

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON COUNTER-ISIL
(ISLAMIC STATE OF IRAQ AND THE LEVANT) STRATEGY

Tuesday, July 7, 2015

Washington, D.C.

ALDERSON REPORTING COMPANY
1155 CONNECTICUT AVENUE, N.W.
SUITE 200
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036
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1 HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON COUNTER-ISIL
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6 U.S. Senate

7 Committee on Armed Services

8 Washington, D.C.

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10 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:35 a.m. in
11 Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John
12 McCain, chairman of the committee, presiding.

13 Committee Members Present: Senators McCain
14 [presiding], Sessions, Ayotte, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds,
15 Ernst, Sullivan, Lee, Graham, Reed, Nelson, Manchin,
16 Gillibrand, Donnelly, Hirono, Kaine, and Heinrich.

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1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN McCAIN, U.S. SENATOR
2 FROM ARIZONA

3 Chairman McCain: Well, good morning.

4 The Senate Armed Services Committee meets today, as
5 soon as the media allows us to see the witnesses, to receive
6 testimony on the U.S. strategy to counter the Islamic State
7 of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL.

8 I am grateful to our distinguished witnesses for
9 appearing before us today.

10 The risk posed by ISIL must be seen in the context of
11 what many of America's most accomplished leaders and foreign
12 policy experts have described as the most complex and
13 uncertain international environment since the end of World
14 War II. All across the globe, America's interests in
15 security and stability are at risk.

16 As part of a broader strategy to dominate eastern
17 Europe, Vladimir Putin's Russia continues its onslaught in
18 Ukraine, with Russian troops and equipment leading an
19 asymmetric campaign to undermine Ukraine's government and
20 independence as the United States has refused the Ukrainians
21 weapons for its defense.

22 China's destabilizing behavior also poses a growing
23 challenge to U.S. national interests: its reclamation and
24 militarization of vast land features in the South China Sea,
25 its continued military buildup, and of course, its blatant

1 and undeterred cyber attacks against the United States.

2 Iran is expanding its malign activities and hegemonic
3 ambitions across the Middle East, as we see clearly in
4 Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, and elsewhere, and yet,
5 some in the administration seem to operate under the
6 delusion that a nuclear agreement could lead to a new modus
7 vivendi with the Islamic Republic.

8 And in Syria, Bashar Assad's slaughter of his own
9 people, which has been the single greatest contributor to
10 the rise and continued success of ISIL, goes on and on and
11 on, aided by Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah. For 4 years, the
12 President has said Assad must go as a part of a political
13 transition in Syria, but conditions on the ground have never
14 allowed it. Tragically, that remains true today.

15 What each of these growing threats has in common is a
16 failure of deterrence, brought on by a dangerous perception
17 of American weakness and lack of resolve, which our
18 adversaries have taken as a provocative invitation for
19 hostility.

20 When it comes to ISIL, President Obama's comments
21 yesterday at the Pentagon reveal the disturbing degree of
22 self-delusion that characterizes the administration's
23 thinking. It is right but ultimately irrelevant to point
24 out, as the President did, that we have conducted thousands
25 of airstrikes, taken out many ISIL fighters and much

1 equipment, and pushed it out of some territory. None of the
2 so-called progress that the President cited suggests that we
3 are on a path to success.

4 Since U.S. and coalition air strikes began last year,
5 ISIL has continued to enjoy battlefield successes, including
6 taking Ramadi and other key terrain in Iraq, holding over
7 half the territory in Syria, and controlling every border
8 post between Iraq and Syria. Moreover, the longer ISIL
9 remains undefeated in Iraq and Syria, the more potent its
10 message is to those around the world who may be radicalized
11 and inspired to join the group and spread violence and
12 mayhem on its behalf.

13 It is not that we are doing nothing; it is that there
14 is no compelling reason to believe that anything we are
15 doing currently will be sufficient to achieve the
16 President's long-stated goal of degrading and ultimately
17 destroying ISIL, either in the short term or the long term.
18 Our means and our current level of effort are not aligned
19 with our ends. That suggests we are not winning, and when
20 you are not winning in war, you are losing.

21 The reality today is that ISIL continues to gain
22 territory in Iraq and Syria, while expanding its influence
23 and presence across the Middle East, Africa, and Central
24 Asia. There is no responsible ground force in either Iraq
25 or Syria that is both willing and able to take territory

1 away from ISIL and hold it, and none of our current training
2 efforts of moderate Syrians, Sunni tribes, or Iraqi Security
3 Forces are as yet capable of producing such a ground force.
4 It is unclear why the latest gradual escalation of effort,
5 the deployment of a few hundred additional advisors to
6 Anbar, will make a difference that our previous efforts
7 failed to achieve.

8 While our coalition may own the skies, as the President
9 said yesterday, our air campaign against ISIL continues to
10 be limited significantly by overly restrictive rules of
11 engagement and a lack of ground intelligence, which only
12 gets worse as ISIL moves into urban areas to avoid coalition
13 bombing. Any pilot will tell you that they are only as good
14 as the targets they receive, and when three-quarters of our
15 air missions against ISIL still return to base without
16 dropping weapons, that is indicative of a fundamental
17 problem with our air campaign.

18 What is worse, none of our efforts against ISIL in Iraq
19 can succeed while the conflict in Syria continues, and with
20 it the conditions for ISIL's continued growth, recruitment,
21 and radicalization of Muslims around the world. As
22 published media reports indicate, our Syrian train and equip
23 program is anemic and struggling because our stated goal
24 does not include going after Assad and his regime forces,
25 and we still do not provide the forces we are training with

1 the enabling capabilities to succeed in any engagement they
2 may face inside Syria.

3 Given the poor numbers of recruited and trained Syrian
4 fighters thus far, I am doubtful we can achieve our goal of
5 training a few thousand this year. But even if the program
6 achieves its goal, it is doubtful that it will make a
7 strategic difference on the battlefield. Yes, we need a
8 political solution in Syria. But no such solution is
9 possible with Bashar Assad still in power. Unless and until
10 the United States leads a coalition effort to put far
11 greater battlefield pressure on Assad, a political solution
12 will never be within reach, the conflict will grind on, and
13 ISIL will thrive.

14 The lack of a coherent strategy has resulted in the
15 spread of ISIL around the world, to Libya, Egypt, Nigeria,
16 and even to Afghanistan, where I visited last weekend.
17 Afghanistan is certainly not Iraq, but the parallels are
18 eerily familiar. As in Iraq, the United States is
19 contemplating a drastic reduction in force presence that
20 places at risk the hard-won gains of the last decade. While
21 Afghanistan's security forces are improving in quality, they
22 are still missing the same set of key capabilities the
23 Iraqis were missing when the U.S. withdrew in 2011,
24 including intelligence, aviation, special operations, and
25 logistics capabilities. At the current pace, our military

1 commanders know these capabilities will remain critically
2 underdeveloped at the end of 2016, when President Obama has
3 announced that U.S. and coalition forces will dramatically
4 downsize to a presence solely in Kabul.

5 We have seen this movie before. And if we make the
6 same mistakes, we should expect similarly tragic results. I
7 do not want to attend another hearing like this with your
8 successors trying to figure out a strategy to clean up after
9 avoidable mistakes. What that means is that the President
10 must provide our commanders on the ground with necessary
11 forces, capabilities, and the authorities to help our Afghan
12 partners in continuing to secure their country and defeat
13 our terrorist enemies together.

14 ISIL is not 10 feet tall. It can be and must be
15 defeated. But that will never happen if we continue to
16 delude ourselves about our current campaign. The President
17 is fond of the truism that there is no military solution to
18 ISIL or any other problem. What he has so often failed to
19 realize is that there is sometimes a major military
20 dimension to achieving a political solution. This was the
21 critical lesson that the United States learned in the Iraq
22 surge. We must learn again. Security on the ground is a
23 precondition to political reconciliation, not the other way
24 around.

25 The unfortunate irony is that a President elected in

1 opposition to the war in Iraq is repeating some of its worst
2 strategic mistakes. And what is worse, despite obvious
3 indications that the current strategy against ISIL is
4 failing, he has yet to find the courage of his predecessor
5 to admit mistakes and choose a new direction. This needs to
6 happen sooner rather than later, or the disaster the next
7 President will inherit in the Middle East but also far
8 beyond it will be overwhelming.

9 It is clear we are living in a time of unprecedented
10 turmoil. We see it on our television screens every day:
11 ISIL's spread across the Middle East, Russia's invasion of
12 Ukraine, and China's maritime expansion in Asia.

13 Once again, I thank our witnesses and look forward to
14 their testimony.

15 Senator Reed?

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

3 Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

4 Welcome, Secretary Carter, General Dempsey. Thank you.

5 This morning's hearing is an important opportunity for
6 this committee to hear from the administration regarding its
7 strategy to counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the
8 Levant, or ISIL. It follows up on the committee's hearing
9 in May with outside witnesses regarding the counter-ISIL
10 strategy.

11 ISIL, with its violent, extremist ideology and brutal
12 military capabilities, poses a clear threat to the stability
13 of the Middle East, Africa, and beyond, and a threat to the
14 United States and our partners' interests in those regions
15 and, indeed, even in the homeland. ISIL's campaign to
16 establish a caliphate threatens to create a breeding ground
17 for training extremist fighters, attracting foreign fighters
18 intent on returning to Western countries to carry out
19 attacks, and inspiring others in the United States and
20 elsewhere to commit violence. The American people recognize
21 the threat posed by ISIL but, at the same time, are
22 appropriately wary, after nearly a decade and a half of U.S.
23 military involvement overseas, about being drawn deeper into
24 a seemingly intractable Middle East conflict.

25 As part of the administration's whole-of-government

1 strategy, the Department of Defense has the lead for two of
2 the nine lines of effort against ISIL and plays a supporting
3 role for the efforts of a number of other departments and
4 agencies. This committee has provided essential resources
5 to the Department to implement the strategy through funding
6 of the overseas contingency operations fund, including the
7 President's request for both the Iraq and Syria train and
8 equip funds and a billion dollars for the Counterterrorism
9 Partnership Fund. However, the severe cuts mandated by
10 sequestration puts at risk the ability of the civilian
11 departments of our Government, including the State
12 Department, the U.S. Agency for International Aid and
13 Development, and the Department of Homeland Security, and
14 Treasury Department to carry out fully the other seven lines
15 of effort that comprise our counter-ISIL strategy. The
16 effect of sequestration could be that the U.S. Government is
17 having to fight ISIL literally with one hand tied behind its
18 back. The success of the strategy depends on getting both
19 our military and civilian departments the necessary
20 resources to confront ISIL.

21 At this committee's hearing in May, several witnesses
22 called for expanding the U.S. military involvement in Iraq
23 and Syria in response to ISIL's seizure of the Anbar
24 provincial capital of Ramadi and ISIL's gains in Syria. The
25 President's announcement last month of an additional 450

1 U.S. troops to be deployed to Iraq to train and assist Iraqi
2 Security Forces begins to address the critical need to bring
3 local Sunni tribes into the fight against ISIL. We will be
4 interested in hearing from our witnesses what additional
5 steps they would recommend for expanding the presence of
6 Sunni fighters in the Iraqi Security Forces and to ensure
7 that Kurdish Peshmerga receive expeditiously the weapons
8 they need to counter ISIL in the fight.

9 In many respects, the current challenges in Iraq result
10 from two intersecting forces: the rise of ISIL and the
11 deterioration of the Iraqi security forces and complementary
12 governmental capacities. Many of the factors and
13 personalities forming ISIL can be traced to the invasion and
14 occupation of Iraq. Planning for that war failed to account
15 for deep-seated sectarian divisions between Sunni and Shia
16 within the region, which gave rise to grievances that fueled
17 the rise of ISIL. In addition, many of the factors
18 contributing to the deterioration of Iraq Security Forces
19 can be traced to the actions of Prime Minister Maliki, in
20 particular his replacement of competent leaders in the
21 military with cronies loyal to himself.

22 Iran's role in Iraq and the broader region must never
23 be forgotten either. Many of the aforementioned actions by
24 Maliki were at the behest of Iran or certainly with their
25 acquiescence. And Iran's influence on Iraq's political

1 decision-making can be seen even prior to the 2008 visit of
2 the Iranian President Ahmadinejad to Baghdad. Today, Iran
3 has its own military boots on the ground in both Iraq and
4 Syria, and it continues to support its proxies. We must
5 keep a close eye on Iran and assess carefully their
6 interests at the tactical and strategic level.

7 As we work with the coalition to counter the threat of
8 ISIL, it will be useful to obtain your perspective on these
9 and other factors as we endeavor to reshape our policies and
10 our strategy.

11 Ultimately, though, one of the key lessons from the
12 Iraq war is that no amount of U.S. or coalition military
13 assistance or boots on the ground will lead to the lasting
14 defeat of violent extremism if the underlying political
15 causes that allow such extremism to arise and thrive are not
16 addressed. In Iraq, the Abadi government must continue to
17 take substantive steps to govern in a more inclusive manner,
18 address longstanding grievances of Iraq's sectarian and
19 ethnic minorities, expand the integration of Sunnis and
20 Kurds into Iraq's military and political structures, and
21 disarm Iranian-backed Shia militias.

22 In Syria, moderate and extreme elements to the
23 opposition have made tactical gains against ISIL and the
24 regime, but ISIL remains the dominant force in western
25 Syria. Absent a moderate opposition that is willing to and

1 capable of taking territory from ISIL and holding it, any
2 change in the status quo is unlikely. Bolstered by critical
3 outside assistance, the Assad regime remains in the seat of
4 power in Damascus, but has ceded territory in recent months.
5 Despite these territorial shifts in the ground battle in
6 Syria, a defeat on the battlefield is not the most likely
7 end to the battle in Syria. A political solution that
8 addresses grievances and a broad range of constituencies in
9 Syria is the only pathway to a sustainable solution.

10 When I met with military and political leaders in Iraq
11 earlier this year, they emphasized that U.S. and coalition
12 forces are at the beginning of a multiyear campaign against
13 ISIL. They stressed the need for strategic patience. I
14 hope our witnesses today will provide their perspective on
15 just where we are in the long fight and what to expect in
16 the coming months and years ahead.

17 I look forward to your testimony.

18 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 Chairman McCain: Thank you.

20 I welcome the witnesses. Secretary Carter?

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. ASHTON B. CARTER, SECRETARY OF

2 DEFENSE

3 Secretary Carter: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking
4 Member Reed, members of this committee. Thank you for the
5 opportunity to come before you to address your questions and
6 concerns about this campaign.

7 And I want to especially thank the chairman for going
8 to Afghanistan over his Fourth of July weekend, which I
9 appreciate. Visiting the troops means a lot to us, sir.

10 And as all of you know from your travels around the
11 world, there is a high demand everywhere in the world for
12 American leadership, from Asia, where I saw some of you in
13 May, to Europe, where I was 2 weeks ago. The Obama
14 administration and the members of this committee have helped
15 ensure that we meet that demand, and I thank you for that.

16 The same is true in the Middle East where we are
17 standing by our friends like Israel, working to prevent Iran
18 from acquiring a nuclear weapon and otherwise exercising
19 malign influence and confronting ISIL, which is the subject
20 of this hearing.

21 It was also the subject of a meeting yesterday at the
22 Pentagon where President Obama and Chairman Dempsey and I
23 discussed our counter-ISIL campaign with senior defense and
24 interagency leaders. We all agreed that ISIL represents a
25 grave threat and that it must be and will be dealt a lasting

1 defeat. That is our objective, which is shared by a global
2 coalition that reflects both the worldwide consensus on the
3 need to counter ISIL and the practical requirement for
4 others to do their part. The administration's strategy to
5 achieve that objective, as the Joint Chiefs' doctrinal
6 definition of strategy puts it, integrates all the Nation's
7 strengths and instruments of power, as has been noted. And
8 it is executed through nine synchronized lines of effort.

9 The first and arguably the most critical line of effort
10 is the political one, as has also been noted, which is led
11 by the State Department. This line involves building more
12 effective, inclusive, and multi-sectarian governance in
13 Iraq.

14 At the same time, the United States continues to work
15 diplomatically to bring about a political transition from
16 Bashar al-Assad to a more inclusive government with which we
17 can also work to defeat ISIL.

18 The next two lines of effort are interconnected: to
19 deny ISIL safe haven and to build partner capacity in Iraq
20 and Syria. Both are led by the Department of Defense which,
21 alongside coalition partners, is conducting an air campaign,
22 advising, and assisting Iraqi Security Forces on the ground,
23 and training and equipping vetted local forces in Iraq and
24 for Syria.

25 Before I go on, let me say that these first three

1 political and military lines of effort have to be in sync, a
2 point that has been made already. That is a challenge but
3 one we are working through with our partners in the
4 coalition, on the ground, and around our Government.

5 The fourth line of effort is enhancing intelligence
6 collection on ISIL, which is led by the National
7 Counterterrorism Center.

8 The fifth line of effort, disrupting ISIL's finances,
9 is co-led by Treasury and State.

10 Lines of effort six and seven, both co-led by State and
11 the National Counterterrorism Center, are to counter ISIL's
12 messaging and disrupt the flow of foreign fighters to and
13 from ISIL, both of which are critical in today's connected
14 and networked world.

