid in.

I think it's not going to have—we won't know where we are with that, quite frankly, probably until the spring time, sort of that first burst.

Senator COLLINS. But it's complicated also by the rampant corruption in Afghanistan. If we're going to have an effort after the marines have cleared a village to prevent the Taliban from returning, which was the frustration I heard, if we're going to have that alternative to Taliban rule, isn't our task made much more difficult by the widespread corruption and the shadow over the legitimacy of the recent presidential election?

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, ma'am, there's no question. The Afghan government needs to at some point in time appear to be—to actually have some legitimacy in the eyes of its people. The core issue in that regard is the corruption piece. In many ways it's been a way of life there for some time and that's got to fundamentally change. That threat is every bit the threat that the Taliban is.

Senator COLLINS. Exactly, and we need to treat it that way.

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, ma'am.

Senator COLLINS. Finally, Admiral Mullen, I'm going to submit for the record a letter that really disturbs me, that I received from John Bernard, who is a retired marine whose son was killed in Afghanistan. His son was the marine whose picture became so controversial. I am so grateful to Secretary Gates and to you and others who tried to convince, unsuccessfully, the AP to not publish that horrible image, which will be the last image that this family has of their beloved son.

But Mr. Bernard, who, as I said, is a retired marine himself, wrote me just a few weeks before his son was killed in Afghanistan. He expressed serious concerns about the rules of engagement. He told me that he felt it put his son and others needlessly at greater risk and that in our commendable and very American attempt to prevent civilian casualties, that we were placing our troops at far greater risk.

I'm going to send you the letter so that you can read it. I promised Mr. Bernard at his son's funeral that I would do so. I hope that you and General McChrystal will look seriously at the concerns he raises about the rules of engagement. I can't tell you how tragic this was, to have received this letter and then what this fa-

ther feared most indeed happened just a few weeks later. So I would very much appreciate your reading his letter.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Admiral MULLEN. If I may, ma'am, I thought what AP did on that was unconscionable, unconscionable, to that family.

Senator COLLINS. I agree.

Admiral MULLEN. The issue of rules of engagement is one obviously we all take extraordinarily seriously. The directive—we were in my view putting ourselves in a very bad strategic position in terms of being able to succeed with the number of civilians that we were killing. I don't think we really understood that. I think it took too many incidents for us to get that right.

General McChrystal knows that. We also believe that getting this right in the long run will actually result in fewer casualties. That doesn't mean that risk isn't up higher now, given the challenges that we have and the direction that McChrystal has laid out. So I understand.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Collins.

Senator Begich.

Senator BEGICH. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you very much for being here. I know it's a confirmation hearing, so let me just make this quick comment on that. I think you have done a very good job. I'm looking forward to your next 2 years. I'm looking forward to supporting you. Now that's off the table, now we move on to the other issues.

I actually want to—Senator Collins brought up an interesting point. I had an interesting call last night from my father-in-law, who's a retired colonel who served in Vietnam, an Army colonel, and actually had the exact same concern. So as you receive that letter and if you do respond in some formal way, I would like to be shared on that if I could and see how—his comment was interesting. He, 20-plus years in the military, but his concern was, you know, we're engaged or we're not. We're not halfway in. We have to make a decision on what we're going to do and how we're going to do it.

So I'd be very interested if you do a formal response and I would be interested in that.

Which leads me to a bigger issue. I have gone over to Afghanistan, I've gone over to Pakistan. It was a very eye-opening experience, to say the least. But back in earlier spring this year, General Petraeus was here and I asked a specific question. I know you said in your opening comments you can't answer ratios, but I want to put this comment on the line and then maybe your response in general.

That is, based on his own ratios of 20 counterinsurgents per 1,000 population—and Iraq it was much higher toward the end; it was in the 24, 25 range, give or take, per 1,000. If you use that ratio, based on the populations from our own data that we have on the population, even with our surge that we have now, with the goal of Afghan troops and police and all the other security per-

sonnel, we're going to be short under that ratio 350,000 if we use that ratio.

That was General Petraeus' ratio. The concern I have is, Iraq is a different environment geographically and otherwise. Afghanistan is much different, harder, as you have well defined. So how do we get there? That is a huge number.

Then the second part of that question is, what are our allies going to do? What is their role going to be? Because what I keep hearing and seeing is a diminishment of their role and responsibility, which concerns me, especially from Alaska we've lost 12 more troops in the last 90 days and dozens of casualties. So I'd be interested in first those two questions.

Admiral MULLEN. Let me take the allies first and I'll come back to the ratio if that's okay.

Senator COLLINS. Yes.

Admiral MULLEN. Actually, the allies over the last year and a half or so have actually increased their numbers fairly substantially. Now, compared to the numbers that we have—and I just think I'm enough of a realist to believe that it's not going to increase. We're not going to get tens of thousands of more troops, should we have a request for them, from our allies.

But they have some quality capability. They actually put, several of the countries, NATO countries, put more forces in to support security for the elections. There are 41 countries that have military or civilian capability in Afghanistan supporting this mission.

Senator BEGICH. Can I interrupt you for just a second. Have they increased significantly the combat front-line folks? That's my point.

Admiral MULLEN. No, but they have actually put some. The forces, the security forces for the elections, were all combat forces.

