

**HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON U.S.  
EUROPEAN COMMAND AND U.S. AFRICA  
COMMAND IN REVIEW OF THE DEFENSE  
AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR FISCAL  
YEAR 2013 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DE-  
FENSE PROGRAM**

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**THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 2012**

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:34 a.m. in room SH-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Senator Carl Levin (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Levin, Lieberman, Reed, Nelson, Udall, Hagan, Manchin, Shaheen, Blumenthal, McCain, Inhofe, Sessions, Chambliss, Brown, Ayotte, and Graham.

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

Majority staff members present: Richard W. Fieldhouse, professional staff member; Jessica L. Kingston, research assistant; Michael J. Kuiken, professional staff member; Jason W. Maroney, counsel; William G.P. Monahan, counsel; Russell L. Shaffer, counsel; and William K. Sutey, professional staff member

Minority staff members present: Ann E. Sauer, minority staff director; Adam J. Barker, professional staff member; Christian D. Brose, professional staff member; Paul C. Hutton IV, professional staff member; Daniel A. Lerner, professional staff member; Lucian L. Niemeyer, professional staff member; and Diana G. Tabler, professional staff member.

Staff assistants present: Hannah I. Lloyd, Mariah K. McNamara, and Bradley S. Watson.

Committee members' assistants present: Bryon Manna, assistant to Senator Lieberman; Carolyn Chuhta, assistant to Senator Reed; Ryan Ehly, assistant to Senator Nelson; Gordon Peterson, assistant to Senator Webb; Casey Howard, assistant to Senator Udall; Mara Boggs, assistant to Senator Manchin; Patrick Day, assistant to Senator Shaheen; Chad Kreikemeier, assistant to Senator Shaheen; Anthony Lazarski, assistant to Senator Inhofe; Lenwood Landrum, assistant to Senator Sessions; Clyde Taylor IV, assistant to Senator Chambliss; Charles Prosch, assistant to Senator Brown; Brad Bowman, assistant to Senator Ayotte; and Sergio Sarkany, assistant to Senator Graham.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARL LEVIN, CHAIRMAN**

Chairman LEVIN. Good morning, everybody. This morning's hearing continues the committee's review of the fiscal year 2013 defense budget request of the administration and the future years defense program. Today we receive testimony from Admiral Jim Stavridis, Commander, U.S. European Command, and Supreme Allied Commander Europe, and General Carter Ham, Commander, U.S. Africa Command. They are here to discuss the defense and security challenges in their areas of responsibility and how their combatant commands are postured to meet those challenges.

We thank you both for your fine service. Please extend, on behalf of this committee, our gratitude to the military men and women who serve in the European and African areas of responsibility. They and their families deserve and have this Nation's support and our thanks.

This will likely be Admiral Stavridis' final posture statement before the committee. Admiral, this committee has benefitted in so many ways and on so many occasions from your testimony and your advice, first as the Commander of the U.S. Southern Command and most recently as EUCOM Commander and Supreme Allied Commander Europe. We thank you for your many decades of great service. We all wish you and your family our very best in your retirement.

The Strategic Guidance that the Defense Department issued in January reaffirmed that Europe is our principal partner in seeking global and economic security for now and for the foreseeable future. The Defense Department's guidance also stressed the central role that the NATO alliance serves for the security of Europe and beyond.

This transatlantic security partnership is clearly demonstrated in the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan where NATO and other European countries contribute more than 30 percent of the total coalition forces and nearly 80 percent of the non-U.S. foreign forces in Afghanistan. The role of ISAF forces is transitioning from being in the combat lead to assuming a support, advise, and assist role as Afghan security forces step forward and assume the lead for security. This transition is underway, and consistent with President Obama's decision last June, the United States has begun the drawdown of the 33,000 U.S. surge force from Afghanistan, to be completed by the end of this summer.

The success of transition will depend in large part on the success of the international coalition in training and supporting the Afghan security forces through 2014 when the transition to an Afghan security lead is planned to be completed. That is a major agenda item for the NATO summit in Chicago in May. Another top agenda item for that summit will be defining NATO's strategic partnership with the Government of Afghanistan beyond 2014, including arrangements for sustaining the Afghan security forces.

Successful transition will also heavily depend on the commitment of the Government of Afghanistan and the Afghan people to increasing security throughout the country. The recent violence in response to the unintentional burning of Korans at the Parwan detention facility, including the killing of U.S. and coalition troops—and that includes two more American soldiers yesterday—is deeply

disturbing. Admiral Stavridis, the committee would be interested in your views on the implications of these events for the success of transition and the success of our mission in Afghanistan.

The Defense Department's Strategic Guidance, issued in January, also notes that changes in the strategic landscape, including the end of the Iraq conflict and the drawdown in Afghanistan, create an opportunity to "rebalance the U.S. military investment in Europe." I welcome the Department's announcement last month that two of the four Army brigades stationed in Europe will be inactivated. This change, along with the removal of an Air Force A-10 squadron from Germany, will decrease the number of U.S. military personnel stationed in Europe, currently around 80,000 personnel, by about 10,000 and will result in the closure of a number of facilities. I encourage the Department to continue to review its force posture in Europe across the Services to see if additional force reductions and base closures might be in order, consistent with EUCOM's missions and our NATO commitments. We need to consider those before we consider another domestic base realignment and closure round, another BRAC round.

The threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the means of delivering those weapons is a central security challenge. At the 2010 Lisbon summit, NATO recognized the growing threat to Europe from ballistic missiles from the Middle East, and NATO decided to establish a missile defense of NATO's population and territory. The United States will provide the core of that defense with its Phased Adaptive Approach on ballistic missile defense, the first phase of which is now deployed. This system is designed to protect our deployed forces, our allies, and our partners from Iran's increasing missile inventory. NATO is seeking Russia's cooperation with this regional system. Such cooperation would send a powerful signal to Iran of world unity against their developing long-range missiles or their having nuclear weapons. We look forward to Admiral Stavridis' views on the progress and the impact of missile defense.

Nearly a year ago, AFRICOM initiated Operation Odyssey Dawn in Libya. NATO, with the support of forces from EUCOM, conducted and completed Operation Unified Protector. These successful civilian protection and mass atrocity prevention operations saved untold Libyans from being slaughtered at the hands of Qadhafi's forces and helped end decades of tyranny and oppression at the hands of the Qadhafi regime. Our witnesses are to be commended on the successful outcome of these operations. In my view, it was the right call for our NATO allies to lead with U.S. forces playing a unique and enabling role, particularly given the endorsement of the Arab League, Gulf Cooperation Council, and the United Nations.

Today, Libya's new political leadership has begun the difficult process of building consensus. AFRICOM is presented with an opportunity that has not existed for more than 4 decades: the establishment of a military-to-military relationship with the Libyan armed forces. The committee looks forward to learning of General Ham's efforts in Libya and his assessment of the Libya security forces as a potential security partner.

Libya is but one of many of General Ham's security challenges. The fall of the Qadhafi regime has created a security vacuum and a market for surplus small arms and other man portable weapons in the region that al Qaeda affiliates and other transnational actors are seeking to use to their advantage. This development is a cause of great concern. General Ham's efforts to train, assist, and support regional militaries in North Africa will be a key factor as to whether these violent extremist and criminal organizations are able to create safe havens through which they can further destabilize the region and its governments and potentially plan external attacks against our interests.

In East Africa, Somalia continues to threaten regional security and serve as a burgeoning safe haven for al Qaeda affiliates to train for and plot external operations. The efforts of AFRICOM since its inception to train and equip the regional militaries, as well as international efforts to maintain and bolster the presence of the African Union mission in Somalia, as shown progress in recent months. Last week in London, Secretary Clinton, in word and in deed, demonstrated that the United States remains committed to helping create a more stable and unified era for the Somali people. AFRICOM's efforts to build the capacity of regional governments, most notably Kenya, Ethiopia, and Uganda, will be a key determinant of whether recent progress can be consolidated. Last year's National Defense Authorization Act provided General Ham with new authorities in this area, and we would be interested to learn from the general whether they have assisted him in his efforts.

General Ham and Admiral Stavridis, I have just touched the wave tops of the issues facing you and your commands. We look forward to hearing your testimony and continuing to help AFRICOM and EUCOM accomplish their security objectives.

And I want both of you to know that we very much appreciate the very positive way in which you have worked with this committee and the relationships that you have fostered with our members.

Senator McCain.

I will put the balance of my statement in the record.

[The prepared statement of Chairman Levin follows:]

#### **STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN**

Senator MCCAIN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me join you in welcoming Admiral Stavridis and General Ham, thanking them for their distinguished service. I especially want to acknowledge Admiral Stavridis, as this will be his final appearance before this committee in uniform, and I know he is grateful for that. Thank you, Admiral, for your service and dedication to our Nation, and I wish you fair winds and following seas.

What is clear from our commanders' prepared testimonies and what will become clearer today is that the work of our armed forces both in Europe and Africa is not decreasing, it is increasing. It is becoming more complex, and it is becoming more important to our national security. I think we should bear all this in mind as we in this committee and we in Congress more broadly debate whether

and how to reduce to our defense spending, including the catastrophic effects of sequestration.

Our European allies remain our preeminent security partners, and today EUCOM and NATO are being called upon to bear an ever greater responsibility for diverse international security challenges from Afghanistan and Libya to cyber threats and transnational terrorism, to ballistic missile defense and the strategic balance of forces on the continent. We must be mindful of the enduring value and impact of our European alliances as we evaluate change to our force posture.

In its recently released defense strategy, the Defense Department has proposed the withdrawal of an additional brigade combat team from Europe. At the same time, this drawdown of forces is complemented by new U.S. military commitments to Europe, including a brigade-sized contribution to the NATO response force, new rotations of troops for joint exercises and operations, the installation of a ground-based radar in Turkey, and the stationing of four ballistic missile defense-capable Aegis ships in Spain. Overall, this seems like a prudent realignment of our forces and commitment in Europe.

Amid the growing global focus of the U.S. European Command, we must remember that the vision of Europe whole, free, and at peace will remain unfulfilled so long as the country of Georgia remains forcibly divided and occupied by Russian forces. Georgia is an aspiring member of NATO and one of the largest contributors of forces to the Afghan mission, and yet our bilateral defense relationship remains mired in the past.

As a bipartisan report led by two members of this committee, Senators Jeanne Shaheen and Lindsay Graham, concluded last year, the United States needs to build a, quote, more normal defense relationship with Georgia, including defensive arms sales in coordination with our NATO allies.

At a time of uncertainty in Russia, when lashing out at manufactured foreign enemies remains a tempting way to garner domestic legitimacy, it is not in America's interest to leave Georgia without adequate means to defend itself. It is for this reason that the Congress included a provision in the National Defense Authorization Act last year that requires the Department of Defense to provide Congress with a strategy for the normalization of the U.S.-Georgia defense relationship, including the sales of defensive arms. We look forward to Admiral Stavridis updating us on the development of that strategy.

One area where we and our European allies are increasingly working together is Africa. But while European Command has 68,000 forces assigned to it, AFRICOM has none. The increasing threats in Africa make it hard to justify this disparity. As General Ham notes in his prepared statement, the danger of transnational terrorism across Africa is growing and troubling. As al Qaeda's senior leadership continues to be degraded through sustained military pressure, al Qaeda's franchise groups, especially those in Africa, are expanding their ambitions and capabilities. Al Shabaab in Somalia, Boko Haram in Nigeria, and al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb are all increasingly making common cause with each

other and exploiting weak governments in Africa to facilitate their operations.

That is why AFRICOM's efforts to build the capacity of our African partners to disrupt these terrorist groups and deny them safe haven and freedom of movement is so critical. Two of the best emerging partners we have in this regard are Libya and Tunisia, which was reaffirmed once again for me last week when I traveled to both these countries with a few of my colleagues from this committee.

In Tunisia, the operational tempo of their armed forces has increased substantially due to the conflict next door in Libya. More than 10,000 Libyan refugees are now living in Tunisia. The Tunisian Government is seeking additional military assistance to enable them to sustain their security operations along their border with Libya, as well as to combat al Qaeda franchise groups that seek to destabilize the country. The Tunisians are seeking spare parts for the sustainment of their force, wheeled vehicles, aircraft, and better capacity to monitor their maritime domain and borders.

We look forward to General Ham's assessment of how AFRICOM can better assist Tunisia in these ways. It is critical that we do so.