15 The eighth line of effort, providing humanitarian
16 support to those affected by the conflicts in Iraq and
17 Syria, is led by State and AID.

18 Finally, the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI,
19 and the Department of Justice work together to protect the
20 homeland, the ninth line of effort, by disrupting terrorist
21 threats. In addition to our full-spectrum cooperative
22 relationship with Department of Homeland Security and other
23 law enforcement agencies, DOD personnel continue to strike
24 ISIL elements in Iraq and Syria.

25 The effective execution of all nine lines of effort by

1 the United States and its coalition partners is necessary to
2 ensure ISIL's lasting defeat.

3 I want to add briefly that there are important
4 classified dimensions to our approach to ISIL and to the
5 Middle East more broadly, Mr. Chairman, that we will not be
6 able to discuss in this meeting but can discuss separately.

7 Let me turn to the execution of the two lines of effort
8 on which DOD leads, which our personnel have been performing
9 with the excellence we all expect of the finest fighting
10 force the world has ever known.

11 American service members and their coalition partners
12 have conducted over 5,000 airstrikes. That air campaign has
13 produced some clear tactical results: limiting ISIL's
14 freedom of movement, constraining its ability to reinforce
15 its fighters, and degrading its command and control.

16 Coalition air support has also enabled gains by local forces
17 in Iraq and Syria, including Syrian Kurdish and Arab forces
18 who recently took the key border town of Tal Abyad from
19 ISIL, cut off one of its key lines of communication and
20 supply, and put ISIL on the defensive and its stronghold
21 Raqqah under pressure.

22 Those examples demonstrate again that where we have a
23 credible ground force, working in a coordinated way with the
24 coalition air campaign, ISIL has suffered. That is what
25 makes the third line of effort, developing the capacity and

1 capabilities of local forces, so important. Indeed, we know
2 from recent experience that success against ISIL requires
3 capable local ground forces. And we know from our history
4 in the region that putting U.S. combat troops on the ground
5 as a substitute for local forces will not produce enduring
6 results.

7 That is why we are bolstering Iraq's security forces
8 and building moderate, vetted Syrian opposition forces. But
9 both of these efforts need strengthening.

10 In Iraq, the Iraqi security forces were severely
11 degraded after four divisions dissolved and Mosul fell a
12 year ago this June. Our efforts to build partner capacity
13 and advise and assist ongoing operations involve around
14 3,550 American personnel at six locations around the
15 country. Their training work has been slowed, however, by a
16 lack of trainees. As of June 30th, we have only received
17 enough trainees to be able to train about 8,800 Iraqi army
18 soldiers and Peshmerga forces, in addition to some 2,000 CTS
19 personnel. Another 4,000 soldiers, including 600 CTS
20 personnel, are in training. I have told Iraqi leaders that
21 while the United States is open to supporting Iraq more than
22 we already are, we must also see a greater commitment from
23 all parts of the Iraqi Government.

24 We are also in the early stages of our train and equip
25 mission in Syria. 3 months into our program, training is

1 underway, and we are working to screen and vet almost 7,000
2 volunteers to ensure that they are committed to fighting
3 ISIL, pass a counterintelligence screening, and meet
4 standards prescribed by U.S. law regarding the law of armed
5 conflict and necessitated by operations. As of July 3rd, we
6 are currently training about 60 fighters. This number is
7 much smaller than we had hoped for at this point, partly
8 because of the vetting standards I just described.

9 But we know this program is essential. We need a
10 partner on the ground in Syria to assure ISIL's lasting
11 defeat. And as training progresses, we are learning more
12 about the opposition groups and building important
13 relationships, which increases our ability to attract
14 recruits and provides valuable intelligence for counter-ISIL
15 operations.

16 We are also working to equip vetted local forces. In
17 Iraq, after earlier delays, we are expediting delivery of
18 essential equipment and materiel to the Iraqi Security
19 Forces and working with the Government of Iraq to ensure
20 this equipment is quickly passed to Kurdish Peshmerga and
21 Sunni tribal forces. In Syria, we will begin equipping
22 forces as soon as they complete training.

23 We are constantly assessing this approach. We did so
24 after the fall of Ramadi, continued through yesterday with
25 President Obama at the Pentagon. The strategy is the right

1 one, but its execution can and will be strengthened,
2 especially on the ground.

3 In Iraq, we are focused on increasing participation in
4 and throughput of our training facilities. An example of
5 this is our effort at Taqaddum, which has been noted, in
6 Anbar Province, where we recently deployed approximately 350
7 of the additional 450 American personnel authorized.

8 We assessed our presence at this military base would
9 provide access to thousands of previously unreachable Sunni
10 tribesmen. This is in support of the Iraqi Government's own
11 initiative to increase outreach to the Anbar tribes. As of
12 mid-June, the Iraqi Government has enrolled and armed an
13 initial group of 800 Sunni fighters at Taqaddum, and we are
14 supporting the Iraqi training of 500 additional fighters now
15 at Taqaddum. The Iraqis have already identified 500 more
16 trainees that will follow the current group, and we will
17 continue to work to ensure that these Sunni fighters, which
18 are critical to the success of our campaign, have the
19 training and equipment needed to effectively fight ISIL. I
20 should also note that the Anbar operations center is located
21 at Taqaddum, which is another reason for that particular
22 geography, so that we can advise and assist the Iraqi
23 commanders there commanding Sunni forces.

24 In Syria, we seek to capitalize on the recent successes
25 in Kobani and Tal Abyad and continue to strike ISIL's nerve

1 center in Raqqah. At the same time, we are looking for ways
2 to streamline our train and equip program's vetting process,
3 which I noted earlier, to get more recruits into the
4 training pipeline. We are also refining our curriculum,
5 expanding our outreach to the moderate opposition, and
6 incorporating lessons learned from the first training class.
7 I am happy to speak about that more.

8 In conclusion, I sought to describe to you clearly the
9 strategy, the Department of Defense's execution of its
10 critical lines of effort, and where our execution can and
11 will and must be strengthened.

12 Achieving ISIL's lasting defeat will require continued
13 commitment, steady leadership from the United States and our
14 global coalition, hard work by our men and women in uniform,
15 essential complementary and synchronized efforts along the
16 other seven lines of effort and, most importantly,
17 commitment and sacrifice by Iraqis and Syrians. Together
18 and with your continuing support for the men and women of
19 the Department of Defense, for which we are ever grateful,
20 we will achieve ISIL's lasting defeat.

21 Thank you.

22 [The prepared statement of Secretary Carter follows:]

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1 Chairman McCain: General Dempsey?
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1 STATEMENT OF GENERAL MARTIN E. DEMPSEY, USA, CHAIRMAN,

2 JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

3 General Dempsey: Thank you, Chairman and Ranking
4 Member Reed and members of the committee. I appreciate the
5 opportunity to come back and to chat with you today about
6 the military component of our strategy against ISIL.

7 Our starting point has to be the strategic picture in
8 context. I have said before that the global security
9 environment is as uncertain as I have ever seen it. The
10 world is rapidly changing everywhere, and we are seeing
11 significant shifts in an already complex strategic
12 landscape. ISIL is one of many concerns. As the chairman
13 mentioned, we are contending with Russia's revanchism in
14 eastern Europe, China's assertiveness in the South China
15 Sea, Iran's malign activities in the Middle East, technical
16 advancements by North Korea, rising aggression of non-state
17 networks, and a rapidly leveling playing field in cyber and
18 in space. While our potential adversaries grow stronger,
19 many of our allies are becoming increasingly dependent on
20 the United States and on our assistance, and some of our
21 comparative military advantages have begun to erode. What
22 makes this uniquely complicated is that these trends are
23 manifesting themselves simultaneously.

24 Within the Middle East, I characterize three converging
25 sets of complexity.

1 First, several governments are struggling for political
2 legitimacy because they are not sufficiently pluralistic or
3 they are not sufficiently accountable to their citizens.

4 Second, the centuries old Sunni/Shia struggle is very
5 evident. Weak states are less able to assert independence
6 amid the tug of war between sectarian regional powers.

7 And third, we are seeing rising competition between
8 moderate and radical elements of Islam, and ISIL and others
9 are taking advantage of that competition.

10 Within this evolving global context, the role the
11 United States military is taking against the trans-regional
12 threat of ISIL is appropriately matched to the complexity of
13 the environment and is at a level of effort that is
14 sustainable over time.

15 Military power alone, as we have said, will not solve
16 ISIL. I do not think anyone here would disagree with that.
17 All nine lines of effort need to be considered in the
18 aggregate. This campaign focuses on actively reinforcing
19 and hardening our partners in the region who must and in
20 most cases are taking responsibility for their own security.
21 And that is an important point. Enduring stability cannot
22 be imposed in the Middle East from the outside in. The
23 fight is enabled by the coalition, but it must be owned by
24 those regional stakeholders.

25 It bears repeating that this is the beginning of a

1 complex, nonlinear campaign that will require a sustained
2 effort over an extended period of time. We have to be just
3 as agile as the network of terrorists we face. We are
4 constantly evaluating our approach and making sure we are
5 resourcing it appropriately, balanced with our other global
6 commitments.

7 But 4 years and counting of budget uncertainty have
8 made this balance distinctly harder.

9 Thank you and I welcome your questions.

10 [The prepared statement of General Dempsey follows:]

11 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman McCain: Thank you, General.

2 Mr. Secretary, let me clear up a couple of points
3 before we get into the strategy. You have stated before you
4 would recommend a veto of the NDAA to the President. Is
5 that your position?

6 Secretary Carter: He restated his position yesterday,
7 and I support it. I am happy to give the reasons for that,
8 if you would like, Mr. Chairman.

9 Chairman McCain: Sure, but you might answer also when
10 you answer, do you choose between fully funding the
11 President's defense budget request with OCO funding or
12 funding defense at sequestration levels?

13 Secretary Carter: Well, the short answer is I am
14 hoping we can do better than that.

15 My view has not changed since I came up here a few
16 months ago on this issue. And the chairman alluded to the
17 problem. I very much hope that a way will be found to come
18 together and get beyond the gridlock that we have and to
19 give us a budget, a normal budget process, that provides a
20 stable runway for the Department. And I will explain why
21 that is so important.

22 We have been going 1 year at a time budgetarily now for
23 several years straight, and it is extremely disruptive to
24 the operations of the Department. It is managerially
25 inefficient because we are doing this herky-jerky process.

1 It is difficult to have a multiyear national defense
2 strategy, which we must have, with a 1-year-at-a-time
3 perspective. It is difficult to run large programs,
4 shipbuilding programs, aircraft programs efficiently in a
5 1-year-at-a-time budget.

6 I also believe, Mr. Chairman, that our people deserve
7 better. That is, they need a horizon in front of them --
8 our military people and their families.

9 And last, I travel around the world, as you all do, and
10 it is embarrassing that we cannot in successive years now
11 pull ourselves together before an overall budget approach
12 that allows us to do what we need to do, which is we program
13 in a multiyear manner, not in a 1-year-at-a-time manner.

14 So for all those reasons, Mr. Chairman, I just appeal.
15 It is not something that I have any particular expertise in,
16 and it is obviously much bigger than defense because, as
17 noted, the success of this campaign and the success of our
18 national security hinges importantly, very importantly on
19 this Department, the Department that I lead, but also on law
20 enforcement and homeland security and diplomacy.

21 Chairman McCain: I understand.

22 Secretary Carter: So I am hoping, Mr. Chairman, that
23 we can do better than that choice and that we do not
24 continue down what I have called a road to nowhere.

25 Chairman McCain: Well, you may be presented with that

1 choice. And I would also add this is an authorizing bill.

2 The Appropriations Committee is where the money is.

3 But just very quickly, in your confirmation hearing,
4 you stated in response to my question about whether we
5 should arm the Ukrainians, quote, I am very much inclined in
6 that direction, Mr. Chairman, because I think we need to
7 support the Ukrainians in defending themselves. The nature
8 of those arms I cannot say right now. I have not confirmed
9 with -- but I am inclined in the direction providing with
10 arms, including to get to what your question is, lethal
11 arms. Do you still have that position?

12 Secretary Carter: I have not changed my thinking in
13 those months, and I had the occasion to talk to the
14 Ukrainian minister of defense just the other week --

15 Chairman McCain: Fine. I am just asking whether you
16 still want to support them -- arming them or not. That is a
17 pretty straightforward question.

18 Secretary Carter: We are considering that. We have
19 not made a decision in that regard.

20 Chairman McCain: Are you still --

21 Secretary Carter: And we are providing --

22 Chairman McCain: Are you still inclined to providing
23 arms to the Ukrainians? Please, Mr. Secretary.

24 Secretary Carter: Yes. I have not changed my view.

25 Chairman McCain: Thank you. That was it. That was a

1 simple answer to a simple question.

2 Secretary Carter: But if I can just --

3 Chairman McCain: No, because I have only got 2 minutes
4 left. Thank you.

5 5,000 airstrikes have been conducted. 75 percent of
6 the airstrikes return without having dropped a weapon. If
7 there was ever a compelling argument for forward air
8 controllers, it seems to me that is the case.

9 And you mentioned we are currently training about 60
10 fighters. I got to tell you after 4 years, Mr. Secretary,
11 that is not a very impressive number. And is it true that
12 with these people that you are training and equipping to
13 fight in Syria -- is it true that you are telling them they
14 are only there to fight ISIS and not Bashar Assad? Is that
15 true?

16 Secretary Carter: Yes. We are telling them that we
17 are arming and training them in the first instance to go
18 after ISIL and not the Assad regime. That is our priority.
19 And these are people who are inclined in that direction and
20 come from areas that have been overrun by ISIL --

21 Chairman McCain: So in other words, if they are
22 barrel-bombed by Bashar Assad, they are not --

23 Secretary Carter: I think we have some obligation to
24 them once they are inserted in the field.

25 Chairman McCain: Is that to defend them against

1 barrel-bombing?

2 Secretary Carter: Well, that decision will be made
3 when we introduce fighters into the field.

4 Chairman McCain: That is of small comfort to those
5 people you are recruiting right now that that decision will
6 be made later on. Is that fair to these young men to say we
7 are sending you in to fight ISIS only, and by the way, we
8 will decide on the policy whether to defend you if you are
9 barrel-bombed?

10 Secretary Carter: They know that we will provide
11 support to them. Exactly what kind of support --

12 Chairman McCain: Does that mean you will defend them
13 against Bashar Assad's barrel-bombing? Mr. Secretary, this
14 is not a very pleasant exchange. I would like to have
15 answers to questions. Will we tell them that we will defend
16 them against Bashar Assad's barrel-bombing?

17 Secretary Carter: I think we have an obligation to
18 help them --

19 Chairman McCain: Will we tell them that?

20 Secretary Carter: We have not told them that.

21 Chairman McCain: You have not told them that. So you
22 are recruiting people and not telling them that they are
23 going to defend them because you have not made the decision
24 yet. And yet, you want to train them quickly and send them
25 in.

1 Now, there is success on the part of an outfit called
2 the Army of Conquest, which is funded and trained and
3 equipped mostly by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and perhaps others.
4 They are succeeding. If there are battlefield games, they
5 are achieving them. Does the United States have any
6 relationship with that outfit? Because they are fighting
7 against Bashar Assad as well as ISIS.

8 Secretary Carter: I will have to get back to you on
9 the answer to that question because who has that contact is
10 something that we would have to discuss separately, Mr.
11 Chairman.

12 Chairman McCain: The answer is --

13 Secretary Carter: Can I go back --

14 Chairman McCain: Go ahead.

15 Secretary Carter: Can I go back, Mr. Chairman? You
16 mentioned the question of air sorties and which fraction of
17 them result in strikes, and I would like to explain those
18 numbers to you a bit.

19 In the case where the airstrikes are mounted -- and I
20 will ask the Chairman to elaborate further on this. In the
21 case where the airstrikes are conducted in a deliberate
22 manner, that is, one knows at the time the aircraft embarks
23 on the sortie what the target will be -- in those cases, 93
24 percent of the time they are concluding the sortie.

25 When it comes to dynamic targeting, the fraction is

1 much lower. It is about 37 percent. And the reason for
2 that is that in the case of dynamic targeting, by its nature
3 the aircraft is deployed with the expectation that a target
4 of opportunity -- let us say something that is moving on the
5 ground or a developing tactical situation will provide the
6 opportunity for a strike. That does not happen all the
7 time, but it does happen about 37 percent of the time, a
8 fraction, I should note, that is much higher than it was in
9 Afghanistan where we did the same thing. We routinely flew
10 sorties in order to capitalize upon fleeting opportunities
11 or developing opportunities. So our experience here is, in
12 fact, better than it is in Afghanistan. But anyway, that is
13 what explains --

14 Chairman McCain: Any experienced pilot will tell you
15 that if you have a forward air controller on the ground to
16 identify those targets, then the number of targets hit is
17 dramatically increased. And we have no forward air
18 controllers on the ground, and that, I can tell you, is
19 incredibly frustrating to the young pilots who are flying
20 these 6-and-a-half-hour sorties who feel that they are not
21 achieving anything, Mr. Secretary. You might want to talk
22 to them as well since they are the ones that are doing the
23 fighting.