Then there's the question of are they going to—will they leave them there after the elections. I don't know the answer to that. But they've actually over the last couple of years put in a significant additional number from their perspective. I think that's important.

As this resource request comes in, I think NATO is going to have to also deal with it as well and look at what they can do. So the training piece, which they do pretty well, both police and army, may be an area that they can add additional capability; the civilian piece as well.

So we would look to that. So they've gotten better. From my point of view, they're more committed. But we're never going to see an extraordinary addition of resources from our allies.

Second on the ratio piece, the 20 to 1,000. I hope that's 50 to one. I used to be able to do that kind of math. But basically, the number that we focus on is about 5O to one. First of all, it's a guideline. If you do the math, clearly with the forces we have there right now we're not close to that.

You can also—and I think General McChrystal would sit here and tell you, his biggest concern is east and south. That doesn't mean we don't have challenges in the north and the northwest. So we need to be careful with this. We use it as a guideline, not as the absolute answer that, hey, if you're not at 50 to one you don't have a chance. We just don't believe that.

But clearly we need to keep that in mind as we move forward and look at where the threat is and see what the ratios are there roughly, which we do.

So as we look at his request that will come in and ask for resources to support his view of where he stands, certainly we'll have that in mind. But we're not there in the classic sense right now. We're not there, we're not close.

Senator BEGICH. But I would say we're not there even in those high-intensity areas.

Admiral MULLEN. Correct.

Senator BEGICH. So that's my concern.

Let me follow up on a couple other things. The way I see this, I'm anxious to hear General McChrystal recommendations, but this is a two-part. It's civilian, it's military. It's a combination. Will his recommendations to you look at the whole spectrum or just the combat component, with a little bit of notation in regards to the civilian component because so much of the State Department participates in that? How will that approach come to you?

Admiral MULLEN. I think you describe it—the second way, how you describe it. He will address the military side. In our review, certainly at the Pentagon as well as through the administration, we're very specifically looking at the broader requirement as well.

Senator BEGICH. So you'll look at the bigger picture.

Admiral MULLEN. The State Department is. But certainly the administration, the White House, is looking at the integrated view of all the requirements.

Senator BEGICH. Last because my time is up, when—I know you said in short order. How do you define that? The time that he'll give those recommendations?

Admiral MULLEN. I said that so I wouldn't have to define it.

Senator BEGICH. I know. That's why I'm asking. I noticed. I noted that question was not specifically answered by each person. 2 weeks?

Admiral MULLEN. His submission, I think in the next couple of weeks.

Senator BEGICH. The next couple of weeks to you. Then from there, you and the President——

Admiral MULLEN. We'll go through the same process, Secretary Gates and I. And this is a process we've used over the last several years, where I will then review it with the chiefs, and we'll review it with Petraeus. Petraeus will endorse it, first of all, with his views, bring it in to the chiefs. We will essentially look at it, and we'll then take it to Secretary Gates, and then he'll make a decision and we'll move it across, move it across the river at that time.

Senator BEGICH. Very good.

Thank you very much. My time is up.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Begich.

Senator Chambliss.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral Mullen, I too want to thank you for your commitment and your service to our country, and also the service of your family and the commitment of your family. This is difficult times that we're in. You're gone from home a lot, and without the strong sup-

port of your family we wouldn't have the commitment from you. So we thank both of you there.

I want to get to Afghanistan, but first I want to ask a couple of questions about Iraq. We obviously just celebrated the eighth anniversary of September 11. We're getting close to the eighth anniversary year of going into Iraq. These are difficult times still in Iraq. It's pretty obvious that that is the case, even though we're downsizing.

First of all, is downsizing on track? Do you see any potential changes in the schedule of reduction in forces?

Admiral MULLEN. No, sir, I think we are basically on track. We're very focused on the elections in January to provide security and really—I'm sorry—support for the Iraqi security forces, between now and then. We have had levels—we have had violent incidents. All violence is not gone. Al Qaeda is not gone.

So one of the things that I do worry about is making sure that I spend enough of my time that we don't lose focus there, because we have come so far, although I think most of the effort between now and the end of '11 is really political.

Senator CHAMBLISS. We have been training security police and military personnel in Iraq basically since we got there. I remember visiting with General Petraeus early on in that conflict, where he was in charge of that training. We're now seeing that spike in violence that you talked about with the downsizing of American troops.

Were the Iraqi military police and—excuse me—the Iraqi military as well as security police ready to assume the challenge that was given to them when we pulled out of the major areas?

Admiral MULLEN. By and large, yes, sir. The attacks of a couple weeks ago in Baghdad certainly got everybody's attention. To his credit, I think Prime Minister Maliki reacted very strongly. So did the security forces. They saw that as a wakeup call. They've adjusted very quickly, and what I get when I talk to General Odierno specifically and General Petraeus about that, they're very satisfied with the adjustment.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Moving to Afghanistan, in that same vein, you indicated that it'll be another 2 to 3 years before you think that the Afghan security police and their military are capable of providing any kind of meaningful defense. How do you see the difference from the training in Iraq and the training in Afghanistan?

Admiral MULLEN. I think it's basically focused in a way that we know what we need—we know what they need to learn. It is a huge challenge because of the literacy rate with the Afghan soldiers and police. It's at the single digit level, sort of 9 or 10 percent.