Finally, it is essential that AFRICOM remain actively engaged with the National Transitional Council in Libya and with the elected government that will eventually succeed it. The most urgent and important area where we can assist the Libyans is the demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration of the many militias that remain in the country. It is critical that we support Libya in training and equipping a security force that can be a source of national unity and internal stability, as well as a capable partner for our armed forces. This effort goes hand in hand with our continued assistance to the Libyans to help secure loose weapons inside the country, especially MANPAD's, to keep them out of the hands of terrorists.

At the same time, we must do far more to assist the many Libyans who have been wounded in this conflict. Our military is the best organization in the world when it comes to medical treatment for wounded warriors, especially in prosthetics and rehabilitation. This remains one of the most emotionally resonant issues among the people of Libya, and it would only increase the enormous goodwill and influence that we enjoy in the country if we could expand our assistance for these wounded Libyans, especially in our military medical facilities in Europe. Such assistance would not require much of us but it would honor the sacrifice that so many in Libya have made to free their country and thereby stand as a firm pillar of mutual respect and solidarity on which to build our partnership with the new Libya.

Again, I thank the witnesses. I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator McCain.

Admiral Stavridis?

**STATEMENT OF ADM JAMES G. STAVRIDIS, USN, COMMANDER,  
U.S. EUROPEAN COMMAND/SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER,  
EUROPE**

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Chairman Levin, Ranking Member McCain, distinguished members of the committee, as always thank you for a very gracious welcome.

I will comment about my final appearance here. Just to recall, the first time I testified—and I am not sure anyone would remember. It was in 1994 when I was a young commander in command of a destroyer and we had a panel on readiness with a representative from each of the Services here at the O5 level in command. All I remember about that hearing is that the other three Services sent individuals who were all about 6'3" and had great hair, and I was clearly the outlier in that particular group and I think I remain that way today. [Laughter.]

My outstanding colleague and great General Ham here—

Chairman LEVIN. Well, you have not changed in all those years.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Exactly, unfortunately. [Laughter.]

It has been a terrific 3 years here at U.S. European Command and in the NATO world. I would highlight over the last year, since I appeared in front of the committee, the work in Libya. We do feel good about that. I think we are making progress in Afghanistan despite all the challenges that the chairman and the ranking member correctly alluded to. We have kept stability in the Balkans. We have done very well, I think, in engaging with our partners in Europe. And we are pushing on missile defense, cyber, interagency, private-public, a lot of different initiatives and we will continue to work on all those things.

Our fundamental job at European Command is to defend this country forward. We try and do that by being ready for the unexpected. If we look back on last year at this time, as Libya was bursting on the scene, it is a good example of how we do not know what will happen next. We try to be ready. We try to work with partners and allies, as we have talked about, and we try to continue to strengthen this NATO alliance which I do believe is a cornerstone for all of us.

I am working now on the adjustment to the force posture in Europe, and I will be glad to talk a bit about that. The removal of the two heavy combat brigades, but the addition of a rotational one, and the adjustments we are making over there—I think they are sensible and balanced.

We are making progress on the missile defense piece, and I will be glad to talk in more depth about that.

One thing I would like to mention—often I get a question from people, constituents of yours, as well as from the members about why. Why is it important to remain engaged in Europe? And I would just like to very quickly say I think it does matter that we continue to have Europe as our partner of first resort and a cornerstone of our engagement in the world, and I think that is for several different reasons, including the economy. Although somewhat diminished of late, it still remains about 25 percent of the world's GDP. The geography is extremely important. Europe is a strategic platform that allows us to go to Africa to support General Ham, to

go to the Middle East, to operate really in the global South Asian and Central Asian world.

And then the NATO alliance itself I think is, as we have mentioned several times, very key to all of this. In practice, that translates into addition to our ability to operate in the world. That is why we have 40,000 non-U.S. troops in Afghanistan. That is why our allies did such, I think, strong work in Libya. That is why they do the bulk of the work in the Balkans. They are taking the lead in counter-piracy. So I think we get very real benefit from all of that.

I will simply close by thanking the committee, as always, for the great support to U.S. European Command. I will, with great enthusiasm, relay your wonderful words about the men and women who are in the command. It means a lot. I encourage you all to come and visit, as some of you have had the opportunity to do. Your presence to our troops matters and your engagement with senior leaders in other nations matters as well.

Thank you for hearing our testimony today.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Stavridis follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you so much, Admiral.

General Ham?

**STATEMENT OF GEN CARTER F. HAM, USA, COMMANDER, U.S. AFRICA COMMAND**

General HAM. Mr. Chairman, Senator McCain, and members of the committee, thanks very much for the opportunity to appear before you today. And I am truly honored to be here with Admiral Stavridis, a very respected colleague and a longtime friend.

Operations in Libya truly brought U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command to a higher level of collaboration, and this year we will continue to work closely together to more effectively address security challenges in our respective areas of responsibility.

The last year, as the chairman and ranking member have indicated, has been a year of significant change that has swept across the African continent. The broad wave of democratic movements that began in Tunisia have spread faster and more broadly than many had forecasted. The Republic of South Sudan became the world's newest nation. In Nigeria, Boko Haram emerged as an increasingly violent extremist group and a threat to western interests. And in the Horn of Africa, al Shabaab and al Qaeda's publicly formalized merger made evident what we have long suspected. Throughout the past year, we have seen that security in Africa continues to be influenced by external actors, by rapid economic developments, population growth, and the overall size and diversity of the continent itself.

In line with the new defense Strategic Guidance, we have prioritized our efforts, focusing on the greatest threats to America, Americans, and American interests. Countering the threats posed by al Qaeda affiliates in East and Northwest Africa remains my number one priority. Strengthening the defense capabilities of our African partners to responsibly address security challenges remains an integral part of what we do. Strengthening regional capabilities in peacekeeping and maritime security also remain important

areas of focus. And our engagements are designed to be innovative, low-cost, and have a small footprint. Indeed, in Africa a small investment can go a long way.

As I traveled across the continent, I have been encouraged by the optimism of African leaders in confronting the challenges and embracing the opportunities ahead. I sincerely believe that in the long run it is Africans who are best able to address African security challenges. Because of this and because a safe, secure, and stable Africa is in the United States' national interest, we at U.S. Africa Command will continue to strive to be the security partner of choice on the continent.

Everything U.S. Africa Command has accomplished is the result of the professionalism and dedication of the uniformed and civilian women and men of the command, our strong partnerships in Africa, and our teammates from across the U.S. Government.

I appreciate the tools that you have given us to execute our missions, including new authorities under sections 1206 and 1207 of the National Defense Authorization Act. Meeting our intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance requirements continues to be a challenge, and I am working with the Department of Defense to gain additional capabilities to monitor the activities of al Qaeda affiliates in East, North, and West Africa.

ISR is also essential to U.S. Africa Command's ongoing efforts to assist the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Central African Republic, and the Republic of South Sudan to defeat the Lord's Resistance Army in Central Africa.

I thank the committee for its enduring support, without which United States Africa Command would simply be unable to accomplish its missions. We welcome you to visit us at our headquarters or preferably in Africa where you can see firsthand what we are doing.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator McCain. And I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Ham follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you so much, General Ham.

Let us try 7 minutes for our first round. We have a vote at 11:00. Apparently it is now 11:30, but assuming that we are still asking questions, which I presume will be the case, we will try to work right through that vote, and if necessary, we will also have a second round.

Admiral and General, first, about the fiscal year 2013 budget. We have had an administration strategy which has been laid out recently. And my question is, does the 2013 budget request from the administration reflect the administration's strategy for your area of responsibility, and do you support that budget? Admiral?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Yes, sir, to both questions.

Chairman LEVIN. General?

General HAM. I do, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Now, relative to Afghanistan, Admiral, let me ask you a number of questions about the events that are going on in Afghanistan following the violence over the Koran burning. Question number one, should we, because of this violence, modify our strategy in Afghanistan in your judgment?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. No, sir. I think at the moment although, as you say, it has been a very challenging week, as I look at the broad sweep of our progress there, I am convinced that we should continue with the current strategy of transitioning to the Afghan security forces.

Chairman LEVIN. And do our NATO allies and the other ISAF participating countries also remain committed to the strategy following this violence?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Yes, sir. In my conversations—as you can imagine, I have had many over the last week or so with senior leaders within the alliance. You have also seen the Secretary General of the alliance—Secretary General Rasmussen—address this specifically. And I think there is solid support on the European side of this to continue with the current strategy.

Chairman LEVIN. What is your assessment of the response of the Afghan security forces to the violence over the recent days?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. It has been reasonably good. We have had about 150 demonstrations around the country, about 30 people killed, about 150 wounded. So this has been a significant level of activity, but it has been very diffuse around the country. I think General Allen would tell you and will probably have a chance to tell you directly in a few weeks that he has been generally pleased with the response, both of the Afghan police and the Afghan national army, in containing these demonstrations and holding violence to a minimum.

Chairman LEVIN. Last June when the President announced the plans for the drawdown of U.S. surge forces by the end of this summer, he also said that after that occurred, that U.S. troop reductions would continue, in his words, quote, at a steady pace as Afghan security forces move into the lead. Can you give us your view regarding the pace of troop reductions in Afghanistan after the end of this summer when the surge forces are out of Afghanistan between then and 2014 when we would be turning over the principal security responsibility throughout Afghanistan to the Afghans?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Sir, as you would expect, we are starting to think about that holistically from, as you say, the end of the fighting season at the end of this summer and looking forward. But I think it is too soon to lay out a definitive track. General Allen will be coming in, I would guess, by mid-summer with some ideas about that, and they will have to be vetted on the U.S. side through General Mattis up the NATO chain with me. And I would not anticipate having granularity on that until later on this year. And I think it has to be conditions-based as we go forward. So I think that is a sensible approach.

Chairman LEVIN. Do you have any current views about that pace?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I do not, sir. I want to see how things go for the rest of the year.

Chairman LEVIN. And next, do you anticipate that one of the major outcomes from the NATO summit in Chicago in May would be an agreement between NATO and the Government of Afghanistan on a long-term strategic partnership for promoting security and stability in Afghanistan?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I believe it will be. That is a very high-level goal for Secretary General Rasmussen. Everything I can see around the circuit on the NATO side indicates a strong willingness to go forward, and I believe we will have an enduring partnership between NATO and the Republic of Afghanistan.

Chairman LEVIN. And you expect that could be accomplished by that summit?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Yes, sir, I do.

Chairman LEVIN. Now, discussions between us and Afghanistan on a long-term strategic partnership agreement have allegedly slowed down reportedly over the issues of night raids and detention operations. Is it your expectation that those issues would need to be resolved within the U.S. Afghanistan strategic partnership negotiations before an Afghan-NATO strategic partnership agreement could be finalized?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Well, first of all, those particular discussions are in the U.S. chain. So it would be sort of General Mattis who would be focused on that obviously. My sense is that on the NATO side, we are going to move forward independently of national bilateral agreements. Some European nations have already concluded strategic partnership agreements. Some are in discussions. There is a NATO path forward on this that I am confident will be done by the summit.

Chairman LEVIN. Now, on the question of our forces in Europe, after the inactivation of two Army brigades and the one A-10 squadron in Germany, I assume that this is going to affect bases or sites that we have in Europe. And I am wondering if you would provide us for the record a list of the impact of those changes on our locations in Europe.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Yes, sir, I will be glad to.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Chairman LEVIN. Do you believe it is in our security interest to pursue cooperation with Russia on missile defense?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I do.

Chairman LEVIN. Can you tell us why?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I think that as a general proposition, the missile defense system that we are putting in place is not in any way directed against Russia. It is directed against ballistic missiles that could come from a variety of nations.

Chairman LEVIN. Including Iran?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Including Iran, of course. And clearly Russia's geopolitical position where they exist in the world, their geography would make it advantageous to have a means of sharing information. Now, that is distinct from a fully integrated system, and of course, we have to protect our classified information and so forth. But I think there is advantage in a tactical sense to this, and from a political perspective, I think seeking zones of cooperation with Russia where we can find them is a useful thing to do, recognizing there are going to be areas that we are going to disagree with the Russian Federation upon.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

General, you recently visited Libya I believe and had discussions with military leaders in Libya. Can you give us your reaction to those meetings?

General HAM. Sir, I have visited Tripoli, a first visit, first of what I hope will be many visits to that country. And we, early in February, hosted the military chiefs of the Libyan armed forces at our headquarters in Germany. All of this focused on establishing what I will call a normalized military-to-military engagement process.

I am encouraged by the willingness of the Libyans to want to have that kind of relationship. To that end, we have stood up an Office of Security Cooperation. That is the mechanism that we would have to facilitate things such as foreign military sales and international military education and training programs.

