

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATIONS OF VICE
ADMIRAL CHARLES B. COOPER II, USN, TO BE
ADMIRAL AND COMMANDER, UNITED STATES
CENTRAL COMMAND; AND LIEUTENANT
GENERAL ALEXUS G. GRYNKEWICH, USAF, TO BE
GENERAL AND COMMANDER, UNITED STATES
EUROPEAN COMMAND AND SUPREME ALLIED
COMMANDER, EUROPE

Tuesday, June 24, 2025

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3 COMMANDER, UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND; AND LIEUTENANT
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8 Tuesday, June 24, 2025
9

10 U.S. Senate
11 Committee on Armed Services
12 Washington, D.C.
13

14 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m.,
15 in Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Roger
16 Wicker, chairman of the committee, presiding.

17 Committee Members Present: Senators Wicker, Fischer,
18 Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Cramer, Scott, Tuberville,
19 Budd, Schmitt, Sheehy, Reed, Gillibrand, Blumenthal,
20 Hirono, Kaine, King, Warren, Peters, Duckworth, Rosen, and
21 Kelly.
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1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROGER WICKER, U.S. SENATOR
2 FROM MISSISSIPPI

3 Chairman Wicker: Okay. We collectively have 9:30 on
4 our watches, so this hearing will come to order.

5 The Committee meets today to consider the nominations
6 of Vice Admiral Brad Cooper, to be Commander, United States
7 Central Command, and Lieutenant General Alexis G.
8 Grynkewich, to be Commander, United States European Command
9 and Supreme Allied Commander, Europe. I welcome our
10 nominees and their families, and I thank them for their
11 continued willingness to serve our nation.

12 I want to begin my remarks by recognizing the
13 remarkable skill, courage, and professionalism displayed by
14 the men and women of our military and intelligence
15 communities who participated in Operation Midnight Hammer
16 over the weekend.

17 President Trump was right to authorize the mission to
18 strike Iran's nuclear facilities and address this
19 longstanding threat to the United States. Our Commander in
20 Chief gave Ayatollah Khamenei every chance to negotiate
21 peacefully. The Iranian leader, however, rejected our
22 President's entreaties. He instead chose to continue his
23 pursuit of a nuclear weapon and support of terrorism rather
24 than a peaceful resolution that would have benefited the
25 Iranian people. To be clear, the situation the Iranian

1 regime finds itself in today is entirely of its own making.

2 I know members of this Committee will have questions
3 about Operation Midnight Hammer and the Administration's
4 Iran policy. I do remind my colleagues there will be a
5 classified briefing for all Senators later today with
6 senior Administration officials to address many of these
7 questions.

8 If confirmed, Admiral Cooper will assume command of
9 CENTCOM in the midst of a seismic shift across the Middle
10 East. These changes were precipitated by Hamas' barbaric
11 attack against Israel on October 7, 2023. Since then,
12 Iran's conventional military capabilities have been
13 severely degraded, Hezbollah's leadership has been
14 decimated, and Hamas has been crushed. Iran's longtime
15 political ally in the region, Syria's Bashar Assad, is out
16 of power and in exile.

17 Iran and its terrorist allies are weaker than they
18 have been in decades, but the job is not done. We must do
19 all we can to support the defense of Israel and ensure that
20 American forces in the region have what they need. I hope
21 to hear Admiral Cooper's unclassified assessment of recent
22 developments and his description of the force posture and
23 force protection requirements CENTCOM needs in order to
24 contend with Iran, its proxies, and other threats emanating
25 from the region.

1 Lastly, we must not lose sight of the continuing
2 threat posed by radical Islamist terrorist groups like ISIS
3 and al Qaeda. Although weakened, ISIS and al Qaeda remain
4 intent on killing Americans. I am interested in Admiral
5 Cooper's testimony about the current capabilities of
6 terrorist groups in the region and what CENTCOM's
7 counterterrorism strategy should be in order to counter
8 this threat.

9 Now as to General Grynkewich, if confirmed, he will
10 take command of EUCOM and NATO at a time of war and great
11 uncertainty. Vladimir Putin continues to remind the West
12 that Russia remains a determined enemy, one which is
13 willing to use force to vindicate long-held grievances and
14 to violate international law. The Russian dictator's
15 invasion of Ukraine has rained death and destruction upon a
16 democratic people and serves as a warning to the world that
17 the military threat from Russia is as relevant today as it
18 ever has been.

19 Indeed, earlier this month, NATO Secretary General
20 Mark Rutte warned that, quote, "Russia could be ready to
21 use military force against NATO within five years,"
22 unquote. He added that Putin's war economy "produces more
23 munitions in three months than the whole of NATO produces
24 in a year."