Yet we've got a program with the army, where we put that in place to increase their literacy level. We haven't done that with the police. We're just starting to do that with the police right now. So we know that that's going to be a requirement. I have much more confidence in our ability to train and get the army to the level that they need to get and execute operations, which they're doing right now even at the 90,000 that exists right now. I'm much more concerned about the police, as I was in Iraq at about the same point in time, where we never thought we'd make it with the police there as well, from the ministry to out in the field. In about 2007, which

was a couple years after General Petraeus had started that work, it finally started to turn.

So that's why I say 2 to 3 years. But I don't think from a training standpoint we're done. If I were to look at Iraq, that was 2004. You are talking about it's now 2009. So there will be a longer term requirement. Yet these forces that we're generating, the army and the police, they're in the fight pretty quickly. So we don't have to wait until then. It's just that I think it's going to be about that length of time before they'll really be able to take a grip.

I worry about as violence increases there—our lesson in Iraq was the police and the security forces got worse, I mean, just because it was really violent. My expectation is we're probably going to have to go through some of that in Afghanistan as well.

Senator CHAMBLISS. You preempted my next question relative to the literacy rate. As you and I discussed in my office a couple weeks ago, what I understood the literacy rate to be was about 30 percent, and both you and General Petraeus have kind of deflated me there. That was bad enough, but you just indicated about a 9 to 10 percent in the military.

Admiral MULLEN. Well, that's what I understand it to be. I think that is probably close.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Whatever it is, it's very, very low, which means that at some point in time when we think we have achieved military success, we've still got to look at the other side. When we leave, there's got to be some kind of economic foundation left there for the Afghan people to be able to survive. With a literacy rate of somewhere of, let's assume it's in teens or assume it's 20 percent, that means 80 percent of the people in that country can't read and write.

What do we do? How do we leave that country in a state nonmilitarily that they can survive?

Admiral MULLEN. I think first of all they've got to have security. That's the necessary condition. They've got to have enough good governance to be able to survive. That includes things like rule of law and institutions that provide things for them that just aren't there now, goods and services. But it also has to have some level of economic underpinning. I don't underestimate the challenge there as well. It's one of the five or ten poorest countries in the world.

So there's got to be some economic improvement. Not unlike Iraq in a sense or just about any insurgency or counterinsurgency, it's a three-legged stool. You've got to be able to do security. You've got to be able to do development, create jobs, as well as a level of governance.

Senator CHAMBLISS. My time is up, but we talked with General McChrystal last time he was here about the National Guards from various parts of the country going into agricultural areas and providing, rather than military security cover, agricultural training services. Is that program still being successful?

Admiral MULLEN. It is. I can't remember how many brigades now or how many States, but it's like six or seven States that continue to do this, to provide agricultural expertise out of the Guard. It's had a big impact and we're going to continue that.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you very much, Admiral.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Chambliss.

Senator Akaka.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Aloha, Admiral Mullen.

Admiral MULLEN. Aloha, Senator.

Senator AKAKA. I would want to thank you very much for your outstanding and dedicated service to our Nation over these years. You have shown outstanding leadership as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. I also want to congratulate you on your nomination to continue to serve in this position.

Admiral MULLEN. Thank you.

Senator AKAKA. And also I want to add a welcome to your lovely wife Deborah to the hearing.

Admiral MULLEN. Thank you, Senator.

Senator AKAKA. Admiral, I'm interested in the Afghanistan momentum. We have been fighting in Afghanistan now for about 8 years. We are facing a more sophisticated and resilient insurgency than any time since 2001. My question to you is what could be the long-term effects if we fail to quickly regain the initiative and reverse the momentum in Afghanistan?

Admiral MULLEN. I worry a great deal about essentially it becoming a failed state and a safe haven and, while not immediately, maybe the midterm effects that that has on Pakistan. The President's strategy—and I strongly agree with this—it's a regional strategy. It involves both those countries. Even though they're both sovereign countries, they have links that go back throughout the ages.

There are other countries in the region that I think need to be paying a lot of attention to this as well, India being a specific one. It's very difficult to predict here. It is—actually, I think what has happened in Afghanistan, as difficult as it is, has contributed to the diminishment of Al Qaeda even in Pakistan. So it is the combination of efforts in both countries I think that is so important to get at what is the core goal of the President's strategy, which is Al Qaeda.

I worry—I don't know for sure, but I worry a great deal that if the Taliban retake Afghanistan that in fact clearly the option is there to recreate that safe haven where they were pretty comfortable. The long-term effects of that I think could be pretty disastrous for us and our National interests, assuming Al Qaeda is somehow able to both plan and execute attacks, which they are planning to do today.

Senator AKAKA. As you mentioned, Pakistan begins to play into our strategy. The administration's goal in Afghanistan and Pakistan is—and let me quote—"disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan and to prevent their return to either country in the future." Admiral, assuming we are able to defeat Al Qaeda, how would you propose that we accomplish the last part of the goal of preventing their return to Afghanistan or Pakistan?

Admiral MULLEN. I think if the country of Afghanistan has a strong enough government and a strong enough security force, they can prevent them from coming back. That doesn't include—at least

clearly it doesn't include the Taliban under their current leadership.