So I think we are off to a good start. The challenge for us will be to sustain that and make sure we are addressing the security concerns that are of mutual interest to Libya and the United States.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you both.

Senator McCain.

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral, I am sure in your experience you remember that we intervened in Kosovo and Bosnia because ethnic cleansing and an unacceptable situation prevailed that caused us to intervene and stop the massacre that was going on. Right?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Yes, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. Yesterday the Secretary General of NATO, Mr. Rasmussen, told the cable, quote, we haven't had any discussions about a NATO role in Syria, and I don't envision such a role for the alliance. Is it true that NATO is doing no contingency planning of any kind with respect to Syria, including for the provision of humanitarian and medical assistance?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. We are not doing any detailed contingency planning at this point, Senator, and there is a reason for that. Within the NATO command structure, there has to be an authorization from the North Atlantic Council before we can conduct detailed planning.

Senator MCCAIN. Before you can do any planning.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Before we do detailed contingency planning.

Senator MCCAIN. I asked if there is any planning going on.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. There is always a closely monitoring a situation like that, but there is nothing that I would categorize as detailed planning.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, would you characterize the crisis in Syria as an armed conflict between Assad's forces and opposition forces?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Yes, sir, I would.

Senator MCCAIN. Would the provision of arms, communication equipment, and tactical intelligence help the Syrian opposition to better organize itself and push Assad from power?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I would think it would, yes, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. So here we are with a NATO that was willing to engage and intervene in Bosnia and Kosovo, but we will not even make any contingency plans for the massacre that is going on in Syria. I guess I will not have to ask a comment on that. It speaks for itself as to the role of NATO.

General Ham, have you seen evidence of al Qaeda attempting to exploit unrest in Libya and Tunisia? And if so, have they had any success?

General HAM. Sir, we have seen indications that al Qaeda seeks to take advantage of the situation in Libya. It is less clear to me that they have the same intent in Tunisia, but Libya to be sure.

Senator MCCAIN. In your prepared remarks, you say there are clear indications that al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb is now involved in trafficking arms from Libya. Could you tell us a little bit about the indications, what kind of weapons they are trafficking, and has al Qaeda acquired MANPAD's from Libya?

General HAM. Senator, if you allow me, it would be best, I think, to give you the details in a classified response to your question. But more generally, we certainly have seen the transit of small arms, some heavy weapons, and munitions from stockpiles in Libya through the border area between Niger and Algeria, and we assume that that is intended to resupply al Qaeda in the lands of the Islamic Maghreb principally operating in northern Mali.

Senator MCCAIN. And this whole issue the Tunisians have with their border problems lends itself to making the situation worse because they do not have control of their borders. Right?

General HAM. Sir, that is true for most of the Nations in that neighborhood.

Senator MCCAIN. So it would be in our interest to help the Tunisians, as I mentioned in my prepared statement, with some ability to better control their own borders.

General HAM. I agree with that, Senator.

Senator MCCAIN. Admiral, you know, in the defense authorization bill, we put in language about Georgia and the sale of defensive arms. Have we had any advice and counsel from you on that as to how we can carry out that mission of helping them with defensive weapons?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Sir, we are moving very fast on that and I anticipate that coming back to the committee, to the Congress at the end of this month. And I want to assure you it is getting a great deal of attention and we are leaning forward on it very much.

I also want to just mention—and you picked up on this, but Georgia's contributions in Afghanistan are almost beyond noteworthy. They have a full battalion there. They have just agreed to add a second battalion. They will then become the largest troop-contributing nation on a per capita basis of the 50 who are there. We are also looking at bringing them into the NATO Special Operations Headquarters to do some work in that regard too. So overall, as you indicated, it is a nation that we are working with very closely, and I look forward to delivering the section 1242 data you asked for at the end of the month.

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you.

General Ham, on a recent visit that we paid to both Tunisia and Libya, I got the distinct impression that al Qaeda is a threat and radical Islamist elements are a threat, but overall, more so in Tunisia than Libya because they are further along. There does not seem to be a fear, at least amongst the people of these countries, about those extreme elements having an undue influence. But at the same time, this issue, particularly in Libya, of all these weapons

lying around, including perhaps MANPADs—I have heard figures as much as 20,000. The militias that are still not under government control should give us pause.

What is your assessment, because you hear a lot of different opinions in the United States, of the real threat that these countries might fall under the sway or influence or takeover by al Qaeda, Salafis, other extreme Islamist organizations that might not be in the United States? national security interest?

General HAM. Senator, from the reporting that I have seen and my interaction with leaders in both countries, I do not think there is great likelihood that an extremist organization will be able to extend control of the government of either country. It is rather the network and the cells of extremist organizations that are seeking to take advantage of the current unrest particularly in Libya that would undermine the efforts of the legitimate government of those countries. And I think that is the real threat rather than taking over the country.

Senator MCCAIN. So a lot of it will be gauged by the progress that they make towards forming up a government, getting the militias under control, in other words, nation building from really scratch.

General HAM. Good governance and establishment of legitimate security institutions are absolutely key to the success in both countries.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, I found, much to my dismay, that both the prime minister and the deputy prime minister were professors at the University of Alabama, and that brings an extreme element into the government—[Laughter.]

—that should be of significant concern, I believe. Do you agree, General?

General HAM. Sir, I do not. Having met the prime minister, I think he is—and he will be here in this city next week.

Senator MCCAIN. I hope all of our colleagues have the chance to meet him.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I would just add “Roll Tide.” [Laughter.]

Chairman LEVIN. I was going to thank Senator McCain for his questions until that last one. Thank you, Senator McCain.

Senator Lieberman.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Thanks, Admiral and General, for your service.

I must admit that I never thought that of all the things I have had the honor to experience in my time as a Senator, that I would ever be sitting in Tripoli with the leadership of the country, could say the two words that you said, “Roll Tide,” and receive thunderous applause in response.

Admiral, let me join those who are thanking you for your service, extraordinary service to our country. It has been a great honor and really a pleasure to get to know you. You obviously have been a great military leader but you also have a tremendous sense of history which I think has contributed to your service to our country. May I say I know you referred with your characteristic humility a while ago to your height. You join a rather proud list of great military leaders over history who have not been tall except in the qual-

ity and effect of their leadership. And I thank you very much for that. Obviously, I have no bias against people who are not tall.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. You look pretty tall to me, Senator.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Now, let me begin with you. I do want to say for the record that I share the consternation that Senator McCain expressed about the excess of rhetoric and deficiency of any real action to assist the opposition in Syria. This does remind me of experiences we had in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s. It actually took quite a while for us to build the political will both here and in Europe to get involved there. While we were doing that, a lot of people got killed. The same is happening in Syria now. I hope it does not take us so long. And in both of those cases, when we got involved, we were able to stop it—NATO, our coalition of the willing—and brought about a much better situation than existed before. And I hope before long, we will be able to do that there as well.

I also want to touch on another matter that Senator McCain raised and that is our relations with Georgia. As you well know, Admiral, there will be a NATO summit in Chicago this spring. It does not appear to me, from what I hear, that there will be anything on the agenda about further NATO enlargement. I hope we can find a way to make clear in Chicago that the door to NATO has not been closed to other nations, particularly I am thinking of Georgia, but there are others as well.

Do you have any sense of that? I presume it will not be on the agenda, but can we find a way to let countries like Georgia know that the door is still open to them to NATO?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Sir, I do not know if it will be on the agenda. But as you surmise, I doubt that it will be formally placed on the agenda. There are nations in various stages of moving toward membership including, among others, Macedonia and Montenegro. Georgia is in a national plan that continues to make progress.

The treaty is very clear. The treaty is very simple in terms of an open door is defined, democratic ideals, position to contribute, unanimous consent of the members. I think that the United States continuing to use its voice within the councils of NATO can move this position very effectively, and that is how I would approach it.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Okay. I hope that is in fact the case.

Let me ask you one follow-on question about the really tragic events in Afghanistan in the last week or so. Do we have a judgment about whether the unrest that followed the regrettable, to put it mildly, burning of the Koran is spontaneous or whether our enemies there, the Taliban, for instance, are basically jumping on an unfortunate event and trying to turn it to their advantage?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Senator, I will provide some classified data on that. As you can imagine, we do have a sense of it. I would say it is somewhat both, and we will provide you some more detail on that.

Senator LIEBERMAN. That is good enough for now.

General Ham, I wanted to come back to the Lord's Resistance Army. I know the President a while back deployed about 100 of our special forces into Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, et cetera, in response to the LRA. Can you give us a status report on that operation this morning?

General HAM. Senator, I would be glad to.

The force is deployed. We have liaisons in each of the National capitals that work with the military forces of the four countries. More importantly, they are deployed in the operating areas particularly in the Central African Republic and the Republic of South Sudan, as well as members who operate in a joint intelligence operation center in the Democratic Republic of Congo. They are mostly special forces. Personnel are advisors and trainers. They are facilitating the flow of intelligence. They are helping with logistics planning so that the African forces can sustain themselves for longer periods in what is a very large and austere operating area and also assisting with long-range communications.

So I think we are off to a pretty good start. The next steps for us are, in concert particularly with Uganda and South Sudan, to use a South Sudanese base from which we can fly an intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance aircraft to extend the range into what we think is the most likely operating area of the Lord's Resistance Army in the Central African Republic and the northern portion of the Republic of South Sudan. So far, so good.

A concern is the rainy season is coming. That will impede intelligence collection and certainly tactical movement. So we have a bit of a sense of urgency to try to get done everything we can before the rains hit.

Senator LIEBERMAN. How would you describe what the goal of our presence there is?

General HAM. Sir, we are an enabling force to facilitate and advance the capabilities of the African forces, to increase their ability to sustain their operations for longer periods of time. They have much better human intelligence. Their field-craft is quite good. They need mostly communications, a little bit of sustaining capability, a little bit of planning effort. But it will be the Africans who bring this mission to a successful conclusion.

Senator LIEBERMAN. And, of course, the goal of their efforts is to defeat the Lord's Resistance Army and to presumably capture or kill its leader. Is that correct?

General HAM. Yes, sir, that is.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thanks.

Let me go back to Tunisia and just invite you to say a little more, General Ham. As others who have been there, I have been really impressed by the transition they made. They had a good interim government. They held open, free, and fair elections. They have elected a government which the majority of the elected representatives to the parliament were members of a party called Inyatta, which is Islamist, but has really I think helped a lot of us have a different vision or a fair vision of what is possible for a party that calls themselves Islamists in terms of respect for law, women's rights, democracy.

But they have got some really big challenges, and I think perhaps of all the Arab Spring uprisings, this is the one that has the greatest prospect to succeed, but they need our help to do so. And I know immediately they need financial assistance, which a lot of countries are talking about doing, including our own.

But what about military-to-military? I was surprised at how little we were giving them before this uprising certainly as compared to

Egypt but really other countries in the region as well. I wanted to invite you to talk a little bit about what your plans are, if you have any—I hope you do—to work with the Tunisian military to build their capabilities in the year ahead.

General HAM. Senator, during the transitional period, the interim government period, we had dialogue with the Tunisian ministry of defense and their armed forces, but there was some reluctance to commit to longer-term arrangements. Now that the government has been seated and the government is certainly more permanent, we had just 2 weeks ago a bi-national commission meeting with the Tunisians in Tunis, again to map out the military-to-military engagement and security assistance plan between the two countries.

What the Tunisians have asked us for at the top of their list is assistance with border security, both land and in the maritime domain. And so we are seeking opportunities to do that.

Second, they have asked us to make sure that we can at least sustain and preferably increase the number of Tunisian officers who are afforded the opportunity to train in U.S. military educational institutions.

So again, a good basis for an enduring relationship I think is formed, and we have just got to sustain that now well into the future.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Good. Thank you.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Can I add just one thing, sir, on this, on Tunisia? And it is a NATO organization called the Mediterranean Dialogue which brings together non-NATO Mediterranean countries, including Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Israel and is a mechanism that we are going to employ to bring Libya closer as well. So there are alliance mechanisms as well as the good points that General Ham made.

Thank you, sir.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thank you. Again, Godspeed in the chapters ahead, Admiral.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Lieberman.

Senator Inhofe.

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think when we talked about the force structure in EUCOM being reduced and if you go back—it is my understanding—through the 1990s, that reduction has gone up as high as 75 percent even before the more current reductions. And you have answered the question in terms of meeting the contingencies there, but I did not hear anything—General Ham, in terms of this reduction and the fact that we need a rapid response sometimes to things that are happening in Africa that you and I have talked about, how is this impeding you looking down the road?

