HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PROGRAMS AND POLICIES WITH RESPECT TO EMERGING COUNTERTERRORISM THREATS IN REVIEW OF THE DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2013

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING
THREATS AND CAPABILITIES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:24 p.m. in room SR–222, Russell Senate Office Building, Senator Kay R. Hagan (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Hagan, Nelson, Fischer, McCain, and Blunt.

Committee staff member present: Leah C. Brewer, nominations and hearings clerk.

Majority staff members present: Richard W. Fieldhouse, professional staff member; Michael J. Kuiken, professional staff member; William G.P. Monahan, counsel; Michael J. Noblet, professional staff member; and Robie I. Samanta Roy, professional staff member.

Minority staff members present: Adam J. Barker, professional staff member; and Thomas W. Goffus, professional staff member.

Staff assistants present: Jennifer R. Knowles, Kathleen A. Kulenkampff, John L. Principato, and Lauren M. Gillis.

Committee members' assistants present: Jeff Fatora, assistant to Senator Nelson; Christopher Cannon, assistant to Senator Hagan; Christian Brose, assistant to Senator McCain; and Peter Schirtzinger, assistant to Senator Fischer.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR KAY R. HAGAN, CHAIRMAN

Senator HAGAN. The Emerging Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee will come to order, and my first official apology. I, for some reason, had it in my head this was at 2:30 instead of 2:15. So I do apologize.

Good afternoon, everybody, and thanks. Today the subcommittee welcomes Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security

Affairs Derek Chollet—thank you for being here—Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict Mike Sheehan—thank you—and the Commander of Special Operations Command, Admiral Bill McRaven—thank you—for you to receive—for us to receive testimony on the Department of Defense programs, policies, and operations with respect to countering emerging terrorism threats, in preparation for the committee's markup of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014. We look forward to your testimony today.

Since the subcommittee held a similar hearing last year, the global landscape has continued to evolve and the demands being placed on our Nation's military continue to morph as well. assistant Secretary Chollet, the subcommittee requested your participation today because the most acute terrorism threats our Nation faces today are located in the geographic area for which you are responsible.

A few examples come to mind quickly. In Syria, the Al-Nusra Front, which is closely connected with al Qaeda in Iraq, has demonstrated remarkable strength over the past few months against the military and Mafia-like forces of President Assad and his inner circle. In Yemen, despite a number of notable counterterrorism successes by our Nation's counterterrorism professionals, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula continues to plan strikes against the United States and our interests. In Somalia, a massive investment by the international community in the African Union Peacekeeping Force, coupled with targeted training by U.S. Special Operations Forces of deploying units, has paid dividends that may put the Somali people and their nascent national government on a path to a better future.

And in North and West Africa the political instability created by the Arab Spring, as well as the multilateral military intervention in Libya, has created a security vacuum in a vast region of the world where the reach of national government does not often extend beyond the major population centers. Al Qaeda's franchise in the region, al Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb, as well as a number of other local violent extremist groups, have seized on this instability and the availability of the weapons to undermine the Governments in Mali and elsewhere.

I know the issues surrounding this region have consumed a great deal of attention for all three of our witnesses today and we look forward to hearing your views on the situation on the ground as well as the support the United States, that we are providing to regional and international efforts to combat this instability.

I also understand this situation serves as a good way to highlight some of the complex security assistance challenges that our defense professionals have sought to address in recent years. Secretary Sheehan and Admiral McRaven, I hope that you will also address these matters today.

Another issue which I know the full committee chairman and ranking member have focused on in recent years is the U.S. Support Mission to Central Africa efforts to remove the leadership of the Lord's Resistance Army from the battlefield. Given the recent coup in the Central African Republic, the subcommittee looks for-

ward to an update on this mission and the Department's plans for it in the coming months.

Admiral McRaven and Secretary Sheehan, over the past year the Department has placed an emphasis on innovative, low-cost, and small footprint approaches to achieve national security objectives. This describes one of the hallmarks of our Special Operations Forces and the demand for those forces we know remain high.

While the residual threat from al Qaeda, fiscal realities facing the Department, and the sensitivity of many of our partners to a large or visible presence of U.S. military personnel will drive continued deployments of Special Operations Forces for our counterterrorism operations and engagement activities designed to improve the capacity of foreign security forces to confront the mutual security challenges.

Upon taking command of U.S. Special Operations Command in August 2011, Admiral McRaven began developing your vision for the future of our Special Forces. One element of that vision is what you've referred to as "enhancing the global Special Operations network." I know that published reports indicate that you're seeking a series of changes to your command's authority and DOD policy, which we have discussed, that would give you more control over the deployment and utilization of Special Operations Forces. In some cases these proposals have generated speculation, and please use today's hearing as an opportunity to provide specifics on what you are hoping to achieve and what changes you believe are necessary to enhance the effectiveness of the Special Operations Forces in carrying out these assigned missions.

Secretaries Sheehan and Chollet, as the civilians with primary policy oversight the committee looks forward to hearing your thoughts on these issues.

On the issue of security assistance authorities, I hope all three of our witnesses will offer views on the authorities this subcommittee has helped provide to the Department to address the multitude of security issues our Nation confronts. These include the global security contingency fund, the targeted authorities for Yemen and the Horn of Africa, the Section 1208 authority, DOD's counternarcotics authority, and other issues that you would like to share your thoughts with us.

Recent news reports have also discussed U.S. counterterrorism operations, including those conducted using remotely piloted aircraft, or drones, and whether they preponderance of such operations should be conducted under Title 10 of DOD authorities. The public statement of several senior administration officials suggest that changes along these lines may be under consideration. So I hope you'll also provide testimony on that.