24 Secretary Carter: If I can address the question of
25 JTACS, I think that is a fundamental one, Chairman, and

1 since you have raised it, let me go back to the fundamentals
2 of the strategy which are to support capable and motivated
3 ground forces while we fight when we find them. And we are
4 supporting such capable and effective ground forces. For
5 example, just to give one example, the Kurds in northern
6 Syria now.

7 Chairman McCain: Mr. Secretary, my time is way up.
8 But that has nothing to do with not having forward air
9 controllers on the ground. I hate to cut you short but we
10 are 3 minutes --

11 Secretary Carter: I am just saying we do not rule that
12 out and our strategy does not --

13 Chairman McCain: You never rule it out. It has not
14 happened.

15 Mr. Reed?

16 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

17 Mr. Secretary, I was struck by your statement. You
18 said that the first and most critical line with our efforts
19 is a political one led by the State Department. And in your
20 colloquy with the chairman, you pointed out that there are
21 challenges with respect to year-to-year OCO funding that is
22 being proposed. But State does not even have an option to
23 that source of funding.

24 So are you concerned that they might be so resource-
25 deprived under the Budget Control Act that they could not be

1 the primary --

2 Secretary Carter: I am. The State Department, the
3 Department of Homeland Security, other agencies that are
4 critical to protecting us against ISIL and other threats --
5 they need resources too. And so that is another reason why
6 I appeal for an overall budget perspective. I realize it
7 involves lots of moving parts and would require a major
8 coming together to release the gridlock of the last few
9 years, but I really appeal for that not just for my own
10 Department, but for the rest of the national security
11 establishment. I think it is critical.

12 Senator Reed: Shifting now to the training effort in
13 Iraq, one of the first issues was the composition of the
14 provisional forces that rallied a year ago to try to defend
15 Baghdad. It is overwhelming Shia. Now we are beginning to
16 see Sunnis appear.

17 First, is that the deliberate cooperation of the
18 government in Baghdad? Are they finally getting the message
19 that they have to have the support of the Sunni community?
20 And second, are you beginning to see a trend that is a
21 positive one in the sense of the overall participation of
22 Sunnis?

23 Secretary Carter: We see the commitment of Prime
24 Minister Abadi, so different from the behavior of his
25 predecessor, to engage in a multi-sectarian way in the fight

1 against ISIL. That includes the Kurds and it includes
2 Sunnis. Now, that has gone slowly, which explains why the
3 numbers are small. We expect them to grow. We hope they
4 grow. But what we need from the Iraqi Government is the
5 enrollment of Sunnis in the Iraqi Security Forces and the
6 commitment of the Iraqi Government to pay them, to equip
7 them with our help which we provide.

8 And then to get back to the chairman's question about
9 direct support to them, when we have effective ground forces
10 under the control of the Iraqi Government, we are prepared
11 to do more to support them, but we need to have those
12 effective ground forces because local forces on the ground,
13 we know from experience, is the only way to create a lasting
14 defeat of ISIL. And that is what the strategy is all about.

15 Senator Reed: General Dempsey, can you comment on your
16 perception of the situation in terms of Sunni forces in
17 Anbar Province particularly and the government in Baghdad's
18 relationship with them, expediting weapons, providing
19 support more than rhetorically but actually?

20 General Dempsey: I can, Senator. Thanks.

21 As the Secretary mentioned, the good intentions of
22 Prime Minister Abadi have not always been met with activity
23 at echelons or levels of bureaucracy beneath him. And so
24 there was a period of time when, frankly, we had the
25 capability to bring them in but we could not generate the

1 recruits. That situation has improved I think probably as a
2 result of their failure in Ramadi, and what we see now is a
3 renewed effort by the prime minister to empower his ISF, his
4 Iraqi Security Force, leaders to reach out to the Sunni
5 tribes and to arm them. It is our policy to do that through
6 the central government, not directly because our objective
7 is a unified Iraq. If it became clear that that was not
8 going to happen, we would have to reconsider the campaign.

9 Senator Reed: One of the observations is the
10 leadership at the tactical level all the way up to brigade
11 and division of the Iraqi Security Forces continually seems
12 to be unimpressive. Are there active changes going on right
13 now to ensure that the leadership at the brigade/division
14 level is competent? In fact, it is just startling because
15 it appears that ISIL -- in fact, there was some indication
16 there were former Ba'athist officers operating with them --
17 are much more operationally and tactically capable than the
18 Iraqi Security Forces. Your comments.

19 General Dempsey: I do, sir. You know, we tend to look
20 at the tactical shifting and who owns how much territory and
21 how many airstrikes, for example. But we also need to watch
22 Iraqi leadership changes. Recently we received an open
23 source report that their chief of defense would be retired.
24 We consider that to be a very positive thing. There are
25 issues up and down the chain of command.

1 We also watch carefully the distribution of their
2 budget, how much money is going into the ministry of
3 defense, how much is going into the popular mobilization
4 force, how oil is being generated and the revenues shared.
5 We watch the influence of the ministry of defense, whether
6 the ISF is the dominant force for the Government of Iraq or
7 whether that dominance is shifting to the popular
8 mobilization forces, the relationship of the Iraqi army and
9 the Iraqi police, and we watch the activities of the Shia
10 militia. In every case, there are positive indications, and
11 in every case there are indications that concern us.

12 Senator Reed: Quickly, Mr. Secretary, because there is
13 just a moment left. The issues come up about the training
14 and equipping of forces going into Syria -- I would presume
15 the General might want to comment also -- that part of the
16 plan to insert these forces would be to protect them as much
17 as possible from any type of response, to focus them on ISIL
18 but also to put them in places in the country where they
19 would be much less likely to be engaged. But if they were
20 engaged, they would not only have the right to defend
21 themselves, but my presumption would be we would assist them
22 in defending themselves from attack. Is that a fair
23 estimate?

24 Secretary Carter: That is my feeling. That is what I
25 said, that I think we have an obligation to do so. You are

1 right. I do not expect that occasion to arise anytime soon.
2 And to get to the chairman's point earlier, in the very
3 first vetting, the thing, Mr. Chairman, that made the
4 numbers so small -- and I said the number is 60, and I can
5 look out at your faces and you have the same reaction I do,
6 which is that that is an awfully small number. Why is that
7 number so small, this in the first class? And the reason
8 for that has to do with the criteria we apply -- and some of
9 this is the law -- to these recruits. We do
10 counterintelligence screening. We make sure that they, for
11 example, are not going to pose a green on blue threat to
12 their trainers, that they do not have any history of
13 atrocities. These are all things that are required of us,
14 and that they are willing to engage in the campaign in a way
15 that is compliant with the law of armed conflict. All of
16 this is the legal and I would say principled -- I am not
17 arguing with it -- policies of the U.S. as far as those
18 fighters are concerned. And that is why 60 of them got out
19 the other end of the process.

20 Now, General Nagata, who is doing the training -- I
21 indicated he has got 7,000 more -- expects that we will do
22 better as we get better, and that number 60, which is not
23 impressive, will get larger over time as he learns more, to
24 get to the chairman's earlier point, about the groups that
25 are willing to cooperate with us. But when we do get them,

1 they will deserve our support and we will give our support
2 to them. It is going to take some time, obviously, to get
3 the numbers up to the point where they can really have an
4 effect.

5 Senator Reed: Thank you.

6 Secretary Carter: I should point out, by the way,
7 while we are talking about fighting in Syria, while these
8 numbers are small, this particular train and equip -- I just
9 need to point out that there are other capable ground forces
10 fighting both the regime and ISIL, some of which we can
11 support and do support with ISR, airstrikes, and so forth.
12 I gave the example of the Syrian Kurds. But we would like
13 to see more, and we are trying to get better at training
14 them because the number 60, as you all recognize, is not an
15 impressive number.

16 Senator Reed: Thank you.

17 Chairman McCain: Senator Sessions?

18 Senator Sessions: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 Mr. Secretary, this is a tough job you have undertaken,
20 but as my wife reminds me when I complain, do not blame me.
21 You asked for the job. But I am not sure you asked for it.
22 You were asked to take the job.

23 But at any rate, Senator McCain's opening comment is
24 exceedingly important. It goes to the key of what we are
25 here for. The whole purpose of this hearing is how to

1 confront and stop ISIS and the Levant. So we want to talk
2 about that, not all these other strategies, General Dempsey,
3 other threats around the world. We need a strategy on this
4 problem. And I am deeply disappointed. I do not see the
5 confidence in your testimony or General Dempsey's testimony.
6 I believe we are carrying out a strategy that the President
7 has, and I do not believe it has sufficient respect for the
8 use of military force necessary to be successful. I mean, I
9 hate to be a critic about this. This is important.

10 Senator McCain warned in 2011 we should not pull out
11 all our troops and we needed to remain engaged in that
12 country. And he has also warned you if we do it in
13 Afghanistan, the same thing is liable to happen there, both
14 of which would be tragedies of monumental proportions
15 considering how much we have invested, the soldiers General
16 Dempsey led in Iraq.

17 So I am not happy about this. I think "delusion" is a
18 word that is too accurate. So I just wanted to say that
19 here at the beginning. I hope we will get into more details
20 about what you plan to do to reverse this action. And at
21 some point, the President is going to have to change his
22 mind, it seems to me. He cannot just function based on a
23 campaign promise when the reality is different.

24 Secretary Carter: Would you like me to address that?
25 It is a very fair question. Let me just go back to the

1 issue of the strategy, and then I will say something about
2 Afghanistan.

3 The strategy for defeating ISIL on the ground in Syria
4 and Iraq is to train and then enable local forces. That
5 takes some time.

6 Senator Sessions: Well, I am aware of that. General
7 Dempsey was training the Iraqi forces 8 years ago. I
8 visited him in Iraq. That was his primary responsibility.
9 We have been training them for nearly a decade. And that is
10 not the problem right now. I think the problem is
11 confidence within the Iraqi Government and the Iraqi
12 soldiers that they are going to be supported and that they
13 are going to be victorious. And if they had that
14 confidence, you would get more recruits.

15 Secretary Carter: I agree with that, and that is what
16 was lacking under Maliki. You are absolutely right.

17 Senator Sessions: Well, you just said the strategy --
18 I believe you used the word "strategy" -- is to support
19 capable and motivated ground forces where we find them.
20 Well, I think General Stewart a few months ago testified,
21 the new Defense Intelligence Agency head, who was there in
22 the al Anbar region and led the effort that the forces --
23 when they turned it around in Iraq. General Dempsey, you
24 remember that effort. And he said, when pressed -- I felt
25 that he was reluctant because it was not the administration

1 policy. But he acknowledged that when you have embedded
2 soldiers, forward observers, the United States forces
3 embedded with troops moving out into combat situations, that
4 those Iraqi troops will perform better. Do you agree with
5 that, General Dempsey?

6 General Dempsey: I agree that there are points on the
7 battlefield where the presence of forward observers, JTACS,
8 embedded, SOF forces, would make them more capable.

9 Senator Sessions: So is our strategy now -- does it
10 remain that we will not do that?

11 General Dempsey: I can tell you that I have not
12 recommended it. Whether we do it or not, I am telling you
13 that I have not recommended it, Senator. And I can explain
14 why, if you would like.

15 Senator Sessions: Well, I would like to know why.

16 General Dempsey: Okay. Let us take the issue of
17 airpower because it seems to be the most prominent one. At
18 a similar period in the Afghanistan conflict in 2012, the
19 number of aircraft that returned with their ordnance because
20 there were not targets available on the ground was 83
21 percent. It is 65 percent in Iraq right now.

22 The JTACS and the special force observers are not a
23 silver bullet to the destruction of ISIL. The silver bullet
24 is getting the Iraqis to fight.

25 Senator Sessions: Well, I totally agree with that. I

1 just believe that if we had a few forces, a thousand forces,
2 in Mosul, Mosul never would have fallen. So now our policy
3 is to try to take back this territory? What is the
4 reluctance to use our special forces here?

5 This is what bothers me. I understand the problem in
6 Syria and I am dubious about what we ought to do about
7 Syria. I do not know. We probably should not have involved
8 ourselves in Libya. But we committed our Nation in Iraq,
9 General. We have been deeply committed for over a decade
10 there. So is it now our policy that you are refusing to
11 even allow special forces to be embedded with, say, two
12 special forces with 600 Iraqi troops in a battalion? You
13 are rejecting that idea?

14 General Dempsey: What I have recommended is that if we
15 find a unit which is led and is responsive and has an
16 offensive mission where we can enable them or increase their
17 likelihood of success, then I will make that recommendation.
18 But to restore or to put embedded advisors in on a habitual
19 basis, the environment is just not simply set to do that.
20 And by the way, it is not reluctance. We got 1,600 pilots
21 flying over Iraq and Syria today. We got 3,500 boots on the
22 ground doing train, advise, and assist.

23 Senator Sessions: So if we had a few advisors in the
24 Iraqi battalions, you are saying that that would not make a
25 positive impact on their morale and their capabilities to

1 actually win?

2 General Dempsey: What I am saying, Senator, is that
3 for a brief, temporal tactical gain, we should wait until we
4 see a strategic opportunity to do that.

5 Senator Sessions: Well, I would think if we started
6 having some wins, ISIS would have fewer recruits and we
7 would have better morale with the Iraqi recruits too and
8 they would fight better. It is the chicken and egg perhaps,
9 but I think it is very important. And I hope you will
10 reevaluate that and recommend to the President we do that
11 because I think without that, we are not going to be
12 effective.

13 Thank you very much.

14 Chairman McCain: Senator Manchin?

15 Senator Manchin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 Thanks to both of you for being here and the service to
17 our country. I appreciate it very much.

18 As you can tell, this is a pretty sensitive subject and
19 it is a very concerning subject to all of us.

20 As I go around the State of West Virginia, my little
21 State -- you know, it is a very hawkish State and a very
22 patriotic State and a lot of veterans -- I speak to all of
23 them. They are confused right now. They really are. And
24 you heard the frustration coming out.

25 But basically Iraq is not a united country. You have

1 the Sunnis, the Shiites, and the Kurds. And I think,
2 Secretary Carter, you have said that until they have the
3 will -- and I think, General Dempsey, you have said the same
4 thing -- until Iraq has the will to fight. But which group
5 has the will to fight to defend the other group? That is
6 what we are having a problem. And I think it has been said,
7 well, if you have a group that is fighting -- and the Kurds
8 want to fight -- why do we still have to make them go
9 through the Baghdad centralized government in order for them
10 to get the weapons they need to defend themselves and be
11 aggressive? So they are confused about that.

12 They are confused about in Syria trying to spend the
13 money to find people to train, when you acknowledge that we
14 only had 60 of them successful right now and the amount of
15 effort we are spending there. But yet, I think you said you
16 had the Syrian Kurds that were fighting and some things of
17 that sort.

18 I do not know. And then I am asked the question. They
19 said we continue to keep trying to train and arm the Iraqis,
20 and it seems like all they are doing is supplying ISIL with
21 the equipment that the Americans are giving them. And when
22 are we ever going to stop giving equipment to the people
23 that will not defend it and fight for it?

24 So I guess talking at your level, are you talking to
25 the White House about rethinking the whole Iraqi position as

1 far as one centralized government, one Iraq, or maybe a
2 separated Iraq?

3 Secretary Carter: I think we are all aware that it is
4 very difficult to govern Iraq in a multi-sectarian manner.
5 We thought about all the alternatives to that. I think we
6 all have actually for years, and I am sure all of you have
7 as well. We are trying to assist Prime Minister Abadi in
8 governing in a different way from the way Maliki governed
9 which, as Senator Sessions noted, led to the disintegration
10 of the Iraqi Security Forces, the sectarian coloration of
11 them, and that is what ultimately led to their collapse in
12 Sunni territory.

13 Senator Manchin: Secretary Carter, if I can ask this
14 question also along those lines. I have been asked the
15 question. You just reminded me. They said did we not see
16 signs that Maliki was incompetent, that he would have gone
17 strictly to a sectarian position, as he did, not for a
18 strong, united Iraq. With all the people we have had there,
19 did we not see that coming and could not have averted that
20 from happening?

21 Secretary Carter: I can only speak for myself in that
22 regard. I was not closely involved in it at the time. I
23 certainly had that concern about Mr. Maliki. And I know
24 that many of you met with him. I met with him several
25 times, and it was quite apparent to me.

1 Now, Prime Minister Abadi says he has a different
2 intention, which is to govern Iraq from the center but in a
3 decentralized enough way that the Kurds, the Sunnis, and the
4 Shia each have enough space to carry on their own welfare in
5 the way that they wish, but there is a single, integral
6 Iraqi state. And that is what he says he is working
7 towards, and we are supporting him in that regard. That is
8 why, for example, when we provide arms to the Kurds, we do
9 it with the consent of the Iraqi Government in order to
10 indicate that we support the idea of a single Iraqi
11 Government in Baghdad but we also want the Kurds in the
12 fight and armed. And that has not delayed our arming of the
13 Kurds.