General HAM. Senator, I think we will be okay. The air and maritime forces that have been forward-stationed in Europe were absolutely essential to operations in Libya. Those forces will largely remain in Europe, and I think we will be in good shape. The special forces that are stationed in Europe are going to be enhanced in the future with some special operations aviation that will, I think, again give us increased capability. And one of the Army brigades

that is retained is the Airborne Brigade based in Italy. That is the most likely Army force that we would require in a contingency. So I am pretty satisfied, Senator.

Senator INHOFE. Vicenza?

General HAM. Yes, sir.

And then lastly, sir, as Admiral Stavridis laid out in Europe where there will be a rotational presence, we are actually very fortunate that the very first of what are called regionally aligned brigades or regionally aligned forces will come to U.S. Army Africa, our Army component, in fiscal year 2013. We think that is a very good initiative. It gives some predictability and will enhance our ability not only to respond to emergent contingencies but, more importantly, to continue exercises and partnership activities on a predictable basis on the continent.

Senator INHOFE. Something you said reminded me—I may perhaps ask you, Admiral. I was pretty much involved in the Vicenza, back when we had to use them to overfly Turkey, and helping them. Fortunately, we had weather that was cooperating at that time, but we now have—I think it is all complete now. The staging area in Aviano. Is that operating to your satisfaction?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Yes, sir. I visited it about 8 months ago. It is a terrific facility.

Senator INHOFE. Yes, it is. It is. Yes, I was there also.

Just for a minute, going back—and I appreciate the fact that Senator Lieberman was asking questions about the LRA. It was actually my legislation back in 2009 and we called it the LRA disarmament in Northern Uganda. At that time, Northern Uganda was pretty much it, up there around Gulu. My first exposure to that was some 16 years ago. Now moving all around as far south as you mentioned, Eastern Congo—and I had occasion to be in South Sudan, one of the first visitors there under that new country. That was one of their major concerns up there. And so I do know that it has expanded to the point where I always felt we should be considering that a major terrorist activity, even though they say Joseph Koni is one man, he has got a few close lieutenants, but they are spreading around. They have mobility.

The question I would ask you about this is do you feel you have the assets necessary—we will start with just the LRA—to handle what you need to handle and then emphasize the fact that even though we have some combat troops there, it is not a combat mission that we have. There has been a lot of criticism that people thought that it was. Would you elaborate on that?

General HAM. Senator, I would be glad to. First of all, with regard to the role of the forces, we are a train, advise, and assist role. We are not those who are out on operational missions. However, because of the area in which our forces operate, they are combat-equipped. There are dangerous areas in which they are operating, and they are certainly based alongside the forces of the Nations involved.

With regard to assets, I have the assets I need with one exception that if you will allow me to answer in a classified forum. The challenge for us right now, particularly with reconnaissance is the ability to reach all of the areas we need to reach to be able to observe or try to collect and identify where the leaders of the Lord's

Resistance Army are operating. That is why this base in South Sudan, which General Hawk, who you have met, has offered to us, is so important because it will allow us to extend and have the reconnaissance aircraft operate for longer periods of time in the areas in which we think the Lord's Resistance Army is operating, again particularly in the Central African Republic and the northern regions of the Republic of South Sudan.

Senator INHOFE. And I appreciate it. I know what you are doing and you are doing a great job. We do get classified briefings on a regular basis, and I would just like to make sure that anything that comes up that changes what you are doing now or progress you are making that you share that, well, with me personally.

Getting into the Boko Haram, I think that has been there. They say that it only came by that name since 2001. However, I can remember being with Sani Abacha as long ago as 16 years ago, and while it was not called that at the time, it was the genesis of what has become Boko Haram.

I just would ask if you think that the capability of the Nigerian forces—how are they—how would you assess them and their capability of handling that because I consider that to be a major problem in that part of Africa.

General HAM. Sir, we have been engaged with the Nigerians to seek opportunities, if they would like us to, to seek to increase the capabilities specifically of their tailored counter-terrorist forces. Their general purpose forces are pretty good, but they are not really designed for this kind of a mission. And we think, just as we have found, having some specialized training, equipping, small forces that are very specifically focused on a counter-terrorist role would probably be beneficial to Nigeria. And if they would like some help, we would like to do that.

Senator INHOFE. Yes. You think maybe the 1206, 1207 programs have a very good application there?

General HAM. Absolutely, sir.

Senator INHOFE. I was going to say that I want to include IMET throughout the continent down there and how beneficial that has been. When I am down there, I can see the results of that. You see the people that we have trained and they have gone back to these areas. It has been a very successful program, and I would assume that you agree with that.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. If I could just say a word on 1206. In the EUCOM dimension, we use that to prepare our allies to go forward into Afghanistan with us, and it absolutely underpins the contribution of 40,000 European troops. So 1206 has been a terrific initiative from the EUCOM perspective as well, sir.

Senator INHOFE. Yes. Well, my time has expired, but I would like to have you make one comment about an area that really impresses me is in Kabul, the military training center there. We have watched this. I know the Oklahoma 45th was actually over there in the very early stages long before that center was developed. But is that progressing and are you getting the results that you were looking in ANA and the quality of training?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Yes, sir, absolutely. And just to give you a number, we now have 80 percent of the instructors there are Af-

ghans. So this is another kind of transition that is happening, a transition in training and it is because of the work—

Senator INHOFE. It is 80 percent now?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Yes, sir.

Senator INHOFE. That is quite an improvement. I was there over New Year's and it was about half of that, I thought, at that time. So it has really been improving quite a bit. Good. Good work.

And let me also get on record and say the same thing that the other Senators have said about your service, about our personal relationship, and how much you will be missed. Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Inhofe.

Senator Nelson.

Senator NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral Stavridis, let me thank you for your service. And in our little discussion before, what you are doing is you are avoiding being disintermediated, and that is an important point that we discussed earlier.

Your testimony notes that we have completed phase one of the European Phased Adaptive Approach, or EPAA, to missile defense. It is designed and intended to defend against the existing growing threat from Iranian ballistic missiles to Europe and other possibilities as well. You also note that our NATO allies are making efforts to contribute to NATO's new missile defense mission.

Can you in layman's terms, as much as possible, describe why you believe this Phased Adaptive Approach and the planned capabilities of it are important to defending Europe against Iran's growing missile capabilities, particularly phase two in Romania and phase three in Poland?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Yes, sir. You correctly categorized the threat as coming from that region of the world and it is only growing. Therefore, we have an obligation, an alliance obligation, here and, of course, ultimately that threat will probably be intercontinental in nature. And so all the more reason at that point to be defending the homeland. So as we build up from the current phase one, which is a couple of Aegis ships, a static radar system, a command and control system up in Germany, we put all that together. We are going to combine that with the NATO command and control system.

By 2015, we will have a land-based interceptor set that will be ashore in Romania, in Deveselu, Romania. We will upgrade the missiles at that point. We will upgrade the command and control. We will lash in more overhead sensors, and then the next step will be 2018 when we will add another set of ground interceptors in Poland.

As we build this, I am confident the NATO allies will step up and contribute as well. For example, the Dutch are buying ships that are capable now of plugging into this architecture like our four DDGs, our destroyers that will be going to Rota.

So it is a progression. It is phased and it is adaptive to the threat in that we can plug in at any step along the way to continue to improve it to pace the threat that we see.

Senator NELSON. Well, it is adequately named. Because it is phased adaptive, it can be adapted to what the changes would require, but it is also called the "defense." It is not intended to be

an offense approach. It is defense. So I think that is important for people to understand.

You noted and Senator McCain noted about the Aegis ballistic defense ships that are going to be based. Can you explain the benefit of home porting for the four ships at Rota as compared to having the ships transit the Atlantic as an alternative?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Yes, sir. The advantage of having them forward, if you will, in Rota is partly the multi-capability of the ships. In other words, these are not just ballistic missile ships. They are air defense ships. They are anti-submarine ships. They are anti-surface ships. They can be used as intelligence gatherers. They have very sophisticated aircraft attached to them. So the capability that you bring forward into this theater is frankly profound, and it also helps my fellow combatant commander here because Rota is uniquely positioned essentially directly between U.S. European Command and Africa Command. These ships could be one day working down off the Gulf of Guinea addressing threats from a Boko Haram scenario. In the next few weeks, they could transit through the Suez and be doing counter-piracy missions. The next week, they could be doing their traditional missions in the ballistic missile sense in the eastern Mediterranean.

The advantage to having them forward and not transiting the Atlantic is simply one of time/distance. For every ship that is forward-deployed, it is really the equivalent of the effort of three or four ships back in the United States because of that transit time it has to eat up.

And then lastly, the political benefit of having them there to engage with our allies I think speaks for itself within the alliance, sir.

Senator NELSON. In addition to the Dutch, are other NATO allies working on comparable ships or comparable warfighting opportunities?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Yes, sir. The Spanish are looking at this. The Germans and Italians have air defense systems that they are looking to lash into this. All the Nations contribute in the command and control arena and certainly in the staffing and the command structure. So over time, my intention is to continue to encourage our European allies to shoulder their rightful part of this, and I think over time we should continue to press that hard.

Senator NELSON. Well, we have been frustrated in the past because it felt like NATO was the United States pulling a lot of our friends along but they were not pulling their weight in terms of the financial cost or the capability to be supportive as we have been. Do you see that as developing in parity now more so within the—

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I think we have to continue to press on our allies to spend more on defense as a general proposition. The Europeans set a goal of 2 percent of the gross domestic product, and they are not meeting that. In the aggregate, they spend about 1.5 percent of GDP. They are not meeting their own standards for doing that, and I think the United States should continue to press this very hard. I do at every opportunity and I welcome the chance to address it in a public forum like this as well.

Senator NELSON. Well, I think it is important, and I appreciate the fact you are stating that so publicly because it seems at times as though our allies would sacrifice until our last penny. And what

we need to do is be sure that there is a parity here among all the Nations that gain from this security apparatus that we have.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Yes, sir. I agree we need to continue to press hard.

Senator NELSON. General Ham, one of the broad questions that always comes to mind is what in your command keeps you awake at night from time to time, the threat that perhaps is the hardest to quantify, the hardest to identify, the hardest to deal with.

General HAM. Senator, very clearly at the top of my list is the threat of a terrorist attack that would emanate from Africa but conducted here in the homeland. And it is not too hard to imagine how that might happen. For example, a Somalia American citizen disaffected finds his way—probably a young man finds his way to Somalia to a training camp, because he is a U.S. passport holder, perhaps finds a way to negotiate the various security systems, and then conducts an attack here in the homeland. That is mission failure for us, Senator, and that is what keeps me awake.

Senator NELSON. Obviously, that is one of the hardest things, if not the hardest thing, to defend against.

General HAM. It is, sir, but again, with our emphasis on working by, with, and through host nation forces, seeking ways to have stable institutions in Africa, the likelihood that an attack like that could occur lessens. And that is really what we are focused on.

Senator NELSON. Thank you, gentlemen.

And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Nelson.

Senator Brown.

Senator BROWN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And to both of you, thank you for your service, obviously, and your leadership.

I would like to follow up on my colleagues' comments on Syria. I certainly share their concerns and agree that we should empower our partners who are in the best position to exert pressure on the Assad regime. So I just want to note that for the record.

Admiral, I would like to just switch gears a little bit. You have mentioned how proud you are of the National Guard partnership program. I have had actually the honor of participating with Massachusetts going over to Paraguay and serving and learning. I can tell you firsthand that program is unbelievable. And the work I have done also over at the Pentagon in understanding the larger role of that program has been eye-opening as well.

I am assuming that you agree that that program is unique, cost-effective, and a necessary international engagement tool. Is that a fair statement?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Oh, I would go beyond that, Senator.

First, thank you for your service as well.

But let me say that I think the State Partnership Program dollar for dollar may be one of the most efficient and effective programs that we have at our disposal as combatant commanders. I have 22 of these programs in the European theater. When I was the Commander of U.S. Southern Command, I had the State Partnership Program you allude to. Down here I had about 20 of those programs. So I have seen about 40 to 45 of these over the last 6 years, and the bang for the buck is terrific because in the end we can do

all kinds of messaging and strategic communication but personal contact trumps everything. And when we put fine young American guardsmen and women in and around their partners, the return on investment, especially over time, is very powerful.

And I will conclude by saying the other thing about the Guard is they bring this unique basket of civilian skills along with their military skills, and that, as you know, has real application particularly in many of these less developed countries.

