

**HEARING TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATIONS
OF DR. KATHLEEN H. HICKS TO BE PRIN-
CIPAL DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DE-
FENSE FOR POLICY; AND MR. DEREK H.
CHOLLET TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF
DEFENSE FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY
AFFAIRS**

THURSDAY, APRIL 26, 2012

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:37 a.m. in room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Carl Levin (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Levin, McCain, Inhofe, Portman, and Ayotte.

Committee staff members present: Richard D. DeBobes, staff director; and 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; Peter K. Levine, general counsel; William G.P. Monahan, counsel; Russell L. Shaffer, counsel; and William K. Sutey, professional staff member.

Minority staff members present: Ann E. Sauer, minority staff director; Adam J. Barker, professional staff member; and Christian D. Brose, professional staff member.

Staff assistants present: Jennifer R. Knowles and Kathleen A. Kulenkampff.

Committee members' assistants present: Lindsay Kavanaugh, assistant to Senator Begich; Anthony Lazarski, assistant to Senator Inhofe; Brent Bombach, assistant to Senator Portman; and Brad Bowman, assistant to Senator Ayotte.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARL LEVIN, CHAIRMAN

Chairman LEVIN. Good morning, everybody.

This morning the committee considers the nominations of Dr. Kathleen Hicks to be Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and Derek Chollet to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs.

Dr. Hicks and Mr. Chollet, welcome to both of you. Our nominees have demonstrated their commitment to public service throughout their careers. We appreciate your willingness to continue to serve.

We also appreciate the support that your families have provided and that is so essential, as we have seen throughout the decades. As is our custom, you are free to take the opportunity to introduce any family and friends who are here today with you to support you. You can do that at the time of your opening statements.

Our witnesses today are nominated for policy positions that deal with some of the most complex security challenges confronting the Department of Defense.

The Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy advises and assists the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy on the full range of policy matters, including strategy formulation, contingency planning, and the integration of DOD plans and policy with overall national security objectives. Dr. Hicks has been nominated to replace Dr. Jim Miller whose nomination for Under Secretary of Defense for Policy is presently pending before the committee.

Since 2009, Dr. Hicks has served as the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Forces. In this position, she has helped lead efforts within the Department to develop and implement strategic guidance, including the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review and the Department's recent Strategic Guidance issued in January.

Derek Chollet is nominated to be the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, the principal advisor to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and the Secretary of Defense on international security strategy and policy on issues of DOD interest relating to Europe, the Middle East, and Africa and for the oversight of security cooperation programs and foreign military sales in those regions.

Since 2009, Mr. Chollet has held positions at the State Department and on the National Security Council where he has worked on many of the issues that he will confront at the Department of Defense if he is confirmed by the Senate.

One of the primary challenges that both our witnesses will have to wrestle with, if confirmed, is maintaining progress in Afghanistan as the lead for security transitions to the Afghan security forces and U.S. coalition forces are reduced in number between now and 2014. Key to the success of this transition will be the Defense Department's policies and efforts to build the capacity of the Afghan army and police and the sustained commitment of our NATO allies and other coalition partners to the goal agreed on at the NATO Lisbon summit of having Afghan forces in the security lead throughout Afghanistan by 2014.

In that regard, I am deeply concerned about news reports regarding an administration proposal to reduce the future size of the Afghan security forces after these forces assume the lead for security throughout Afghanistan. It has been reported that the United States is advocating a proposal in NATO to cut the future size of the Afghan security forces by one-third from 352,000 this year to less than 230,000 after 2014.

Yesterday Senator McCain, Senator Lieberman, Senator Graham, and I sent a letter to President Obama stating our concerns about these proposed reductions in the Afghan security forces. These cuts appear to be based primarily on current presumptions regarding what the security situation will be in Afghani-

stan several years from now. We believe that is the wrong approach. It is just too early to decide that conditions 2 or 3 years from now will allow a one-third reduction in the size of the Afghan security forces. And I will place our letter to the President in the record of today's hearing.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Chairman LEVIN. Our NATO and international partners share an interest in a secure and stable Afghanistan and should invest some of their defense savings from drawing down their forces in sustaining Afghan forces over the long term. We should not, however, jeopardize the hard-won gains of the past years by failing to help fund and sustain the Afghan security forces with what they need to provide enduring security in Afghanistan.

Other major security challenges that our witnesses will share responsibilities for include: countering a potential Iranian nuclear threat and Iran's broader efforts to destabilize the Middle East, ensuring adequate policy and resource support for ongoing counterterrorism and counter proliferation operations, pressuring the Assad regime to end its murderous campaign against its own people, managing our changing security relations in the Middle East and north Africa in the wake of the Arab Spring, establishing clear policies and priorities for building the capacity of partner nations to address security challenges on their own, and to support the Department's operations to advise and assist the Ugandan effort to eliminate the Lord's Resistance Army and to remove Joseph Kony and his top lieutenants from the battlefield.

Dr. Hicks would also play an important role in implementing the Department's recent Strategic Guidance which she helped craft. That Strategic Guidance sets the goal of reshaping the U.S. joint force to be smaller and leaner and at the same time more agile, flexible, and fully capable of meeting the Department's global challenges. That includes rebalancing our global posture and presence, pivoting more toward the Asia-Pacific region and the Middle East.

This week Secretary Panetta and Secretary Clinton will be meeting with their counterparts from Japan in the so-called Two Plus Two meetings to continue work on arrangements for the future presence of U.S. Marines in Okinawa and Guam in light of U.S. plans for the U.S. Marines presence in the Asia-Pacific region under the new defense Strategic Guidance.

Senators McCain, Webb, and I wrote to Secretary Panetta earlier this week to express our concerns regarding the affordability, executability, and timing of the realignment of marines. Also, it is important that we understand how this planned distribution of the marines throughout the Pacific supports and complements the broader U.S. strategy and force posture in this important region.

Other challenges include countering transnational threats, ensuring the effectiveness of our nuclear deterrent, addressing the spread of ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction, and strengthening the capabilities of our allies and friendly nations to provide their own security.

On the issue of protecting cyber operations, this new but increasingly important and complex mission affects not only the Department of Defense but the Government and the economy as a whole.