Before our witnesses provide brief opening remarks, I'll turn to Ranking Member Fischer for any opening remarks that she has to make.

Senator Fischer.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR DEB FISCHER

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Madam Chairman. Once again, this is our first official hearing. I would like to tell you what an

honor and a pleasure it is to serve as the ranking member on your subcommittee.

I join you in welcoming our witnesses today and I thank them for their many years of service. Their testimony will play an important role in informing our efforts to craft the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014.

Over the last month the full committee has heard from many of our most respected civilian and military leaders regarding the threats within their respective areas of responsibilities. What was made abundantly clear from their testimony is that this country and our partners are facing a global security environment that is as complex and daunting as any time in our history.

Terrorists and other illicit networks are increasingly interconnected and are no longer confined to geographic boundaries. As you have stated previously, Admiral McRaven, there is no such thing as a local problem. While the security environment is becoming increasingly dynamic, I worry that our strategy to confront these threats is struggling to keep pace. What I hope to gain from our hearing today is a better understanding of what threats cause our witnesses the greatest concern and whether current strategy, resourcing, and legal authorities are sufficient to meet those threats. More simply, how do we most effectively address the growing threats to this country and our interests around the world, particularly in a time of growing budgetary uncertainty?

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you, Ranking Member Fischer.

I want to recognize our witnesses. First, Secretary Sheehan, if you could give your opening statement, and then Secretary Chollet and then Admiral McRaven.

Secretary Sheehan.

STATEMENT OF HON. MICHAEL A. SHEEHAN, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS AND LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT AND INTERDEPENDENT CAPABILITIES

Mr. SHEEHAN. Thank you, Madam Chair, Senator Hagan, and thank you, Senator Fischer, as well. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today from the Department about our emerging counterterrorism threats. I've provided a longer statement for the record that will address many of the issues both of you raised in your opening comments, but I also touch upon them in my opening remarks as well.

Today I'd like to talk about the evolving threat of AQ and its affiliates, our counterterrorism efforts, and a few words about the role of Special Operations Forces in our strategy. As you mentioned, Senator Hagan, the Secretary of Defense and the President announced in our new defense strategy that we're going to develop innovative, low-cost, and small footprint approaches to achieve our security objectives. The Secretary of Defense also stated that the task of training, advising, and partnering with foreign military and security forces has moved from the periphery to become a critical skill set across our armed services. I would add that for Special Operations Forces this has always been one of our quintessential missions.

Today we shall expand upon our defense strategy and discuss how in the context of the dynamic threat posed by al Qaeda and other terrorist groups, how our CT effort is progressing. In the past year alone, we've already seen this strategy begin to take shape and have some success, particularly in Somalia and in Yemen. I'll come back to those.

But before I talk about the strategy, a few words about the threat as I see it. In the past ten years we've had enormous success against AQ, particularly in their ability to strike our homeland and other strategic interests abroad, and it's important to recognize this success and understand what has been responsible for that success.

However, AQ's core threat to our homeland continues to evolve and emanate around the world. But I will say that I still consider the main threat from al Qaeda from its two traditional strongholds, in the mountainous area between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the AFPAK region number one, and second from its other traditional stronghold in Yemen. Those remain the most traditional and to me still the most important threats for al Qaeda, direct threats for our homeland today, those two, even as al Qaeda morphs and seeks to find sanctuaries in other parts of the world, and we'll talk about those.

Right now al Qaeda has begun to take advantage of uncontrolled space in other parts of the world. Now, we mentioned Somalia and we've had some great success there. That's perhaps the third area after AFPAK and Yemen, then Somalia. Then the two most emerging areas that we all know of and that you mentioned in your opening remarks, Senator Hagan, is North Africa, West Africa, and of course Syria. In both cases, al Qaeda has taken advantage of ungoverned space and moved into both those areas to begin to establish its networks.

In North Africa they were able to join with a local Touareg rebellion, then eject that leadership of that rebellion and take over a large part of Mali, and we know the story of the French pushing them back since last January.

In Syria the Al-Nusra Front, an AQ of Iraq affiliate, another AQ affiliate, has also taken advantage of the ungoverned space in the war in Syria to establish a foothold there, and it continues to operate, primarily with its efforts against the Assad regime.

Let me take a few words to talk about our strategy against al Qaeda around the world. First I want to say a few words about direct action. Our direction—

Senator HAGAN. Secretary Sheehan, one other comment is let's make them pretty brief, because what my plan is is to be in here until 3:20.

Mr. SHEEHAN. Okay. I was planning on five minutes.

Senator HAGAN. Okay, that's fine. Then we'll go to the closed session and have another hearing.

Mr. SHEEHAN. All right.

Senator HAGAN. That's fine.

Mr. SHEEHAN. I'll go through this briefly.

We use several components of our strategy. One is the direct action or the lethal action. We've become very proficient at that in the Special Operations community, and it helps us target the key leadership and networks of al Qaeda. As you're aware, the Presi-

dent has made clear that he wants to continue to engage the Congress and assure not only that our targeting, detention, and prosecution of terrorists remain consistent with our laws and systems of checks and balances, but our efforts are even more transparent with the American people and the world.

The second component of our strategy is security force assistance. This is our building partners' capacity. You asked—I'll make a few comments about some of the instruments that Congress has provided to us particularly since September 11th of 2001 to give us tools to do that. section 1206, the train and equip, and section 1207, particularly for Yemen and East Africa, have been fundamental for us building the capacity in Yemen and in Eastern Africa, where we have had success rolling back al Qaeda's sanctuary over the past year.