25 Of course, Russia is not just a danger to our NATO

1 allies. Russia also directly threatens the homeland. Its
2 nuclear arsenal is sized and postured to destroy the United
3 States. The members of this Committee are keen to hear
4 General Grynkewich's views of the threat Russia poses, as
5 well as his plans to counter it.

6 The United States faces a daunting challenge. We must
7 deter, and if necessary, defeat two nuclear peer
8 adversaries. That task highlights the important role
9 allies play in our security. President Trump deserves
10 considerable credit for dramatically increasing allied
11 burden sharing, which has helped to renew NATO's purpose.
12 NATO is now actively debating a commitment for members to
13 spend 5 percent of their GDP on defense.

14 Amid this encouraging development, there are some in
15 the Pentagon that believe the U.S. must draw down our
16 military presence in Europe. This thinking bewilders most
17 of us on this Committee, given Russia's aggression and the
18 renewed willingness of allies to share our collective
19 defense burden.

20 Our presence in Europe helps deter Russia. It also
21 has additional benefits, including enabling and assisting
22 our military operations in the CENTCOM and AFRICOM areas of
23 operation. That support is vital, especially now, as
24 tensions once again rise in the Middle East.

25 With that I look forward to our hearing today, and I

1 turn to my colleague and friend, Ranking Member Reed.

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

3 Senator Reed: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome,
4 Admiral Cooper, General Grynkewich, and our congratulations
5 on your nominations. Thank you for stepping forward to
6 continue your long careers of service And I particularly
7 extend my appreciation to your families, who are with you
8 every step of the way, and are one of the reasons, I think,
9 you are here today before us.

10 Gentlemen, as you are well aware, this is a very
11 dangerous moment. On Saturday, the President ordered
12 airstrikes on several nuclear facilities deep within Iran.
13 More than a hundred American aircraft and thousands of
14 servicemembers executed a remarkable, global operation that
15 significantly damaged Iran's nuclear infrastructure,
16 although we still await the final battle damage
17 assessments. And I salute the military personnel who
18 carried out this mission with incredible skill and bravery.

19 It is imperative that we prevent Iran from acquiring a
20 nuclear weapon. However, I am concerned about the
21 consequences of this attack. Iran has already retaliated
22 by launching ballistic missiles at our bases in Qatar and
23 Iraq, threatening tens of thousands of American troops.
24 Fortunately, these strikes were intercepted, but we must
25 recognize the grave risk of igniting a broader regional

1 war. Our forces in the region must continue to brace for
2 additional attacks, and indeed, we have seen additional
3 attacks between Israel and Iran. I urge the Trump
4 administration to pursue diplomacy and international
5 engagement to prevent further violence.

6 Admiral Cooper, I trust that you understand the
7 challenging situation within which you have been nominated
8 to lead CENTCOM. In this regard, your distinguished record
9 of service is encouraging. Your career as a Surface
10 Warfare Officer with extensive command experience in the
11 Middle East, including your current position as Deputy
12 CENTCOM Commander and previous command of U.S. Fifth Fleet,
13 should serve you well.

14 If confirmed as CENTCOM Commander, you will need to
15 not only address the Iran crisis but also continue to
16 navigate the difficult environment surrounding Israel's war
17 against Hamas in Gaza, the ever-present Houthi threat in
18 Yemen, and the potential resurgence of ISIS in Syria and
19 Iraq, all while the Administration has announced
20 significant force reductions in these areas. I would like
21 to know how you would address each of these threats,
22 amendment how U.S. military operations can align with
23 Iranian nuclear negotiations, and any plans you have to
24 help build the capacity of our regional partners, such as
25 the Lebanese Armed Forces.

1 Even as we navigate these conflicts in the Middle
2 East, the security environment in Europe remains fraught.
3 At this moment, NATO leaders are gathering in Brussels to
4 address a number of urgent issues, including the war in
5 Ukraine and Russia's increasingly aggressive posture toward
6 the West. I am hopeful President Trump will take this
7 opportunity to clearly express America's solidarity with
8 our NATO allies.

9 General Grynkewich, you have been nominated to command
10 European Command, or EUCOM. For the past 3 years, EUCOM
11 has served as the backbone of the international effort to
12 support Ukraine, enabling the Ukrainians to succeed on the
13 battlefield while sending an unmistakable message to
14 America's adversaries around the globe. However, in recent
15 months, the position of the United States seems to have
16 reversed, with the Trump administration challenging our
17 allies while attempting to negotiate directly with Vladimir
18 Putin. I would point out that Putin has suffered immense
19 costs in Ukraine, and has turned to Iran and North Korea to
20 help sustain his war.