Senator BROWN. You are right. The bang for the dollar—I was actually shocked as to how little it actually is and the value we get out of it. And I am concerned that the State Department is trying to wrestle program from us, and I would encourage you and others to advocate for it because of its effectiveness.

And I am wondering if we reduce our military presence in Europe, how do you think the partnership program will be affected, if at all.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I think it becomes more valuable in that scenario because it is relatively low cost. If we are going to have less static forces assigned in Europe, the ability to have those State partnership folks rolling in and out becomes even more valuable.

Senator BROWN. Can you comment on the ongoing discussions between DOD and our German and Italian allies with respect to the termination of the MEADS program? And are these discussions progressing?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. They are progressing. The Congress has helped us by sharpening the amount of funding that we can spend on this. We are in the process of discussing this. This is really done on a policy level in the Pentagon, but I track it because I talk all the time to the senior German and Italian military folks. I would categorize it as a discussion that is ongoing that will, I think, conclude successfully in a mutually agreed way this spring.

Senator BROWN. And, General, if I could, the Guard currently are partners with eight countries in Africa, and I understand you believe there is some room for growth there. Can you comment how might those plans for an Army regionally aligned brigade and Air Force Africa Partnership Flight in supporting those programs? Is there any option to expand or maintain those types of programs?

General HAM. Senator, I believe there is. First, with regard to the State Partnership Program, like Admiral Stavridis, I am a big fan of that. It is the enduring relationships that are developed in the State Partnership Program that are so valuable to that effort.

I have asked General McKinley if we could add two more State partners this year. I think we should look for some new and innovative ways to apply the State partnership. For example, in a place like Libya where we have a newly forming relationship rather than a longstanding relationship, that might be a place where we could apply the State Partnership Program to great effect. So we will continue to look for opportunities such as that.

And the regionally aligned forces, the African Partnership Flight like African partners on station, the maritime component of that, what I think we will see in the years coming is an increased degree of predictability as the U.S. force presence is now out of Iraq and beginning to decline in Afghanistan, more predictable bases to be available for engagement, for exercises, and again, all with an eye

toward increasing the capacity and the capability of the key African states that we interact with so that they can do more, contribute more to their own stability and to regional stability.

Senator BROWN. That is interesting you say that. I noted just from firsthand and just firsthand commentary that the rule of law training that the JAGs and others provide these new relationships in countries where they really do not have a rule of law, they do not have an understanding as to how we are able to balance the civilian and military especially in places like Paraguay and other countries as well. And that is very important, and I appreciate both of your support of that program.

I was wondering—General, I might as well stay with you. In your opinion, who should be the folks that will teach the Libyans how to safely store all of the unserviceable weaponry floating around Libya? Who do you think should be running that train?

General HAM. At present it is a State Department-led activity to try to help the Libyans, along with the neighboring states, first, to gain control, find out what weapons were in existence and then try to claim them under central government control, and then following that, do an assessment of the serviceability, what are the needs. I am very comfortable with that process to have the State Department lead. We help. We are part of that process, but I think it is okay, and as it is a government-to-government activity, I think that works okay.

Senator BROWN. I might as well just wrap up with you on the no-fly ban with seven Americans working in Egypt. I know it is not your AOR. But I was wondering if you could see—ask if there is any impact on AFRICOM's approach to other countries in the region potentially having similar types of problems. Any issues there?

General HAM. None noted, sir, but it is not a question I have asked but we can.

Senator BROWN. Thank you.

And, Admiral, I have one final question and then I will wrap it up with my inquiring. Our relationship with Pakistan has obviously a direct impact on your ability to maintain lines of communications through their country. And our combat footprint in Afghanistan, as it evolves—we obviously have a huge logistical tail that follows. How will this affect EUCOM's relationship with TRANSCOM to facilitate an adequate flow of equipment along the northern distribution network?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. It is a terrific question that we are wrestling with because, as you correctly say, in order to get all of our equipment out of Afghanistan over the next 2 or 3 years will be a significant logistical task. I am in contact constantly with General Fraser, TRANSCOM, to ensure that we can move it through that northern distribution network, and that gets into a lot of complex politics along that route, to say the least.

On Pakistan, I think we are moving in a somewhat better direction than we were, say, 6 months ago, 5 months ago. So hopefully we will have access both to those southern and the northern. But I think hope for the best, plan for the worst, and we are doing that.

Senator BROWN. Thank you both.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Brown.

Senator Udall.

Senator UDALL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, Admiral. Good morning, General. Thank you for taking the time to be here with us today.

General Ham, if I might, I would like to turn to you. You may remember that during your confirmation hearing last year, I noted that your predecessor had cosponsored a study by the DSB, the Defense Science Board, on the trends and implications of climate change for national and international security. The study has special emphasis on Africa. The report was published last October and is in my view a detailed and thoughtful analysis of “observable, measurable, and real” impacts of climate change. The report also contains assessments of the consequences of climate change that “will continue to have major consequences for the political, economic, and geographic world.”

So the basic conclusion of the DSB was that changes in climate patterns present new challenges to regional security and stability. The report goes on to warn that failure to anticipate and mitigate the impacts increases the likelihood of more failed states and the potential for conflict.

I was also really interested in the specific recommendations of the report regarding the role of the DOD and combatant commands as a part of whole-of-government effort to help avoid such humanitarian and security crises. And in my view, those conflicts could pose a serious threat to U.S. national security interests in Africa and elsewhere.

Could you comment on your personal views on the overall findings and recommendations of the DSB, and would you agree that resource scarcity and the impacts of climate change have the potential to cause or aggravate conflicts in your AOR?

General HAM. I believe, Senator, there is no question but that environmental security can have a dramatic effect on overall security both in individual states and more regionally.

I would tell you my frank assessment is that we are having better success in response to environmental security challenges than we are finding traction for preventative or predictive actions that could be taken. On the good side, we have incorporated in a number of regional exercises, which we conduct over the course of this fiscal year, 16 exercises involving as many as 30 different African states that will have as a component of that exercise response to an environmental disaster of some sort, mostly water-related either flood or drought.

We are finding that the African nations are very accepting and understanding of the security impacts of such issues. As I indicated, though, we are finding—and perhaps because it is more difficult, we are finding less traction on the preventive steps than we are on response.

Senator UDALL. That makes complete sense.

There were specific recommendations in the report regarding the role of combatant commands, including AFRICOM. I know you have just spoken to those in a general way. Are there any additional comments you would want to make on specific recommendations that are in the DSB?

General HAM. Senator, one is the presence of some subject-matter experts, specifically water experts, on the staff, again leading to the interagency nature of the command. So we have had in the past representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and from the U.S. Geological Survey present on the staff to help us with those issues. We are currently gapped right now. We do not have folks present, but both those organizations are sending people to us we hope will join us this summer.

Senator UDALL. I think you anticipated my next question which was it strikes me that we need to develop the data and systems to help identify the actions necessary to avoid or at least mitigate the effects of climate. Is that what you were just speaking to?

General HAM. I would agree with that, sir, and again, it is not just defense. It is working with the USAID, with others, and in many cases, USAID partnered with nongovernmental organizations to assist African countries in planning and preparing for the impacts of environmental change.

Senator UDALL. Finally, on this subject—and thank you for your attention and interest in this—could you provide your views concerning whether actions to address the humanitarian and security effects of climate change should be an integral part of a whole of government conflict avoidance strategy? Perhaps it could be addressed within the newly established global contingency fund framework or other multi-agency efforts focused on avoiding conflict.

General HAM. Sir, necessarily it must be a whole-of-government approach. No one element of the Government has all the resources, authorities, or capabilities to address the impacts on security of environmental change. To that end, I think we have a responsibility at U.S. Africa Command to work very closely not only with the chiefs of mission in Africa who have the responsibility to pull together that whole of government effort, but also with the various bureaus in the State Department, with USAID central, and with others to make sure that we are, first of all, aware of one another's capabilities and finding increased opportunities to synchronize our efforts, again with an end toward assisting the African countries to deal with what is an increasingly serious security matter that ultimately contributes to our security by them being more secure.

Senator UDALL. So we deploy all of our influence, our power, our smart power, our kinetic power, any combinations. Thank you for that insight.

Let me turn to the concept of strategic communication. You have been a real proponent of that—or no. I am sorry. I think this is to the Admiral, but General, you are welcome to comment as well.

Can you define what you mean by strategic communication, Admiral, and why you think it is so important for the military?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I can. I think that in the 21st century, as we seek to deliver security—and it ties to this whole-of-government idea, and it is really a whole-of-society idea. At the end of the day, we need to communicate on motives. We need to communicate our actions. We need to be in a position to convince others that we are a force for good—we, the military; we, the United States of America; we, the larger society as a whole. And to do that effectively, you have to use all the modern tools. You have to use Facebook and

Twitter, LinkedIn, all of those kinds of things. But as I said to Senator Brown a moment ago, in the end personal contact trumps everything. So a combination of all those things, crafting a strategic approach, that is strategic communications.

Senator UDALL. General, do you have a point of view as well?

General HAM. I am seated next to the master. So I have learned from him.

But I would echo that. And, of course, in many parts of Africa, it is less developed than Europe. So the extension of mass media and other social networking is really starting to grow, and what we are finding is that it is growing exponentially. It is not the incremental approach that we kind of saw as we have been growing up with the military over the past several years, but they leap ahead in various places in Africa. And so part of our role, I think, is not only understanding that ourselves and how do we leverage that to our advantage, but encouraging it and helping Africa militaries that we are partnered with for them to take advantage of this as well, and some have done so quite effectively.

Senator UDALL. I know the Hart-Rudman Commission report, which was issued shortly before September 11 and still, I think, has some very salient recommendations, talked about mil-to-mil relationships and the importance of expanding those to prepare for a coming 21st century asymmetrical environment. There was also, Admiral, talk of more people-to-people versus embassy-to-embassy kinds of contacts and you are both describing those opportunities.

So thank you for your time. Thank you for your service.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Udall.

Senator Ayotte.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, Chairman.

Thank you, General Ham, Admiral Stavridis. I want to say to the Admiral thank you for your distinguished service to our country and we wish you all the best in the future. It will certainly be a loss around here. We will miss you.

I wanted to just follow up briefly with what Senator Brown had said and also lend my support to the State partnership program of the National Guard. I think it has been a very effective and not only cost-effective but a very strong way for us to represent our interests in a collaborative way around the world. So I appreciate that.

I also wanted to follow up on Senator Brown's question about the MEADS program. You know, in the 2012 NDAA, we essentially said that this committee wanted to cut off funding for MEADS. And as I understand it, in the 2013 budget, there are still \$400 million allocated for the MEADS program. You know, with \$15 trillion in debt, that is a really hard sell to my constituents that we should allocate \$400 million for a system that we will never procure or use, particularly at a time when there is a need to upgrade some of our Patriot systems that we will be using.

So I guess I would ask you to pursue that process very rigorously because I do not think there is going to be a lot of sympathy around here to allocate money for a weapons system that we will never procure. So I appreciate your efforts in that regard, and I would like to see that happen sooner. Thank you.

The question I had also is in looking at the 2013 budget, last year in the defense authorization, I had concerns about the maritime prepositioning forces. In particular, in the 2012 proposal, the Navy announced plans to place 6 of the 16 ships from the 3 squadrons of the maritime prepositioning forces into reduced operating status. In particular, it was the forces in the Mediterranean. And as a result of that, I introduced to the defense authorization an amendment that was adopted that would require—because we heard concerns from the Marines, General Panter, and also the Marines about what that would do in terms of—in fact, General Panter said it would translate to potentially a slower response time in support of combatant commands.

And this, as you know, is a very critical part of the world when you think about our ability to respond in the Mediterranean with what we see happening right now. In that area of the world, you have got Syria, Israel, Egypt all in that area. And as I look at the 2013 budget, to my knowledge we have not yet received that certification from the Secretary of Defense in terms of the impact of readiness on a reduced operating status. And now in the 2013 budget, we are actually eliminating the squadron in the Mediterranean even though the unrest in that area—you think about Israel, Syria, Egypt, Libya. Certainly even from when it was an initial recommendation in 2012, really the circumstances have actually changed. And now we are going to eliminate that prepositioned force.

And I wanted to know what the strategic rationale was for that and also what your view is in terms of an impact on readiness. I mean, this is a real concern. I understand we are in a constrained budgetary time, but we certainly, when you think about the critical area of the world that we are talking about, do not want to put ourselves in a position where we are not able to respond promptly in those areas particularly with our ally Israel.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Thank you, Senator. I will also see if General Ham might want to comment here because those forces, as you correctly point out, the MPS capability would be at my disposal or his disposal.