A year ago if I testified from here I would have been talking about al Qaeda controlling massive swaths of territory in Yemen and massive swaths of territory in Somalia. In both cases they've been rolled back. The programs that you've provided us with those authorities were central to that.

We have a new experimental program, the GSCF, a pilot program, that is also assisting us in building capacity around the world and I can talk a little bit about later and our evaluation of that.

Section 1208, although not a building capacity program per se, is also fundamental for our ability to work with surrogates to pursue our interests in operational aspects of counterterrorism. But we're increasingly using it as well to develop partner elite units that also become very operationally important to us in North Africa and other parts of the world.

In the future I think it's extremely important, Senator Hagan, that we look to codify those authorities that have been provided to the Department of Defense, provide those multi-year authorities, make them permanent and make sure the funding streams and authorities are clear.

I want to spend a few minutes talking about denying sanctuary. When I was following al Qaeda prior to September 11, we learned then that you cannot allow al Qaeda to have sanctuary with impunity. What we try to do whenever al Qaeda has sanctuary is try to either work with the host country or, if they're not capable, increasingly now we're working with multinational forces to deny al Qaeda sanctuary.

In Yemen, where we had a capable country leadership with the new leadership of Hadi, we're working with the Yemenis to roll back al Qaeda in Yemen. In Somalia, where we didn't have a functioning government, we've worked with the African Union and a U.N. peacekeeping operation and have successfully ejected al Shabaab, the al Qaeda affiliate, out of the major cities in Somalia. In Mali right now, the French have pushed the AQM out of the major cities in north Mali, and we're working to create a UN operation to follow that so the French can focus on the high-value targets and eventually turn over that security to the host country.

That's really what we're trying to do with our strategy, is turn it back over to the host country and local forces. We can assist them, but really the responsibility for ensuring the security of their

sovereign territory is their national responsibility. That is the future and those tools that I just talked about and you mentioned, Senator Hagan, are absolutely fundamental for our ability to do that. We're looking at modifying those and coming up with some new ideas that Admiral McRaven and we have presented that we think will even better our ability to pursue those objectives.

Let me conclude by saying that after a decade of great success in pounding al Qaeda leadership, typically in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but around the world, harassing them with partners and by ourselves, we've had success against the al Qaeda organization. We need to continue to be adaptive and flexible in order to continue to have that success and make sure we have the proper authorities, the proper funding. I believe we can do that together, and I look forward to continuing the discussion of how we do that in the rest of this session.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sheehan follows:]

Senator HAGAN. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Mr. Chollet.

STATEMENT OF HON. DEREK H. CHOLLET, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

Mr. CHOLLET. Madam Chair, Ranking Member Fischer, distinguished members of the subcommittee: I appreciate the opportunity to join this hearing to speak about how today's emerging counterterrorism threats impact our defense relationships in Africa and the Middle East and what we are doing to build strong partners in these critical regions.

The dramatic events of the past 2 years throughout the Middle East and Africa offer both opportunities and challenges as we work to combat al Qaeda and associated threats. On the positive side, these developments hold great promise for people long denied freedom, dignity, and opportunity. Ultimately, we believe that democratic transitions will discredit violent extremists, provide a more enduring foundation for stability and cooperation, and better align our values and our interests.

We are also aware of the significant risks inherent in such historic change. In particular, al Qaeda and other extremist organizations are seeking to exploit the resulting uncertainty to establish new operating environments in ungoverned or poorly governed spaces. In order to mitigate these risks, the Department of Defense is strengthening our military-to-military relationships with partners, working to enable effective local capacity, and supporting international and regional responses to terrorist and extremist threats.

In all of these efforts, we are working closely with our allies in the regions as well as Europe to leverage our collective capabilities, especially as we adjust to the new realities of more austere budgets.

In the interest of time, I'll briefly comment on four countries in particular, several of which you've mentioned, Madam Chair, in your opening statement, and I'll look forward to your questions.

First in Yemen. As part of a "whole of government" approach to combatting AQAP, DOD is providing training and equipment to

Yemeni security forces to build capacity and to conduct counterterrorism operations. Also, in concert with our EU and Jordanian partners, we are providing advice to the Yemeni military as it reorganizes under a single chain of command under President Hadi. A unified professional Yemeni military will be more effective in the fight against AQAP and will contribute to greater political stability.

Second, we remain supportive of Libya's transition in the aftermath of the Benghazi attacks and seek to assist the government of Libya as it strives to secure its borders, control its various militias, and counter violent extremists. DOD is willing and able to expand cooperation with the Libyan armed forces, but we are challenged by a heightened security threat and a diminished personnel presence at our embassy in Tripoli. As the security situation improves and the Libyans are better positioned to provide funding to support their armed forces modernization, we hope that our relationship will expand.

Third, in Mali we are very concerned about the instability and the risk—instability in Mali and the risk it poses to regional stability and our interests in the region. We share, as Secretary Sheehan has pointed out, we share the French goals to shrink the AQIM safe haven, to contribute to the restoration of Malian territorial integrity, and to set the enabling conditions for elections.

Since soon after the French forces entered Mali in January, the United States has been supporting them in critical ways through intelligence-sharing, airlift, and aerial refueling, to enable their operations. While there is no consideration of putting U.S. combat forces on the ground in Mali, we continue to support Mali's neighbors through training and assistance to counter regional threats.

Finally but perhaps most troubling, we are keenly focused on events in Syria and the suffering of the Syrian people and the impact on regional stability generally. As President Obama said last mont during his visit to Israel and Jordan, we are very concerned about Syria becoming an enclave for extremism, which is why we're working with the international community to help accelerate a viable political transition and helping the Syrian opposition be more cohesive and capable.