14 Senator Manchin: It seems like the biggest problem we
15 have is with the Sunnis and the Shiites.

16 Secretary Carter: And then the Sunnis and the Shiites.
17 And this is why it is so important to take the time to train
18 a truly multi-sectarian Iraqi force. There are elements of
19 the Iraqi forces that have that right character, for
20 example, their CTS.

21 And so our strategy, just to go to the beginning, is to
22 train and equip those local forces. They are essential.
23 Then we can help them. And it is a chicken and egg thing
24 except that you need to have the capable and motivated
25 ground force. Then we can enable it rather than to

1 substitute for it, which does not lead to a lasting result.

2 Senator Manchin: I would think, General Dempsey, it
3 has been pointed out here that we have spent multiple years,
4 10 years plus, a trillion dollars, lost a lot of lives in
5 Iraq, and we had 100,000 troops there at one time trying to
6 train and defend and get them motivated. And that did not
7 work. So that is the hard question. I mean, how do you go
8 home and answer that? How do I go home and answer that we
9 are going to try this over again? Maybe we will do a better
10 job of retraining. I think that was the frustration you
11 have seen coming out of Senator Sessions.

12 General Dempsey: Well, sure, but I think it is
13 probably worth mentioning that my judgment about how this
14 will evolve over time is that it is a generational issue.
15 It is trans-regional, Senator. There are elements of it in
16 Afghanistan. We see it in Iraq and Syria. We see it in the
17 Sinai. We see it in Libya. And we cannot just focus like a
18 laser beam on one part of it. There has to be pressure to
19 cross it. And so what we are trying to do is achieve an
20 enduring defeat, which means we have got to work it through
21 partners because they have more to gain and more to lose.
22 And finally, we have got to find a sustainable level of
23 effort since I do believe this is a generational challenge.

24 Senator Manchin: I just think that basically my
25 question would be, overall are we trying to defend the

1 British lines that were drawn 100 years ago and putting
2 people in a territory that they do not believe that that is
3 their country? I mean, why are we forcing something upon
4 people that do not want to accept it?

5 General Dempsey: I will just follow up with you. I
6 also share that concern, that the Mideast will never be the
7 Mideast again. And so everything that I recommend to the
8 Secretary and to the President is recommended with the
9 intention of being flexible enough that we can build upon it
10 if we do find that inclusive national unity government in
11 Iraq or not.

12 Senator Manchin: Thank you.

13 Chairman McCain: I cannot help but mention the
14 situation was stabilized after the surge and we had won.
15 And we predicted if everybody was pulled out, that the
16 situation would descend into chaos. It is a fact that
17 thanks to General Petraeus and the surge and great
18 sacrifice, the Iraq war was won. And to ignore that in that
19 conversation, General Dempsey, is to me intellectually
20 dishonest.

21 Senator Ayotte?

22 Senator Reed: Mr. Chairman, just for the record,
23 President George W. Bush signed an agreement with the Maliki
24 government to withdraw all forces.

25 Chairman McCain: We will have this debate later on,

1 but it was clear that we could have and everybody knows they
2 could have and the people who were there know they could
3 have.

4 Senator Ayotte?

5 Senator Ayotte: I want to thank both of you for being
6 here, for your service to the country. We appreciate it.

7 I wanted to ask you, Secretary Carter. You had said in
8 answer to Senator Manchin that in fact the arms that we are
9 providing to the Kurds, we are doing so with the consent of
10 the Iraqi central government. Does that mean we are doing
11 it directly or are we going still through the Iraqi central
12 government?

13 Secretary Carter: First of all, we are not the only
14 ones. But we and others basically convey the weapons
15 directly to the Kurds, but we inform the Iraqi Government
16 and get their formal consent to it. So it does not delay
17 the arming of the Kurds. We are trying to stick up for
18 basically the central government.

19 Senator Ayotte: Because previously we had heard
20 complaints about it originally going through the Iraqi
21 central government and then to the Kurds. So I am glad to
22 hear that we are directly providing it to the Kurds, letting
23 the Iraqi central government know what we are providing.

24 Secretary Carter: Mr. Barzhani was here in town. You
25 may have met with him a few weeks ago. And he was grateful

1 for what was being provided, and he noted that the delays,
2 which was the principal problem that were experienced early
3 on, are not being experienced now either in the shipment of
4 our equipment or that of others, for example, the Germans
5 providing anti-tank munitions, which they value very much.

6 But we are trying to stick up for the principle that
7 Iraq is a single, unitary, multi-sectarian state, and
8 difficult as that may be, that is much preferred to the
9 alternative, which is the sectarian disintegration of Iraq.

10 Senator Ayotte: Let me follow up. So clearly the
11 Kurds are capable and motivated. And at this point, are
12 they receiving all of the weapons that they have asked for?
13 Because as I understood it, ISIS unfortunately has captured
14 some of the armaments that we left in Iraq and some of them
15 heavy armaments. The Kurds are quite effective, but it is
16 hard if you are out-armed. And are they now receiving --
17 what have they requested that we are not providing? And if
18 so, why?

19 Secretary Carter: I will let Chairman Dempsey answer
20 that.

21 Again, just to say it is not just us. I think there
22 are more than 12 nations overall arming the Kurds. And I
23 noted I was with the German defense minister over in Germany
24 last week, and she was providing to the Kurds these critical
25 anti-tank weapons of a kind the Germans make that is

1 especially effective. So it is not just us. And the Kurds
2 are an example of what we are looking for, which is an
3 effective ground force that will stick up for itself, hold
4 together, take and hold territory. And that is why we are
5 providing them with support.

6 Senator Ayotte: So we agree with that. I think that
7 there has been broad agreement on that, and so we just want
8 to make sure that they have what they need.

9 General Dempsey: Senator, I am not aware of anything
10 that they have asked for that we have not provided. We
11 probably have not provided in the quantity that they may
12 have desired, MRAP's for example, and we are working to
13 address those quantity issues.

14 Senator Ayotte: I wanted to follow up on a different
15 topic because, General Dempsey, you mentioned in your
16 testimony some of the other challenges we face around the
17 world, including the malign influence of Iran. And recently
18 -- I read it today in the press that in fact Iran was
19 actually pushing for the lifting of the arms embargo at the
20 UN and also the resolution that bans Iran from developing
21 ballistic missiles. So I wanted to get both of your
22 thoughts on those two issues. As we look at Iran's malign
23 influence in the region, as far as I can tell, we still see
24 Iran not only supporting the Assad regime, Hezbollah, the
25 Huthi rebels, and also we have heard reports on the Taliban

1 undermining our interests. So your thoughts on those two
2 issues?

3 Secretary Carter: I will start, Marty, if it is okay.

4 You are right. I cannot speak to what is going on in
5 the negotiations. Secretary Kerry is conducting those
6 negotiations. But I agree with your perspective, namely
7 that we have serious concerns with Iranian malign activities
8 outside of the nuclear issue, which is the focus of those
9 talks. And it is in several different locations around the
10 region. And whatever happens as far as an agreement over
11 the nuclear program with respect to Iran is concerned, I
12 think we -- and certainly I feel this -- have a clear duty
13 in the Department of Defense, first of all, to defend our
14 friends and allies, keep a robust posture in the Gulf -- our
15 friends and allies, to include especially Israel -- maintain
16 our robust posture, and continue to maintain the military
17 means to strike Iran's nuclear program if we were ordered to
18 do so. We work on all three of those things, and we will
19 work on them whether or not an agreement is reached in
20 Geneva.

21 Senator Ayotte: So just to be clear, Mr. Secretary, it
22 does not sound like, based on what you are saying, given
23 their malign activities in the region, that it would be a
24 good idea to lift the arms embargo right now on what Iran
25 receives. Would you agree with me on that?

1 Secretary Carter: No. We want them to continue to be
2 isolated as a military and limited in terms of the kind of
3 equipment and materiel they are able to get.

4 Senator Ayotte: And also, can you explain to us why is
5 it important that we also continue to stop them from having
6 an ICBM program? Because we know they have one.

7 Secretary Carter: Yes. Well, the reason that we want
8 to stop Iran from having an ICBM program is that the "I" in
9 ICBM stands for "intercontinental," which means having the
10 capability to fly from Iran to the United States, and we do
11 not want that. That is why we oppose ICBM's.

12 Chairman, do you want to add anything on any of those
13 points?

14 General Dempsey: Just to answer your question because
15 you posed it to both of us. Under no circumstances should
16 we relieve pressure on Iran relative to ballistic missile
17 capabilities and arms trafficking.

18 Senator Ayotte: Thank you.

19 I also just wanted to point out something, Secretary
20 Carter, when the chairman had asked you about the defense
21 authorization. One thing that I think needs to be pointed
22 out, the President has said he will veto it. The defense
23 authorization received 71 votes in the Senate. I would
24 describe that as very bipartisan. So it troubles me that he
25 would seek to veto something that received 71 votes.

1 Chairman McCain: Senator Donnelly?

2 Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 General, thank you. Mr. Secretary, thank you.

4 I just got back from Iraq with Senator Kaine, who led
5 our trip. And one of the meetings we had was with a number
6 of the Sunni tribal leaders, and some of them were from the
7 Haditha area. And in talking to them, they said, we have
8 stood with you. We have faith with you, but we have people
9 who are now eating grass in our town. We have no food. We
10 have no supplies. And we have been told the only airlifts
11 that can come in would be on military transport. Is there
12 anything you can do to help feed our people? And so I
13 wanted to put that before you to see if there is something
14 we can do to be of aid to these individuals.

15 Secretary Carter: I will say something about that and
16 then ask the Chairman if he wants to add.

17 First of all, I want to thank you, Senator Donnelly,
18 also Senator Kaine, for traveling there. We appreciate it.
19 On behalf of the 3,550 members of our armed forces that are
20 in Iraq and conducting this fight, thank you for taking the
21 time to go visit them this Fourth of July weekend.

22 The humanitarian situation is yet another tragic
23 consequence of what has gone on in ISIL. It remains one of
24 the coalition's efforts, as I indicated in my opening
25 statement, to relieve the humanitarian situation. That is

1 very difficult to do when there is not order and control on
2 the ground. And so this is why we need to get a security
3 situation that is stable, ground forces that are capable of
4 seizing territory, holding territory, and governing. That
5 is the only way to get the humanitarian situation turned
6 around either in Iraq or in Syria. It is very sad and it is
7 tragic. In the case of Iraq, as has been noted, something
8 brought about by the reemergence of sectarianism in a really
9 tragic way.

10 Chairman, do you want to add anything?

11 General Dempsey: One of the reasons we went to
12 Taqaddum Air Base, also locally called Habineyeh, is to
13 advise and assist in the Anbar operations center, which is
14 where these kind of issues should actually migrate through.
15 You should be interested to know the Iraqis have the
16 capability to address that. They have C-130J, you know,
17 state-of-the-art --

18 Senator Donnelly: I know they do but they are not.

19 General Dempsey: Yes. Well, we will pass it to the
20 guy who is embedded.

21 Senator Donnelly: And when you are hungry, you know,
22 your stomach does not tell you want Iraqi food or U.S. food.
23 You just want help. And one of the bonds created with these
24 tribal leaders is they said, we have always felt we could
25 count on you.

1 And to follow up on that, as we look at Ramadi and
2 other areas in the Iraqi armed forces, one of the great
3 tragedies of this whole thing was that the number of ISIS
4 fighters in Ramadi was extraordinarily insignificant in
5 terms of the overall number, but the Iraqi forces headed the
6 other way. And so I wanted to hear your thoughts on making
7 sure that the Iraqi forces know that there is no back door
8 anymore. There is only one way through Ramadi and that is
9 forward.

10 Secretary Carter: I will say something about that, and
11 then, Chairman, you may want to add.

12 The way you recount the fall of Ramadi is exactly
13 correct. Ramadi needs to be retaken, and the way to do it
14 is to have a force under the competent command and control
15 of Iraqi Security Forces commanders, which has been a
16 challenge, and a plan and the means to, as you say, make
17 sure that they do not bog down and they are able to take
18 Ramadi and move through Ramadi. This will be a test of the
19 competence of the Iraqi Security Forces, and it is a test
20 that they must pass. And therefore, our and the coalition's
21 involvement is to try to train and equip and support them to
22 be successful, and we are going to take the time and
23 encourage them to take the time so that the operation, when
24 they do conduct it, is successful.

25 Senator Donnelly: One of the side spin-offs, when it

1 is successful and Ramadi is taken back, is that ISIS will
2 then look for a quick PR claim somewhere else. And so I
3 just want to make sure that we are ready in surrounding
4 towns and in surrounding areas, that when Ramadi falls, we
5 know they are going to step somewhere else and that we have
6 a plan in place to protect those other towns as well.

7 General Dempsey: The Ramadi campaign which about a
8 month ago was about to be executed precipitously, actually
9 with our help, is now a very deliberate campaign, first to
10 isolate it and then to go back and recapture it with a
11 supporting effort in Fallujah. So our presence in the Anbar
12 operations center is allowing the Iraqi Security Forces to
13 take a more deliberate campaign approach and to avoid the
14 very toothpaste aspect of the way ISIL squirts around the
15 battlefield when you squeeze it in one place and it turns up
16 in another. But this is very much us helping them
17 understand the threat and formulate a campaign to address it
18 so that they get credit for it and that they become credible
19 to the people of Al Anbar Province.

20 Senator Donnelly: Well, as I am sure you know, the
21 Sunni tribal leaders -- they have a tremendous value for the
22 relationship they have established over the years with the
23 United States, established in blood and treasure. And so
24 what gives them confidence more than anything is knowing
25 that not that our soldiers are in the front, not that our

1 soldiers are in the combat, but that we are there to help
2 guide and help provide advice and help provide a plan and
3 help provide air cover is the other thing that they talked
4 to us about. They said, you have no idea how our spirits
5 soar when we see your air assets. And so they want to make
6 sure that all of that is going to be in place as we move
7 forward. Then they are willing to buy in. If not, they
8 feel their families are exposed.

9 One last thing I wanted to ask you -- I see my time is
10 running short -- and that is in Syria. You do not have to
11 answer this. I will ask it on a second round. You know,
12 the question comes up so when Assad goes, if Assad goes, how
13 does the space get filled with people who we think can be of
14 help as opposed to Nusra or ISIS? And I know that is the
15 tremendous challenge you have too. And it seems like we are
16 getting further behind the curve as opposed to in front of
17 the curve on that question.

18 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 Chairman McCain: Senator Cotton?

20 Senator Cotton: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

21 Mr. Secretary, Mr. Chairman, thank you for appearing
22 today, for your testimony.

23 I would like to associate myself with the remarks that
24 Chairman McCain made earlier today about arming the
25 Ukrainian Government. He and I traveled there last month,

1 as far as east as we could go to Dnipopetrovsk. We saw very
2 brave and skilled soldiers. We saw them doing things like
3 constructing unmanned aerial vehicles out of Styrofoam to
4 meet their needs. And in addition to the lethal aid they
5 need, they also still need a substantial amount of nonlethal
6 aid. Some soldiers have the improved first aid kits that
7 our soldiers have been carrying overseas. Some soldiers
8 have first aid kits that look like they came out of the prop
9 scenes in MASH, in addition to radar systems and radios and
10 so forth.

11 But moving on to the Islamic State, one point that I do
12 not think has been discussed here today is the Islamic State
13 in Egypt. There have been a series of spectacular terrorist
14 attacks in the Sinai peninsula. The Islamic State takes
15 credit for those attacks. We still have the multinational
16 force and observers in the Sinai peninsula, almost 1,800
17 soldiers, 1,200 of which are American personnel.

18 Secretary Carter, General Dempsey, can you explain to
19 us what steps we have taken to ensure that our troops in the
20 Sinai peninsula are adequately protected and are working
21 with the Egyptian security forces to not just defend
22 themselves, to try to defeat the Islamic State in the Sinai
23 peninsula?

24 Secretary Carter: Thank you. Let me address the
25 Ukraine part first, and then the Chairman can address Sinai.

1 First of all, thank you for going to Ukraine. I have
2 been there many times. The government there and the people
3 there, particularly in the western part of Ukraine --
4 Vladimir Putin's conduct there has had the opposite of
5 whatever effect he thought it might have in terms of
6 attracting Ukraine in the direction of Russia. He has
7 strengthened the feeling among Ukrainians, particularly in
8 the western part of the country, that they want to have a
9 future that they determine, that is not determined from
10 outside.

11 To get to your point, we are constantly assessing --
12 and this gets back to the chairman's earlier point -- the
13 kind of assistance that we provide to the Ukrainians. The
14 principal kind of assistance, however -- I will come back to
15 the military part in a moment, but I cannot emphasize the
16 importance of economic assistance to Ukraine, and that is
17 largely in the hands of the Europeans and so also are the
18 sanctions against Russia. And that is really the main
19 event, and I cannot emphasize enough the importance of that
20 because that is mostly a matter for the EU rather than the
21 United States. We are less directly involved, but we
22 certainly support the EU both in its sanctions against
23 Russia, which we share, but theirs are more important
24 because their volume of trade is greater, and also their
25 efforts to strengthen the Ukrainian Government and economy,

1 support reform there and the independence of Ukraine.