I also—and the "defeat Al Qaeda" piece, and it does focus on Al Qaeda, but these terrorists and extremists, particularly in recent years, have become much more linked. So yes, it's Al Qaeda, but it's also the Taliban. It's also LET, it's also TTP, it's JUD, it's JEM. And all of them have the same kind of outlook. Now, each one of them does not threaten us directly as a country, but the totality of this epicenter there in terms of the terrorists who are there is one that I am extremely concerned about, led by Al Qaeda.

Senator AKAKA. Admiral, our military continues to shoulder a huge burden in the Middle East and South Central Asia. It seems the number of deployed forces in Afghanistan will remain high and there are reports that there might be a request for additional troops. That concerns me about military readiness.

If we continue our current pace of operations, how would you assess our readiness to counter future threats abroad?

Admiral MULLEN. At the current levels, which includes the plan to draw down in Iraq, we actually will start to increase dwell time, which is nominally for the ground forces, particularly the Army, one to one. Actually, the Marine Corps, because we've built three additional battalions, they're coming out of Iraq now, the Marine Corps deployment level ratio—I'm sorry—dwell time is out to about 1 to 1.5 for its main units. There are some units whose ratio is 1 to 1.

So we'll be able to increase that dwell time, and that will happen over the period of about 2 or 3 years with the Army as well. General Casey says about 2011 or 2012, assuming our levels don't go above—assuming we come out of Iraq and our levels in Afghanistan don't go too high, that he also would be able to increase that dwell. That buys us some recuperation time, which we need for our troops and our families, for our gear as well. But it also allows us to start training for other missions.

So we've clearly accepted additional risk globally focusing on Iraq and Afghanistan. That is how we would move forward here.

I would be first and foremost concerned about just the recuperation time for our troops and families, while at the same time getting ready for those additional possibilities.

Senator AKAKA. Admiral, I applaud your continued efforts to be a strong advocate for our wounded warriors. During a recent speech you stated: "Time is of the essence when it comes to finding better treatments for traumatic brain injuries." Admiral, what more can be done to better treat traumatic brain injuries?

Admiral MULLEN. I spend a fair amount of time with my wife Deborah visiting what I would call centers of excellence, certainly in the VA world. I was recently up in Boston and I was struck at the advancements that are being made there by the Boston VA and their relationships in the community with Harvard and Boston U and other institutions, educational and research institutions, which are contributing. I know Secretary Shinseki has this as a priority as well.

I think that we, that the Department of Defense and the VA, must work as hard as we can together to surface and then fund these things. Some of what I saw there, there were studies that

were going on for 3 or 4 years that actually had some good information. So what are we doing with them? We've got to know what's going on and then execute, and basically take it and do something with it. I just believe we're in the beginning stages of this, 8 years into war notwithstanding, that we're really just starting to get to a focus across the full spectrum that addresses these kinds of issues.

So I use the VA hospital as an example. I think we need to do this throughout the country.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Admiral.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Akaka.

Senator Thune.

Senator THUNE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral, thank you for your great service to our country. I do want to add my support for your reconfirmation. Thank you, your wife and family for their service as well. There are some tough things that we're involved with. Of course, you're in the middle of it all. I know much of the focus today has been on Afghanistan, as it rightly should be. I have one question with regard to that, but I'd like to ask a couple of other questions if I might quickly too.

I, like everybody else, want to, in this country, want to see us succeed in Afghanistan and be able to put together a strategy that would allow that to happen. To me, that I think means preventing terrorism organizations from being able to create safe havens in that country and also making sure that we've got a well-trained Afghan army and police force that can maintain security and take over more of the fight.

That's why I'm a little bit concerned about, last Tuesday NBC News aired a story from a reporter that was embedded with a U.S. Army unit on patrol in Afghanistan and one particular aspect of that report caught my attention. There was a report that highlighted how the U.S. forces are not allowed to search private dwellings due to cultural sensitivities. So Afghan soldiers search Afghan residences. Yet the report also noted that the Afghan army soldiers are reluctant to support the coalition in the more dangerous aspects of the mission. It went on to say that, while the U.S. soldiers searched a wooded area, this NBC report stated: "It's so risky, bombs easily hidden in this brush, Afghan soldiers refused to go in." That's what I found troubling about that report.

I guess my question is is this report an isolated case or does the Afghanistan National Army often refuse to perform dangerous missions?

Admiral MULLEN. I'm not aware that they do, and their reputation is such that they're good fighters, and that our relationship with them is very strong. You're speaking to the directive or direction that actually I think General McKiernan put out before General McChrystal got there, and I know McChrystal concurs with this, is we just were doing ourselves a lot of damage by entering those homes ourselves and strategically we were really hurting ourselves.

But I am not aware of a rampant kind of incidents that you just described where the Afghan army isn't in the fight. In fact, and it's not an army story, but it's a police story, I think in the last couple of months the Afghan police have had upwards of 150 plus of their

officers killed. They have also sacrificed greatly. All the problems that we do have with the police, and they are plenty, we've had an extraordinary number of sacrifices there as well.

But I certainly haven't gotten that kind of feedback. I can check and see if it's different.