The United States is the single largest humanitarian donor to the Syrian people and is working closely with partners like Jordan and Turkey to help deal with the significant humanitarian and security challenges they face as a result of this conflict.

Madam Chair, Senator Fischer, the situation in Syria along with that in Yemen, Mali, Libya, and elsewhere, serves as a stark reminder that, as Secretary Hagel said last week in his speech at NDU, "The world remains combustible and complex." That's why, especially in these fiscally challenging times, we will continue to rely upon the leadership of this subcommittee and the full committee and the Congress as a whole in supporting the Department and our men and women in uniform to defend our interests.

Thank you again and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Chollet follows:]

Senator HAGAN. Thank you.

Admiral McRaven.

STATEMENT OF ADM WILLIAM H. McRAVEN, USN, COMMANDER, U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Admiral McRAVEN. Madam Chairman, Ranking Member Fischer, distinguished members of the committee: I appreciate the opportunity to come before you today and talk about the magnificent work being accomplished around the globe by the men and women of the U.S. Special Operations Command. I have submitted a formal statement and ask that it be included in the record.

Madam Chairman, this is my first opportunity to address this committee since I took command in the summer of 2011. Since that time, I'm proud to say that we have continued the great work initiated by my predecessor, Admiral Eric Olson. At the same time, we have adapted to the changing strategic and fiscal environment to keep SOF relevant now and in the future.

In Afghanistan, we established a new SOF command structure which brought the various NATO and U.S. SOF elements into alignment under a two-star headquarters. This has allowed us to have a common view of the enemy and synchronize our SOF to achieve a common end state. This change has made SOF even more effective than ever before. Partnered with our Afghan SOF, we have continued to attrite the enemy leadership while at the same time building and training Afghan security forces so that they can stand on their own against this determined threat.

Globally, SOF is in approximately 78 countries around the world helping to build partner capacity so that the host nations can deal with their own security problems. I recently returned from Colombia and the Philippines, where our long-term investment with their SOF has dramatically helped change the security situation in those countries. I believe that these efforts, that is building allied SOF capacity and capability, represent the best approach to dealing with some of the world's more complex security problems.

In support of the Secretary's defense strategic guidance, SOCOM is working to strengthen these international partnerships and to build lasting networks both formally and informally so that we or our allies can create a secure environment in unstable areas and, if necessary, react to emerging crises rapidly and effectively.

In all cases, those Special Operations Forces deployed to foreign lands are working for the geographic combatant commander, with the approval of the chief of mission, and always in support of U.S. policy goals.

Finally, I have made caring for our force and their families my top priority. In the past year my command sergeant major and I have met with soldiers and their families from around the SOCOM enterprise. We have listened to their concerns and, with the support of the services, we are aggressively implementing programs and plans to help with the physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing of the force. We have a professional and moral obligation to take care of our warriors and their families and we greatly appreciate the support of your committee and other members on the Hill in our efforts to take care of these men and women.

Thank you again for your commitment to the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines and civilians of the Department of Defense, and specifically to those great warriors who make up the Special Operations Command. I look forward to taking your questions.

[The prepared statement of Admiral McRaven follows:]

Senator HAGAN. I want to thank all three witnesses for your service to our country. So I thank you very, very much.

Admiral McRaven, I'm very pleased to hear about the attention being paid to the families, especially from a physical, mental, and obviously spiritual. I think that's key to have our Special Operations Forces working like they do. Obviously, the families are very, very important.

What I'd like to do is have a round of eight-minute questions and then we can—I would like to go to the closed session around 3:20 if we can.

I want to ask a question to the panel on Syria. A common refrain of administration officials testifying before Congress is that our intelligence community does not know enough about the Syrian opposition to make sound decisions about which, if any, elements the United States should support. However, in recent weeks reports have emerged that there are some elements in the southern region of the country that are moderate in their views and in their intentions. So if the three of you could address: Do you agree that the United States should provide additional support to elements in Syria that share our views and interests? What is the relationship between the Al-Nusra Front, a Sunni extremist group in Syria, and the al Qaeda in Iraq, and do these groups provide support to each other? Then to what extent is there a risk that the violence in Syria will spill across the border into western Iraq and strengthen al Qaeda in Iraq? Secretary Sheehan, if you could start.

Mr. SHEEHAN. Thank you. Actually, Senator, I think I'll defer to start to assistant Secretary Chollet, who's our lead on this issue.

Senator HAGAN. Okay.

Mr. SHEEHAN. I'll take a first crack. Senator, it's an excellent question. In terms of a picture of the opposition, and we can get into some of this in more detail perhaps in the closed session in terms of the intel picture, but as you suggest in your question, it is a mosaic, the opposition. There are, depending on who you ask and on what day, there are at least tens, if not over 100, different sort of pockets of the opposition.

We are working closely with the opposition. It's an effort that our State Department colleagues have been in the lead on with the Syrian Opposition Council and the Syrian Military Committee. As Secretary Kerry announced several weeks ago, we are in the process of providing them more support. We've provided them a significant amount of support thus far, over $100 million, and we're in the process of fulfilling that commitment. It's mainly been on the political side, on the civilian side, in training civilians and helping them get better governance capacity, in helping their communications abilities.

But the decision that was announced several weeks ago was that we would provide nonlethal assistance to the armed opposition and we're in the process of implementing that commitment. That's mainly in the form of medical supplies and food assistance right now.