21 In contrast, the Ukrainian military continues to fight
22 bravely and demonstrate stunning battlefield innovations,
23 such as its recent drone attacks deep within Russian
24 territory. I would argue that there is never a time to
25 appease Putin, but it is certainly not now.

1 I am also concerned by the Administration's plan to
2 slash funding and reduce U.S. force presence in EUCOM and
3 their failure to request new funding for assistance to
4 Ukraine. These decisions send an encouraging message to
5 Russia. Indeed, I think it is imperative that we provide a
6 significant supplemental emergency appropriation to Ukraine
7 to continue to the fight and send a very strong signal to
8 Putin that we are not giving up.

9 General Grynkewich, I would appreciate your assessment
10 of the war in Ukraine, and your views on future U.S.
11 military activities and investments needed in the EUCOM
12 area of responsibility to uphold our steadfast commitment
13 to collective defense and America's security.

14 Gentlemen, if confirmed, you will lead America's
15 forward-deployed forces at a momentous time. I am grateful
16 for your willingness to step forward to meet this
17 challenge. Thank you, and I look forward to your
18 testimony.

19 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator Reed.
21 Now we will take opening statements, no longer than 5
22 minutes if you don't mind, gentlemen. We will begin with
23 you, Admiral Cooper. Your opening statement, sir.

1 STATEMENT OF VICE ADMIRAL CHARLES B. COOPER II, USN,
2 TO BE ADMIRAL AND COMMANDER, UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND

3 Admiral Cooper: Well, good morning, Chairman Wicker,
4 Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished members of this
5 Committee. As the proud son of a career Army officer and
6 Vietnam veteran, and the grandson of a World War II
7 veteran in the Pacific, I am honored -- and I am humbled --
8 by the opportunity to appear before you today.

9 I would like to first thank the President of the
10 United States, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman
11 of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for their faith, trust, and
12 confidence in nominating me to serve as the next Commander
13 of U.S. Central Command.

14 I am also honored to join today with Lieutenant
15 General Alexis Grynkewich. We all know him by his callsign
16 of "Grynych." Having served alongside him for the last 4
17 years, in very challenging times, he is the very best our
18 nation has to offer. It is a wonderful privilege of being
19 with him today.

20 I am joined today by my wife, Susan, my high school
21 sweetheart from Montgomery, Alabama, and the anchor of our
22 family. She was there when my parents signed a waiver so
23 that I could attend the Naval Academy at the age of 17. As
24 I prepare to mark four decades wearing the cloth of the
25 nation next week, I know that none of it would have been

1 possible without Susan's boundless love, not only for our
2 family, but to thousands of military spouses around the
3 world. She truly has been my greatest source of strength
4 throughout this amazing journey.

5 Also with us today are our daughter Katie, a
6 cardiovascular ICU nurse, in Jacksonville, Florida, and
7 Andrew, a fellow nurse and Marine veteran of Iraq and
8 Afghanistan. Our son Bradford, a professional welder, is
9 working on a U.S. Navy guided missile destroyer in Mayport,
10 Florida, playing his role in keeping our Navy "fit to
11 fight." He and his wife, Shelby, are unable to be here as
12 they prepare for the imminent arrival of grandchild number
13 three, a future member of the U.S. Naval Academy Class of
14 2047 -- sorry, Senator Reed. Our grandchildren, Avery and
15 Charlie, also could not be here today, but they remain two
16 of our life's absolute greatest joys.

17 I am also grateful for the support of my brothers and
18 sisters-in-law who are here today. As a career Navy
19 Surface Warfare Officer, I have spent my adult life on Navy
20 ships, deploying all around the world, including a tour on
21 the ground in Afghanistan, and with family moves to
22 Germany, Korea, Japan, and most recently Bahrain.
23 Supporting the Coopers has truly been a team sport, and I
24 am deeply thankful for their love these many years.

25 My greatest inspiration for continued service has come

1 from those I have had the privilege to lead and serve
2 alongside in the Joint Force. U.S. forces in the Middle
3 East are laser-focused today on warfighting, lethality, and
4 readiness, and they are performing superbly. I honor them
5 and their families for the sacrifices they continue to make
6 for the nation. I would like to specifically acknowledge
7 the exquisite execution by the Joint Force of an incredibly
8 complex mission in Iran this past weekend in successful
9 defense of Al-Udeid Air Base just yesterday. I just could
10 not be prouder, and I know that this Committee shares in
11 that same pride.