Senator THUNE. It was a news report, but I guess it gets to the broader question of as we place more and more burden on the Afghan army and the Afghan police to perform, just do we have a level of confidence that they will perform up to our expectations and as we begin to at some point hopefully hand off, that they continue to provide security.

Admiral MULLEN. All the feedback I've gotten is yes. That doesn't mean we don't have challenges. I hope the report is only isolated, but I think the report speaks to the complexity of the challenge of both training and executing and getting them into the fight. It is an enormously complex environment, mission, etcetera. But I'm just not aware of any kind of extensive incidents like that that you described.

Senator THUNE. To shift gears for just a minute, there was a September 10, 2009, article in The New York Times. The headline read that "U.S. Says Iran Could Expedite Nuclear Bomb," and that American intelligence agencies have concluded that Iran has created enough nuclear fuel to make a "rapid sprint" for a nuclear weapon.

I know that there are conflicting views about when that capability will exist and I guess I'm interested in your thoughts about how quickly Iran could develop a nuclear weapon if they decide to make a rapid sprint to that end.

Admiral MULLEN. Those time frames generally run for me 1 to 3 years. What you're talking about, what that article spoke to, was what I call a breakout capability. In other words, they develop enough of the technology and then they make a decision, the Supreme Leader makes a decision, to go. From there it takes a period of time. As you indicated and I think the article indicated, there are various views of what that takes.

But it is—everybody is sort of in that ballpark, 1 to 3 years. So it's not like it's a long way off should they decide to do that. My personal belief is that the Iranians are on a path, they want to develop nuclear weapons, and I think that would be an incredibly destabilizing outcome for a part of the world that is already pretty unstable.

Senator THUNE. You had stated in your answers to some of the advance questions that, with regard to current negotiations over the follow-on START treaty, that the proposed range of 500 to 1100 strategic delivery vehicles and a limit of 1500 to 1675 warheads would be sufficient to maintain U.S. strategic deterrence. I guess my question has to do more with the delivery vehicles, but do you really mean to suggest that the U.S. would be able to maintain the strategic deterrent, the nuclear umbrella to allies, at a level of 500 strategic delivery vehicles?

Admiral MULLEN. I'm very comfortable at 500 to 1100. It is a range. That's where the negotiations are. At some level coming down from 1100, I get pretty uncomfortable with our ability to do

that. That's really for the negotiators to figure out and obviously what our strategic deterrent will be.

What I am equally concerned about is the need for us as a country to invest in this capability, in the industry for the future, which has been underinvested in or not invested in for a significant period of time, so that we can have a deterrent force that is technically current and reliable. So it is that range. At that range on the high end, I'm very comfortable. On the low end I'm pretty uncomfortable.

Senator THUNE. Do you know, has DOD done analysis at the low end?

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir, we have.

Senator THUNE. Is that something that would be available to Congress?

Admiral MULLEN. I'm not sure. I'd have to check. I mean, pretty much anything is if you want. But I'd have to—it's been a few weeks. I'd have to go back and look at it to see. As you know, we're right—"we," our country, is right in the midst, the administration is right in the middle of negotiating to get to a follow-on, START follow- on, by the end of this year.

Senator THUNE. Right. Obviously, that has significant—requires significant force structure changes.

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir, I understand that.

Senator THUNE. Submarines, bombers, ICBMs, something would have to be eliminated. So I just wondered if the Department's carefully studied that.

Admiral MULLEN. We actually know where the break points are. Analytically, we've looked at this and so we know where tough decisions have to be made as you come down and decisions about is it a triad or is it a dyad and what would it take, if we sustained a triad even at lower levels, which could be very, very expensive. So all those things—actually, I'm very comfortable with the level of analysis that we've done with respect to that.

Senator THUNE. I'd be interested in following up with you if that's something that would be available for us to look at.

Thank you. Thank you, Admiral.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Thune.

Senator Hagan.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral Mullen, thank you so much for being here. I thank you for your work, for your service. To your wife Deborah and to your sons, I thank you so much for your family sacrifices. It means a lot, I know. And I do think that you are certainly well qualified for a second term. So thank you for doing that.

I wanted to ask you a question about Afghanistan. I think that succeeding in Afghanistan requires partnership built upon the strong relationships that we have with the Afghan government, national security forces, and above all the local populace. It's essential that our strategy in Afghanistan is centered on protecting the Afghan people from the Taliban, which we talked about, enabling the Afghan governance and reconstruction, and enabling the capacity

of the Afghan national security forces. As Secretary Gates has indicated, we must ensure that Afghanistan has the appropriate intelligence, law enforcement, and internal security capabilities to sustain the long-term opposition against the Taliban.

Our troops and resources in Afghanistan must be used to build trust with the Afghans, move to the next phase of counterinsurgency tactics, and enable the Afghan government to conduct development and reconstruction operations. Our U.S. troops have to be perceived by the Afghans not as the problem, but rather as part of the solution.

Has the Department begun discussing the resourcing effort within the special operations community to execute the President's Afghanistan strategy, specifically the theater special operations forces needed to train the Afghan National Army and Police and the strategic special operations forces needed to conduct the combat operations under the domain of the Joint Special Operations Command?