But every day we learn more about the opposition. I believe today or tomorrow in London Secretary Kerry will be meeting with members of the opposition at a G–8 Ministerial meeting, but on the

margins of that he'll be meeting with them. So we every day learn more, and we not only do it in our own contacts, but working with our close partners in Jordan and Turkey in particular, who have a lot of contacts with the Syrian opposition.

So I think that there are folks we can work with. We're very concerned about Al-Nusra, as you mentioned. They clearly do not wish us well, and what we have seen is that, although they have been in some cases effective on the battlefield, they are also losing the hearts and minds of many of the Syrian people as they seek to impose their rather rigid ideological views on the Syrian people. So we believe that there is an opportunity, with our support and the rest of the international community's support to the opposition that we are working with, to build up the opposition that we want to see achieve a Syria that is inclusive, that is tolerant, and that allows the Syrian people to meet their aspirations.

I'll just comment briefly on the spillover because you asked about spillover. It's something that we are keenly focused on, primarily mainly with our partners in Jordan and Turkey because of the significant refugee problems that both countries face. In Jordan there is up to 500,000 refugees. It's about 10 percent of the Jordanian population right now. So we work very closely with those countries to help alleviate their immediate refugee concerns, but also work with them as they're thinking through what steps would be necessary to ensure their stability when the situation gets worse on the ground.

Senator HAGAN. Admiral McRaven.

Admiral MCRAVEN. Ma'am, I'm not sure there's much I can add to that in this forum. I'm certainly—I'd be more than happy to talk to you in a little bit more detail in the closed session on what we're doing.

Mr. SHEEHAN. The same thing, Senator Hagan.

Senator HAGAN. I've also heard that the refugees in Jordan are up at 600,000 and they're talking about before the end of the summer perhaps going to a million, 1.2 million. I don't know what those numbers are, but they certainly seem to be aggressive, individuals moving quickly into Jordan. Obviously, looking at the size of Jordan, the complications that come with that, too.

Secretary Sheehan, I know you spoke about the situation in Mali. What I'd like to know too is what is your assessment of the French operation, and then the strength of al Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb, and whether the U.S. support to the operation will continue, the status and capability of the forces that are deploying to the region?

Mr. SHEEHAN. Yes, Madam Chair. First of all, I think the French—

Senator HAGAN. And actually, Secretary Chollet, too.

Mr. SHEEHAN. I think the French operation was absolutely excellent. They moved very quickly to the region on January 11 when the AQIM moved south of the Niger River and quickly started descending upon the capital in Bamako, which caught pretty much everybody by surprise, perhaps even AQIM itself. I don't think they expected to go that far that quickly.

The French reacted very fast. They got forces in there very quickly and very rapidly pushed AQIM back across the Niger River and

took control of the major cities, Timbuktu, Gao, and Kidal and others up north, pushing AQIM back up into the desert, up into the mountainous area bordering on Algeria, and some others may have squirted into the eastern and western countries. But mainly they're still hanging out in remote parts of Mali.

So the French were very, very successful. Now they're shifting their focus to tracking down these individuals and trying to eliminate them from the battlefield. So I think it's been a very good operation. They understand as well as we understand that much of al Qaeda's leadership has escaped. They have not been killed or captured. But they have disrupted this very threatening sanctuary that they had established between mid-summer last year and January of this year. That was something that could not stand and we're very grateful for the French taking the lead to doing that. Right now——

Senator HAGAN. Let me ask you one question on that, too. What in your view is the impact of the restrictions, statutory and policy restrictions, that prohibit the United States from engaging the armed forces of Mali?

Mr. SHEEHAN. I think right now, Madam Chair, that right now we don't need the Malian army per se. The French are working with the Malian army in the north, helping them to take on their security responsibilities, and it's a very weak army, notwithstanding all the aid that we provided them over the last five years or so. It's an organization, because of the coup and because of Captain Sanogo and his thugs that are still hanging around the margins of this army, it remains to be seen how it will evolve and develop into a professional force.

The EU has taken on the mission of retraining and reprofessionalizing them. We have policy restrictions against that, and I think the EU is starting to move in that direction and we'll see over time how well the Malian army is able to coalesce and get its act together. It remains very much to be seen.

In the short term, the next answer after the French will be a UN-authorized mission coming out of the AFISMA, the ECOWAS mission which really hasn't been really up to the task. With UN blue-hatted mission being contemplated in the Security Council now, that type of force should be able to take back those cities and allow the French to focus its force in the future on the high-value targets.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you.

I tell you, I'm going to move to Senator Fischer for her questions. Thank you.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I have a question for all three of you gentlemen. Some observers have criticized the United States because they think we are in too many places. When we're looking at defense budget cuts, with sequestration, and with the economy in the shape it's in, how do you go about answering those charges that the United States may be spread too thin? And how would you prioritize where we need to be?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Yes, ma'am, thank you. I'm not sure I think we are spread too thin. Right now, on any day of the year you will find Special Operations Forces in somewhere between 70 and 90

countries around the world. Some of these are onesies and twosies and some of them are 100 or thousands, as is the case of Afghanistan.

I think we've got to define and really decide early on what we think our U.S. policy is vis a vis building partner capacity in our relationships with other nations. We, U.S. Special Operations Command, provide a very cost-effective, small footprint, culturally sensitive, language-trained force that can work with a number of these nations to build their capacity to deal with their own problems. I think this is really the thrust, as Secretary Sheehan mentioned early on, the thrust of what we in the SOF community provide, is an ability to help other nations deal with their own problems before we have to surge additional forces in to help them, to help them out.

So I guess it depends on where our U.S. interests lie and that really—in my case, I defer to the policymakers on that.