Senator AYOTTE. Right.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Certainly the budget is part of this. We are looking always within the Department to try and rationalize resources. As you say, there are 16 total of these ships. By reducing the number globally, in effect we take more risk in the theater where you do not have the ship available. Part of the decision is that we have additional stocks of prepositioned equipment in Norway in a static setting up there, and I can provide you for the record some information on that. It gets into some classification issues.

So we, all of us globally, combatant commanders, looked at how can we try and find the best mix of maritime prepositioning assets. So I am comfortable although I recognize that it includes additional risk in this area. And I will be glad also to follow up on the Norway piece and to give you a little fuller explanation of that for the record and also give you the full status of the process of moving the ships. They will actually be there at least through this sum-

mer. They will be operating in exercises in the Baltic for us, and I will get you the details on that timeline.

Senator AYOTTE. I appreciate that, Admiral.

I do not know if you have anything to add, General Ham.

General HAM. Senator, I would simply say that I agree with that. The ability to move the land-based prepositioned equipment very quickly throughout the region remains a very important capability. So cooperative security locations and other basing I think helps to offset the risk of the loss of the maritime prepositioned systems. Again, it is a tough, tough decision and we did wrestle with this—the combatant commanders and the OSD staff. I am okay with it, but I would tell you kind of just barely okay with it.

Senator AYOTTE. Yes. We are certainly taking on additional risk with this.

And one of the concerns that I have, as I have articulated, is the original reduction that prompted my amendment to the NDAA was actually recommended at a time prior to our involvement in the conflict in Libya, prior to much of what is happening in Syria right now and the Arab Spring really when the initial recommendation came out.

So one thing I would appreciate is pursuant to the 2012 NDAA, I had had an amendment in that said even to go to reduced operating status, that the Commandant of the Marines would do an assessment on the impact on readiness and that also the Secretary of Defense would submit to us an impact on readiness and what risks we are taking on in that area of the world. So I would appreciate your follow-up on that.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Yes, Senator.

Senator AYOTTE. And I appreciate your testimony on this today.

And I would say, General Ham, I do have a follow-up based on last year when you appeared before our committee, and I certainly appreciate it. As I understand your written testimony, you have certainly expressed concern about the collaboration between terrorist groups in Somalia, North Africa, Nigeria, coordination of al Qaeda, and also the coordination of al Shabaab and al Qaeda, the merger on February 9th of those two groups, which had worked together before but clearly more of a merger.

Last year I asked you if we detained a member of al Qaeda that was planning an attack on us or our allies, where would we detain and interrogate that individual. And you told me last year that you would need some lawyerly help answering that one.

Has anything changed in 10 months? Do we now have a detention facility if we capture someone under your command who is a member of al Qaeda who is planning an attack on our country where we will detain them to interrogate them?

General HAM. Senator, we do not have a detention facility in the Africa Command area of responsibility. There have been some instances where such individuals have been held aboard a U.S. ship awaiting final determination as to where that individual would then be transferred. Again, each case is a little bit different depending on the nationality of the individuals involved, but that is probably in the near term about the best solution that we have at present is aboard a U.S. ship until such time as a longer-term detention decision is made.

Senator AYOTTE. But you would agree with me that on a ship, we can only hold them for so long, and if we have to do a longer interrogation of someone, that is not a permanent solution to how we can detain and interrogate these individuals and have the sufficient time if we need a longer interrogation.

General HAM. Absolutely, ma'am. A U.S. Navy ship is not a good long-term solution.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Ayotte.

Senator Reed I believe is next. Senator Reed?

Senator REED. Thank you.

Let me join my colleagues, Admiral Stavridis, and commend you for extraordinary service to the Navy and the Nation. I know you will continue to serve in many different capacities.

And welcome, General Ham.

One of the key actors in your region is Russia. There is an election. Can you give us your estimate of post-election—I think we can assume who is going to win—how effective they will be in terms of dealing with two of the critical issues we face which is the Iranian and Syrian situation since they do have some great leverage in both areas?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I think, as I look at Russia, I see, first and foremost, an election, and I think we all know that elections in any country bring their own set of dynamics that play up to the point of the election and then there is a period of time after an election when there is room for maneuver and potentially some change. So I will make a general comment to that effect.

When I look at Russia today, I see a mixed picture of some areas of good cooperation. They are very helpful to us, for example, in Afghanistan with the northern distribution network, with their assistance to the Afghan national army, with helicopter sales. They have donated weapons and ammunition to the Afghan security forces. They have every reason to want us to succeed. They talk about it frequently. So in Afghanistan, we sort of see a zone of cooperation.

I think in counter-terrorism we see zones of cooperation. I think in counter-narcotics—they have a particular problem, heroin addiction—we see areas of cooperation. They are a very strong partner in piracy operations at sea.

So on the plus side, I see a number of areas of cooperation.

On the other hand, we have areas where we disagree fundamentally with the Russian Federation, over Georgia, for example.

At the moment, sort of in the middle is missile defense, which is an area that we would hope to move over to the cooperative side, assuming we can do it in a way that protects classified information and makes sense. But at the moment, that is an area of contention between the two nations.

You mentioned Iran and Syria. I will leave it to the senior cabinet officials to talk to positions here, but I think Secretary Clinton recently has spoken to a sense that Russia has not been helpful, for example, in Syria. Will that change after the election? I think it will depend on events on the ground in Syria as well as on the election itself. So we will have to wait and see.

On Iran, as you know, Russia has been helpful at times, but could they do more and exert more leverage? I think they could. And I would say the same answer pertains. I think after an election is the time you start to see where things really go.

This will come to a head from a NATO perspective as we find out whether or not the newly elected president of Russia chooses to come to the NATO summit. NATO's hand is out to have a NATO-Russia summit meeting as part of that May summit. It is here in the United States in Chicago. I think we will know more after the election when we see that. So I would say, sir, that is an indicator to watch.

Senator REED. One final follow-up with respect to Iran, and that is there is the political leadership in Russia which is mingled with their national security leadership, et cetera. Do those audiences appreciate the potential threat to Russia alone if in fact Iranians were to have nuclear material and their close relationship with other elements, some of which the Russians have been jousting with for years now?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. In my conversations with my interlocutors in Russia, I would answer that question by saying yes. They are aware of those concerns. They are concerned about it.

Senator REED. Thank you.

One other final question, Admiral Stavridis, and that is you have conducted Austere Challenge exercises. You have a program with our cybersecurity. Can you generally comment about how the NATO allies are doing in terms of their cybersecurity, their cooperation with us, moving ahead, falling behind, et cetera?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Sure. The good news is our partners in NATO are among the most sophisticated actors in the world of cyber. So there is a lot of capability there. They are moving forward with some encouragement from us to create a center of cybersecurity and excellence in Tallinn, Estonia, which makes sense because that was a nation that has undergone a cyber attack. We have enhanced within the alliance command structure our ability to defend ourselves much like CYBERCOM here in the United States is working.

In terms of could they be doing more, absolutely. And so I am pushing them very hard in this direction. The Secretary General is pushing the allies very hard. I would say cyber and the special forces are two areas of real growth and emphasis that we are going to have going forward in the alliance, sir.

Senator REED. Just quickly is this another potential point of contention with the Russians? As you all get better, they get more nervous?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I think that in everything with Russia there is potential for cooperation and there is potential for conflict, and I would say cyber offers both of those opportunities, frankly.

Senator REED. General Ham, again thank you for your leadership in Africa Command.

Going forward, one of the initial impressions from our experience over the last several years in Iraq and Afghanistan is partnering with local security forces and developing their capacity, and partnering with governments to develop their capacity will be a key

aspect of our national security and also a cost-effective way to sort of be there before the shooting starts and perhaps prevent it.

Can you comment about what you are doing in Africa and particularly in the Horn of Africa with this kind of mentoring? Are you vetting our forces with their forces or developing a cadre of experts who understand culture and the local mores?

General HAM. Senator, thanks. I think that is one of the capabilities that the general purpose forces across the U.S. military now are comfortable with this idea of security force assistance. That does not mean that every soldier, sailor, airman, marine is a cultural expert. We still require those with great in-depth capability to lead some of these efforts.

But as an example, the support that the United States has provided particularly to Uganda, Burundi, and Djibouti—they have contributed forces to the African Union mission in Somalia—has, I think, been one example of where U.S. assistance can really make a difference. We do not accompany those forces in the operational area, but we are intimately involved in a State Department-led, usually contractor-executed, and augmented by uniformed U.S. military programs in their home countries to prepare them for this mission. I think this is a pretty good model for how we can operate effectively in Africa.

And lastly I would say, Senator, that we do not have in Africa the scale of the missions that were required in Iraq and Afghanistan, and that allows us to have a much more tailored approach that is specifically designed for the circumstance in each individual country.

Senator REED. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Reed.

Senator SESSIONS.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, it is great to be back with Senator Graham after being in Libya together and meeting the University of Alabama professors that now run the government of Libya.

Senator GRAHAM. And I want to be on the record denouncing Senator McCain's attack on the University of Alabama. Even though I am into SCC and you all beat us routinely, I am still standing by you. [Laughter.]

Senator SESSIONS. Well, I guess I would say that it was encouraging that they have had a revolution, a long-term dictator is gone, and you wonder what will happen. Will it be better or worse? And these were two Ph.D.s in electrical engineering. The deputy prime minister got his degree at Cal Tech and Dr. El-Keib is North Carolina State and 20-year professors, 17- and 20-year professors, and able to go back home to a country they had to leave because of oppressive leadership.

General Ham, with regard to Egypt—and it is not your command. I think that is CENTCOM. But Egypt, Libya, Tunisia—on a scale from hopeful to concerned about their future, where would you put the needle there?

General HAM. Senator, for Libya and Tunisia, the two countries in the Africa Command area of responsibility, I am hopeful. Tunisia is a little more further along than Libya is, having had elections now and forming a government that I very much appreciate

you spending some time with them and getting to know them. But there is a real sense of optimism and forward progress in Tunisia. We are looking for opportunities that we can assist in the security realm to keep that momentum moving forward.

Libya. While I am hopeful, there are more hurdles to be overcome I think in Libya at present, but it seems to me that the National Transitional Council, the interim government, is really striving to map out a good way ahead to deal with the many challenges that they must confront not only in the security realm, but in economic development, humanitarian issues, economic trade, and establishment of writing a constitution. But the challenges are immense. But it seems to me that they are taking a very good, methodical approach. They will need a lot of help, but I remain optimistic.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, you are correct that the prime minister and deputy that I just referred to and the others are interim. There will be an election. It remains to be seen what may develop after that.

And Egypt I think is likewise. We will have to see how that government develops, but we felt that there were some positive signs. I certainly felt that.

Admiral Stavridis, congratulations on your service. Thank you for your service.

I would just say I am personally somewhat pleased that we will draw down that second brigade out of Europe because we have a financial crisis in America. We had Secretary Panetta before the Budget Committee yesterday, and there was a pretty grim discussion. Senator Conrad—he is not running for reelection. He loves this country. He thinks that there will have to be more cuts than what we are already looking at.

I believe the \$489 billion in cuts that we are not looking at is enough, and I believe we need to alter the sequester. But I do not believe the sequester will be eliminated. I am not going to vote to eliminate the sequester because that is the minimum cut, \$2 trillion over 10 years out of expected expenditures of \$47 trillion. So we are reducing it from only \$47 trillion to \$45 trillion in projected expenditures over the next decade. So it worries me.

Admiral Stavridis, I am concerned. I know Europe has financial problems, but you might not know that per capita the United States with \$44,000 in debt for every man, woman, and child is greater than every country in Europe, including Greece. So we are at a point where the Europeans cannot just depend on the United States for their security, and we are at 4 percent GDP on defense. They are at 2 percent, really happily living under our umbrella.

What could you tell us about the prospects that Europe would maintain that 2 percent, increase it, or is there a danger that it would go even below that?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Well, I am going to start with the bad news, which is they are not even spending 2 percent, Senator. Unfortunately, they are running right about 1.6 percent, and the goal that they have agreed to in a NATO context is a minimum of 2 percent. And of the 28 nations in NATO, only between 5 and 8, out of 28, depending on how you measure it, are even hitting that 2 percent

goal. So they are not stepping up to the bar that they have set for themselves.