2 I did talk to, as I mentioned, the defense minister
3 there about what he needed, and his principal focus was on
4 training. So as I said, we will constantly reassess that,
5 but we are assessing that. And I am open to what we do in
6 the future. I have indicated that. I continue to indicate
7 that. But his emphasis was on training, and we have
8 trainers now in Yavoriv, which is the principal training
9 range there. That is much appreciated. He was asking me
10 and us for more of that kind of training. I think we will
11 continue to do that and to support the Ukrainian military.

12 I should say that the defense minister of Ukraine used
13 to be the interior minister, which is a very good
14 combination because the Russian and separatist threat is a
15 hybrid kind of threat, hybrid in the sense that it is
16 signified by the little green men phenomenon, a combination
17 of the exercise of malign influence through sort of KGB-type
18 tactics on the one hand and battlefield operations on the
19 other. And he is somebody who really understands that kind
20 of hybrid warfare. That is really where he wants our help.

21 Senator Cotton: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. I do not
22 mean to cut you off, but I do have other questions.

23 General Dempsey: On the MFO, about 9 months ago,
24 anticipating and watching the intel stream about the
25 radicalization of the Sinai and the fact that the Egyptian

1 armed forces had moved resources to their western border, we
2 actually did a joint staff integrated vulnerability
3 assessment. And as a result of that, we introduced Blue
4 Force Tracker raid towers, changed movement techniques,
5 enhanced their communications, put in some counter-mortar
6 radars, things that you are very familiar with.

7 We also have been in touch with our Egyptian armed
8 forces colleagues. They have increased the number of
9 Egyptian -- they have brought back Egyptian armed forces
10 into the Sinai. They accompany us on our movements when we
11 make them. And of course, we recently released some of the
12 capabilities that have been withheld from them so that they
13 could address their terrorist threat in the Sinai.

14 Senator Cotton: You are confident that American
15 personnel in the Sinai currently has adequate protection
16 against terrorist there?

17 General Dempsey: I am confident that they are
18 adequately protected today, but I fully expect that threat
19 to increase. And in fact, I recently had a conversation
20 with the Secretary about the future of the MFO mission
21 which, as you know, really has not changed in the last 50
22 years.

23 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

24 I would now like to move to the heart of the Middle
25 East and the Islamic State. For the record, I think the

1 Islamic State is a grave and growing threat. But until they
2 develop their own ballistic missile program and until they
3 have thousands of centrifuges and tons of uranium, I believe
4 the Islamic Republic will be a graver threat than the
5 Islamic State, that is, the Islamic Republic of Iran. My
6 objections to the course we have taken in the nuclear
7 negotiations are well known, and I will not repeat them
8 here. But I will note that Iran remains an anti-American,
9 terror-sponsoring outlaw regime that is responsible for the
10 deaths of hundreds of Americans from Lebanon to Iraq,
11 Afghanistan.

12 General Dempsey, you served three different tours in or
13 associated with Iraq. How many American soldiers died at
14 the hands of Iranian militias or explosively formed
15 projectiles during your command?

16 General Dempsey: Yes. I recently heard both the Chief
17 of Staff of the Army and the current CENTCOM Commander put
18 that number at about 500.

19 Senator Cotton: Hundreds of Americans died and
20 probably thousands were wounded or suspected of being
21 wounded. What should we say to their families, the families
22 who lost soldiers at the hands of Iranian militias or
23 Iranian roadside bombs, once we reach a deal that is going
24 to give Iran tens of billions of dollars in sanctions relief
25 and international legitimacy without them changing their

1 behavior?

2 General Dempsey: I would tell you what I have told
3 them, is that solving the nuclear issue diplomatically is a
4 positive outcome. But make no mistake about it. There are
5 at least five other malign activities in which Iran is
6 engaged that cause me grave security concerns, and we will
7 not take our eye off those five. And you know what they
8 are: ballistic missiles, sea-based mines, cyber activities,
9 arms trafficking, and surrogates and proxies.

10 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

11 Chairman McCain: Senator Hirono?

12 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 Thank you, Secretary Carter and General Dempsey, for
14 being here and for your commitment.

15 General Dempsey, you testified before the House Armed
16 Services Committee that -- I quote -- I would not recommend
17 we put U.S. forces in harm's way -- where you were talking
18 about Iraq -- simply to stiffen the spine of local forces.
19 You continued, if their spine is not stiffened by the threat
20 of ISIL on their way of life, nothing we do is going to
21 stiffen their spine.

22 So, General Dempsey, what is it going to take to
23 stiffen the spines of the local forces?

24 General Dempsey: Actually, Senator, what I said was
25 that if it takes us to stiffen their spine in the face of a

1 threat that is existential to them, then it does not seem to
2 me that they are going to be stiffened.

3 But I do think -- you asked me what -- the things that
4 we are doing -- and I mentioned a few of them earlier about
5 expanding our network of points where we touch them, help
6 them train, and help them target, and help them understand
7 how they integrate with each other, army and police -- I
8 think those things have had the effect of giving them
9 greater confidence. I just made the point that I do not
10 think the added step of accompanying them into combat would
11 make a strategic difference except if we get to the point
12 where there is a major offensive that we think could be
13 increased in terms of its probability of success by our
14 presence.

15 Senator Hirono: So as far as you are concerned, we are
16 doing those -- taking those steps that will enable them to
17 be able to fight for themselves because I agree with you
18 that there is no number of our troops that we can send there
19 that will result in a lasting kind of situation.

20 You also talked about your recent trip to Israel where
21 you discussed various scenarios involving Assad's departure.
22 I do not know whether Assad's departure is anywhere in the
23 near future, but let us assume that there is a departure.
24 How would his departure affect the dynamics of what happens
25 in Syria? Would ISIL step in to fill the power vacuum? And

1 how would Assad's departure change our strategy regarding
2 ISIL?

3 General Dempsey: So let me tell you about our military
4 planning efforts. our Israeli counterparts and our
5 Jordanian counterparts very much believe that the
6 possibility of either the regime collapsing or enclaving
7 itself in Tardis, Latakia, Homs, and Hama is possible. And
8 so they were very eager to have consultations with us about
9 what that would precipitate. And your description of it is
10 one that at least our regional partners express, which is to
11 say we do not want this to be a foot race, if it occurs,
12 between Al Nusra and ISIL and Ansara, all of these other
13 groups converging on Damascus.

14 I will not sit here today and tell you that I have the
15 answer to that, but I will tell you that we are in
16 consultations, even as I sit here, with the Turks, the
17 Israelis, and the Jordanians about that scenario.

18 Senator Hirono: So what you are doing is to prepare
19 for that possible eventuality and to ensure that these other
20 groups do not just step in and take over. But let us say
21 that -- well, let me put it this way. If Assad departs,
22 does that somehow make our mission against ISIL simpler,
23 easier to target? Is that a way to think about it?

24 General Dempsey: I am on a roll. That is a subject of
25 great debate actually. The debate is framed somewhat this

1 way. Is the presence of Assad the catalyst for these
2 issues, these radical ideologies, and violent extremist
3 organizations? Or did they emanate somehow else and they
4 simply use the presence of the Assad regime as a recruiting
5 tool? Depending on how you answer that question will
6 largely shape how you think about solving the problems.

7 The situation militarily is such that what we are
8 trying to provide with partners is options, that is to say,
9 we are trying to form a network of partners, partners that
10 we may not have conceived before like the YPG, the Syrian
11 Kurds in and around Kobani and over to the east bank of the
12 Euphrates River. We are trying to provide options that will
13 allow us to shape and to react, depending on what the
14 internal situation -- how it evolves, and we are working
15 most closely with those who border Syria who have, again,
16 the most to gain and the most to lose.

17 Senator Hirono: Turning to the training that we are
18 doing with the moderate Syrian forces, we recognize that you
19 are having great difficulty while training not only the
20 Syrians but also in Iraq. And you have described this as a
21 generational challenge. So while we are slowly training the
22 local forces to fight for themselves, what are some of the
23 other things that we need to be doing contemporaneously? Is
24 it those nine action items that need to be occurring at the
25 same time as --

1 Secretary Carter: It is. For example, Senator, if I
2 may, in recognition of the fact that it is going to take
3 some time to build the forces that defeat ISIL in the
4 territory of Syria and Iraq, that is a fact. We are going
5 to do that. I am sure we will be successful at that, but it
6 is going to take some time. We need to defend ourselves in
7 the meantime because there are parts of ISIL that would like
8 to attack us and our friends around the world. And that is
9 where Homeland Security and the FBI and the rest of our
10 efforts to protect ourselves come in. So on the one hand,
11 we need to go to the territory where ISIL arose and defeat
12 it there, and we will do that. But at the same time and in
13 the meantime, we need to continue to defend our people and
14 our country against these guys. And some of them have the
15 ambition to go to Syria, train, and come back to the United
16 States. You see that already in Europe. We see some signs
17 of that in the United States.

18 And that is why I was so laborious in describing the
19 nine lines of effort. The ones we are talking about that we
20 have principal responsibility are two of those nine. But
21 the others really are critical as well because, as Senator
22 Cotton said a moment ago, ISIL is a grave threat. These
23 guys do want to do us harm and our friends and allies in the
24 region.

25 If I can say something about this. You asked about the

1 Assad regime and the Chairman answered that. Obviously,
2 what we would like to see occur is for Assad to leave the
3 scene but for the state of Syria not to disintegrate
4 completely because we know what is down that road:
5 sectarian disintegration. Now, that is a diplomatic task
6 that is underway, as the Chairman indicated, and that is the
7 outcome that would be by far preferable I think not only for
8 the United States and our national security interests, but
9 for the people of Syria who are suffering so terribly now.
10 There are so many refugees and it is really a tragic
11 situation in the human sense. But Assad needs to go, but
12 the structures of governance need to stay or we hope they
13 will stay because we know what life is like without
14 structures of governance in the Middle East.

15 Senator Hirono: Thank you.

16 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 Chairman McCain: Senator Rounds?

18 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 Gentlemen, first of all, let me just say thank you for
20 your service to the country.

21 We find ourselves, as you have stated, in a very
22 precarious position in a number of areas. General Dempsey,
23 as I sat here and listened to your assessment of the world
24 today from your point of view, it was alarming to find at
25 location after location we find ourselves being challenged

1 and we find ourselves being pressured into positions that
2 perhaps 10 years ago we would not have found ourselves in,
3 whether it be with regard to the Pacific Rim areas or
4 whether we find ourselves in the Ukraine area and so forth.
5 Our challenges are many. Yet, at the same time, it does not
6 appear that this has come in as a surprise.

7 As you moved farther along and specifically into the
8 area that we had today, which was in terms of our challenges
9 with ISIL and defeating ISIL, it seems to me that we have
10 found ourselves once again in a position where there really
11 were not surprises. But I am just curious. The Secretary
12 stated that in Iraq, the Iraqi Security Forces were severely
13 degraded after four divisions dissolved and Mosul fell a
14 year ago this June. The Secretary was not in his position
15 at the time. You were, sir. Was that a surprise to you?

16 General Dempsey: Well, they collapsed because of poor
17 governance and sectarianism. I was surprised at the
18 rapidity of it. And I suppose I would suggest to you that
19 the degree to which the leadership had been changed out for
20 all the wrong reasons by the Maliki government were the
21 conditions under which that occurred.

22 Senator Rounds: If the four divisions that were lost
23 there -- if they were there today, would four divisions --
24 does that make a difference between us moving forward with
25 the defeat of ISIS, or is that not the right number? What

1 is the right number that it is going to take in terms of
2 boots on the ground, not American boots on the ground, but
3 literally allied forces on the ground? What is the number
4 that it takes in order to move forward with whatever
5 strategies are in place if there are strategies in place?
6 And I am assuming that we will get into that. What is the
7 number that we want to see on the ground?

8 General Dempsey: The Commander of CENTCOM has
9 testified that to recapture Mosul eventually, he believes he
10 will need approximately nine brigades worth of security
11 forces, six from the Government of Iraq and three from the
12 Kurdish region. That would be for Mosul. And then, of
13 course, restoration of the border, which would be the
14 ultimate step, restoration of their sovereign territory
15 defined as the border between Syria and Iraq, that would be
16 largely a federal police or border issue, and I am not aware
17 that that number has been identified. But the initial goal
18 is to form or re-green, re-equip nine brigades.

19 Senator Rounds: What is the time frame that that can
20 be accomplished in?

21 General Dempsey: Putting a temporal dimension on this
22 is risky at best. Because the campaign is dependent on a
23 coalition and it is dependent on the network of actors that
24 include the Sunni tribes, the Iraqi Security Forces
25 themselves, the counter-terrorist service, and the Kurds,

1 the act of describing when those groups could all come
2 together to establish the conditions to do this is just
3 difficult to pin down. Even if I knew the answer to that
4 question, I would be loathe to report it to you in an open
5 hearing. But I have said from the beginning that it was
6 probably a 3-year effort to restore sovereignty to Iraq, and
7 we are 8 months into that.

8 Senator Rounds: You know, General, we pride ourselves
9 and then we point out the fact that we truly do have the
10 greatest fighting force the world has ever seen. And yet,
11 right now we find ourselves, as the President stated some
12 time ago -- he called ISIS the Jayvee team. Clearly that is
13 not the position that I think the administration would take
14 today. We have identified that they are clearly a threat.

15 We have identified a nine-point plan here, Mr.
16 Secretary, in which you have identified all of the things
17 that have to happen, including the defense of our country
18 from these individuals. At what point during this 3-year
19 time frame -- or what is the possibility during this 3-year
20 time frame that the patience that you have shown, General,
21 and that the Secretary has alluded to here to build this up
22 -- what is the probability that this time frame gets away
23 from us? Are we in the position to make this thing last for
24 3 years without literally upping on our own point in order
25 to defend ourselves? At what point does it look like we are

1 going to have to amp this thing up using our own resources
2 to a greater degree than what we have today?

3 General Dempsey: I said 3 years for Iraq, and I have
4 also described ISIL in general as a generational problem
5 because of its allure in, notably, the Sunni sect of Islam.
6 Look, we just have to have a Sunni partner in order to
7 address this challenge of ISIL. And so although I have said
8 3 years for Iraq, it is more like a generation, which I
9 suppose is loosely defined as 20 years, to address the
10 violent extremist allure of ISIL in the Sunni world, and
11 that allure will only be stripped away when someone actually
12 takes care of them and governs them.

13 But to your question, are there points at which we
14 should and would consider the introduction of additional
15 U.S. military combat capabilities? The answer is yes. I
16 think you have seen us do that in the raid that we conducted
17 into Syria to capture and kill the group affiliated with Abu
18 Sayyaf, the financial network of ISIL. And I think that we
19 are always on the alert or always on the lookout for those
20 opportunities and can use our capabilities as necessary to
21 deal with those.

22 Senator Rounds: You feel that you are in a politically
23 appropriate position and that you would have the backing to
24 step in when needed to take care of the problem when the
25 time is right?

1 General Dempsey: I cannot answer what answer I would
2 receive. I have the confidence that my recommendation would
3 be accepted and debated in the context of everything else we
4 are doing.

5 General Dempsey: Let me out here if I may, Senator. I
6 think that part of our strategy is to look for opportunities
7 to do more in the sense of creating capable ground forces
8 that we can support. So we kind of welcome those
9 opportunities. We are taking those opportunities in the
10 case of Syria. So I do not want to speak for the Chairman,
11 but in terms of is the opportunity to do more in that sense,
12 not as a substitute for local people, but as a way of
13 enabling them and assisting them, that really is the
14 strategy. So I think we welcome those opportunities when we
15 find them. We are trying to create those opportunities in
16 the Sunni areas, as was noted earlier. We are taking some
17 opportunities in the Kurdish area, and we hope that we have
18 more, including in Syria.

19 Senator Rounds: Mr. Chairman, my time has expired, but
20 I would make one comment, and that is it appears to me that
21 if our strategy is waiting on other people to get their
22 stuff in order, it does not seem to be as practical as
23 taking advantage of and literally going out and proactively
24 taking care of the problem, if need be. And we have got the
25 greatest fighting force in the world, and the last thing in

1 the world I want to see is to have them engage boots on the
2 ground. But if it means boots on the ground or additional
3 folks there fighting there, as opposed to having a
4 successful attack on this homeland, then I think we all
5 agree on what we ought to be doing. And I just hope that
6 the strategy includes that as a possibility.

7 Chairman McCain: Senator Heinrich?

8 Senator Heinrich: Secretary, Chairman, welcome to you
9 both. Thank you very much for your service.

10 Let me start by saying that surge or no surge, I think
11 it is pretty clear, at least to my constituents, that the
12 Iraq war remains one of the greatest U.S. foreign policy
13 mistakes of the last century and one that I hope we have
14 learned a few lessons from.

15 I want to follow up, Secretary, on what Senator Hirono
16 raised. And one lesson that I believe we should have
17 learned by now is that eliminating one terrible Middle
18 Eastern dictator can too often lead to even more brutal
19 influences filling the leadership vacuum. We have seen that
20 play out too many times. We have seen it to some extent in
21 both Iraq and Libya.