Admiral MULLEN. We think that clearly the Afghan special forces are a very capable group or part of the Afghan military and so there's great emphasis there. As we move forward I think in the strategy, McChrystal review of the President's strategy as he took leadership, took command there, the priority to focus on the Afghan people and also train and equip the Afghan forces writ large—special forces, army, as well as police—is a top priority.

We have not—because he hasn't submitted a request yet to say, given this, these are the forces that I need. But I'm confident that inside that, the totality of that request, will be embedded a request for a certain amount of special forces to get at exactly the issue that you're talking about. And that will come in great part out of JSOC, among others, and out of Tampa and the totality of our special forces, who are as pressed as any other part of our military, quite frankly, and are so exceptional in what they do.

So it will be, I believe as I look at it right now, a very important part embedded in the fullness of the counterinsurgency approach, because these forces are. So I'm confident that that request will come in. We just don't have it yet.

Senator HAGAN. Let me ask you a little bit about Pakistan. I believe that the stability of Afghanistan is dependent upon the stability of Pakistan, and I believe that the Pakistani government's beginning to recognize that the Pashtun insurgency in the FATA area is a threat to Pakistan's sovereignty. We need to enable the Pakistan army and the Frontier Corps with the capacity and capability to conduct sustainable direct action missions against the more dangerous elements of the Pakistani Taliban and Al Qaeda in Waziristan. Unlike the Swat region, Waziristan is populous, mountainous, and remote, characteristics that are not conducive for conventionally trained Pakistani army.

We also need to work with the Pakistan government and military to deny the safe havens for the Afghan Taliban's high command, currently based out of Quetta in Pakistan's Baluchistan Province.

Though General McChrystal's assessment deals with our civil affairs strategy in Afghanistan, can you provide an update on the Department's strategy along the Afghan- Pakistan border? Of particular note, it's interesting to me since it's the 82nd Airborne out

of Fort Bragg that's currently based in RC-East, and Major General Scaparotti is the regional commander in RC-East.

Admiral MULLEN. There's been a lot that has changed in the last year in Pakistan with what the Pakistani military and the Frontier Corps have achieved. I think it's important to recognize that, because a year or 2 ago there were many people who were very skeptical that they would do anything. They've had a big impact. It hasn't been perfect.

We are there to support them where they are asking for our support. That said, it's only going to go as fast as they want it to go. I've been there I think 13 times. It's very clear to me that they very much appreciate the support, but it's going to be at their pace, even though we would like—many of us would like to see it happen more quickly.

He's got a two-front threat. The Pakistani military also, they consider their principal threat, their existential threat, to be India, not these extremists. They are increasingly concerned about the extremists, which is why they've addressed it. He's started to train his forces in counterinsurgency, which a year ago or 2 years ago they didn't do much of. He's rotating them, and he's had some pretty significant positive impacts on it.

In addition to the Quetta shura, I am as concerned about the Hakkani network, which is north of there and which is sort of the centroid for feeding Afghan Taliban in and out of Afghanistan killing our people and killing Afghan citizens. So it's still an extraordinarily dangerous border. I think it will be for the foreseeable future. We've actually had success in diminishing Al Qaeda leadership and it's not as strong as it was, but it is still very lethal and still very focused on us as a country, planning to still execute attacks against us and other western interests.

So there's been progress, but we've still got a long way to go. From the overall strategy standpoint, we're still very much invested in Pakistan. We think that's an important long-term relationship. They still ask the question: Are you staying or going this time? Not unlike the question that gets asked in Afghanistan. The Senator Kerry-Senator Lugar bill is very important as far as I'm concerned, because it's not about the $1.5 billion a year as much as it is a 5-year commitment to Pakistan.

So our strategy is I think much more comprehensive with Pakistan than it used to be. That said, there are limits. It's a sovereign country and they're very much in charge of their own country.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you. I see that my time is out.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Hagan.

Senator Webb.

Senator WEBB. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral, I'd like to add my thanks to you and Deborah and your sons for all the years of service that you've given our country, and also to express my appreciation for the integrity and forthrightness that you have brought to this job. I can tell you that it is greatly appreciated on this side of the river and, having spent 5 years in the Pentagon, I know it's appreciated on the other side as well.

There's been a lot of talk about Afghanistan. I'm going to ask some questions on it. But before I do, I would like to point out that,

as you know, we're doing this Quadrennial Defense Review and it's a very important one with the new administration in. I hope that we don't lose sight on either side of the river of the larger aspects of national strategy that sometimes fall away at the expense of short and midterm ground commitments that can affect force structure in the short term, but really not play out to our National advantage in the long term.

In the interest of time, I have two questions that I would like to submit for the record on that. One of them relates to the size of our Navy. The other regards the roles and missions of the Marine Corps. I will submit that to you for the record.

With respect to the situation in Afghanistan, there's been discussion earlier about whether this is a new strategy or an ongoing strategy. The most important point I believe is whether this is a valid and achievable strategy, whether we have attainable goals that are clearly articulated our side to the other side and to the American people, and whether those goals have an understandable end point so that we know when we are done, particularly in a military sense.

What you are attempting to achieve or what the administration says that it's attempting to achieve is in some ways without historical precedent. We've had a lot of discussion today about Iraq as something of a touchstone here. But as you know and I know, for better or worse, the Iraqis have been used to in the past to a strong central government, strong national government, and they also have for a very long time had a national army. Hundreds of thousands of Shia are known to have died in the war against Iran, fighting in the National army of Iraq. It's a different situation with respect to Afghanistan.