Senator FISCHER. I guess I would ask you about those tools. Before you gentlemen comment, if I could ask you, Admiral, about the tools that the Secretary mentioned. 1206, it's, I've been told, a slow plan approval process, and so it's difficult to have implementation happen quickly. Is that an issue when trying to work with our partners and you're looking at two years down the road to get a plan implemented?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Ma'am, I won't talk specifically to 1206, but I will tell you that we have a large number of authorities. In order for us to really build a long-term plan and have a long-term engagement with any nation, invariably we have to kind of piecemeal these authorities together.

So whether it's 1206 or 1208 or the JSET authorities or the global security contingency fund, all of these as we try to look out and say, if you want to build a professional military over the next five years, how do you develop a plan to do that, well, the only way we can develop a plan right now is on a year by year basis. And there are some limitations in the authorities we have, and as you mentioned in some cases there are delays in the process that make some of that problematic.

Again, I wouldn't focus just on 1206. I think we can improve the process on all of our authorities to make us more agile in dealing with other countries.

Senator FISCHER. Do our troops have enough time to rest?

Admiral MCRAVEN. I think they do now, and certainly they will more so as we—

Senator FISCHER. What's their deployment schedule? Can you speak to that?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Yes, ma'am, I can. It depends on their military operational specialty, their MOS, as we refer to it. In some cases you have these very high demand, low density MOS's, so folks that are in kind of high demand at every location, but we don't have a whole lot of them. So in those cases you see some of those folks that are almost on back to back rotations. In a lot of cases it is they're forward for a period of time and they're back for .8. So we say one to .8, which is really unacceptable, and we work hard to try and mitigate that as best we can.

Where we're driving to is to make sure that we can get to a one to two or, better yet, a one to three rotation, so that the folks back home have time to spend with their families. It gets back to preserving the force and the families to make sure that they are resilient and that we can improve their physical health, their mental health, and their spiritual health, not necessarily religious but broader spiritual health, so that they are energized when they go back downrange.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Admiral.

Would you two gentlemen like to address the prioritization process and also how you view using these tools, whether it's 1206, '7, or '8?

Mr. SHEEHAN. Yes, Senator Fischer, I would like to talk about 1206 and some of the others. First of all, I would like to thank the Congress for its wisdom to provide these authorities post-September 11. 1206, 1207, 1208 did not exist prior to September 11. Without those authorities—they're not perfect, but without those authorities I don't think we would have had the success we've had globally going against al Qaeda networks.

1206—if I look at security assistance on a spectrum, on one end I'd put FMF, the Cold War, foreign military sales programs to provide to a country F–16s, ships, big equipment. It's the slowest. It's the most politically sensitive. It's more of a political-military relationship and big items, very slow.

On the other end in terms of speed and agility is section 1208, not a security assistance program, but a program where we work at DOD—normally those plans are written up by Special Operations staffs in the GCC's, go rapidly through the Department of Defense, through the chief of mission for approval, and through Washington much quicker. We can turn those around very, very quickly.

In between is 1206 and then 1207 or GSCF. The faster it is—when the State Department has the lead and both State and DOD have to concur and coordinate, it just takes a lot longer to do. When it's a DOD lead and the State Department only coordinates on it, it goes quicker. That's really the bottom line. It's just a matter of process. We're getting better. The State Department works——

Senator FISCHER. Does that process need to be changed then in order for it to respond more quickly to the issues that are out there?

Mr. SHEEHAN. I think it's a fair question, Senator. Part of it is the State Department and DOD committed to each other to make it work faster. However, I would opine in this committee that I believe that our legislative proposal, 171, that's one of Admiral McRaven's important proposals for a SOF network, and other changes that we've made that provide more of a DOD lead in this authority, would make things more rapid, yet preserve the State Department's role in approving at the chief of mission level and concurring at the Washington level on all of these programs.

But I think that those type of adjustments to these programs would enable us to have more rapid and effective programs to do the type of partnership-building that we've talked about on this panel.

Mr. CHOLLET. I'll just add in the brief time left that I concur completely with what Secretary Sheehan said just on the process issues. Just going back to kind of the core of your question of are we stretched too thin and how we prioritize, I think one of the reasons why the Secretary in the new defense strategy has put a premium on building partner capacity also working with others is that we can leverage the capabilities that we uniquely have and better enable those to work with us or in some cases carry the primary burden.

I think Mali is actually a pretty good example of that, where the French have stepped up in a big way to take some pretty serious action. We have supported them with refueling and with logistics and with some intel support, but they are carrying the lion's share of the burden.

Now we and them and our other European allies are working with regional players to try to beef up the African forces so that over time, under a UN helmet authorization, a UN blue helmet, they can go forward and this can be an African-led effort in Mali.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, gentlemen.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator HAGAN. Senator Nelson.

Senator NELSON. Madam Chairman, I have a number of questions, but they need to be done in a closed session because of classification.

I would in the open session just ask you about the fact that a British study found that newer converts to Islam were in much higher percentages being the ones that were being recruited as U.S. citizens into terrorist groups. Any comment on that in this session?

Mr. SHEEHAN. Senator, I've spent about the last 15 years trying to study al Qaeda and what makes an operative. There is a phenomenon I've often noticed—and some of this was picked up in this study—of the second generation type of adherent, who may be newly radicalized, may be more receptive to becoming operationalized by the organization. So the British study talks a little bit to that. We have seen that in the past, but I'm not sure I would say that this is an overwhelming trend. I think that it's a little bit too simplistic.

Having said that, when I was at NYPD working with the Metropolitan Police in London, we both tracked that phenomenon of the newly recruited either second generation British or second generation American citizen and how they were radicalized by these extremist groups. So it's an issue that domestic folks, FBI and local police, are very much aware of in terms of the radicalization process for those folks.