22 Should we be concerned that Syria post-Assad reality
23 could create a vacuum that ISIL is in a far better position
24 to fill than any of the other regional forces? I think we
25 should be almost as concerned with forces like Al-Nusra

1 Front. And if Assad does fall, should we not have more than
2 discussions on the table? Should we not have a plan to make
3 sure that some amount of governance remains particularly in
4 Damascus?

5 Secretary Carter: Well, yes, we should and we do.
6 That is our strategy with respect to the political
7 transition. Now, for reasons that are easy to understand,
8 our influence with Bashar Assad -- ours, that is, U.S.
9 influence -- is not great. And so we are trying to
10 influence those who would influence him to remove himself
11 from the government of Damascus while keeping intact the
12 structures of governance for the very reason you adduce,
13 which is we know what happens in these Middle Eastern
14 countries when the structures of government disintegrate.
15 And we would like to not see that happen in Syria, even
16 though we know that the persistence of Assad at the helm in
17 Damascus is in fact a fuel for ISIS and others who are
18 fighting him. So he needs to go to remove that fuel, but we
19 do not want to see the structures of governance go at the
20 same time. And that is the challenge, but that is what we
21 are trying to achieve.

22 Senator Heinrich: Well, I think that is certainly the
23 right goal. I just want to make sure we are prepared for
24 that because we have sort of missed that ball in the past.
25 And Syria is an enormous country, and if we saw Damascus

1 lose its governance capability, the implications for the
2 entire region and the world would be enormous.

3 Secretary Carter, as you mentioned as well, to be
4 successful on the ground against ISIL, the fight needs to be
5 led by local capable ground forces. I do not think we
6 should give in to impatience. These should not be Western
7 forces. These should not be American forces. We have
8 certainly heard that from our partners in places like
9 Jordan. This means that we have to place a great deal of
10 emphasis on training motivated and reliable partners, and
11 you have gone a little bit over the small number of Iraqi
12 Security Forces recruited, what some of those challenges
13 are, the bottleneck related to the vetting process.

14 But are there other factors that you would attribute
15 for the lack of trainees? And I guess one of the questions
16 I have related to that is what steps, in addition to the
17 steps that you are taking, is the Iraqi Government taking to
18 address the shortfall in order to meet those kind of
19 training targets we would like to see?

20 Secretary Carter: Thank you, Senator.

21 I think in Iraq the principal limiting factor on Sunni
22 trainees, which is one of our focuses, has been their belief
23 that the government in Baghdad was not fully supportive of
24 them. That is the challenge before Prime Minister Abadi.
25 He says he wants to do that, and that is critical because

1 only Sunnis can take back Anbar. Only Sunnis can govern
2 Anbar when it is all over. So if we are going to wrest
3 Anbar from the likes of ISIL, which we must do, we must have
4 Sunnis on our side. So Abadi is saying all the right
5 things. As the chairman noted, we are trying to support him
6 in doing all the right things.

7 Senator Heinrich: Mr. Secretary, I agree with you
8 wholeheartedly in your analysis. I guess my concern is, is
9 Abadi doing enough to begin to generate confidence in the
10 Sunni population in that region?

11 Secretary Carter: I think he is doing everything he
12 personally can. I think he is challenged in Baghdad by
13 others who would have it the old way, the sectarian way.
14 And so he is not able to make everything happen when and as
15 he said. And we have had some delays and some frustration
16 as a result of that. I think things are getting better. We
17 are getting more trainees. It was noted earlier that there
18 is some confidence among Sunni tribes that we will help them
19 train, equip them, support them, and get them back in the
20 fight, and that there is a future for them not even
21 withstanding the difficulties of multi-sectarian governance
22 in Iraq. That is the path we are on.

23 And in the meantime, just to get back to something that
24 Senator Rounds said, I think -- and I said this before. I
25 just want to restate it -- we need to take action to defend

1 ourselves against ISIL not just in Iraq and Syria but
2 elsewhere, particularly foreign fighters, even as we defeat
3 them in the place from which they arose. They have
4 metastasized now. They aspire to be a global network. And
5 we have to fight them where they are, and we cannot wait for
6 that. We need to do that, and by the way, we do that every
7 day, even this past weekend.

8 Senator Heinrich: Secretary, I want to leave you with
9 one last question. It is a very general one. You may have
10 seen the "Politico" article from a couple of days ago that
11 examined what it called the Daesh effect, and it is sort of
12 a modern example of the ancient proverb that the enemy of my
13 enemy is my friend. Whether it is Hamas or Al Nusra or
14 Iran, there are a number of entities that may be enemies of
15 the U.S., certainly enemies of our allies, that currently
16 share the same opposition to ISIL, or Daesh. What are your
17 thoughts on that observation generally, and would you not
18 agree that it is that reality that is part of the reason why
19 this is such a complicated nut to crack?

20 Secretary Carter: It is a reason why it is
21 complicated. Again, sectarianism is what brought us to this
22 point. So we are willing to and we are and have supported
23 elements of the Iraqi Security Forces that have a very large
24 Shia composition to them, but if and only if they are under
25 the direction and control of the Government of Iraq. And

1 there are Shia forces in Iraq that are not under the
2 direction and control, and we will not support them because
3 that is sectarianism. That is sectarian civil war. We know
4 it leads down that road, and we are trying to stop Iraq from
5 going down that road.

6 Chairman McCain: Senator Ernst?

7 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

8 Thank you, Secretary and Chairman, for being with us
9 today. I appreciate your efforts in this area.

10 And, Secretary Carter, I would like to start with you
11 because right now I am very confused. You had stated
12 earlier and then you affirmed to Senator Ayotte that we are
13 directly arming the Kurds in consultation with the Iraqi
14 Government. Would you state that again, please, sir?

15 Secretary Carter: Yes. You are using the word
16 "directly," and she used the word "directly" and I did too.
17 But let me just be clear about that, which is that we do it
18 in a way that does not delay the shipments and does not
19 narrow down the shipments at all but is by, through, and
20 with the Government of Iraq. We are sticking with that
21 principle not because we do not want to help the Kurds and
22 we do not want to help them in a timely way, but because we
23 also want to stick up for the principle of multi-
24 sectarianism. So that is the reason. But we are insistent
25 that it not lead to delays.

1 And as I said, I spoke to Mr. Barzhani when he was over
2 here and I made sure that he is getting the right kind of
3 equipment not just from us but the Germans and all the
4 others who are arming him in a timely manner. And they are
5 getting that equipment and they are performing extremely
6 well with it.

7 Let me see if the Chair wants to add anything about the
8 method of arming.

9 Senator Ernst: So we are arming the Kurds. It is not
10 being delayed. I know that was stated earlier that there
11 are no significant delays because I do want to emphasize
12 that, as you know, over the last several months, a number of
13 my colleagues and I have been working on legislation to
14 directly arm the Kurds in consultation with the Iraqi
15 Government.

16 And I know that you and Secretary Kerry also had very
17 strongly worded letters to the chairman of this committee
18 emphasizing that we should not be directly arming the Kurds
19 in consultation with the Iraqi Government because there were
20 no delays. And yet, the President now has come out and said
21 that we will be arming them in an expedited manner. Well,
22 if there were no delays, I do not understand why now we need
23 an additional several hundred members of our armed services
24 on the ground in Iraq and that we are expediting the
25 process. If there were no delays, we do not need to be

1 expediting the process.

2 So I just needed to clarify that because it was stated
3 a number of times that we were directly arming the Kurds,
4 which Secretary Kerry had said last year he does not have
5 the authority, the President does not have the authority to
6 do. I still believe we need to be directly arming them in
7 consultation with the Iraqi Government.

8 Following the fall of Ramadi, General Dempsey, you
9 stated that if the Kurds fail to take measures to be more
10 inclusive with Sunnis, Kurds, or other groups, U.S. support
11 for the central government could be curtailed. And, sir,
12 considering the fall of the most western part of Iraq to
13 ISIS, that did not trigger a decision point on the part of
14 the Iraqi Government and its commitment to Iraq. I am just
15 not sure what else the Iraqi Government needs to fail at
16 before the administration changes its strategy and how we
17 support our willing partners in Iraq, the Kurdish Peshmerga.
18 They are willing partners. And I think we need to do more
19 for them.

20 We cannot defeat ISIS in Iraq by continuing to beg,
21 hope, and pray that the sectarian Iraqi Government, which is
22 still overshadowed -- we have heard it a number of times --
23 by previous Prime Minister Maliki and Iran. We do not think
24 they would vigorously defend the Iraqi people equally. I do
25 not believe they will.

1 But we have talked also about being more inclusive.
2 That was mentioned again. "More inclusive." I hear this
3 time and time again. But I would like a definition of what
4 does "more inclusive" look like and how do we measure "more
5 inclusive." Gentlemen, if you would address that please.

6 Secretary Carter: I would begin by noting the words of
7 Prime Minister Abadi when he was here. I think he used the
8 word "decentralized" Iraq, and that is one in which there is
9 a central government in Baghdad and an integral state of
10 Iraq, but there is substantial opportunity for self-
11 determination around the country among Sunnis, among Shias,
12 and among Kurds. It seems to me that is a wise way of
13 approaching what multi-sectarianism means. I think a
14 government in Baghdad that allows the different parties
15 there a degree of self-determination to maintain security
16 within their own territory and to govern themselves, share
17 in things like the oil wealth in the country and so forth,
18 that is what he says he is for, and that is the way he
19 described it when he was here in Washington to all of that.

20 And that is in my judgment certainly better than the
21 alternative, which is sectarian disintegration, which could
22 still occur in Iraq. But I think we all, looking into that
23 abyss, know what resides there. It is further violence for
24 the citizens of Iraq and further opportunity for groups like
25 ISIL that are not preoccupied with the long-term welfare of

1 the territories they occupy. They want to use them for
2 further violence.

3 So that is Prime Minister Abadi's definition, and I
4 think we are trying support him in his aspiration to make
5 good on that definition.

6 Senator Ernst: Thank you.

7 General, anything to add there?

8 General Dempsey: Just militarily what we will be
9 watching for in terms of the intentions of the Government of
10 Iraq and its control over groups that are not directly
11 responsive to the ministry of defense is whether there is
12 retribution, whether they allow -- it was Tikrit I was
13 speaking about I think, Senator. As these families come
14 back to Tikrit after it was recaptured, I think we are
15 watching and it is worth watching on whether they are able
16 to return to their homes or not. I think the same will be
17 true once Ramadi is recaptured, and we will probably be
18 watching how the campaign in Fallujah unfolds to ensure that
19 the popular mobilization forces propagate a campaign that is
20 not characterized by retribution and dramatic collateral
21 damage. Those are all things to watch carefully.

22 Senator Ernst: I think we have willing partners there.
23 I think we need to assist those willing partners.

24 One further comment, too, just very briefly. You had
25 stated you have not seen a request list from the Kurds on

1 the type of equipment and arms that they need. Is that
2 correct?

3 Secretary Carter: No. I have seen such requests. We
4 have honored such requests. We have shipped a lot of
5 equipment. I should once again repeat. It is not just the
6 United States. There are a number of countries that are
7 equipping the Kurds, and in some cases, they prefer the
8 equipment of other countries, for example, German anti-tank
9 weapons. And that is absolutely fine with us, and the
10 Germans are providing those.

11 Senator Ernst: That is one thing I know that President
12 Barzhani had also presented to us during his visit with the
13 members of the Senate Armed Services Committee. I just
14 wanted to make sure that we were clear on that and that they
15 have provided a list of equipment.

16 Secretary Carter: They did. We discussed exactly the
17 same list, and I have discussed it with others, for example,
18 the German defense minister. I mentioned, when I was in
19 Germany a couple of weeks ago, her commitment to do exactly
20 the same, and they have done a great job of equipping the
21 Kurds. And that is an example of a competent ground force
22 that also governs within the territory that it controls, and
23 that is really what we are looking for in that entire
24 region. It is going to be hard to get but that is what we
25 are looking for.

1 Senator Ernst: Well, they are there and I know they
2 are willing.

3 So thank you, gentlemen, very much.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

5 Chairman McCain: Senator Kaine?

6 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 And thank you to our witnesses today.

8 I have a number of questions and concerns about the
9 ongoing mission against ISIL which I will address, but I
10 have got to begin by just saying my concerns about the
11 administration's strategy pale -- pale -- next to my
12 concerns about Congress and what Congress is doing.

13 What Congress is supposed to do is to provide a budget
14 to you to defend the Nation and win this battle, and
15 Congress is supposed to authorize a war that is now 11
16 months in. We have not done either. We are not giving you
17 a budget. We are using a gimmick, and whether the gimmick
18 is the gimmicks of the past, continuing resolutions, or the
19 current gimmick du jour, which is a use of non-recurring OCO
20 funding, we are not giving you the budget. And we are not
21 doing it because -- let us just be blunt -- Congress to this
22 point has decided that the budget caps enacted in August of
23 2011 is a higher national priority than defeating ISIL. And
24 as long as we view that as a higher national priority than
25 defeating ISIL, we are not going to give you the budget that

1 you need.

2 It is my hope, as you testified, Secretary Carter, that
3 we will find a better path, something like a Murray-Ryan
4 budget deal. I know the chair has been significant in
5 speaking out for this as well. But we are not doing what we
6 ought to be doing on the budget side.

7 And we are also not doing what we ought to be doing
8 under Article 1, Section 8, which is declaring war.

9 Tomorrow is the 11-month anniversary of the initiation of
10 the bombing campaign in Sinjar and Irbil. We have spent \$3
11 billion. We have got 3,500 people deployed away from their
12 families risking their lives. And aside from a single vote
13 in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in December, there
14 has not been House committee action or floor debate of any
15 significance. There has not been any meaningful debate on
16 the Senate floor about whether or not we should be engaged
17 in this war, even though three-quarters of the Members of
18 Congress, by my estimation, believe that there should be
19 U.S. military action against ISIL with some differences in
20 detail. But we do not want to have a debate and vote
21 because we do not want to put our names on it. We do not
22 want to be held accountable for a vote.

23 So we can criticize all we want, and I will get into
24 some criticisms. But bottom line, Congress is not doing
25 either of the two things we are uniquely supposed to do:

1 provide your budget to win and authorize war. I think we
2 can make our criticisms have a much greater legitimacy if as
3 an institution we would do what we are supposed to do.

4 I just returned from the region, and just some quick
5 summaries. Senator Donnelly mentioned it. We are achieving
6 some significant successes against ISIL in some parts of the
7 battlefield in Iraq and Syria largely in the areas where we
8 are relying on partners with the Kurds, the KRG regional
9 government in Iraq and then Kurds in the north of Syria.

10 President Barzhani. We met him on Sunday in Irbil. I
11 guess two Sundays ago. And he said this, and this is very
12 important, especially for any who would say the U.S. does
13 not have a strategy. He said thank you to the United States
14 of America. If the President had not started a bombing
15 campaign on August 8th near Irbil, we might not be here
16 today. That bombing campaign likely helped save the
17 existence of the KRG, which has been a good partner. And
18 they lead with that. They do not lead with we are not
19 getting weapons. They do not lead with we do not like
20 working with Baghdad. They lead with thank you to the
21 United States for helping save us, save our region, save our
22 way of life. And that is important for us to acknowledge
23 because that was not by accident. That is a strategy. We
24 helped save an important ally by acting, the President
25 acting when he did.

1 There are challenges too. The Iraqi unification
2 challenge was very patent as we met with Prime Minister
3 Abadi. And there are mixed reviews. Positive on the intent
4 but mixed on the follow-through. In the Sunni area in
5 particular, a lot of criticism. Some support the Anbar
6 governor, supports what Prime Minister Abadi is doing but a
7 lot of the tribal leaders do not, and a lot of the tribal
8 leaders do not think we are doing what we can do. And when
9 they look at what we are doing with the Kurds and they
10 compare with what we are not doing with them, it sticks in
11 their craw.

12 And finally, the challenges in Syria are significant.

13 Let me ask you this question. Today, front page
14 article in the "Washington Post" dealing with the routing of
15 ISIL in northern Syria. Quote: The unexpected route of
16 Islamic State forces across a wide arc of territory in the
17 northeastern Syria heartland has exposed vulnerabilities in
18 the ranks of the militants and also the limits of the U.S.-
19 led strategy devised to confront them. Islamic State
20 fighters had been driven out of a third of their flagship
21 province of Raqqah in recent weeks by a Kurdish-led force
22 that has emerged as one of the most effective American
23 partners in the war. The offensive, backed by U.S.
24 airstrikes, has deprived the militants of control of their
25 most important border crossing with Turkey and forced them

1 onto the defensive in their self-proclaimed capital of
2 Raqqah City, something that would have been unthinkable as
3 recently as a month ago. That is what is happening right
4 now.

5 But every success has a challenge, and there is a worm
6 in this apple and the worm is this. As we have succeeded in
7 our partnership with the Kurds in northern Syria, it has
8 caused grave concern by the Turkish Government. It has
9 caused grave concern by a number of the other Sunni forces
10 in Syria that we are partnering with. How do we continue to
11 manage the Kurds to be successful in the battle against ISIL
12 and partner with them to be successful without causing
13 additional undue challenges in our effort to also help
14 Sunnis be successful against ISIL?