12 Over the past 4 years, I have had the privilege of
13 living in and leading in the Central Command area of
14 responsibility. That time has given me a front-row seat to
15 both the volatility and the promise of the Middle East. It
16 has also reinforced a clear-eyed understanding: the
17 Middle East is incredibly dynamic today. There are
18 challenges, for sure, but also real strategic
19 opportunities. If confirmed, I will work with this
20 Committee to shape outcomes that advance our national
21 interests.

22 I would like to acknowledge and thank the current
23 Commander of U.S. Central Command, General Erik Kurilla,
24 his wife, and family for their lifetime of service to our
25 country. Our nation and our troops in the Middle East have

1 been blessed to have General Kurilla at the helm of Central
2 Command for the last 39 months.

3 Finally, I would like to thank this Committee for your
4 steadfast support and commitment to the oversight that
5 makes our force stronger. If confirmed, I pledge to
6 maintain a transparent and fully responsive relationship
7 with this Committee.

8 I look forward to your questions today. Thank you very
9 much.

10 [The prepared statement of Admiral Cooper follows:]

1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Admiral Cooper, and thank
2 you for your kind words about General Kurilla. I think
3 they are shared by most of us here behind the dais.

4 Before I recognize you, Lieutenant General Grynkewich,
5 would you get together with Admiral Cooper and see if you
6 can get that grandson of his in the Air Force Academy at
7 the appropriate time?

8 General Grynkewich: Sir, I would be happy to. We all
9 make mistakes.

10 Chairman Wicker: You are now recognized.

11 Senator Reed: Clearly they are not qualified for West
12 Point.

13 [Laughter.]

14 Voice: That is okay.

1 STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL ALEXUS G. GRYNKEWICH,
2 USAF, TO BE GENERAL AND COMMANDER, UNITED STATES EUROPEAN
3 COMMAND AND SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER, EUROPE

4 General Grynkewich: Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member
5 Reed, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you
6 for the opportunity to testify before you today. I also
7 would like to thank President Trump, Secretary Hegseth, and
8 General Caine for their trust and confidence in me, and for
9 the opportunity, if confirmed, to continue serving and
10 leading those who raised their right hand and swore an oath
11 of service to our nation.

12 Today I am honored to testify alongside Vice Admiral
13 Brad Cooper, the nominee for Command United States Central
14 Command. Brad and I fought alongside each other in our
15 previous jobs as the Maritime and Air Component Commanders
16 in USCENTCOM. And having seen Brad in action, I know of no
17 other leader more focused on leadership, warfighting, and
18 excellence.

19 Up front, I would like to thank my family for their
20 support and sacrifice throughout my career. A former Air
21 Force Chief of Staff used to remind us that our families
22 are the best possible deal the military could ever get.
23 Our spouses toil to take care of the troops and families we
24 lead, and our children learn to make friends and grow roots
25 quickly as we move from assignment to assignment.

1 My wife, Shannon, is here with me today. We have been
2 married for 27 years, and over that time she has been a
3 tireless supporter not just of me, but of all military
4 families. Our son Justin, a rising college junior
5 currently overseas for a summer program, endured -- or he
6 would say experienced -- 10 moves by the time he was 17.
7 He attended three high schools. I asked him if he wanted
8 to stay in place with his mom for his senior year of school
9 when I received an assignment as he completed the 11th
10 grade. With a year-long deployment for me during his
11 freshman year still fresh on his mind, he said, "No way.
12 I don't want to be the reason the family is apart."

13 We are super proud of Justin, and can't wait to see
14 him this summer.

15 Representing the much broader swath of family and
16 friends who have supported us over the years, we are also
17 joined today by Shannon's sister, Sarah, whose kids,
18 despite my previous nomination and confirmation by this
19 body, still insist on referring to me as "Uncle 2-Star."

20 I was inspired to serve by two men, my grandfather who
21 served in World War II and Korea, and my Uncle Nick, who
22 flew F-4s in the Air Force during Vietnam and who is
23 watching today. My mother, who is also watching these
24 proceedings from down in Georgia, recognized the influence
25 these men had on me and my desire to serve. As a single

1 mom she worked two to three jobs in order to have enough
2 money to send me to Georgia Military College Prep School.
3 There I was mentored by Lieutenant Colonel Curt Landers, a
4 retired Army helicopter pilot, who told me that flying was
5 great, but that if I wanted to do it I ought to consider
6 the Air Force. And the rest is history.

7 Since I first marched up the ramp at the U.S. Air
8 Force Academy on Day 1 of Basic Cadet Training in June of
9 1989, countless others have shaped and molded me as an
10 airman, a fighter pilot, and as a leader. No one gets to
11 this point in a military career without a legion of
12 friends, mentors, and supporters, and for all of those who
13 have helped make me who I am today, I am filled with
14 gratitude.