I think that the United States should continue to forcefully make that point in as many fora as possible, and I am glad you bring it up so I can address it publicly. I speak frequently to leaders in Europe about this, and it is not sustainable over time that Europe, which has roughly a \$15 trillion a year GDP, roughly the same as the United States. So these are two economies that very much have great, robust capability, although both are facing, as you correctly point out, a lot of stress from debt and a variety of other overhangs. So I think we need to continue to make this point forcefully with the Europeans.

As to the prospects over time, if the European economy does recover—and I think it will over time. These are capable people. It is an extremely advanced part of the world, high education. I think over time we will be able to get this to 2 percent and hopefully a little above that, which would be, I think, a much more balanced place for it to be.

Senator SESSIONS. I just feel like our allies and friends have got to understand that that is an awfully small price to pay for freedom.

Mr. Chairman, I will just note that over the last 3 years, the Defense Department's base budget has increased 10 percent, averaging about 3 percent a year, whereas over the last 3 years, Medicaid has increased 37 percent. Spending on the Department of Education over a 3-year period compared to the previous 3-year period has increased 70 percent. Food stamps have increased 300 percent since 2001. That is about \$80 billion now. It is a very large item in our budget.

So I guess I would tell you that the myth is that defense is the great, fastest growing item in the budget is not true. The myth is that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that have caused our deficit is not accurate. The wars as of last year had cost about \$1.3 trillion over 10 years, whereas the single deficit last year was \$1.3 trillion. So the wars are costly. They have been very much a costly item, but it is not driving our deficit.

So I would just say that I do not think we need to go forward with this second part of the cuts, the sequester. I believe the remaining 5-sixths of the U.S. Government needs to be scrutinized and about half of the Government receive no cuts whatsoever. And in real dollars, over a 10-year period of time, if the sequester were to take place, the Defense Department would take a 20 percent cut. So the remaining 5-sixths in the same adjustment factor would have a 50 percent increase.

So I guess I am saying—I know issue Graham and I talked about it on the trip. Defense is going to have to tighten its belt. There is no doubt about it, but we need an overall belt-tightening in our Government, not just on the Defense Department.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Sessions.

Senator Manchin.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for your outstanding service.

And if I may start with Admiral Stavridis. West Virginia is a very patriotic State. We have a high percentage of all of our people

that have served and are still serving. With that being said, the question I get most asked when I go back home is do we still need the presence or basically the presence of our European theaters. And I know that you are planning on drawing down from the 70,000 to 60,000. It is in that neighborhood. There are still 25 major bases.

During the last BRAC, you know, it was basically the American bases that got cut, nothing overseas that I know of. But I am told now that that would be the direction they would go. There would have to be overseas before there would be any more American bases cut.

I think the question is as we draw down the forces, can we consider strengthening relationships in other ways so that we can decrease our force presence even further European. Is there a need to have the presence of the European theater?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Let me answer it in two ways very quickly to say why Europe, and I think that is a fundamental question. A lot of people ask me all the time—I am the U.S. European Commander and people say, why do we have about 80,000 troops there so many years after the Cold War? And I would argue that even as we continue to bring it down—and I will come to that in a minute—I think there is still good value in a presence in Europe because of the geographic importance. It is not just Europe. It supports Carter Ham in Africa. It supports Jim Mattis in CENTCOM. It is a strategic platform that allows us access in and around the region. We do have an alliance and a commitment. That is part of the answer.

And then finally, kind of bang for the buck, the reason we have 40,000 allies in Afghanistan with us is, at least in part, because of those longstanding relationships that are built in Europe.

Now, having said all that, having hopefully at least given part of the answer, why are we there, I will make the point that we are continuing to decrease that presence. Since the end of the Cold War 20 years ago, we have come down 75 percent. So back in the Cold War, we had almost 400,000 DOD personnel there. We had 1,200 bases, and we needed them at that time because of the Russian threat and so forth. But that trajectory down has taken us down 75 percent. We are now coming down another 15 percent with this round, which is acceptable in my view.

And I would conclude by saying that I would anticipate over time, over the decade, we will continue to drive that down because our allies are capable and they can take this on.

Senator MANCHIN. Strategically we will always have some sort of a presence or platform in Europe.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I think so. Right, right. But it is a matter of finding that balance and sort of where is the bottom of that curve, and I think over time we will continue drawing down.

Senator MANCHIN. General Ham, if I may. Last month the terrorist groups, al Shabaab and al Qaeda, have merged or we were told they merged. What does that merger mean for us in the United States?

General HAM. Senator, they did. Al Qaeda senior leaders and al Shabaab formally announced on the 9th of February that they have aligned. This confirms a longstanding suspicion. There have cer-

tainly been indications of that for several years, but this formalized it.

The question we ask ourselves is why now. Why did they make this announcement public now? Some have postulated—and I tend to agree with this—that perhaps one of the motivations for such a public announcement is because al Shabaab is under duress by the African forces which are operating in Somalia, and this may have been an opportunity or perceived to be an opportunity by al Shabaab to garner some support for their effort. So I think actually while it does formalize something we suspected, it may actually indicate weakness.

Senator MANCHIN. I know that we are running out of time here, and I am not going to take all of my time because my dear friend, Senator Graham, has some questions to ask. So I will come back at a later time, and then we are going to have to be voting here pretty soon. So with that, Mr. Chairman, thank you, and I will ask later.

Chairman LEVIN. Yes, thank you very much, Senator Manchin, for that courtesy.

Here is the situation. The vote has begun. Senator Graham is now going to be recognized, and when his time is up, if there is nobody else here, then we will recess until someone does get back here, which will happen because Senator Blumenthal is coming back. I believe Senator Shaheen was coming back. So there will be additional Senators.

So Senator Graham, when you are done, if you could turn it over to whoever is back. If not, just recess it. Thanks.

Senator GRAHAM. Will do. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you both for your service.

We are going to try to get through as of the world in 7 minutes as possible.

Let us start with the concept of al Shabaab and al Qaeda forming an alliance, General Ham. Under the authorization to use military force, do we have the legal authority to have a drone attack against al Shabaab members?

General HAM. In selected cases, yes, sir. If an individual is determined through a review process to be authorized to use—

Senator GRAHAM. Do you think that Congress should look at granting greater authority or—we will just get back to that later because I very much want to make sure that the executive branch has the blessing of the Congress because I think what they are doing with drones has been very, very helpful.

Now, Admiral, do you believe it is important strategically that Afghanistan end well for us?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Yes, sir, I do.

Senator GRAHAM. And winning to me would be withdrawing our forces in a fashion that we could leave where Afghanistan has security forces sufficient to defeat the threats they face, al Qaeda, the Taliban, and that over time, governance will take off.

The Strategic Partnership Agreement that we are negotiating with the Afghans—do you think that is vitally important as to the outcome of this conflict?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I am not the expert on it because I am the NATO Commander looking at Afghanistan. But I will give you an

opinion, which is that it is extremely important because it protects the long-term viability of this process.

Senator GRAHAM. Is there a common view on the ground in Afghanistan that people are at the best case scenario confused about whether or not we are going to stay or leave, and the enemy is using that against us?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I think that we have a strategic communications challenge to convince the people of Afghanistan that we are going to stay.

Senator GRAHAM. And the theory is if we did a strategic partnership agreement with the Afghans where we have an enduring relationship past 2014 in the areas of the economy, political alliances, and a post-2014 military presence, that would send the right signal to Pakistan, Iran, and the Taliban that we are not abandoning Afghanistan. We are going to have a relationship, and the Taliban will never come back militarily. Is that not the goal of the strategic partnership agreement?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. As I understand that U.S. one, I would add, Senator, that NATO is trying to work out a post-2014 relationship, and I would say it sounds very much like you described.

Senator GRAHAM. Would you agree that if we do not get this right, in case President Karzai may be watching C-SPAN today, that if we do not get a strategic partnership agreement before May where the United States is committed to an enduring relationship, it is going to be very hard to convince NATO as an organization to do it? Do you agree with that?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I think it would be very helpful to NATO's moving forward to have its primary member have concluded that.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you agree that the home run for us as a Nation and the world at large regarding Afghanistan is before the NATO conference, have a strategic partnership agreement between the United States and Afghanistan, that in May NATO commits past 2014 to at least a training presence, and that NATO nations contribute to funding the Afghan security forces? Those three things would be a great outcome. Do you agree with that?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I do.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, and I would just say to our Afghan partners and friends that if you do not get the strategic partnership agreement, then the other things are not going to happen, and if President Karzai continues to insist on us turning over 3,044 law-of-war prisoners that we hold at Parwan prison humanely, a great center of intelligence gathering, if he insists turning those prisoners over to an Afghan legal system that does not have the capacity or the maturity to deal with them, then he is making a grave mistake because I, a big believer in the outcome in Afghanistan, cannot go home to South Carolina and tell the people in my State that if we let these prisoners go over to the Afghan system, they will not be out in a matter of days or weeks, going back to killing Americans and coalition forces. So that is not really a question as much as it is a statement.

Now, the Koran burning incident was upsetting to Americans. I know it was upsetting to the Afghan people, and I am sure some of this was spontaneous, but to the Afghan people, you are not advancing your Nation in the eyes of the world when you kill Ameri-

cans who left their family to go and help your family. The young men and women who have been killed as a result of this, Americans, left their families, the security of their nation to help Afghanistan develop. And this was unfortunate, inadvertent, and we are all sorry, but we need to understand the big picture here. So on behalf of the American people who are upset about what has happened to their loved ones and the people we care about, I stand behind that sentiment and would urge the Afghans to control this.

And the good news, after talking to General Allen, is that the Afghan security forces have stood between their people and our people and have done a very good job from what I can tell trying to protect our interests the best they can.

And I just hope that Afghan religious community will understand that we are there to help and we do make mistakes because we are human beings. But nothing justifies this kind of behavior.

Now, are you understanding of why General Allen felt a need to apologize as a military commander of forces in the field?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I did not have a conversation with him.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, I feel like what he did was in the best interest of our troops, and I talked to him today about that. He said he felt that he needed to set the record straight and sort of man-up to this and let the Afghan people know that this was inadvertent and we apologize because we made a mistake. And I hope the Afghan people will understand that this is a two-way street.

And when it comes to the President of the United States? statement, I understand too that President Bush, when we made mistakes on his watch. General Allen told me that he thought the apology by the President was helpful to the cause. So all I can tell Republican and Democratic Members of Congress is that I do not like the way the world is, but it is the way it is, and we have got people in harm's way over there and we need to understand what is best for them.

Now, when it comes to Africa, General Ham, the effort to help Libya and Tunisia—this moment is going to pass if we are not quick about it. Do you agree that the militias have to be controlled in Libya?

General HAM. I agree with that, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. And that we have a window of time here to engage both countries, and it is in our National security interest to provide the assistance that Libya and Tunisia need on the security front because this window will close.

General HAM. I agree.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you both for your service.

We will be in recess, since no one is here and we will come back after the vote. [Recess.]

Chairman LEVIN. We will come back to order. We appreciate your understanding, gentlemen.

And we will call on Senator Blumenthal I believe comes next.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I want to join all of my colleagues in thanking both of you for your very distinguished and dedicated service. I was very privileged and grateful to join Senator McCain and Senator Graham, Senator Sessions, and also Senator Hogan on the trip that has been referenced earlier, although I am not quite as alarmed about the

subversive influence of the University of Alabama in Libya, but it is worth watching.

I want to begin my questioning, though, by making a reference to some of the trends that were mentioned by Senator McCain, most particularly in Tunisia, the threats across the border and the apparent infiltration of al Qaeda in that area. And I think, General Ham, you referred to it in some of your remarks and mentioned that you were concerned about it. I wonder if you could elaborate somewhat on the threats that are posed in Tunisia and in Libya by the porous borders that both of them have and perhaps what we can do about them.

General HAM. Senator, first of all, thanks for joining on the trip. It is a pretty fascinating region of the world and certainly a fascinating time to be there.

What I am concerned about in both Tunisia and Libya is the negative influence that the presence of violent extremist organizations will have in those two countries as they seek what I believe to be a very positive way forward in establishing representative governments and governments that are legitimately serving the people. It is very clear that extremists organizations, notably al Qaeda with some direction from al Qaeda's senior leaders, seek to undermine that good governance that the Tunisians and the Libyans seek. And so I think that is the real threat that is posed.

It is clear that in the mid-2000s there were many North Africans who sought to go fight against the U.S. and its coalition partners in Iraq, and Libya was a transit point for the flow of those foreign fighters. And it seems to me that al Qaeda is seeking perhaps to reestablish some of those networks.