15 Secretary Carter: Thank you. And by the way, thank
16 you once again for traveling there. I know it is much
17 appreciated.

18 Let me start with the Turks. Turkey has a long common
19 border with both Syria and Iraq, which has remained
20 disturbingly permeable to foreign fighters and to resupply
21 throughout the course of this conflict. And we have some
22 people actually talking to the Turks just today, as the
23 Chairman alluded to a while ago, in order to try to get the
24 Turks to up their game. They are a NATO ally. They have a
25 strong stake in things, in stability to their south. I

1 believe they could do more along the border.

2 And so in the meantime, it is true. The Kurds are
3 acting and because the Kurds are capable of acting, we are
4 supporting them. And that is successful and it does
5 threaten Raqqah.

6 I think the tension with respect to the Sunnis is best
7 managed in the way that we are hoping Prime Minister Abadi
8 will manage it, namely by letting them each succeed within
9 their own territory, defeat ISIL, and have substantial --
10 his word is "decentralization" of governance in Iraq that
11 allows them a substantial opportunity to determine their own
12 destiny within the territory that they control. That is
13 what multi-sectarianism in Iraq would mean. As you
14 indicated, it is a lot tougher in Syria, but that is the
15 objective that we have, to have Sunnis -- I would like to
16 see the Sunni tribal leaders that you met with be as
17 successful as the Kurds are. We would welcome that. That
18 is what we are trying to stimulate in al Taqaddum and so
19 forth, and we are willing to do more, as the Chairman
20 indicated and I indicated, when we have a capable ground
21 force that we can support the way we did support over the
22 weekend the Kurds in the north with air power.

23 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I
24 also want to just agree with a line of your questioning
25 earlier. I think it would be absolutely foolish for us to

1 not clarify the rules of engagement for the Syrian trained
2 folks inserted back in the field to make clear that the U.S.
3 will support them if they come under attack by the Assad
4 regime. For them to go back in without a guarantee on that
5 score, we would lose all credibility if we do not provide
6 that. And I just would encourage the administration to
7 clarify that aspect of the rules of engagement. Thank you,
8 Mr. Chair.

9 Chairman McCain: I thank you, Senator. I have been
10 asking that question for a long time, and I keep getting the
11 answer, well, we have not made that policy decision. It is
12 shameful -- shameful -- to send people in and not assure
13 them that we will defend them against attacks by barrel
14 bombs.

15 Senator Graham?

16 Senator Graham: Thank you.

17 To build on what we were just talking about, do we have
18 the legal authority to assist the Free Syrian Army that we
19 train against Assad? Is there a doubt about that?

20 Secretary Carter: I am not sure about the legalities
21 of it, Senator, to be quite honest.

22 Senator Graham: Let us just put it this way. If there
23 is any doubt about whether or not we have the legal
24 authority to protect the troops we train against Assad,
25 please let the committee know. You do not have to answer

1 right now, but that is a big decision. If there is a lack
2 of legal authority, I want to know why and what can we do to
3 fix it.

4 Secretary Carter: I appreciate it, and I will take
5 that back. I appreciate that thought.

6 [The information follows:]

7 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Graham: General Dempsey, thank you for decades
2 of service. I really appreciate that.

3 General Dempsey, would you agree that there are more
4 terrorist organizations with more safe havens, with more
5 weapons, with more capability, with more men to strike the
6 homeland than any time since 9/11?

7 General Dempsey: Thank you for your service. I know
8 you retired recently.

9 Yes.

10 Senator Graham: Do you believe that ISIL is expanding
11 in other countries as we speak?

12 General Dempsey: Yes.

13 Senator Graham: When it comes to Iraq, do you both
14 agree that partitioning Iraq into three separate countries
15 is probably not a viable strategy?

16 Secretary Carter: I certainly agree with that, yes.

17 Senator Graham: Do you agree that the Sunni world
18 would object to giving the southern part of Iraq to Iran?
19 That is what would happen -- right -- if we partitioned the
20 south. Do you all agree with that?

21 Secretary Carter: That sounds like sectarianism to me,
22 and we know what lies down that road.

23 Senator Graham: An independent Kurdistan is going to
24 create a lot of upheaval with Turkey and the region at
25 large. Do you agree with that? A separate, independent

1 state.

2 Secretary Carter: For the Turks, a separate,
3 independent state would be very problematic, and within
4 Iraq, I think a substantial autonomy within a decentralized
5 but integral Iraq is still possible. That is what Abadi is
6 trying to do.

7 Senator Graham: I agree. Do you agree with that,
8 General?

9 General Dempsey: I do, sir.

10 Senator Graham: So partitioning I think is not a
11 viable strategy.

12 As to the Kurds, do you either one of you believe that
13 the Kurds have the ability, will to go into liberate Ramadi?

14 Secretary Carter: I will start that. I think they may
15 have the ability, and we are, obviously, trying to
16 facilitate their movement south. Whether they have the will
17 is another matter. The only reason that I say that is that
18 they are getting, at that point, to the edge of the
19 territory that is Kurdish.

20 Senator Graham: That is my point. For anybody to
21 suggest that the Kurds are the answer to all of our
22 problems, they do not, quite frankly, know the Mideast. I
23 mean, the Kurds are not going to liberate Syria. Do you all
24 agree with that? They will be part of the component, but
25 they are not going to be the liberating force.

1 Secretary Carter: Right, part of the component,
2 absolutely.

3 Senator Graham: As to Assad, what is more likely?
4 President Obama leaves office in 2017 or Assad goes first?

5 Secretary Carter: Well, it is certain that President
6 Obama will leave office.

7 Senator Graham: No, I know that.

8 Secretary Carter: So that is an easy question. But
9 turning to whether Assad will be in power then --

10 Senator Graham: Who leaves first? Obama or Assad?

11 Secretary Carter: Well, I certainly hope it is Assad.

12 Senator Graham: Yes, I do but I do not think so.

13 So the bottom line, if Assad stays in power, do you
14 worry about Jordan and Lebanon being a victim of the war in
15 Syria if it continues the way it is going, that Jordan and
16 Lebanon will become a casualty of the war in Syria?

17 Secretary Carter: Well, I think Jordan and Lebanon are
18 already suffering from the effects of war in Syria. They
19 are hosting refugees.

20 Senator Graham: Right. It could even get worse.

21 Secretary Carter: That is exactly the concern we
22 should all have. One of the concerns we should have about
23 what is going on in Syria -- it is not just the Syrian
24 people, it is the neighbors as well.

25 Senator Graham: Do you agree with me that no Arab

1 force is going to go in and fight ISIL alone unless you put
2 Assad on the table?

3 Secretary Carter: I see what you are getting at and it
4 gets back to our train and equip program. And we are
5 finding people whose principal security fear for their own
6 people -- and this is really for their own villages -- is
7 ISIL. And so they are willing to go and fight against ISIL.
8 There are others who want to fight against Assad, and that
9 is another matter entirely.

10 Senator Graham: Here is my point. They are recruiting
11 more foreign fighters than we are training Free Syrian Army.
12 The math does not work. This is never going to result in
13 Assad or ISIL being degraded or destroyed. The only way I
14 see ISIL to be degraded or destroyed is for a ground force,
15 regional in nature, to go into Syria. Do you agree with me
16 that no ground force made up of Turks, Saudis, Egyptians,
17 you name it are going into Syria to fight ISIL unless one of
18 the goals is to replace Assad? They are not going to give
19 half of Syria to Iran.

20 Secretary Carter: That sounds sensible to me, and I
21 certainly wish that such a force would be created. One of
22 the great disappointments in all of this is that the Sunni
23 world more broadly is not more involved in this fight.

24 Senator Graham: Let us dig into that for a moment. If
25 we went to Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia tomorrow and said we

1 would like to use your armies, we will be integrated, would
2 you agree with me for them to say yes, that we would have to
3 make Assad a target of that army? And are we willing to do
4 that?

5 Secretary Carter: Let us see. I would guess that --
6 it is very hypothetical because, sadly, none of them has
7 indicated their willingness to do anything of that kind
8 under any circumstances.

9 But I see what you are driving at, which is will the
10 rest of the Sunni Middle East participate in this conflict.
11 I certainly wish they would. The one answer I know,
12 Senator, is for the Turks. The Turks have stated their
13 position, which is that they definitely want Assad to go,
14 and the conditions for any other participation so far have
15 been that they want to fight against Assad.

16 Senator Graham: Well, I would suggest you do the
17 following. And you travel a lot. We went to Qatar. We
18 went to Saudi Arabia. We went all over the Mideast. And
19 they told us to a person we would gladly join forces with
20 you upon the condition that Assad is part of the target set.
21 And nobody in the United States will tell them whether or
22 not we are willing to take Assad on militarily as part of
23 the ground force.

24 So I would suggest instead of being upset with the
25 Sunni Arab world, that our problems lie within ourselves,

1 that we are not putting Assad on the table militarily. Do
2 you agree with that? Do you think Assad is on the table
3 militarily?

4 Secretary Carter: Senator, as I am sure you know, his
5 position on the battlefield is more tenuous today than it
6 has been for a long time.

7 Senator Graham: But the point is, is our efforts
8 designed to take Assad out militarily, or are we focusing
9 just on ISIL?

10 Secretary Carter: No. Our approach has been, as I
11 think has been stated clearly for some time, to try to find
12 a political exit for Bashar Assad rather than a U.S.-led
13 military exit. That is the approach.

14 Senator Graham: Thank you.

15 Chairman McCain: Senator Nelson?

16 Senator Nelson: Thank you, and thank you both of you
17 for your decades of service, and that includes you, Mr.
18 Secretary, because you have given decades.

19 I want to follow up on that line of questioning. So if
20 Assad exited tomorrow, what would be the likely strategy
21 that we would use going forward?

22 Secretary Carter: Our strategy would be to encourage
23 the moderate opposition to partner with the structures of
24 the government of Damascus not directly associated with
25 Assad or with his deplorable behavior -- and I think we can

1 determine what that is -- keep the structures of government
2 in place, unify with the moderate Syrian opposition, and
3 create a new government which is more reflective of the
4 aspirations of the populace than Assad's is. And then they
5 would, in turn, need to go and reclaim their territory from
6 ISIL. And I think the United States and the rest of the
7 international coalition would be pleased to support them in
8 that.

9 Senator Nelson: And does Assad exiting sooner rather
10 than later create conditions that are so chaotic for the
11 interest of the United States or is the interest of the
12 United States in him leaving sooner than later?

13 Secretary Carter: I think sooner and in a way, as I
14 indicated. The reason, to get back to the earlier line of
15 questioning, for a political rather than a military
16 transition -- for us to support and seek that -- is that it
17 is less disruptive, less chaotic, less sparks, sectarianism,
18 and therefore violence. That is why it is much to be
19 preferred over a simple toppling of Assad because you do not
20 know what is on the other side of a simple toppling of
21 Assad. So I know it is unsatisfying to talk about a
22 political transition when he himself gives very little
23 indication of wanting to do that, but that is much to be
24 preferred if we can have that. Otherwise, we know what
25 happens when these countries disintegrate.

1 Senator Nelson: And were a political solution to be
2 found for his exit which, of course, is going to be
3 difficult with Iran being his mentor, but Vladimir Putin
4 could be instrumental in arranging some kind of exit
5 strategy -- but were it to be a political solution, do you
6 think it reasonable that there would be some accommodation
7 so that the Alawite minority would not be slaughtered?

8 Secretary Carter: I think there has to be that
9 ingredient. I mean, first of all, the Alawite community
10 will fight for the territory in the northwest. But once
11 again, that is just further conflict, further civil war.
12 And ethnic cleansing of any kind is the kind of thing you
13 could see on the other side of a collapse there. And we
14 know how tragic that is for people.

15 Senator Nelson: What would his arranged exit do with
16 regard to Hezbollah, and will they resist it the whole way?

17 Secretary Carter: Hezbollah has been one of the
18 principal supporters of the Assad regime. So they do not
19 give any indication of welcoming the path that we are
20 discussing here.

21 The Russians perhaps. And I know that we have been in
22 contact with the Russians about that over the years, and
23 certainly I think that they would, if they threw their
24 weight behind such a transition, be influential with Assad.
25 And so I certainly hope they would but I have no confidence,

1 as I sit here right now, that they will.

2 Senator Nelson: Mr. Secretary, when you look at a map
3 like this, a map of Syria that I assume you handed out --
4 somebody did -- that is a mess. And maybe it is the only
5 solution is the solution of a political exit for Assad so
6 that we can go after these extremist elements.

7 By the way, I had to leave the committee to do an
8 interview on CNN, and the whole focus that they wanted to
9 jump on was your statement earlier in the hearing that we
10 had only trained up 60. But I pointed out to them what you
11 said was the vetting is very difficult, and in fact, we are
12 vetting some several thousands additional and the vetting is
13 a lot more tortuous because you certainly do not want to
14 have a guy trained up and then he turns around and aims his
15 gun back at us.

16 In Iraq, do you think that this new prime minister has
17 the capability of getting out of his Shiite mold, and does
18 he have the capability of bringing in all Shiites with all
19 of the Iranian influence in his government in order to reach
20 out with an olive branch to the Sunnis?

21 Secretary Carter: Thank you.

22 With respect to the first part of your remarks, I am
23 always going to be truthful with you, and the number is 60.
24 And I think we have conceded that number before, but I said
25 it today and I will always tell the truth. And that is a

1 small class. It results from the fact that that is the
2 number that got through the very rigorous vetting and
3 selection process we have. General Nagata, who runs that
4 program, believes that he has learned a lot. He has 7,000
5 behind that. So I expect those numbers to increase. But I
6 wanted to tell the truth and I did tell the truth. We
7 expect that number to improve, but you deserve to know where
8 things stand and I am telling you where things stand.

9 And with respect to Abadi, there I would say also that
10 he has indicated to us -- and he was here in Washington. I
11 believe he spoke to many of you as well -- his intention to
12 proceed in a way that is distinctly different from the way
13 his predecessor proceeded and which led to the situation we
14 now have in Iraq. We are certainly supporting him in that
15 regard, but one can see that his intentions are contested in
16 Baghdad. And so we continue to support him. We continue to
17 think, to get back to the earlier line of questions, that a
18 multi-sectarian future for Iraq is the best for stability
19 and peace and the best for the defeat of ISIL. But he will
20 have some substantial influence over that, but it is clear
21 he does not have absolute control in Baghdad. We are
22 supporting him.

23 Chairman McCain: Senator Lee?

24 Senator Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 And thank you, Secretary Carter and General Dempsey,

1 for being here today.

2 General Dempsey, I especially want to thank you for
3 your decades of service to your country and to the cause of
4 freedom. We wish you the best of luck in your future
5 endeavors. I am not sure whether this will be the last time
6 we are privileged to speak with you in a hearing, but
7 regardless, please know how much we appreciate all you have
8 done for our country.

9 And I want to thank the men and women who are deployed
10 in Iraq and in so many other places in the Middle East and
11 for their service to our country. Although they have not
12 been labeled "combat troops," they are still operating under
13 dangerous and uncertain circumstances and are far removed
14 from their families and from the people they love.

15 I want to follow up on the discussion between Senator
16 McCain and Secretary Carter on how we might support Syrian
17 rebels once they return from training. Mr. Secretary, you
18 stated that you believe we have an obligation to those we
19 train to provide them with protection. And I agree with
20 that, and I also believe we have an obligation to let the
21 American people know and that you have an obligation to let
22 Congress know and help us to fully understand what this
23 strategy entails, what that means, and the funding, the
24 time, and the effort that providing any such protection
25 might entail and what it will necessitate.

1 So can you tell us when will the Department of Defense
2 fully explain to the American people and to Congress what
3 the strategy will involve, what it is going to cost our
4 Government? I have said this before, but this is something
5 that should have been made clear last year when the
6 President came up with this plan. But regardless, it is
7 better late than never. It is good that we do it now rather
8 than not at all. Can you tell us when that might occur?

9 Secretary Carter: I will continuously tell you what is
10 going on over there with respect to what we are doing in
11 Iraq and what we are doing with respect to Syria. And we
12 are going to have to -- as I said, I think we have an
13 obligation to support those fighters when they go in. We
14 are going to have to decide exactly under what conditions
15 and what way we will make that tactical decision when we
16 introduce them.

17 But I think the main thing is that we increase that
18 number from what is now a very small number -- and I am not
19 surprised that it is running on television -- into a much
20 larger number. I think we can do that. And the officer who
21 runs this program believes that he will be able to do that.
22 And we will keep you apprised of our progress, and I will
23 tell you every day what I know, as I have done here today.

24 Senator Lee: Thank you. I appreciate that and look
25 forward to that.

1 Now, U.S. strategy in Syria is to empower the,
2 quote/unquote, moderate opposition to defeat ISIS and to put
3 enough pressure on the Assad regime to achieve some type of
4 negotiated peace settlement. For the sake of discussion,
5 let us say these moderates are successful in degrading ISIS
6 to the point that they are no longer a factor in Syria.
7 What does pressuring Assad or his supporters into a
8 negotiated settlement look like at that point, especially
9 given the military support from Iran and Hezbollah that they
10 currently enjoy? Specifically, what role will the United
11 States play in bringing about the pressure and support to
12 achieve this kind of settlement?