The committee needs to understand the dimensions of the threat of industrial espionage being waged relentlessly against U.S. industry and Government, predominantly by the Chinese security establishment, and its impact on our National security and prosperity. This committee has focused for some time on the need to develop comprehensive policies and frameworks to govern planning and operations in cyberspace. The administration has made some progress in these areas as reflected in recent strategy statements in the development of comprehensive legislation to improve cybersecurity, but much, much more needs to be done. These cyber issues will be among Dr. Hicks many duties and should be a top priority.

Our witnesses this morning bring strong qualifications to the positions for which they have been nominated. We look forward to their testimony, and I now call upon Senator McCain.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I join you in welcoming our nominees before the committee today and thank them for their continued willingness to serve our country.

Dr. Hicks, you have been nominated for the position of Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. In this capacity, if confirmed, you would serve as the principal advisor to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and the Secretary of Defense on matters concerning the formulation, integration, and oversight of defense policy and plans.

Mr. Chollet, you have been nominated for the position of Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. In this capacity, if confirmed, you would support the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and the Secretary of Defense on defense policy and strategy for Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

Both of these positions entail important responsibilities for addressing an increasingly complex global security environment. As recent and repeated testimony before this committee has made abundantly clear, the threats confronting our security, our interests, and our ideals are growing not diminishing. Al Qaeda is becoming more decentralized, and its affiliates in Iraq, the Horn of Africa, and the Maghreb are growing stronger, more independent, and increasingly determined to attack American interests.

Iran continues to threaten the stability across the Middle East through its hostile actions, including killing Americans in Iraq and Afghanistan, supporting terrorist groups across the region, destabilizing Arab countries, propping up the Assad regime in Syria, and its continued pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban insurgency is damaged but not broken. Hard-won security gains are put at risk by the safe havens for the insurgency in Pakistan, by poor governance and corruption in Afghanistan, and by the continued perception that America will abandon Afghanistan.

The chairman and I and other members of this committee are also concerned by the administration's intent to reduce the ultimate end strength of the Afghan national security forces from 352,000 to 230,000.

On the other hand, recent reports that the United States and Afghanistan are close to concluding a strategic partnership agree-

ment are very encouraging. I would be eager to hear from you, Dr. Hicks, about what the administration's plans are concerning a residual U.S. military force for Afghanistan beyond 2014 as part of this and other agreements with the Government of Afghanistan.

In Iraq, violence is up since the departure of U.S. troops. Democratic gains are increasingly fragile as Prime Minister Maliki appears to be consolidating his power at the expense of other political blocs. Meanwhile, al Qaeda in Iraq appears to be making a comeback.

From Tunisia and Libya to Egypt, Yemen, and Bahrain, many countries in the Middle East are undergoing monumental changes resulting from the Arab Spring. The situation remains fluid. The outcome of these revolutions remain unclear. And the Department of Defense has an important role to play.

And then there is Syria where the Bashar al-Assad regime has slaughtered nearly 10,000 Syrians and there is no end in sight. What is obvious and indisputable is that the Kofi Annan plan has failed. Assad has not abided and will not abide by a cease-fire. Assad's tanks and artillery continue to shell civilian populations. His forces continue to assault and murder Syrians who attempt to protest peacefully. And his helicopters are now increasingly attacking Syrian towns and cities. Indeed, since the Annan plan was announced last month, Assad has escalated the violence, killing at least 1,000 additional Syrians and displacing thousands more from their homes. The only practical effect that the Annan plan is having at this point is to provide diplomatic cover for Assad to kill more people.

Assad's campaign of violence will continue, as it has for more than a year now, until the military balance of power inside the country shifts against him. This shift will only occur when the United States demonstrates the necessary leadership and takes tangible steps with our friends and allies to help the Syrian opposition to defend themselves. Right now, the United States and the world are failing the people of Syria, and every day that we refuse to lead, more Syrians will die.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to reiterate my concerns about several recent instances where the Department of Defense has been nonresponsive to this committee's requests and noncompliant with the law. I sent a letter to Secretary Panetta on March 29th listing several such instances, and while I have received a response to that letter, several issues remain outstanding. I would like to include that exchange of letters in the record of this hearing.

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

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Senator MCCAIN. Most recently, however, we requested a briefing from the Department on military involvement and possible misconduct in Colombia during the Summit of the Americas. Our intention and our effort was to find out about if there were any breaches or possible evidence of breaches of national security. That briefing which we received yesterday was wholly nonresponsive to our request. The briefers had no information except to provide a timeline and mechanics of the ongoing investigation. And by the way, this stands in stark contrast to the briefings that members of

the Homeland Security—the chairman and the two co-chairmen of the Homeland Security Committee are receiving from the Secret Service. Incredibly our briefers did not even know the basic facts about the present schedule or the misconduct instance themselves.

Another matter of concern is the establishment of the Defense Clandestine Service. The first we heard about it was in a Washington Post article last week. This committee has a certain responsibility and we should not have to learn about major policy decisions through the public media.

I want the witnesses to know that this responsiveness cannot continue.

I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses, and I hope it will provide this committee with a clear understanding of how they will approach what is an increasingly complex and dangerous global security environment in the midst of looming cuts to our national defense budget.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator McCain.

Senator McCain's letter to the Secretary raises very, very important issues about the relationship of this committee to the Department of Defense in terms of their lack of responsiveness too often to our requests and to our laws and to their commitments. And I am going to be taking that issue up, as I have assured Senator McCain, personally with Secretary Panetta.

Senator McCain has also made reference to the Defense Clandestine Service, that announcement that we read about in the paper and should have been briefed about before we read about it. And we are going to have a committee hearing when we get back, promptly after we get back from next week's recess. And Senator McCain and I are trying to find a good date for the committee to have that hearing on that proposed change. And there are representatives here today from the Department of Defense. If you have not already received a call, you will very soon to set up that date, and we would expect the appropriate witnesses to be here for that hearing.

Let us now call upon our witnesses, and we will first call upon Dr. Hicks.

**STATEMENT OF DR. KATHLEEN H. HICKS TO BE PRINCIPAL
DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY**

Dr. HICKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator McCain, members of the committee.

I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee for the position of Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. I have had the great privilege to serve President Obama, Secretary Gates, and now Secretary Panetta for the past 3 years, and if the Senate chooses to confirm me for this position, I look forward to continuing to support America's men and women in uniform.

I have been fortunate to serve under the Secretary of Defense since 1994. For much of that time, I did so as a member of the career Civil Service. In my experience, Senators, we as a Nation possess and unmatched career national security workforce. They are often unsung patriots serving with superior dedication across ad-

ministrations and political parties and alongside their military colleagues. I am deeply humbled to represent that community in some small way through my presence here.