Senator NELSON. Is this radicalization in the United Kingdom?

Mr. SHEEHAN. In the United Kingdom and in the United States.

Senator NELSON. And the United States?

Mr. SHEEHAN. Oh, absolutely. Globally.

Senator NELSON. Did you find in the study a difference between the radicalization in the United Kingdom and in the United States?

Mr. SHEEHAN. I would say that we saw a lot of parallels. But the United Kingdom had some differences that actually showed the strength of the American system. In the United Kingdom. they

found that their communities were more isolated than in the United States. The United States has an incredible capacity to accept minorities, particularly New York City. If you drive through Queens and Brooklyn, on every corner you see a different minority, but they are very well assimilated. In the United Kingdom they had more ghetto-ized immigrant communities, and we talked to them extensively about that issue.

Senator NELSON. That's one of the great strengths of our country, is that we assimilate people.

Thank you, Madam Chairman. I look forward to this classified session.

Senator HAGAN. Senator McCain.

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

I guess my first question for the three witnesses: Is the tide of war receding? Mr. Chollet?

Mr. CHOLLET. I think it's changing.

Senator MCCAIN. I'm asking if it's receding.

Mr. CHOLLET. I think clearly we pulled back from Iraq. We are on the pathway out of Afghanistan——

Senator MCCAIN. How did things turn out there? Pretty good?

Mr. CHOLLET. I think Iraq is more stable today than many thought several years ago.

Senator MCCAIN. Really? You really think that?

Mr. CHOLLET. I do.

Senator MCCAIN. You're uninformed.

Mr. Sheehan, is the tide of war receding?

Mr. SHEEHAN. There's no question in my mind in terms of al Qaeda and its affiliates, my principal threat, that we have pounded al Qaeda's strategic capability over the last 11 years and we continue to do so relentlessly in their primary sanctuaries. Al Qaeda—I would footnote that by saying that al Qaeda has shown some resiliency and potential to reestablish strategic capability in a few years, but has yet to do so.

Senator MCCAIN. A few areas, Mr. Sheehan?

Mr. SHEEHAN. Strategic capability, they have yet to demonstrate strategic capability in those new areas as of yet—as of yet, none.

Senator MCCAIN. Libya?

Mr. SHEEHAN. None.

Senator MCCAIN. None?

Mr. SHEEHAN. None, very little. As a matter of fact, there have been no strategic attacks—

Senator MCCAIN. I just came from Libya, Mr. Sheehan.

Mr. SHEEHAN. I've spent——

Senator MCCAIN. I just came from there. That's patently false. That is a false statement.

How about Mali? Do you think that they're going to be able to reconstitute themselves once the French leave?

Mr. SHEEHAN. Senator, I've been studying al Qaeda for 15 years——

Senator MCCAIN. So have I, Mr. Sheehan.

Mr. SHEEHAN.—and I know exactly what it takes for them——

Senator MCCAIN. Mr. Sheehan, I have too. I'm asking you a question, and do you believe that once the French are leaving do you think that al Qaeda will reconstitute itself in Mali?

Mr. SHEEHAN. They will attempt to reconstitute themselves.

Senator MCCAIN. Do you think they will, since the people, the African Command, have no logistics capability whatsoever?

Mr. SHEEHAN. First of all, they haven't been totally defeated yet, so the question will be——

Senator MCCAIN. But the French are leaving.

Mr. SHEEHAN. They are leaving.

Senator MCCAIN. Yes.

Mr. SHEEHAN. And we'll see whether AQIM will be able to establish a strategic capability from there over the years ahead.

Senator MCCAIN. Did you happen to notice today that al Qaeda in Iraq and al Qaeda in Syria have announced their joint partnership?

Mr. SHEEHAN. Yes, I did, Senator, and we've been tracking that relationship. It's a very close relationship they've had for quite a long time.

Senator MCCAIN. I see. In Syria is there an increasing radicalization and penetration and increasing influence by al Qaeda?

Mr. SHEEHAN. We are very concerned about Al-Nusra group, which is an al Qaeda affiliate.

Senator MCCAIN. I'd like to have an answer to the question. It's a pretty straightforward question. Is al Qaeda gaining traction and significant influence in Syria? It's a pretty straightforward question.

Mr. SHEEHAN. I would say that marginally, yes.

Senator MCCAIN. Marginally——

Mr. SHEEHAN. It depends on how you measure it.

Senator MCCAIN. Marginally al Qaeda is gaining more and more influence in Syria? Marginally?

Mr. SHEEHAN. When I measure al Qaeda in terms of its threat to the United States, I measure its strategic threat.

Senator MCCAIN. I asked—the question I asked was: Are the al Qaeda gaining more and more influence and control in Syria?

Mr. SHEEHAN. Al-Nusra threat is increasing its capability in Syria.

Senator MCCAIN. Now, did you recommend or is it your personal opinion we should provide arms to the Syrian resistance?

Mr. SHEEHAN. I'm not—that's not part of the discussion here about that.

Senator MCCAIN. Did you in your confirmation hearings, when asked for your personal opinion, that you would respond with your personal opinion?

Mr. SHEEHAN. I'm not sure I was asked about that.

Senator MCCAIN. You're not sure? You didn't pay attention at your confirmation hearings?

Mr. SHEEHAN. I was not asked that, Senator. And if I discussed that kind of policy deliberation I would want to do it in a closed session.

Senator MCCAIN. The American people should not know how members of our Department of Defense feel about an issue of slaughter of 70,000 or more people and millions of refugees.