15 In my current role on the Joint Staff, I have had the
16 privilege of seeing the broad swath of global challenges
17 facing America today. Our adversaries are converging, and
18 the risks of conflict with one or more of them grows each
19 and every day. Accordingly, it is more essential than ever
20 for us to focus on warfighting readiness and lethality at
21 all echelons.

22 If confirmed, I look forward to working with this
23 Committee and the Congress on these and other issues of
24 critical importance to U.S. forces in Europe, and to the
25 Alliance.

1 And while the Indo-Pacific has risen in importance
2 over the previous two decades, European and American
3 security remain as intertwined as our history, our
4 cultures, and our economies. As such, a strong NATO
5 capable of defending Europe remains essential to American
6 interests. If confirmed, it will be the honor of my
7 lifetime to lead not only U.S. forces in the European
8 region, but the men and women from across the Alliance
9 within Allied Command Operations.

10 Finally, I would like to offer a brief word of thanks
11 to the current Commander of USEUCOM and SACEUR, General
12 Chris Cavoli, and his wife, Christina. They have led our
13 forces and those of the Alliance during a highly
14 consequential time, and I know the nation joins Shannon and
15 I in wishing them all the best as they head into their next
16 chapter after an incredible 38 years of service to the
17 Army, the Joint Force, and the Alliance.

18 Thank you again for the opportunity to be here today,
19 and I look forward to your questions.

20 [The prepared statement of General Grynkewich
21 follows:]

1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, General, and thank you
2 both, gentlemen.

3 In order to exercise its legislative and oversight
4 responsibilities, it is important that this Committee and
5 other appropriate committees of the Congress be able to
6 receive testimony, briefings, and other communications and
7 information. So I ask standard questions that we ask of
8 every nominee. And you can just simply say yes or no.
9 aloud together, simultaneously.

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

12 Admiral Cooper: Yes.

13 General Grynkewich: Yes.

14 Chairman Wicker: Do you agree, when asked, to give
15 your personal views, even if those views differ from the
16 Administration in power?

17 Admiral Cooper: Yes.

18 General Grynkewich: Yes.

19 Chairman Wicker: Have you assumed any duties or
20 undertaken any actions which would appear to presume the
21 outcome of the confirmation process?

22 Admiral Cooper: No.

23 General Grynkewich: No.

24 Chairman Wicker: Will you ensure your staff complies
25 with deadlines established for requested communications,

1 including questions for the record in hearings?

2 Admiral Cooper: Yes.

3 General Grynkewich: Yes.

4 Chairman Wicker: Will you cooperate in providing
5 witnesses and briefers in response to congressional
6 requests?

7 Admiral Cooper: Yes.

8 General Grynkewich: Yes.

9 Chairman Wicker: Will those witnesses be protected
10 from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

11 Admiral Cooper: Yes.

12 General Grynkewich: Yes.

13 Chairman Wicker: Do you agree, if confirmed, to
14 appear and testify, upon request, before this committee?

15 Admiral Cooper: Yes.

16 General Grynkewich: Yes.

17 Chairman Wicker: Do you agree to provide documents,
18 including copies of electronic forms of communication, in a
19 timely manner when requested by a duly constituted
20 committee, or to consult with the committee regarding the
21 basis for any good-faith delay or denial in providing such
22 documents?

23 Admiral Cooper: Yes.

24 General Grynkewich: Yes.

25 Chairman Wicker: That concludes the standard

1 questions. And now we will begin a round of questions.
2 Each Senator will be allotted 5 minutes.

3 Let me ask a question that I have asked to all the
4 nominees this year and also to the Secretary of Defense
5 just recently at his latest hearing before this Committee,
6 and that regards reconciliation, the \$150 billion that we
7 anticipate will be put in the reconciliation bill for
8 defense.

9 Much of the funding in the defense reconciliation bill
10 is unspecific and will technically be at the discretion of
11 the Department of Defense, though we will write specific
12 recommendations for them. A quick yes or no from each of
13 you. Admiral Cooper, you first. Do you commit to follow
14 the Congress' spending recommendations in defense
15 reconciliation, unequivocally?

16 Admiral Cooper: Yes.

17 Chairman Wicker: And Lieutenant General Grynkewich?

18 General Grynkewich: I do, sir.

19 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Now let's move
20 on then to CENTCOM. Admiral Cooper, you have spent a
21 number of years serving senior military positions in the
22 Middle East, and it is fair to say you understand the
23 Iranian threat better than most. How would you
24 characterize Iran's ability to threaten the United States,
25 Israel, and our partners in the region today, after what

1 has happened during the last weekend? How does the threat
2 compare to just a few years ago, before Hamas attacked
3 Israel in October of 2023? So you will be talking about
4 the Iranian threat as well as their terrorist proxies.