I want to acknowledge and thank my family foremost. I want to thank my husband, Tom Hicks, and our three children, Benjamin, Margaret, and Alexander. They have made considerable sacrifices for the demands of my job. If confirmed, I will rely on their continued support and understanding.

I am also grateful to be joined by my parents: my father, retired Rear Admiral William J. Holland, Jr.; and my mother, Ann Holland. It is especially fitting that they are here today as it is my parents who taught me the value of a life spent in service to country and community, a value I hope I am passing to my own children.

Finally, I want to acknowledge my oldest brother, Bill Holland, also a former naval officer, and my five brothers and sisters who could not be here today.

Senator, the lives of Americans today are influenced more than ever by events beyond this country's borders, and the need for American leadership in the world has never been greater. If confirmed, I will work closely with Congress and this committee to advance U.S. national security interests. I will look to assist the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and the Secretary of Defense in building and maintaining strong defense relationships around the globe, preventing crises where possible, and preparing for crises when necessary, and ensuring alignment of DOD activities and programs with strategic guidance. I will also place a high priority on assisting the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy in the day-to-day leadership of the OSD policy organization, upholding its hallmark standards of excellence, integrity, and responsiveness.

The U.S. military is only one instrument in our holistic national security approach, but it is the key instrument. If confirmed, I pledge to provide policy advice and guidance that advances Secretary Panetta's first key strategic principle for the Department of Defense: to maintain the world's best military.

Mr. Chairman, Senator McCain, members of the committee, thank you for considering my nomination and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Hicks follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Dr. Hicks.

Mr. Chollet?

STATEMENT OF DEREK H. CHOLLET TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

Mr. CHOLLET. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Levin, Senator McCain, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this morning.

I am grateful for the confidence that President Obama has shown by nominating me to this position, and I thank Secretary Panetta, Deputy Secretary Carter, and Acting Under Secretary Miller for their support of my nomination.

I would also like to acknowledge the support from two of my bosses during the past 3½ years, Secretary of State Clinton and

National Security Advisor Tom Donilon, and express appreciation for the confidence they have shown in me.

I also want to thank my family for their support, for I could not do this without them. My wife, Heather Hostetter, is here today and serves as an inspiration for everything I do. Our son Lucas is also here. And I would thank both he and his mom for putting up with so many missed dinners and lost weekends while I have been at work.

I would also like to thank my brother-in-law, Adam Hostetter, and many other friends and colleagues who are here with me today.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, America's national security interests covered by the position of ISA in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa are as profound as they are vast. From ensuring that the transatlantic alliance remains strong, to strengthening Israel's security, to preventing Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, to seizing the opportunities and meeting the threats stemming from the Arab Spring, to working with NATO to ensure a steady transition in Afghanistan, to developing deeper partnerships with African states to meet shared interests, the United States must play a central role. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee and the Congress as a whole to address these challenges and seize the genuine opportunities these issues present.

Mr. Chairman, 20 years ago this spring I had one of my first experiences in Washington as an intern on your personal staff, and if I recall, I assisted your staff with research on the CFE Treaty. Since then, I have had the opportunity and privilege to work closely with several of our country's foremost national security leaders such as former Secretary of State James Baker, former Secretary of State Warren Christopher, and Ambassador Richard Holbrooke. From them and many others, I learned not just by experience but by their example of the importance of public service, of a deep belief in bipartisanship, and the conviction that American leadership remains indispensable to helping solve global problems.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I will make every effort to live up to the confidence placed in me and the excellence demonstrated by our men and women in uniform around the world every day.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Chollet follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chollet.

Here are the standard questions we ask of our nominees and you can answer them together. In order to exercise our oversight and legislative responsibilities, we must be able to receive testimony, briefings, and other communications of information, and that is why we ask our nominees the following questions.

Have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest?

Dr. HICKS. Yes.

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes.

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

Dr. HICKS. No.

Mr. CHOLLET. No.

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

Dr. HICKS. Yes.

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes.

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

Dr. HICKS. Yes.

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes.

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

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes.

Dr. HICKS. No. I am sorry. Yes. I apologize. I misheard the question.

Chairman LEVIN. That is okay. I probably did not state it clearly. Let me repeat it.

Dr. HICKS. Thank you.

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

Dr. HICKS. Yes.

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes.

Chairman LEVIN. Do you agree, if—by the way, thank you for listening. Even though you misheard, you obviously were trying to listen. Sometimes I wonder if our witnesses have been just prepared to go ?yes, yes, yes, no, no.?

Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify upon request by this committee?

Dr. HICKS. Yes.

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes.

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

Dr. HICKS. Yes.

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Let us try 7 minutes. A number of our colleagues are actually at subcommittee hearings of this committee this morning, and I am afraid that kind of conflict happens a lot, usually not with our own subcommittees, but today it did and we cannot help that at times. So they will not be able to be with us I am afraid.

Did I say try a 7-minute round?

First of all, Dr. Hicks, about the Afghan security forces, this is an important issue for us, and as I mentioned, four of us have sent a letter to the President about this matter because we are concerned about the announcement or the statement by our general over in Afghanistan that we are going to—or more accurately, the Afghan security forces are going to be decreased in number after 2014 from 352,000 to 230,000 which is a reduction of one-third. And that was based on saying that basically it was an affordability issue.

Now, we think that the right approach is to wait until a later point when we know a number of things, number one, what the circumstances are on the ground, because transfer of the responsibility for security to the Afghan forces is really a key part of the mission in Afghanistan because they are in the position to defeat the insurgency with our support. And that is the ongoing success that it is going to be achieved in Afghanistan. So this announcement or statement relative to reductions we thought, those of us who sent this letter, myself, Senator McCain, Senator Lieberman, Senator Graham—that announcement, we thought, was very premature.

So let me ask you, Dr. Hicks, about your views on that subject.

Dr. HICKS. Senator, I am not familiar with the statement that you are drawing from. What I can tell you is I agree completely with your statement that we should have a conditions-based approach to our way ahead, and to my knowledge, no decisions have yet been made, certainly on U.S. force levels following 2014.

I do think that as we look ahead—and, if confirmed, I would certainly look to make this a priority—we should be thinking very hard about how the sustainability of the force for Afghanistan can be assured into the future. Part of that is cost for the Afghanis, but it is not the only factor. And I would look forward to working with this committee, if confirmed.