I wonder if you would comment on the historical precedent or lack thereof for what you are attempting to do right now.

Admiral MULLEN. Well, I worry a great deal about—I think history is something we must pay attention to, recently in Iraq and the things that we've learned there, the things that are the same, the things that are different, obviously the history in Afghanistan, which has rich lessons as well, and it's a country that's never been governed centrally. I certainly understand that.

I don't argue for a strong central government in Afghanistan. I think it's important that there is governance that is available to the people at every level. So in the totality of governance that I would look at for the future, it would be from village to some level of relatively weak central government that isn't corrupt, more than anything else, in terms of establishing some semblance of governance for the future.

I hear the discussions about an occupying force. I think McChrystal said it very well not too long after he got there, that it isn't necessarily how big; it's what you do with what you have and how the Afghan people—

Senator WEBB. In the interest of time, my readings are that in the history of Afghanistan the largest national army, actually national army, was somewhere between 80 and 90,000.

Admiral MULLEN. 1979.

Senator WEBB. Your goals with respect to a national level force are at what level?

Admiral MULLEN. Right now, for the army 130,000.

Senator WEBB. National police, military combined?

Admiral MULLEN. Right now it would be about 240, 230.

Senator WEBB. So in the absence of an affiliation with a national government, what is the challenge of building a national military and police force of that size?

Admiral MULLEN. Well, I think the challenge is huge. The only thing I would say is that as a percentage of the population the goals that are out there, not just these but even the goals you may hear tied to the chairman's previous letter, are within—they're within the math as a percentage of the population.

But I think you raise a good point. I don't underestimate the challenge of recruiting a force that could do this at the National level. I am encouraged because the army is seen as the one non-corrupt institution the country has and it's held in pretty high regard by the people. They're also an excellent fighting force historically, with a great warrior mentality.

Senator WEBB. We run the risk, as I mentioned to General Petraeus and General McChrystal, of allowing our success to be defined by something that's never happened before, something that we can't totally control, which is something that concerns me.

You're familiar with this raid that took place in Somalia within the past 24 hours?

Admiral MULLEN. I've seen the press reports.

Senator WEBB. In concept, this was American special operations coming in over the horizon, presumably off of naval ships, taking out an element of Al Qaeda, and returning back to its original point of origin, which to me, if the target was an appropriate target, is an appropriate way to use military force against international terrorism. Would you agree?

Admiral MULLEN. Globally, we're very focused on this. I'd actually be happy to go through the details of that, but I'd really need to do it in a closed session.

Senator WEBB. Well, it points to a concern that a lot of people who have served and a lot of people who have written about the situation in Afghanistan share. That is that maneuverability is the most effective way to conduct operations against international terrorism, and the more territory that you have the defend or occupy the more vulnerable you are in terms of carrying out your mission.

I know the counter-argument about the populace, but it would seem to me that, from what I've been hearing or reading with respect to the level of activity of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, it seems to be very low. We have to be pretty careful in terms of how we lock our people down in defensive cantonments as we approach the issue.

Admiral MULLEN. I think you'll see McChrystal emphasize the exact maneuverability that you're talking about. I take it a huge part of that is just footprint- related. You know, the larger the footprint the less maneuverable you may be. But clearly he wants—he does not want his people in cantonments and he's made that very clear.

Senator WEBB. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Webb.

Senator Udall.

Senator UDALL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, Admiral.

Admiral MULLEN. Good morning, Senator.

Senator UDALL. It's good to see you.

Again, let me touch on three subjects and I'll do my best to use my time efficiently: on "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," on Iraq, and then turn to Afghanistan.

When you testified at your last confirmation hearing, you rightly pointed out that the law of the land was don't ask, don't tell, and it was the Pentagon's job to implement and abide by that policy. We often look to you for personnel recommendations and as we are on the verge, I believe, of holding the first hearing, perhaps this fall, in 16 years on "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," I would welcome your thoughts and would ask if you would consider putting your thoughts in writing before that hearing later this fall, so that we can have the benefit of your thoughts.

Admiral MULLEN. Sure. Yes, sir. I'd be glad to do that.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Senator UDALL. Thank you for that.

I want to commend the chairman for his willingness as well to consider moving in that way.

To Iraq: National elections in January, some talk of a concurrent referendum on the presence of our troops there. Ambassador Hill believes that it won't actually be brought to the ballot, but I would like your thoughts on what General Odierno and others are preparing if that were to be on the ballot and were to pass.

Admiral MULLEN. Well, this was a possibility last summer, spring and summer, as well, and it fell out and was moved to the right. It's obviously resurfaced. It is a great concern on the part of both Ambassador Hill and certainly General Odierno. Obviously, as part of the political spectrum that is there that I think is such a dominant part of how Iraq moves ahead, the outcome with respect to whether this actually gets voted on or not, the referendum occurs, I think is really critical.

We were on a plan and on a glide slope right now that we think makes a lot of sense, gets us through the elections. Then actually we start coming down pretty dramatically starting in the spring to that 35 to 50,000. Clearly, the Iraqi people and the Iraqi government are in charge of their country. If there's a referendum that we're going to leave, we'll leave.