5 Admiral Cooper: Senator, thank you very much for the
6 question. I think we would all agree that Iran is the
7 number one source of instability in the region. They are
8 the number one source of and sponsor of terror throughout
9 the world.

10 At the strategic level, I think they have been
11 weakened since the events of 7 October. At the tactical
12 level, I think they have been degraded, and I think the
13 degree to which that degradation has taken place,
14 particularly in the last 12 days, is best discussed in a
15 classified forum. I think we would be able to more ably
16 articulate the specifics of what that looks like as a
17 result of the last 12 days in conflict with Israel.

18 Chairman Wicker: Okay. And I do understand that, and
19 I mentioned that in my opening statement. But would you
20 agree with me that the remarkable effectiveness of Israel's
21 military campaign against Iran and against its terrorist
22 proxies has directly affected, in a positive way, American
23 national security?

24 Admiral Cooper: I would, sir.

25 Chairman Wicker: How so?

1 Admiral Cooper: Sir, I think if you zoomed out and
2 take a look at where the threats have been and you look at
3 decades of Iranian sponsorship of terrorism, and you see
4 the blood that is on the hands of the Iranians, from
5 Hezbollah to Iranian-backed militia, with hundreds of
6 attacks against American servicemembers, they had, and they
7 continue to be threats to the United States.

8 Chairman Wicker: And these terrorist groups could not
9 possibly have engaged in their reign of terror without the
10 assistance and backing of the Iranian regime, could they?

11 Admiral Cooper: They could not.

12 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much.

13 Now let me say, Lieutenant General Grynkewich, that as
14 I ask my question let me agree with our distinguished
15 Ranking Member that there is no time to try to appease
16 Putin, but if ever there were it surely would not be now,
17 and that this is no time, in my judgment, for us to let up
18 in support of those who would resist his illegal invasion
19 of neighbors.

20 General Grynkewich, General Cavoli has testified that
21 ground combat forces are central in deterring Russian
22 aggression in Europe. Can you describe the value of
23 maintaining a strong force posture in Europe, and
24 specifically, EUCOM has five brigade combat teams addressed
25 to it, three of which are rotational. What impact would a

1 return of these rotational brigades to the continental
2 United States have on our defense and deterrence goals in
3 Europe, sir?

4 General Grynkewich: Chairman, I do agree that land
5 combat power is very critical in the European theater. It
6 is a large land mass, and the plains of Europe have long
7 required that ground combat power to be present.

8 I also think, in the broader context of European force
9 posture, if we look at the situation today, many of our
10 forces that were forward postured in Europe were in a
11 perfect position to swing into action to support General
12 Kurilla during the crisis in the Middle East. So it is a
13 good pivot point from which you can move forces to any
14 region of the world for combat options.

15 With respect to any potential reduction in force
16 posture, I do not want to get ahead of any posture reviews
17 that the Department is undertaking right now. But I do
18 commit to providing a detailed assessment and my military
19 advice up to the Secretary of Defense as they go through
20 that posture review, and understanding the importance that
21 ground combat power has.

22 Chairman Wicker: Fair enough. We are going to stick
23 to the 5 minutes, so I will yield back and recognize my
24 friend, Senator Reed.

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

1 First, let me begin by saluting General Kurilla and General
2 Cavoli, outstanding soldiers who left distinguished legacy.

3 Admiral Cooper, we have something sort of in common.
4 My father served in the United States Navy in World War II
5 and inspired me to go to West Point, and your father served
6 in the United States Army in World War II and inspired you
7 to go to the Navy. So we have something in common.

8 Admiral Cooper: Yes, sir.

9 Senator Reed: One of the critical issues at the
10 moment is the possibility of Iranian and Russian
11 collaboration, which touches both CENTCOM and EUCOM. The
12 Foreign Minister was just in Moscow, I believe, yesterday.
13 The Iranians have provided significant support to their
14 fight against Ukraine. And I am sure, at this point, they
15 are demanding reciprocal support.

16 Both General Grynkewich and Admiral Cooper, from the
17 military's perspective, what happens if the Iranians and
18 the Russians begin to collaborate more closely in supplying
19 the Iranians with equipment or with technicians or with a
20 whole range of things? Admiral Cooper, please?