So I think we need to partner very closely with the security forces, the armed forces of Tunisia and Libya, to prevent the reestablishment of those networks, to prevent those violent extremist organizations from undermining the progress that both countries are seeking.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. And is there anything that we can enable or anything specifically that the Department of Defense is doing to enable that cooperation become more robust?

General HAM. Senator, they are. We are expecting within the very near future a specific request from the Government of Tunisia to our ambassador in Tunis with some specific requirements, and we certainly are anticipating that some of those requirements will be for security assistance. We had a very good bi-national commission conference in Tunis a few weeks ago to start to work out those details. I am very satisfied with the progress of the military-to-military relationship that is developing with the new government. We need to sustain that.

And similarly with the Libyans, we are forming a good relationship. We now do have an Office of Security Cooperation, the organization that can orchestrate security assistance, international military education, and training and the like. So we are moving in the right direction, but we need to sustain that effort.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you.

Admiral, I want to just briefly note your testimony that submarine forces provide assurance, deterrence, and valuable contributions to the forward defense of the United States. That is a quote

from your testimony. And I take that to mean that you are a strong proponent of continuing and enhancing our undersea warfare capability.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I am, and in the context of U.S. European Command, the range of missions that our submarine force performed for me as a combatant commander go from the very highest end when they operate in under-ice missions in the high north, they operate in conjunction with other very sophisticated forces. So they are very capable at the high end, but I continue to be impressed with their abilities in the lower end of conflict and security.

Two examples.

One would be piracy. Surprisingly perhaps, we find submarines are effective as intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance platforms that are very helpful in that regard.

And then in our mutual work together in Libya, we were fortunate to have U.S. submarines capable of launching Tomahawk cruise missiles, for example, in a very effective and immediate sort of way. So the submarine force really does operate across the spectrum, not just at that high end of anti-submarine warfare that we traditionally think of.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. They perform a very versatile mission.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Exactly, yes, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I want to briefly ask whether you are satisfied that there is sufficient support for the extraordinary work that is done at Landstuhl and other medical facilities for our wounded warfighters when they come back. I have been so impressed by the kind of care that you have provided to troops coming back to Connecticut and elsewhere, young men who have lost limbs and who have been saved from battle, but are given real hope of restoring normal lives because of the tremendous care that is provided there.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Sir, I will tell you of all of the things that I do in U.S. European Command, in many ways I am most proud of the work of our folks at Landstuhl. They are just extraordinary and I know many members of the committee, as you say, have been through and seen that.

If I could highlight something, one of the, if you will, signature injuries of this conflict is emerging to be traumatic brain injury, TBI. Now, we have a very capable unit that does that, over 30 people dedicated to it. We have what we call the SyNAPSE Program. We tailor the TBI treatment to each one of these young men and women. We have exceptional physical therapists that we have gone out and hired. So we do the whole spectrum of care there. But I am very proud of our work in TBI.

And lastly, I want to just say thank you to the committee for the support for the follow-on hospital which is up in front of the committee now, and we have received good support on that and we appreciate it.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. The SyNAPSE Program is really one of the most promising medical activities in the world today, I can say without too much exaggeration. So I really thank you for it.

And just to follow on one of the points that Senator McCain raised, in our visit to Libya, we were told about the numbers, huge numbers, of freedom fighters there who have, I think, been taken

to other countries with wounds very similar to those that are suffered by our warfighters in Afghanistan. And I wonder whether there is any possibility that we could provide more care for them there.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I am willing to explore that, and I will work with General Ham who would handle the departure end of that, and I will take a look at it. We do have, for example, troops from Georgia who I mentioned earlier, our very staunch allies, with us in Afghanistan. So there is some precedent for that, but it is a very specific process and I will take a look at that, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. And just to finish with one quick question about the cooperation with Israel in the event of an attack on Iran's nuclear armaments or capabilities. Could you give us your assessment on the cooperative missile defense programs that we have with Israel, if you could in this setting, either the Arrow missile defense or the David's Sling, as to how successful our joint missile exercise has been?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I think to do justice to that, I need to move that into a classified setting. But I will say that our cooperation with Israel across every element of military activity is robust and is capable and is serious. And I will provide you a detailed answer on the missile defense.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you. Again, thank you to you both for your excellent testimony today and your tremendous service to our Nation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Thank you for your service as well in the Marine Corps, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Blumenthal.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hopefully we are almost finished.

I want to thank both of you, General Ham and Admiral Stavridis, for your service to the country. And, Admiral, I particularly appreciate your willingness to work with me over the last 3 years in my position as chair of the European Affairs Subcommittee of the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee. We will certainly miss you as you go on to another post.

Mr. Chairman, I have a brief statement that I would like to submit for the record on the upcoming NATO summit in Chicago. I know that you have addressed this a little bit, Admiral, but—

Chairman LEVIN. It will be made part of the record.

[The prepared statement of Senator Shaheen follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

As we all know, this is really the first summit on U.S. soil since 1999. It is an opportunity for us to both highlight the successes at NATO and also to address some of the upcoming challenges.

I know, or at least I understand, that you talked a little bit about the Smart Defense Initiative, and I am sure that is something that will be discussed in Chicago. I do have some concerns. While I understand that it is an important initiative and it makes sense to better pool and coordinate our resources, I do have some concerns

that it not be used as an excuse to further reduce defense spending among our NATO allies. And I wonder if you could comment on that.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I would be glad to.

We, as in the military committee, all the chiefs of defense, General Marty Dempsey and his 27 colleagues, myself as the Supreme Allied Commander for Europe and the Supreme Allied Commander for Transformation, General Abrial, have all addressed very specifically this point that we are recommending constantly and strongly to our political leadership that Smart Defense not be used as an excuse to lower, particularly in the case of European partners, already too low budgets. So we are in complete agreement with you and we will continue to press that at the political level. And I think the United States in its role as a significant actor in the alliance should continue to press that as well.

Senator SHAHEEN. And what kind of response are we getting from—

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Well, at this point I would say that we are getting a respectful hearing on that viewpoint, but the proof will be in the defense budgets as they roll out after the summit. And we need to continue to monitor that and put real pressure on it.

The initiatives that are part of Smart Defense I wholly subscribe to, everything from Baltic air policing to missile defense, the alliance ground surveillance system, pooling of helicopters, MPA, and so forth—marine patrol aircraft. But I think this has to be done in a way that does not permit a reduction at least below the 2 percent goal, which we are not meeting now on the European side of the equation. So I am in full agreement with you, Senator.

Senator SHAHEEN. Libya has afforded, as everyone has said, an excellent example of the success of NATO, and it is undoubtedly the most successful cooperative military effort of its kind in history. It seems to me that one of our challenges is to better—I do not want to say “message”—but better educate some of the new emerging leaders about NATO’s—not only its history and current successes, but its importance for the future. And I wonder if you could talk about that as well.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I would be glad to.

First of all, I agree that the Libyan campaign was a very successful one, began with a U.S.-led coalition under General Ham, did excellent work for, I think, 2 weeks—Carter, roughly—and then NATO came in for the last 7 months of the operation. It showed the ability to move from a coalition setting into an alliance command structure operation. It showed all of the positives that you alluded to.

It showed us areas we need to do better in. We need better alliance intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. We need better alliance refueling capability. We need better alliance intelligence and targeting. We need to be better at strategic communications. And we are addressing all of those areas as a result of what we have learned.

In terms of telling the story of Libya, I agree completely with that. I have an article actually in the Foreign Affairs this month that I co-wrote with Ambassador Daalder about it. We are, at every level in NATO, working hard to get the story out. It is challenging

because the new cycle moves on and we are on to the next challenge in the international security world. But I do believe that the Libyan campaign is one that—for all of the lessons learned on it, I think on balance it has been very positive. We will draw those lessons. We will continue to push them forward, and I think the summit will be another opportunity to do so.

Senator SHAHEEN. I think that is true. And I had the opportunity to meet with Ambassador Daalder yesterday to talk about some of these same issues.

I am not going to ask you to comment on this. I know Senator McCain raised the issue of Georgia, and I understand that that will be coming up in Chicago. And I would hope that even though enlargement is sort of on hold for the Chicago summit, that there will be an effort to make sure that countries like Georgia, Bosnia, Macedonia, those countries who are interested in being part of NATO have some reason to continue to be supportive and to be encouraged about the efforts that they are engaging in.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Senator, I agree. On Georgia, as I said to Senator McCain, of the 50 countries that are operating with us in Afghanistan, Georgia today is the second largest troop-contributing nation on a per capita basis. As they contribute a second battalion, they will become the highest on a troop-contributing basis. And it is very real. They are in the fight. I was visiting with a Georgian lieutenant colonel, a triple amputee, at Landstuhl. These are brave—a brave nation and brave soldiers who stand with NATO, and we need to be mindful of that as we go forward.

Senator SHAHEEN. I agree with that. I think they are very proud of their contribution, and I know that we all appreciate it very much.

There were some good news this week about the Balkans. Serbia's candidacy to the EU was formally accepted. I think that is very positive. But as you know too well, even though some of the border issues between Kosovo and Serbia have calmed down somewhat, it seems to be only one incident away from having that break out into conflict again. And I wonder if you could talk about what progress you are seeing and what Serbia's EU candidacy means for helping to calm the situation between Kosovo and Serbia.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I can. As always, to put a context on this, we should remember that in 1999 NATO was dropping bombs in Belgrade. We were actually attacking Belgrade. And we had, at one time, 50,000 troops in Kosovo as part of a large mission there. So the good news is we have come a long way in a decade and a bit. Today we are down to around 5,000 troops. When I took the watch as SACEUR, we had 15,000 troops there. So we have brought them down and we have maintained a safe and secure environment. So I think the trajectory is good.

In terms of where we are at this moment, we are at a bit of a plateau as we wait, as you said, for the EU candidacy to settle, and now the next big muscle movement will be the election, which I believe will be in May. After that point in time, we will reassess the security situation. And I am hopeful that the EU-led talks between Serbia and Kosovo will continue very slowly, painfully, and incrementally to bear fruit and that by the summer I can make a recommendation to further withdraw the troops. That is my hope at

the moment. However, again, I think we are on a bit of a plateau in a holding state while we let the dust clear from the latest good news that you started out with and see if it has a longer manifestation in country.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, again, thank you both very much.

My time has expired. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Shaheen.

Let me just ask a question following up on Senator Blumenthal's questions relative to Israel, and I am only going to ask you about things that are in the public domain.

My understanding is that in 2010 that there was a large joint military exercise with Israel involving missile defenses. Is that correct?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. And that that was the largest U.S.-Israel military exercise of any kind up to that point.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I would guess that is correct.

Chairman LEVIN. And one of the things that we are able to contribute to that missile defense and have contributed, because there have been test missiles fired by Iran and I believe maybe by Syria as well, is that—and this is public information—missile launch data from satellites in real time is shared with Israel.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Senator, I would really prefer to give you a classified answer to that.

Chairman LEVIN. Okay. Well, I am pretty sure that is unclassified, but let us know if it is or not.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Okay, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. If it is unclassified, make sure you confirm that.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Yes, sir, I will.

Chairman LEVIN. It is also my understanding that it is in the unclassified world that we share information on missile tracks with our X-band radar with Israel. You can give us the same answer. You can confirm if that is in the public domain.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. I will.

Chairman LEVIN. But that is my understanding.

Now, we were going to have an exercise that was scheduled with Israel I believe a few months ago, which was then delayed by their defense minister's request. Is that correct?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Sir, we mutually arrived at a decision to postpone the exercise—it is called Austere Challenge—until the fall. We are now actively pushing forward on conducting that exercise.

Chairman LEVIN. And you will be able to confirm what it is that we contribute to that exercise, but whatever it is, does that add significant capability to Israel's missile defense?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Yes, sir. You alluded earlier to the Juniper Cobra exercise of several years ago. This is continuing that very robust level of cooperation across a variety of activities to include missile defense. And I am happy to provide great detail on this at a classified level for you, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. And that involvement of our—whatever our involvement is—and you will confirm that it is as described by me

as in the public realm. That involvement does add significant capability to Israel's missile defense?

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Senator Shaheen, it is you and me between them and lunch.

Senator SHAHEEN. I just wanted to hear what you had to say.

Chairman LEVIN. In that case, we began with our gratitude and I hope universally expressed up here to both of you, but since this is your last appearance, Admiral Stavridis, we single you out for special thanks today and good luck to you and your family.

Admiral STAVRIDIS. Thanks a lot, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. And we will stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:25 p.m., the committee adjourned.]