The military view from a security standpoint right now, we think that's pretty high risk. The glide slope that we're on is one that we're much more comfortable with.

Senator UDALL. Thanks for that update. I think we'd be well served to continue to prepare for any of those particular scenarios.

Let me turn to Afghanistan, but in an interesting connection. I want to turn to Deborah. She may have done more for our future counterinsurgency efforts than anybody because, if my memory is right, she encouraged, strongly encouraged, you to read the book entitled "Three Cups of Tea." I know Greg Mortenson. I know you've gotten to know him. He's pointed out that cultural sensitivity is in some ways one of our greatest weapons. There's no place

like the United States for cultural sensitivity since we have every culture, every ethnic group, every racial group, every country, represented here among our population.

He noted and you noted in some remarks that western fast food culture is not well suited to that part of the world. He's speaking of Afghanistan, the Middle East. Results are measured in decades and generations, rather than minutes and seconds. It takes time to build relationships, time to learn cultures, time to foster sincerity and mutual respect.

My question to you is, do we have that time? I remember General Petraeus talking about different clocks in Washington and Baghdad as we were talking about time lines. What are the different clocks telling you about what's happening in Kabul and here in Washington?

Admiral MULLEN. Well, I'm greatly worried about the time that we have. That's why I have such a sense of urgency about getting this right. It's why I recommended, very specifically that's why I recommended, that General McChrystal be put in a leadership position out there, because I don't think we have a lot of time. At the same time, I feel we almost must take time because it's such a vital part of the world long-term from the standpoint of our strategic national interests. This is Afghanistan and Pakistan, it's Central Asia and South Central Asia.

So it's a real conundrum in that regard. I think we have to move quickly to start to turn this thing around. Then at the same time, I think we have to have a long-term relationship that allows those young girls, when I went out there to open up that school, to grow up and make a difference as they raise families and, as Mortenson, Greg Mortenson, would say, they give guidance to their sons: You are not going to go do this.

Senator UDALL. Yes, the heartening core of that effort is that the elders in those communities, in other words the men, understand the potential if you empower women in those cultures. At the same time, those are very patriarchal cultural structures.

Again, thank you, Deborah, for what you've done to help us in these important national security efforts.

My final question is the footprint debate we're having about Afghanistan. I know Secretary Gates expressed a concern about being seen as occupiers as well as partners.

He said an increased footprint becomes part of the problem, depending on whether the nature of the footprint and the behavior of those troops and their attitudes and their interactions with the Afghans promotes an occupier perspective or a partnership perspective.

What are your thoughts on this question of increased footprint and how we find that right balance?

Admiral MULLEN. Well, I think that under no circumstances can we be seen as an occupier. We know we're not. That's who we are. We've never been. We haven't done it anywhere. But that's not—that message has got to be understood by the Afghan people. I think General McChrystal, as I indicated earlier, said it very well not too long after he got there. He was much less concerned about footprint, although he has a concern, than he is about what are you doing with it. So what are you actually doing to engage the people,

to let them know you're on their side in a way that they accept that?

We were in too many cantonments. We were not integrated with them. We weren't living with them. The message was one of occupation on the part of many. There again, the Afghan people don't like the Taliban. They don't want to return to that rule. But they've still got questions about whether we're staying long-term, not just the combat side of this, but whether we're staying long-term and we're going to be with them. Before we left them and they know that.

So it's really, I think, what you're doing with the forces that are there, as opposed to the size of the footprint.

Senator UDALL. I see my time has expired. Thank you again for your service and I look forward to working with you as we continue to make the case to the American people with three or four or maybe even just two quick bullet points about why we have to be successful in Afghanistan.

Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Udall.

Again, thank you very much, Admiral, for your service, for your answers today. I think that colonel and that captain that I quoted before kind of put the issue very succinctly for me, which is that we've got to look hard at how we generate Afghan forces and that the lack of Afghan forces is our Achilles heel. That was dramatically brought to our attention when we were in Helmand Province; the ratio of forces was five to one, five marines, one Afghan soldier. Totally unacceptable.

No one's talking about removing all of our forces from Afghanistan. The question is whether we go beyond at this time and make a commitment at this time to additional combat forces, beyond what has been already put in motion. That is an issue worthy of debate. It is part of a much larger picture. As you have indicated here this morning, this is not just a picture of one part, of just combat troops additional to what's already a commitment. There are many other issues involved here in terms of the resources that may be requested.

We look forward to your review as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, taking I presume an independent review with your other chiefs of whatever recommendation is presented to you. You obviously put a great deal of stock in a McChrystal recommendation when it's forthcoming. But you will be giving your own independent view to the Secretary of Defense, and he will be giving his recommendation, I presume, to the President. Is that the way it works?

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. So we are going to stand adjourned. We're going to move as quickly as we can, obviously, with your nomination. I'm sure you're going to get a very strong unanimous vote from this committee. We've already heard everyone speak out on it. I see no reason why we can't proceed very promptly to the floor. There may be some questions for the record. If there are, we would hope they would be filed within the next 24 hours so we can get this done promptly.

We thank again your wife and family. I think each one of us have touched upon their service as well as your own, and we're grateful for all of it.

We stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:04 p.m., the committee adjourned.]