Chairman LEVIN. Cost not just for the Afghanis but also the cost for the coalition, NATO, and ourselves in terms of sustaining is going to be one factor, but it surely should not determine, number one, what the size of that Afghan force is. And second, compared to the current cost of our presence in Afghanistan, being able to have an Afghan army and police that is able to do the job would really be a bargain. Would you not agree?

Dr. HICKS. I do agree.

Chairman LEVIN. Mr. Chollet, do you have any comment on that?

Mr. CHOLLET. Sir, I would just add that I believe General Allen in testimony before this committee made clear that no decision had been made, and that in terms of the slope downward from the surge of 352,000 troops, that is something that he would do a rigorous assessment of the metrics on how we could have that down slope.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Let me ask you about the Afghanistan-U.S. strategic partnership agreement, which Senator McCain made reference to as being an important step forward, and I totally concur with him in that statement.

What impact do you believe that agreement, strategic agreement for an ongoing relationship, is going to have on Pakistan's strategic calculus and on its continuing support to insurgents who are using safe havens in Pakistan to launch cross-border attacks against coalition, U.S., and Afghan forces? Do you see any effect of that strategic agreement on Pakistani behavior?

Dr. Hicks, why do we not start with you?

Dr. HICKS. Mr. Chairman, I think the strategic partnership agreement—I have not been briefed on it in detail, but I think it signifies a significant commitment by the United States to sustain itself and its relationship with Afghanistan into the future. My un-

derstanding and view is that that would have a significant effect on the Pakistanis' understanding of the United States' commitment to remain engaged in the economic future and the political future, as well as the security of Afghanistan.

Chairman LEVIN. Mr. Chollet, do you have any comment on that?

Mr. CHOLLET. Sir, I as well have not been briefed fully on the strategic partnership agreement. My understanding is you will be receiving a briefing from administration officials later today on the scope of that.

If confirmed, Pakistan will not be in my portfolio, but I would just say on the Afghanistan piece that it will send an extremely important signal of our long-term commitment to Afghanistan and it will send a clear signal that we will not be withdrawing from the region as we did in the 1990s.

Chairman LEVIN. Now let me ask you a question about Syria. Apparently Turkey is willing to create and defend a safe zone along the border inside of Syria. Are you aware of that willingness? Is that in fact the case? And if so, what has been the reluctance of NATO to step up and support Turkey in that effort? Dr. Hicks?

Dr. HICKS. Mr. Chairman, I am not aware of that commitment. What I can tell you is that in my current capacity, I am familiar with the combatant commander's planning efforts with regard to Syria and we are doing a significant amount of planning for a wide range of scenarios, including our ability to assist allies and partners along the borders.

Chairman LEVIN. You are not familiar with that report that there was an expression of willingness on the part of Turkey to create a safe zone?

Dr. HICKS. Mr. Chairman, I am not familiar with that report.

Chairman LEVIN. Okay, thank you.

Mr. Chollet?

Mr. CHOLLET. Mr. Chairman, I am familiar with the reports that Turkey might be willing, but I am unaware of any official request, or even serious discussion for that matter, about how NATO and other powers may be able to help Turkey in that regard. I may note that in the cross-border incident several weeks ago, there was again some reports about a possible article 4 discussion within NATO. And again, to my knowledge, that has not been requested by the Turkish Government.

Chairman LEVIN. Do you have any opinion as to whether or not that would be a wise move, and if Turkey is willing to take the lead in doing that, do you have an opinion as to whether or not NATO should be supportive of that willingness?

Mr. CHOLLET. Mr. Chairman, I think if the Turkish Government requests an article 4 discussion with NATO, NATO would be obliged to have that discussion with them. So I would support that, of course.

In terms of the details of a so-called buffer zone, I know that as Chairman Dempsey and Secretary Panetta have testified before this committee and others, there are risks clearly with any military option by the United States or anyone in Syria. But it would be a discussion I would think we would at least be willing to pursue with the Turkish Government if they were to so initiate it.

Chairman LEVIN. Do you have thoughts on that, Dr. Hicks?

Dr. HICKS. Mr. Chairman, I agree. I think we should take seriously any efforts by others to think through ways of dealing with the problem set. This is a very complex problem, many risks involved, but worth looking at.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Senator McCain.

Senator MCCAIN. So we should take seriously any suggestions rather than lead. Right? Is that pretty much what you are saying?

Dr. HICKS. Senator McCain, my view is that the United States is leading diplomatically.

Senator MCCAIN. How are they doing that?

Dr. HICKS. Senator McCain, my understanding is that the President has been very clear in pulling together both the Friends of Syria group, working through the U.N. aggressively, working the sanctions issue.

As far as the Department of Defense role, again, we are focused—in my current capacity, I am focused on supporting the combatant commanders in developing plans for all kinds of approaches, should the President decide to take further steps in the military vein.

Senator MCCAIN. Mr. Chollet, do you have a comment on that since you work at the National Security Council? Are we taking the lead vis-a-vis the issue of Syria?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, the President has been very clear—what an outrage what is happening in Syria today. He gave a speech on Monday, as you know, at the Holocaust Memorial in which he was very clear on that score and spoke of the unspeakable violence and brutality that is being wrought upon the Syrian people. There are no questions there are mass atrocities.

Senator MCCAIN. I am glad he has spoken up.

What concrete actions have been taken, Mr. Chollet?

Mr. CHOLLET. So I think the administration has been moving on multiple tracks, as Dr. Hicks has mentioned: an economic track to put incredible pressure on the Assad regime, working with our friends and allies; a diplomatic track through the Friends of Syria to strengthen the international consensus, some 70 countries against Assad—

Senator MCCAIN. Actually they have not with the Friends of Syria. At least the Friends of Syria say they have not because I met with them, Mr. Chollet. So that is not a fact.

Do you believe that the Assad has complied with any of the six conditions set forth in the Kofi Annan peace plan?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe he has not complied with most of them.

Senator MCCAIN. Is it true that the number of people that Assad has killed in Syria has grown considerably since the Syrian Government agreed to the Annan plan?

Mr. CHOLLET. There has certainly been an uptick of violence. I do not have—

Senator MCCAIN. In your view, what conditions the administrations will—the administration will admit that the Assad plan has failed and then move beyond it to take other actions to end the killing?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, the Security Council resolution passed last Saturday allows for certain reports back to the council.