21 Admiral Cooper: Senator, thank you for that. First,
22 I think I would note the Iranian and Russian collaboration.
23 I would also add into that mix the collaboration with North
24 Korea and China. I think at the strategic level that
25 emerging axis is troubling and one that we will have to

1 keep our eye on, and if confirmed, I will absolutely do
2 that. We have certainly seen the tactical implications of
3 support from Iran to Russia. We have seen tactical
4 implications of Chinese companies providing sensors and
5 weapons and components to Iran, who ship them to the
6 Houthis, who shoot them at Americans. I think we need to
7 call those types of things out more. But clearly that
8 emerging force, that axis, is one that we need to pay
9 attention to.

10 Senator Reed: Thank you. General Grynkeiwich?

11 General Grynkeiwich: Sir, I agree with my good friend,
12 Admiral Cooper, on this. From a European perspective, the
13 Iranians' supplying of drones to the Russians and their
14 extensive use in Ukraine has contributed to countless
15 numbers of casualties. So that is one thing that I do
16 agree, we need to keep a close eye on.

17 But no doubt in my mind we have seen the use North
18 Korean troops in the Russian fight in Ukraine. And, of
19 course, China is providing economic support to the entire
20 group of these, this adversary alignment that we start to
21 see.

22 So in a future context, as we start to think about
23 potential conflicts against great powers, we do need to
24 worry about the potential for simultaneity of those
25 conflicts and think about how we posture ourselves and our

1 allies to help deal with that. And that is one reason, I
2 think, the increased spending that we are seeing from our
3 NATO partners is going to be absolutely essential to
4 success of the Alliance, moving forward.

5 Senator Reed: I think your experience, Admiral
6 Cooper, in the Middle East, is that it is not a linear
7 process there. Things happen which are quite unexpected.
8 One aspect of this, and it was pointed out by Vali Nasr,
9 who is one of the more perceptive commentators about the
10 area, is that Iran might draw the lesson that their only
11 deterrence is to have a nuclear weapon, and it could
12 accelerate its process of trying to obtain a weapon.

13 What is your assessment of the possibility of that?

14 Admiral Cooper: Senator, I think as we sit here now,
15 and it is a very dynamic time, I would be reluctant to make
16 a strategic assessment or a tactical assessment. I think
17 that is best done by the intelligence community in the
18 coming days.

19 But for sure, the thing I think that we need to do
20 right now, and we are doing, with clarity, is making sure
21 our men and women are safe in the Middle East, and that is
22 where our focus is today, sir.

23 Senator Reed: Thank you. Final question for Admiral
24 Cooper. The proxy network of the Iranians has been
25 significantly degraded by Israeli attacks, primarily, but

1 also other factors, the changing leadership in Syria. How
2 are we going to continue that denigration of the proxies?
3 That is one aspect of it. Second, do you sense -- and this
4 might be reserved for the closed session -- that those
5 proxies will eventually come back to the Iranians and start
6 being active?

7 Admiral Cooper: Senator, first I would agree the
8 proxies are significantly degraded, particularly Hamas and
9 Hezbollah. If confirmed, it would be a priority of mine to
10 deter conflict through both the deterrence of Iran and
11 those proxies. I think we are going to have to continue to
12 watch them very closely. While those two proxies have been
13 degraded, we still have the Iranian-aligned militia groups
14 that are out there, as well as the Houthis currently in a
15 cease-fire with us.

16 Senator Reed: Thank you, gentlemen. Thank you very
17 much.

18 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Reed. Senator
19 Fischer.

20 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank
21 you both, Admiral Cooper and General Grynkeiwich, for your
22 service and for the service of your families to this
23 country for many, many years.

24 General, you are nominated not only to serve as
25 Commander of the U.S. European Command but also as the

1 Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, who is responsible for
2 all NATO military operations and forces, and that includes
3 the American nuclear forces that are assigned to NATO.
4 NATO is a nuclear alliance. The role that you would assume
5 in NATO has always been filled by an American, beginning
6 with General Eisenhower in 1950.

7 How do you view the role of nuclear deterrence with
8 respect to the NATO alliance?

9 General Grynkewich: Senator, in my view, the U.S.
10 strategic nuclear forces under the command of General
11 Cotton at U.S. Strategic Command are really foundational to
12 the security of all of Europe and foundational to the
13 security of the Alliance, and also underpin global security
14 in many ways, and they are absolutely essential.

15 I also would note the forward positioning of certain
16 nuclear capabilities on the continent, and those provide a
17 very important backstop against any potential threat coming
18 from the east.

19 Senator Fischer: You earlier were asked about the
20 higher role of spending from our NATO partners to 5 percent
21 of GDP. I am curious how you would work to coordinate
22 among the NATO members to ensure that their investments
23 would be complementary to each other and to the Alliance,
24 as a whole?

25 General Grynkewich: Senator, if confirmed, I think

1 that would be one of my major responsibilities, is to
2 ensure that any increased spending was done in a way that
3 benefitted the Alliance and ensured the achievement of
4 capability targets that the Alliance has agreed to.