Well, let me ask this: Do you believe that there's a great risk of both Libya—of both Jordan and Lebanon being destabilized with the present course of events as they are proceeding?

Mr. SHEEHAN. That's not something I track as much—ask Mr. Chollet.

Senator MCCAIN. Okay. Mr. Chollet?

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes, I'm worried about that.

Senator MCCAIN. Would you say that over the last two years that there has been greater and greater influence by jihadists and radical Islamic forces in Syria?

Mr. CHOLLET. Over the last 2 years?

Senator MCCAIN. Yes.

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes.

Senator MCCAIN. As regards to Libya, do you think that we are providing sufficient assistance to the Libyans which they can pay for in the form of border security, in the form of training and equipping their military so that they can gain more control over their country, particularly in the eastern part?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I stated previously that we fully support doing more for Libya. Frankly, we were doing more before the unfortunate events of last September. Then there's a certain logistical reality which you're well aware of from having been there so often of we don't have a very big footprint in the country right now, for good reason, for security reasons.

So some of the good programs that we were doing, for example, to try to build up their ministry of defense, some of the mentoring that we were doing on the civilian side, have stopped dead in their tracks really in the last nine months. So those are programs we hope to build back up. Border security has got to be a huge priority. Libya is a country the size of Alaska and it's got borders that have been ungoverned for many years. We need to do more about that, no doubt about it.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, having just returned from Libya, I can assure you that the Libyan government finds nothing but frustration in dealing with this administration. And they can pay for these things, but as many issues have been raised in ways not to assist as—and it isn't all the United States' fault, but it clearly is—and the situation in Libya is clearly the result of the, quote, "light footprint" that was part of our policy after the fall of Qadafi.

I'd like to go back to Mali a second. Do you have confidence that when the French leave that the situation will not deteriorate back to a situation that basically is the same as before the French intervened?

Mr. CHOLLET. I have some confidence, not high confidence. We're in the early stages of this story here. The French want to get out by July. The U.N. wants to stand up a force by July. Ensuring that that force is capable to deal with the security threats, because once the French leave the Malian army's not going to be in a position to backfill. So that's why we'll work through the U.N. to get a viable peacekeeping force in there and to work to help train up the Africans as best we can.

But I think we have a shot, but I don't—I wouldn't say that it's high confidence.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, having met with that African force who would be there either under the aegis of the African group or the U.N., I hope that you're aware they have no logistics capability. They have no C–130s, they have no helicopters, they have no way of getting around a country the size of Texas.

But you're hopeful that they'll be able to take over?

Mr. CHOLLET. I am hopeful, but I don't think we're there yet, and that's why we've got to work hard over the next 2 months with our partners, two months and beyond, to ensure that as the French stand down that we have a sufficient force able to backfill to ensure that the gains, the significant gains, of the last 2 months don't get lost.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, in 60 days I find it hard to envision that we would train pilots and provide them with helicopters and C–130s and the equipment, not to mention the ground equipment that's necessary for them to be a viable force. They themselves told me that they are not capable because—not because of manpower, but because they don't have—there's not a single C–130. One of the airplanes they had they crashed on the runway.

Mr. SHEEHAN. Senator, if I could on the situation in Mali, right now the ECOWAS force there, AFISMA, is not capable at all. What you saw there, and you're accurately portraying it, is a completely incapable force. That has to change. What will change over the next few months if we're able to work it through the Security Council is a U.N. blue-helmeted operation, which does have logistics capability, which does have LH–1000s that can bring logistical support to it.

What we need to do in Africa, in Mali, is similar to what we have done in Somalia: Not ask the international force to do too much. In Somalia we were successful in organizing and helping support a UN force, AMISOM, that was capable of kicking al Shabaab out of Mogadishu and out of Kismayo—Ugandans in Mogadishu, the Kenyans in Kismayo, the Ethiopians in the north.

Now, granted those are much more capable forces than we might be able to cobble together for Mali. But we do have a model where if we keep—if we use a U.N.-supported logistical force and keep the mission reasonable—in other words, those forces for the U.N. mission in Mali won't be asked to take over all of Mali. They'll be asked to maintain control of the cities now occupied by the French, Timbuktu, Gao, and Kidal.

In terms of chasing AQIM out of the mountains and going after its leadership and the remnant as they try to reconstitute themselves, that is going to be a job for a much more capable force. The UN cannot do that and we shouldn't expect them to do that. That will be up to the French, perhaps with our support, or other specialized units, perhaps the Algerians if we can convince them to become more engaged, and we're working with them, that we can track down the AQ leadership with much more capable CT forces.

The UN will have a much more modest goal and we think, based on our experience in Somalia, a God-forsaken place two years ago, we might be able to achieve some modest objectives in Mali with that operation.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, you might.

I thank you, Madam Chairman. My time has expired.

The fact is the reality on the ground is that arms and people are flowing freely all across North Africa, many of them coming into Syria, a surprising number of Tunisians. The situation continues to become more radicalized in Syria as 80,000 or more people have been massacred while we sit by and watch and figure out reasons why we can't intervene. And we are going to pay a very, very, very heavy price.

You ought to go to a refugee camp some time, both of you, and meet the people there, and the woman who says: "See all these children; they will take revenge on those who failed to help them, who failed to help."

Senator HAGAN. Thank you, Senator McCain.

Senator MCCAIN. It's been disastrous.

I thank you, Madam Chairman, for interrupting me.

Senator HAGAN. We are now going to ask any Senators who wish to have other questions to submit them for the record, and then we will move this. The closed session will be in Senate Security, Room SVC–217. So this open hearing is closed. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 3:22 p.m., the committee adjourned.]