Senator MCCAIN. Do you believe the Assad plan has failed or succeeded? I mean the Annan plan has succeeded or failed.

Mr. CHOLLET. It is too early to tell.

Senator MCCAIN. It is too early to tell whether the Annan plan has succeeded or failed?

Mr. CHOLLET. I would say it is failing.

Senator MCCAIN. What would you say, Dr. Hicks?

Dr. HICKS. Senator McCain, I would say it is failing and that Annan himself has indicated he is extremely worried about progress on the plan.

Senator MCCAIN. And who is worried about it?

Dr. HICKS. Kofi Annan has himself said he is very concerned about the ability of his plan to succeed at this point given the actions of the Syrian regime.

Senator MCCAIN. Yes. So his suggestion has been to have more observers. The Washington Post had an interesting editorial, I would refer for your reading, this morning. Where UN monitors go in Syria, killings follow.

Well, Mr. Chollet and Dr. Hicks, I am glad to hear that we are planning such a leadership role. I can guarantee you nobody in the Middle East believes that. I can guarantee you that this is a shameful situation where these people are being slaughtered, and we are talking about economic sanctions and diplomatic sanctions when we should be helping these people as we helped the people of Bosnia, as we helped in Libya, and we have helped in other times in our history. And so I am very disappointed in your answers.

Mr. Chollet, do you believe the Syrian opposition is al Qaeda?

Mr. CHOLLET. The opposition, as Secretary Panetta has mentioned before this committee, is deeply splintered. There are probably as many as 100 different groups. There are definitely some extremists within the opposition, but the vast bulk is not.

Senator MCCAIN. What is your assessment of the current—well, let me put it this way. Do you believe that the situation has improved or worsened in Iraq since the withdrawal of U.S. military forces from the country?

Mr. CHOLLET. I think it is stabilized.

Senator MCCAIN. You think it is stabilized when the vice president of the country has to go to Erbil because of the threat of being arrested, that Maliki is greeted in Tehran with full honors, that there is exacerbated relations. Barzani made a statement yesterday that he thought that they would have to consider being an independent country. You think all those things are good.

Mr. CHOLLET. No, sir, I do not. And I think Iraq—

Senator MCCAIN. You think it is stabilized.

Mr. CHOLLET. I do. I do. Iraq was able to host a successful Arab League summit in Baghdad without incident.

Senator MCCAIN. Which most countries did not show up for. Go ahead.

Mr. CHOLLET. But Iraq has enormous challenges. I will not deny that. And if confirmed, it will be one of my priorities to work hard on Iraq, although the DOD role is much reduced there, and to ensure that we meet the opportunities that a new Iraq offer.

Senator MCCAIN. The United States has provided roughly \$1.5 billion a year for about 3 decades to the Egyptian Government under Mubarak. Do you think we should review that whole issue of aid to the Egyptian military, Mr. Chollet?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, as you know, it was an issue the administration looked at very closely over the course of the last few months. Secretary Clinton decided to move forward with that aid. I think it is something that at the current time, given how fragile Egypt is, given the important transition that is upcoming in the next few months of the election and then the writing of the new constitution, given that Egypt is the heart and soul of the Arab world, at this point we do not want to look into that or pursue that option.

However, we need to be able to ensure that a new Egyptian Government is held accountable and lives up to its obligations, including its peace treaty with Israel.

So moving forward, it may be something we do consider, but at this time I do not think the time is right.

Senator MCCAIN. General Maddis recently told this committee that Assad has the momentum on the ground in Syria. Do you think Assad is currently winning militarily? Both of you.

Mr. CHOLLET. He clearly has the balance of force on his side and again, as the President had made clear, is—unspeakable violence on the Syrian people.

Senator MCCAIN. So our answer then is not to provide them with arms or means to defend themselves. It is better to diplomatic and economic measures. Is that your answer?

Mr. CHOLLET. Secretary Clinton has made clear we are providing nonlethal support to the nonviolent opposition. The State Department is administering that, sir. It includes communications equipment, and that is the course we are pursuing at the moment.

Senator MCCAIN. I see. So you feel that nonlethal equipment really does the job against artillery, helicopters, and tanks. Is that correct?

Mr. CHOLLET. Sir, we believe that the nonlethal support does help the opposition, but clearly they are still threatened every day by Assad.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, I hope that you and Dr. Hicks might have an opportunity to go to the refugee camps on the Turkish border and hear from the now 25,000 people who have fled their homes who have been subject to systematic murder, rape, and torture, and you might have a little bit different view as to the efficacy of nonlethal assistance and diplomatic and economic measures.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator McCain.

Senator Inhofe.

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Last week I was in Afghanistan, and a lot of things you do not get through the media. And we had an extensive time with not just Ambassador Crocker and General Allen, but also a lot of the troops in the mess halls and that type of thing, which we always try to do.

General Allen made a statement, and he had some pretty strong feelings because of the rumors that are out there that perhaps

prior to the mandatory withdrawal of 2014 they might be accelerating this. And he had some strong feelings about this. He said that this could be disastrous if we did that, for 2012 and 2013 will be, in his words, the critical moments in this fight as ISAF continues to grow, train, and transition control to the Afghan army and the Afghan police.

Do you agree with him in that statement?

Dr. HICKS. Senator, I do. I think we have to be very careful about the way in which we move forward. Our approach should be conditions-based. There are many considerations that go into that, and no decisions have been made. General Allen's voice is key voice in the decisionmaking going forward.

Senator INHOFE. And I appreciate the word because you used "conditions-based" also in your opening statement, which I always appreciate hearing.

As I said to both of you before, one of the frailties in this kind of a hearing is that whether the President is a Republican or a Democrat, it does not really matter. Those people who are nominated by him are generally going to say that they support his policies. And this always puts it awkward.

For example, one of the worst things that he has done in my opinion when he first started was to make a commitment to close Gitmo. Now, that has not happened, but he has made every effort to do that. And if I were to ask you if you agree that we should close Gitmo, you would probably say that is what the President said and we agree to that.

I want you to keep in mind—and I would like to ask both of you to do this. Look at the expeditionary legal complex that we have there and the history of the trials that have taken place, the military tribunals that take place there.