13 Secretary Carter: I think the way it would look, the
14 outcome that we are aiming for is one in which Bashar al
15 Assad and those who have been associated with his atrocities
16 in Syria are removed, but the structures of government in
17 Damascus and in Iraq that remain continue on in an
18 inclusively governed way that is multi-sectarian, to include
19 Alawites and others, and that can then turn to the task of
20 regaining its sovereign territory from ISIL to the east in a
21 project that would look like what we are working with
22 Baghdad to accomplish to its west in Iraq. That is the
23 post-Assad transition that would be the best for the Syrian
24 people and the best for our counter-ISIL strategy.

25 Senator Lee: By the way, do you believe the 2001

1 authorization for the use of military force gives authority
2 necessary to engage the Assad regime forces that may come
3 into conflict with any rebels we may train?

4 Secretary Carter: I am going to be very careful about
5 how I answer a legal question in that regard, and I would
6 prefer to get back to you in that regard.

7 Senator Lee: Okay.

8 [The information follows:]

9 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Lee: Now, Mr. Secretary, what level of command
2 and control in your opinion does ISIS leadership have over
3 these various affiliate groups across the Middle East and
4 northern Africa, as well as lone wolf individuals or groups
5 in Europe and the western hemisphere?

6 Secretary Carter: It is mixed. But in the main -- not
7 entirely, but in the main -- what one sees is a mixture of
8 groups that were already radicalized and already intent upon
9 attacking the West or attacking Western interests or
10 destabilizing places in the Middle East rebranding
11 themselves as ISIL because of this seeming success it had.
12 And then to get to the lone wolf part, you see people who
13 have had no training, no association with it, including
14 Americans, who go on the Internet and find themselves
15 enthralled because whatever lost souls they are, enthralled
16 by the violence or whatever associated with ISIL and self-
17 radicalized and unfortunately undertake to do violence. So
18 you see that spectrum there. You do see some effort by
19 ISIL, meaning ISIL in Syria and Iraq, to command and control
20 but it is not exclusively that way.

21 And I say all this because that is very distinctly
22 different from the Al Qaeda model. The Al Qaeda model was a
23 very hierarchical, very clear command and control type
24 terrorist enemy. And that meant they had discipline, and it
25 meant they could take on big things like 9/11. But it also

1 meant that when we started to go after them, they were
2 vulnerable to attacks on the command and control structure
3 and on their logistics structure. ISIL is more resilient
4 because it is more decentralized and informal in that sense.
5 It takes a different kind of campaign. We are highly aware
6 of that, as is law enforcement, by the way.

7 Senator Lee: Thank you. I see my time has expired.
8 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 Senator Reed [presiding]: Chairman McCain asked that I
10 recognize Senator Fischer.

11 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Senator Reed.

12 Thank you, gentlemen, for your service to this country.
13 And I especially want to thank you, General Dempsey, for the
14 many, many years that you have served the people of this
15 country and the military families that have been under you.
16 Thank you, sir.

17 Mr. Carter, earlier Senator Rounds had a conversation
18 with General Dempsey about the act of patience and time.
19 And I know the General has counseled patience and he has
20 discussed time. What role do you see time playing in our
21 strategy? You know, do you we have a strategy on forces, on
22 containing ISIL? Are we going to allow them to be able to
23 maintain control of territory for the next 3 to 5 years? Is
24 that going to be acceptable to us? And do you see risks
25 with that type of strategy?

1 Secretary Carter: Well, I think we are going to
2 continue to strike and apply pressure to ISIL throughout
3 this period. We are doing it now. We do it every day. It
4 has had some effect. And we are going to continue every
5 single day, as we did over this past weekend, to defend
6 ourselves against ISIL, including these homegrown people.
7 All that will go on and has to go on because we have to
8 protect ourselves in the meantime.

9 What takes the time -- and I think this is what the
10 Chairman was getting at -- is -- and this is just in the
11 nature of things -- getting a lasting result. A lasting
12 result is one where not only is ISIL defeated but they stay
13 defeated. In order for them to stay defeated, there has to
14 be somebody on that territory who is keeping the peace and
15 governing and replacing ISIL in the territory. That takes
16 some time. We are working with the Kurds to do that. We
17 are working with Sunni tribes. But that is in the nature of
18 things. We want that to go as quickly as possible and we
19 are hastening that to the best of our ability, as are other
20 members of the coalition. But that is the thing that takes
21 the time to build.

22 But in the meantime, we have to protect ourselves and
23 we have to keep pressure on ISIL. And we will be doing that
24 constantly.

25 Senator Fischer: I agree with you on that.

1 Oh, General.

2 General Dempsey: Would you mind?

3 Senator Fischer: Certainly.

4 General Dempsey: Because I have thought about this a
5 lot. Your question is really whether patience increases
6 risk. That is really your question. And I think patience
7 probably does increase risk to the mission somewhat because
8 it extends the time when other things could happen. Right?
9 But I think were we to take more responsibility directly and
10 unilaterally, that would certainly increase risk in another
11 way. It increases risk to our force and increases risk to
12 the other missions that we are held accountable to
13 accomplish globally.

14 What I get paid for is to give advice to the Secretary
15 of Defense with the JCS and the President on managing risk.
16 So to your question, does risk increase due to patience, of
17 course. But the alternative increases risk in other ways,
18 and it is our job to manage that risk.

19 Senator Fischer: As you look at managing that risk and
20 you look at balancing it, how do you reach a decision where
21 you can maintain that patience when you know that when ISIL
22 controls that territory that they have now and they continue
23 to advance in other areas, whether it would be in the region
24 or in Russia, that that is a recruitment item for them, that
25 it will inspire attacks, whether it is in that region or

1 elsewhere around the world? How do you balance that and
2 have the risk that we face in our homeland continue what I
3 think would continue to grow because of possibly an
4 overabundance of patience?

5 General Dempsey: Yes, I will keep at it because, as I
6 said, this is the issue on which the campaign turns.
7 Correct?

8 So what you have to be assured of is that as we manage
9 risk, we look at those things which could threaten U.S.
10 persons and facilities around the globe and the homeland.
11 And where we see risk accruing that could have threatened
12 that national security interest, there is no hesitance for
13 us to act unilaterally and decisively.

14 On the other hand, this campaign is built on the
15 premise that it relies upon other actors. That necessarily
16 requires a degree of patience that we need to nurture, we
17 need to reinforce, and we need to understand in the context
18 of the other things we are trying to accomplish not only in
19 the Middle East but globally.

20 So if you are suggesting that ISIL's threat to the
21 homeland could increase because of this patience, I concede
22 that risk. We take on board the responsibility to manage
23 it. But I would also suggest to you that we would
24 contribute mightily to ISIL's message as a movement were we
25 to confront them directly on the ground in Iraq and Syria.

1 Senator Fischer: If look at patience, if we look at
2 restraint, do you not think that with our restraint we are
3 in many ways encouraging the Iraqis to look elsewhere and to
4 especially look to Iran and invite them into Iraq where they
5 are because they know that Iran will be there fighting a
6 common enemy that they both face at this point? Are we not
7 opening that door to Iran with this what I kind of view as
8 an overabundance of patience, which to me is the greatest
9 risk?

10 General Dempsey: When you look at what we are doing --
11 by the way, the Government of Iraq has been reaching out to
12 Iran since roughly 2004. And they have probably increased
13 their outreach to Iran, but it has very little to do with
14 what we are doing or not doing. It has everything to do
15 with the fact that they believe that their future is -- that
16 it is their turn and that their particular form of
17 governance, which is not yet inclusive as it needs to be, is
18 the right form of governance. So they were going to do this
19 whether we are there or not and whatever manner in which we
20 exert our influence.

21 Senator Fischer: So they have boots on the ground in
22 Iraq through no action of the United States or inaction by
23 the United States.

24 General Dempsey: I would say the advisors that have
25 been sent, the ISR that they are flying, and some of the

1 other capabilities they provided to the Government of Iraq
2 -- I would agree with you, that they would have provided
3 that whether we were there --

4 Senator Fischer: It was a question. It was not a
5 statement on my part.

6 General Dempsey: Oh. The answer is yes, they would
7 have been there regardless of our actions.

8 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 Senator Reed: Senator Sullivan, please.

10 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 And thank you, gentlemen, for the testimony today.

12 General Dempsey, I want to join my colleagues in
13 commending you for your decades of service.

14 And Secretary Carter, it was good getting caught up
15 last week. I appreciate your outstanding service as well to
16 our country.

17 You know, there has been a lot of criticism of the
18 President when he, in August 2014 and then just a couple of
19 weeks ago at the G7 meeting, talked about how we do not have
20 a strategy yet with regard to ISIS. He said that in 2014
21 and he said it again just a couple weeks ago.

22 What he really has not been criticized for and I think
23 is something that I would like to get your view on is each
24 time he has talked about the lack of a strategy, he has
25 essentially kind of put it on your plate. Each time he

1 said, well, the guys at the Department of Defense are kind
2 of coming up with options. We still have not gotten them
3 yet. DOD is working this. He literally said that, a
4 version of that, in August of 2014 and in June of 2015. Did
5 it take the Department of Defense a year to come up with a
6 strategy to defeat ISIS?

7 Secretary Carter: First of all, thank you for your
8 conversation. Thanks for everything you are doing,
9 especially with respect to our Asia-Pacific strategy,
10 Senator. I am very grateful for that and your travels there
11 and your leadership.

12 We just spoke yesterday at the Pentagon with the
13 President about his strategy. And the strategy is the one
14 that --

15 Senator Sullivan: That you laid out.

16 Secretary Carter: -- I described today.

17 Senator Sullivan: Okay. So he --

18 Secretary Carter: By the way, he described 8 or 9
19 months ago and that does not -- and this is important. It
20 involves us, and we have an important role.

21 Senator Sullivan: Right.

22 Secretary Carter: But it involves other parts of the
23 Government as well. That is one of the reasons to keep
24 laboriously citing nine lines of effort. There really are
25 nine lines of effort. We do not directly, for example, try

1 to interdict self-radicalized Americans. The FBI does that.
2 We do not do that. But we have got to do that while we are
3 working on these difficult problems of Iraq.

4 Senator Sullivan: No, Mr. Secretary, I agree 100
5 percent with that, and that is why to me, again, it was a
6 little bit -- and maybe you just cannot answer the question
7 directly. I wish you would. It just goes to some of the
8 process here. The fact that the President for years has
9 essentially been saying we do not have a strategy and it is
10 because the guys over at DOD still have not given me one to
11 me is not -- A, it is not how we develop strategy. As you
12 just mentioned, this strategy needs to be all instruments of
13 American power. The military is clearly one, but we need
14 economic, energy, finance, diplomatic, the whole list. And
15 that, of course, has to be developed by the White House, not
16 by the Department of Defense.

17 So I do not think it took a year for the Pentagon to
18 come up with a strategy, despite the fact that the
19 President, each time he said we do not have a strategy, said
20 that it was essentially your fault. I do not think it was
21 your fault. I think it was the White House's fault. You
22 know, I just want to be on record saying that I think that
23 is unfair criticism to be put on the Chairman or the
24 Secretary to say we do not have a strategy yet and it is
25 because DOD -- but I guess he now can say we do have a

1 strategy. Is this his strategy?

2 Secretary Carter: This is the strategy, and it is
3 devised by the President and the White House. We play a
4 role in it. So I did not observe any waiting for us to come
5 up with a strategy.

6 Senator Sullivan: Well, he actually said it twice.

7 Secretary Carter: The strategy that I have described,
8 the nine lines of effort, was I think first described the
9 end of last summer. It makes common sense that our strategy
10 has all the parts that the nine lines of effort describe.
11 And yesterday's meeting was to give him an update and to get
12 his guidance on how we go forward. We did that. It
13 happened to be at the Pentagon, and the focus was on the two
14 of the nine lines of effort that we are responsible for, but
15 there were other members of the national security community,
16 which is essential to this, who were present and
17 participated in that discussion.

18 Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

19 And, Mr. Chairman, you do not have to answer this,
20 but I do not want to assume it took a year for the military
21 to come up with options for the President.

22 General Dempsey: Well, no, I would be happy to answer
23 it because we are frequently and constantly adapting
24 options. But the context of when he said that was he had
25 asked us is there something more we need to be doing with

1 the Sunni tribes. That is the context of the question. So
2 the real issue is whether we should be doing more with the
3 Sunni tribes, and the outcome of that conversation and the
4 planning that went into it was the Taqaddum Air Base train,
5 advise, and assist platform.

6 Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

7 I know there has been some discussion with regard to
8 the NDAA, and I think it is a good bill, a very bipartisan
9 bill. Senator Reed and Chairman McCain should be commended
10 for the great work they did.

11 One of the things that we try and do in the bill in a
12 number of areas is bolster the credibility where the United
13 States is seen as having a strategy both supported by the
14 executive branch and the legislative branch. And some of us
15 think that our credibility in certain areas of the world has
16 been weak, and it has been one of the weaknesses of our
17 national security and foreign policy strategy.

18 But we tried to do that in a number of areas, and I
19 just want to provide two examples. You kind of hinted at
20 one, Mr. Secretary, the rebalance to the Asia-Pacific.
21 There is some strong language in there about the support for
22 that from the Congress, very bipartisan, and how we need to
23 be increasing troops in the Asia-Pacific.

24 Also very much a focus that I think is an area that,
25 Mr. Secretary, you have said we are late in the game in the

1 Arctic. And you may have seen -- if you have not, I would
2 recommend you take a look at it. "Newsweek" this week talks
3 about a cover story on the Arctic. The title is actually
4 "In the Race to Control the Arctic, the U.S. Lags Behind."
5 It talks about how this is developing as the new great game
6 and Kipling's famous phrase about a critical strategic area,
7 how the Russians are very, very involved in the Arctic. Mr.
8 Chairman, you actually in testimony in front of this
9 committee talked about the four new combat brigades that
10 they are standing up, a new Arctic brigade, their exercise
11 in the last couple months. And then the Commandant of the
12 Coast Guard is essentially saying it is a new geopolitical
13 cold war the U.S. is in danger of loosing. We are not even
14 playing in this game at all.

15 So I just wanted to ask a final comment, Mr. Chairman.
16 You talked about managing risks, Mr. Chairman. Would
17 removing our only airborne brigade, BCT, in the Arctic, our
18 only BCT in the Asia-Pacific -- what would that do to our
19 credibility? Would that bolster our credibility in the
20 Arctic or Asia-Pacific with regard to the rebalance?

21 And you talked about managing risk. It certainly seems
22 to me, as Vladimir Putin is militarizing this part of the
23 world, if we are actually removing forces -- removing forces
24 -- our only Arctic-trained forces, that is a way to increase
25 risk because we know he views weakness as being provocative.

1 They are making a move in the Arctic. If we start
2 withdrawing troops, the 425 in particular, I think that
3 heightens risk.

4 Would either of you care to comment on that?

5 General Dempsey: Yes. I think it increases risk, but
6 some of the decisions -- and you are talking about the Army
7 in this case, but some of the choices that the service
8 chiefs are going to have to make, as we continue to go down
9 in terms of resources -- you know, the Army is tasked with
10 going from 490,000 active where they are today to 450,000 in
11 the next 2 years. And they got to come from some place.

12 Senator Sullivan: But to put that BCT on the block
13 first to me is inviting -- A, the Congress is saying do not
14 do it in the NDAA. But, secondly, that is going to
15 undermine our credibility not only in the Arctic. It is
16 going to undermine our rebalance to the Asia-Pacific
17 strategy. Those are PACOM forces.

18 General Dempsey: I am not going to predispose the
19 Army's decision, although it sounds like you may already
20 have some insight.

21 Senator Sullivan: No, I do not. I am just making sure
22 the Army does not make a strategic blunder.

23 General Dempsey: Right. Although I will tell you
24 this, Senator, we are familiar with the Congress telling us
25 no on the reforms that we are making not because we are

1 trying to cut ourselves apart, but because we have got a
2 trillion dollars -- that is a "T" not a "B" -- a trillion
3 dollars less in budget authority over 10 years. We have
4 some from the beginning it is a disaster.

5 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 I just do want to mention that if we are looking at
7 BCT's going to the area where the Congress has actually said
8 we need to increase forces, having our only Asia-Pacific
9 Arctic capability which, as you know, General, you cannot
10 develop overnight, and our only airborne capability in the
11 entire Asia-Pacific -- to me that would be a strategic
12 blunder. And I think Congress sometimes comes in and has
13 broader strategic insights than the military has on
14 occasion, not always. But in my view, this time is one of
15 them.

16 Senator Reed: On behalf of Chairman McCain, let me
17 thank you for your testimony. And I personally want to
18 thank you for your service to the Nation, both of you,
19 particularly, General Dempsey, as you conclude your
20 uniformed service.

21 And again with Chairman McCain's direction, I will
22 adjourn the hearing.

23 [Whereupon, at 12:30 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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