And the reason I say this is because there is some discussion about—even though I consider that to be a great asset that we have. In fact, it is one of the few good deals that this country has. We have had Gitmo since what? 1904, and it is about \$4,000 a year and they forget to collect about every other year. So it is a pretty good deal.

But they have a great complex there and it is one that it really disturbs me when they talk about releasing more of the combatants who are there. As of the 29th of December 2011, of the 599 that have been released, 167 we can document have returned to the fight. That is 28 percent. That is really disturbing to me. And it was a mistake.

Now, while this President has not been able to close it, he has tried to do it. We have stopped him from doing it in this committee. But now there is talk of the five Taliban that they are talking about releasing at this time.

We set up something in the law in our Armed Services Committee, our authorization committee, that the Secretary of Defense has to certify before further release, and the certification process is pretty complicated. It says he has to certify that the released combatant is not a designated state sponsor of terrorism, maintains control over each detention facility, is not as of this date of certification facing a threat. Well, this has put him in a very awkward situation for having to do that.

What I would like to have you share with me is your feelings about Gitmo, not the policy that is in place right now, but its future and specifically these five combatants that they are talking about releasing, the Taliban.

Dr. HICKS. Senator, under my current position, I have no purview over detainee operations anywhere in the world, to include at Guantanamo Bay. But if confirmed, that will be part of my responsibilities, and I take very seriously the concerns that you express. I would commit to certainly looking with the general counsel at the issues you raise of the five detainees in particular and coming forward with hearing your view on how we should move forward and coming to some conclusions.

Senator INHOFE. Okay. I think that is fair enough. Would you add to that that you would be looking at the advisability of maybe bringing more people into Guantanamo Bay, into Gitmo? There has not been one new admitted since 2008. In light of the recidivism rate that I just went over, I just want to know what your thinking is.

Dr. HICKS. Senator, I would certainly commit to, if confirmed, coming in and having an understanding from you of your concerns and working within the administration to look at that issue.

Senator INHOFE. Okay. That is really all I could ask at this time because it is a resource we have got to start using again. I mean, people are dying because we are not using it properly.

Mr. Chollet, you mentioned in your opening statement AFRICOM. That was kind of my thing that I was originally interested in because heretofore it was under three different commands, PACOM, EUCOM, and CENTCOM. And it is working very well. I just got back from Africa and from Stuttgart where their headquarters is.

A couple of things there. There is always an effort by Members of Congress to say, ah, let us take that AFRICOM and take it away from Stuttgart in this case and put it in my State. I would like to have you be aware and talk to General Ham about what a mistake that would be. My feeling was it should have actually been located in Ethiopia or someplace on the continent. However, with all of their concern, I have personally talked to the presidents of many of the countries who agree that would have been good except they can never sell the idea to the Africans because they will think about going back to colonialism and that type of thing.

So I would like to have your commitment to this committee that you will look at the resources that General Ham has and make sure that we are paying proper attention. It has been my feeling for a long time that as the squeeze takes place and there is the terrorism going down through the Horn of Africa, through Djibouti, that this committee has made a commitment to work with the Africans in establishing brigades so that they can take care of their own needs if such time comes. Do you agree with my concern about AFRICOM?

Mr. CHOLLET. Sir, I absolutely agree that AFRICOM has been a very successful command. In my current job, I have had the opportunity to work a bit with General Ham, and he is very impressive. And you have my commitment that, if confirmed, I would love to

come and talk with you further about how we might work with AFRICOM.

Senator INHOFE. All right. And I appreciate it.

I want to get you also on record because I think I know what your answer is. Some of these programs, the security assistance and engagement programs, have been my favorite. And I single out sometimes Africa in terms of the IMET program, the train and equip program. They have been very successful there. There was a time, as I have talked to both of you about this before, that we considered an IMET program participation as we are doing them a favor when, in fact, if we do not do it—and I am talking about now training the junior grade officers here in the United States. Once we do that, they have an allegiance that is always there. And I would want to maintain those programs in a very strong way, not just IMET but train and equip, FMS, FMF, and some of the other programs.

Dr. HICKS. Senator, those are highlighted in our defense strategy. I completely agree with you on their importance and they are part of what we highlight as building partnership capacity efforts that help us throughout the world.

Mr. CHOLLET. And, Senator, I completely agree. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with you.

Senator INHOFE. Okay, that is good.

My time has expired, but for the record, I would ask some questions having to do with our nuclear modernization program, Dr. Hicks. We are very much concerned about it. I know that back during the New START program which I opposed, commitments were made by this administration to sustain a modernization program and a U.S. nuclear deterrent. And it is becoming more and more significant right now than it has been in the past. So I will be asking some specific questions for the record on that issue.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Inhofe.

Senator Ayotte.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Dr. Hicks. Thank you, Mr. Chollet, for being here today and for your service and future service to our country.

Dr. Hicks, I wanted to ask you about an issue. I had the chance to visit the Philippines in January, and it was also an issue raised by my constituents. It was about an Air Force base, Clark Air Force Base, a cemetery at that Air Force base where more than 8,300 U.S. servicemembers and their loved ones have been buried. And in fact, that cemetery was maintained by the Air Force for 90 years until 1991. And in 1991, after the Air Force vacated Clark Air Force Base and there was a volcanic eruption there, they left the cemetery and then it was not maintained at all until, unfortunately, in 1994 there was a group of private citizens that came forward—and I certainly want to commend those private citizens that did that—to maintain this area where 8,000 of our service men and their dependents and women were buried and those who sacrificed for us. And certainly they deserve our gratitude. But I believe that it is a responsibility for us when we have our veterans, that they deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

So I wanted to ask you. I am not—don't want to understand that you are coming into this position and not to rehash what the Air Force should or should not have done. I actually believe that there are other areas of the Federal Government that have responsibility to maintain this cemetery. What I wanted to hear from you is notwithstanding your other responsibilities that you will ensure that there is coordination in the future. For example, if we close bases overseas that we coordinate with other agencies within the Federal Government to make sure that where our veterans are buried, that those cemeteries are properly maintained consistent with the dignity that our veterans and their families deserve. And if that is something that you could assure me that in our responsibilities you would make sure that we did have coordination going forward, that we would fulfill our responsibility to those veterans.

Dr. HICKS. Senator, I will assure you of that. I believe, as you have stated, that the dignity of our veterans and certainly our buried Americans are vital, and that as we close bases or move our global posture, that is an issue we should be addressing in our considerations.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you.

And I have also introduced a bill with Senator Begich that is a bill that will ensure that those 8,000-plus men and women and their family members that are buried at the Clark veterans cemetery are properly—that those facilities are maintained with the dignity that they should be. And I would love to send you a copy of that just to get your feedback on it, Dr. Hicks.

Dr. HICKS. I welcome that, Senator.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you very much.

I wanted to follow up on Senator Inhofe's questions on nuclear modernization. And let me just start with this, Dr. Hicks. I know this is going to be a very important responsibility that you have in your new position and wanted to ask you do you believe a reliable and modern nuclear deterrent is central to America's national security.

Dr. HICKS. Senator, I do.

Senator AYOTTE. And do you believe a strong and dependable United States nuclear deterrent also helps prevent nuclear proliferation around the world?

Dr. HICKS. I do.

Senator AYOTTE. I recently introduced a letter, which I would like to submit for the record. I have sent a letter to the President expressing my concerns in following up on the New START treaty that he has not followed through in the proposed 2013 budget with a commitment to making sure that we have sufficient resources to modernize our nuclear capabilities. And in fact, one of the deep concerns I have is that in order for us to be able to ensure that our nuclear deterrent is modernized and capable, we also have to have sufficient resources to build and maintain the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement facility. Are you familiar with the plans for that facility at Los Alamos?

Dr. HICKS. Senator, I am not.

Senator AYOTTE. This is very, very important in terms of modernizing, making sure that we have a sufficient nuclear deterrent. And so I would like to—I am going to submit this letter that I

wrote to the President expressing my concerns about the fact that there has not been follow-through on the commitment to modernize our nuclear weapons and our deterrent to make sure that they are effective.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Senator AYOTTE. So I would ask, for the record, that you take a look at this letter that I have sent to the President, along with actually several other Senators, and would ask you to also comment on that letter when you are confirmed. And so I would ask for an answer to receive your comments on the concerns I have raised to the President and what you believe needs to be done to ensure that our nuclear deterrent is modernized, effective, and capable.

Dr. HICKS. Senator, if confirmed, I welcome an opportunity to review the letter and respond.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you very much. I think this is very, very important, and I am deeply concerned about where we are right now on this issue. And I am also concerned that if we do not modernize in the way that I believe the President made a commitment in the confirmation of the New START treaty that it will be to the detriment of our nuclear deterrent and also in my view could encourage proliferation around the world particularly when we look at some of the actors that we are trying to prevent from having nuclear weapons capability, including Iran.

One final additional issue I would like to follow up on from Senator Inhofe's question because you will have responsibility, Dr. Hicks, over our detainee policy. And before the Armed Services Committee, I have questioned many of our military leaders about this issue if we were tomorrow, for example, to capture Ayman al Zawahiri, who is now the head of al Qaeda, for example, if we were to capture him in Pakistan, where would we detain an individual like that to question that individual to gather intelligence to be able to protect our country and obviously, hopefully, find out more about that organization so we could stop their dangerous activities.

So you are, of course, familiar with Mr. al Zawahiri.

Dr. HICKS. I am.

Senator AYOTTE. Do you know, if we did capture him tomorrow, where we would detain him?

Dr. HICKS. I do not know that answer.

Senator AYOTTE. In fact, I got the same answer from Admiral McRaven who is the distinguished Commander of our Special Operations forces when he first came before the committee, when I was first elected to the Senate, and then I asked him recently again that question. And he did not have an answer for me either of where we would put him or an individual like that.

Would you agree with me that if we capture someone like that, one of the important responsibilities we have is to gather intelligence about what an individual, particularly the head of al Qaeda would know about future attacks and also the activities of that terrorist organization?

Dr. HICKS. I agree that would be very important.

Senator AYOTTE. And so to me, this is the ultimate issue as you review the closure of Gitmo. In the absence of bringing anyone to detain them at the Guantanamo facility, if we do not have an

equivalent facility, then there is no place for us to put them. And so to me, without an answer to that, it is very troubling in terms of how we would gather intelligence, how we would assure their security. And that is an answer that I would like you to answer when you take on this responsibility because if you are going to be responsible for detainee policy in this country, this is the foremost question that must be answered. So I look forward to receiving your answer on that in your new capacity because if we cannot answer that question, I think it is a grave problem for our country. Would you agree?

Dr. HICKS. I agree.

Senator AYOTTE. I thank you so much for coming before the committee today and look forward to working with you on this detainee issue and answering that important question, as well as the nuclear modernization question for the safety of our country. Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Ayotte.

Senator Portman.

Senator PORTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Hicks and Mr. Chollet, thank you for being here today. You have gotten some input from members of the committee that I hope you have found useful and I hope we will see you back here again after you are confirmed because I assume you will be.

I will maybe start by saying that Senator Ayotte's comments on nuclear modernization are probably some of the more significant ones that we have heard today because this will be, at the end of the day, critical to our ability to maintain the peace. And I was a signatory of the letter for the reasons that she stated, which is we are concerned about the administration's commitment. So you will both have an opportunity to have further input on that. And we do look forward to you not just reviewing that letter, Dr. Hicks, but getting back to us as to our concerns and hopefully providing us some degree of confidence that the administration is moving forward with their commitments.

I am the ranking member on the Emerging Threats Subcommittee. It deals a lot with the threat of terrorism and particularly some of our capabilities in that regard, and I will tell you with our challenges globally now and with our budget pressures, I am concerned that we do not have the authorities, we are not moving aggressively enough showing American leadership, but working with our allies. We cannot do it all ourselves. We need effective partners. Senator McCain talked a little about this in the context of Syria. Senator Inhofe talked a little about it in terms of Africa. And I would say we need to look at our National strategies for counterterrorism and combating transnational criminal organizations which again is a part of our subcommittee's work, as well as looking at the recently released defense Strategic Guidance, building the capacity of other nations to more effectively combat terrorists within their borders should be a top priority.

There are some authorities focused on this, section 1206, the global train and equip authority, the recently created Global Security Contingency Fund, and then there are some targeted authorities. I think Yemen and Somalia would be examples of that where there is a targeted authority.

But I am concerned that they are not sufficient to accomplish this mission in an effective and efficient way. And I would love to hear from both of you on that. Do you agree with me? What is your assessment of the current authorities available to you, and do you think that the Department needs additional authority to be able to be more flexible to be able to respond?

Dr. HICKS. Senator, let me first say that the authorities we do have have made a tremendous difference, and the Department is very grateful to the Congress for helping us to pass these authorities.

We are, within the Department, currently actually reviewing the authorities we do have for building partnership capacity and attempting to assess if we need further authority, if so, what that authority ought to look like. That is an ongoing internal process that I think would most likely result, if it has any legislative results, in information for next year's cycle of legislative proposals. But it is, again, a key component, building partnership capacity is, of our strategy. It is the kind of area we want to protect and invest in because we think it has significant pay-off for us, and so we are very serious at looking at the authorities.

Senator PORTMAN. I am glad you are looking at it. Mr. Chollet, I want to hear from you on it, but I hope you will talk to some of the combatant commanders about it. What they tell me is that it is a bureaucratic maze to go through it, that it needs to be streamlined, that there is not effective coordination or synchronized U.S. interagency coordination, and that it creates an issue for them. They need to move quickly, and it can be far more user-friendly.

Mr. Chollet?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I would just concur that these authorities are extremely important, these programs are extremely important, particularly as we look in the Middle East and Africa and the importance of building partnerships in those regions. If confirmed, it is something I will look at very closely because it will be a very important tool in the toolkit that, if confirmed, I would have in terms of developing relationships in those parts of the world.

Senator PORTMAN. Let me give you a specific concern that I would have, and that would be the Horn of Africa and Yemen and what is happening. And some of this is information that we have received in closed briefings. But I would encourage both of you not just to look at it, but to go into it with this notion that we do need reform and streamlining, and this is going to be part of our ability to be successful, not necessarily to put boots on the ground but to arm others, not just to provide diplomatic assistance and even going beyond training.

With regard to the plan for the future, the Quadrennial Defense Review, you know, is sort of our overall plan that we look to, and a lot of work went into that, the most recent Quadrennial Defense Review, and a lot of the programs and force structure requirements, of course, were built on the various assumptions that were in there. After the Budget Control Act, the new Strategic Guidance was issued about 4 months after the BCA.

And my question here is, is the new Strategic Guidance as effective at thinking through what our challenges are and do we have

a force structure and do we have programs in place that actually can work under this new Strategic Guidance?

This, of course, does not even take into account the fact that we are now facing a sequester which would make it even more challenging, which the chairman and I and others would like to alter. But I am concerned even about the operational plans based on the new Strategic Guidance.

Can you tell me what you think about that, Secretary Hicks?

Dr. HICKS. Senator, I do think that the new Strategic Guidance was fully informed, if you will, in terms of its analysis and assessment, much as a normal QDR would be. It involved all the combatant commanders, the service chiefs, and the Chairman in providing their important military advice in the process.

I do believe that the Strategic Guidance positions us well for the future both in terms of the security environment and the economic effects of contributing to deficit reduction. At the same time, I think it will take, as Chairman Dempsey said, several cycles of program development to get us fully to that joint force of 2020 that we are aiming for. As in all strategies, we have made a significant down payment in this first budget, and we will continue to adapt the force over time to meet that strategy in its full form.

Senator PORTMAN. Let me talk about a specific concern that I have with regard to capabilities and, again, programs that you say are covered under the current plans. I would tell you that the QDR was based on a force structure that was very different than the new Strategic Guidance, and yet we still seem to have the same policy in place. Iran is an example. The Secretary has said your current boss for you, Secretary Hicks, and both of your future bosses—he has said that if Iran proceeds developing nuclear weapons, we will—and I quote—take whatever steps are necessary to stop it.

Can we do that? I mean, I look at some of the capability development over the past decades and then what has happened with some of those capabilities, replacing the Marine amphibious vehicles, the Navy amphibious ship. I am talking about the FB with regard to the Marines. The ISR platforms, other capabilities to counter anti-access and aerial denial strategies. How were currently planned force structures informed by these changes in our plans? Do you assess any increased risk there based on the current proposal?

Dr. HICKS. Senator, as Secretary Panetta discussed, when he rolled out the new strategy, we in fact explicitly looked at Iran scenarios in developing the force structure that accords to the strategy. In my current capacity, I am very familiar with combatant commander plans for various scenarios that could occur in and about Iran, and as the President said, all options are on the table. And we are looking very rigorously at how to combat any such activity. I am confident, based on my exposure to that, that at acceptable risk we can succeed in campaign plans related to Iran.

Senator PORTMAN. From a budget perspective, tell me how far you think we are away from degrading those capabilities since you say that currently we continue to have them. Are we at the edge? Are we precariously close to not having the capabilities we need?

Dr. HICKS. Senator, I do believe that if we have further cuts to the defense budget, we will need to relook our strategy and the force structure is a part of that. How we reshape the strategy is to be determined and thus whether it would affect those particular capabilities.

Senator PORTMAN. My time has expired, but again, we look forward to continuing to talk to you about these and a lot of other issues that were raised today. Thank you for your service.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Portman.

The further cuts that you just referred to would be the sequestration—is that correct—that Senator Portman made reference to.

Dr. HICKS. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. I just have a couple questions on missile defense.

First, on the new European Phased-Adaptive Approach, the EPAA. In your view—and I think I will ask this of you, Mr. Chollet, first. Does the EPAA send a strong and unified message from NATO to Iran about the unity of the international effort to counter its destabilizing activities and its nuclear and missile programs?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe it does, Senator.

Chairman LEVIN. Now, in a pre-hearing question, Dr. Hicks, on whether you would support U.S. and NATO cooperation with Russia on missile defense, you said you supported such cooperation because it could, quote, strengthen common defenses against Iranian missiles and send an important signal to Iran that Russia and the United States are working together to counter the proliferation and use of ballistic missiles. It is a position I very strongly support, I think you probably know.

Would you include in that considering the possibility of sharing radar and early warning data with Russia as one option for cooperation with Russia on missile defense?

Dr. HICKS. I would.

Chairman LEVIN. Okay. We thank you. We thank your families. We particularly want to thank Benjamin and Margaret and Alexander, your children, for staying with us. Your mother—I know how important it is to her that you are here.

Is Lucas—he is somewhere in the building. Well, if you can hear me, Lucas, the same thing goes for you. I know how important it is to your dad, as well as your mom, that you are here to support your dad.

We will stand adjourned, look forward to your confirmation, hopefully very early but you never know around here. So we will do our best.

[Whereupon, at 10:50 a.m., the committee adjourned.]