5 I would also note the work that has been done on the
6 NATO plans, and that they are specific requirements and
7 capabilities that are essential to the essential execution
8 of those plans.

9 Certain countries have strengths in particular areas.
10 You know, some countries are very strong in the land
11 domain. Others have a stronger position in the maritime
12 domain. And within all of the domains there is, of course,
13 a variety of capabilities. My goal would be to work very
14 hard with our allies and partners in the region to bring
15 all of that together in a coherent fashion, to increase the
16 strength of the alliance.

17 Senator Fischer: Do you know if discussions are going
18 on right now with that?

19 General Grynkeiwich: Ma'am, I am certain that those
20 have started, absolutely.

21 Senator Fischer: Thank you. Admiral Cooper,
22 yesterday we had the opportunity to visit a little bit in a
23 classified session together, and we talked about Iran's
24 influence in both Syria and Lebanon and how that has been
25 changed with recent events. And it sounds like there are

1 real opportunities in the future for more stability, for
2 peace within those nations.

3 What do you assess a post-Assad Syria and post-
4 Hezbollah Lebanon would mean for the region in its
5 entirety?

6 Admiral Cooper: Senator, first, I enjoyed our
7 conversation yesterday. When I think first of Syria I
8 think that stability in Syria can translate into security
9 in the United States, and here is how those dots connect.
10 ISIS thrives in chaos. If the government of Syria, now 7
11 months into their existence, can help suppress that ISIS
12 threat, along with U.S. forces in the region, that
13 stability helps create our own security.

14 I am optimistic for the future, although they are at
15 the beginnings of this new government. I think we have now
16 seen several steps, including Ambassador Tom Barrack, who
17 is the U.S. Ambassador to Türkiye, being appointed as a
18 Syria envoy. He has made several trips. Everything we do
19 in Syria will be diplomatically led, and I think we are
20 heading in a good direction in that regard.

21 Senator Fischer: If you are confirmed, how would you
22 ensure that CENTCOM integrates its actions both with State
23 and Treasury to support more stability, growing stability
24 within Syria?

25 Admiral Cooper: Senator, I would anticipate we would

1 integrated very closely, diplomatically led, drafting and
2 behind. As the policies start to sharpen on this, we will
3 be prepared to provide our best military advice in how to
4 support those policies.

5 Senator Fischer: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator
7 Fischer. Senator Hirono.

8 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome to
9 both of you and your families. Thank you very much for
10 your service.

11 To ensure the fitness of nominees for the positions to
12 which they have been nominated, I ask the following two
13 foundational questions of all nominees before any of the
14 committees on which I sit. So I will ask these questions
15 of you, and we will start with Admiral Cooper and then go
16 on to General Grynkewich.

17 Since you became a legal adult, have you ever made
18 unwanted requests for sexual favors or committed any verbal
19 or physical harassment or assault of a sexual nature?

20 Admiral Cooper: I have not.

21 General Grynkewich: I have not.

22 Senator Hirono: Have you ever faced discipline or
23 entered into a settlement related to this kind of conduct?

24 Admiral Cooper: No.

25 General Grynkewich: No.

1 Senator Hirono: The Middle East remains a volatile,
2 unstable region, and the situation risks drawing the U.S.
3 and our allies into a protracted war, risking the lives of
4 American servicemembers, without a clear plan for what
5 comes next. And Iran should not have a nuclear weapon,
6 which is why I and others have supported the 2015 JCPOA,
7 which allowed the IAEC to inspect suspected Iranian nuclear
8 facilities. Only Congress can declare a war, and the vast
9 majority of Americans oppose another endless conflict in
10 the Middle East.

11 And even after a hastily announced ceasefire, the
12 situation remains highly tenuous, while ongoing attacks,
13 conflicting claims, and a rapidly evolving regional crisis
14 continues. So this regime must use all -- and I am talking
15 about the Trump regime -- must use all diplomatic tools at
16 its disposal to avoid further escalation and instability in
17 the region.

18 Admiral Cooper, I am concerned about additional
19 escalation following the strikes on Iran's nuclear
20 facilities, and despite the President's, as I mentioned,
21 ceasefire announcements, the situation clearly remains
22 volatile, with renewed attacks and conflicting claims.
23 What steps is CENTCOM taking, or should take, to deter
24 further Iranian retaliation, especially as tensions remain
25 high?

1 Admiral Cooper: Senator, first I would agree that the
2 Middle East is a very dynamic region today, and dangers do
3 exist. From a military perspective, our number one
4 priority is the safety of our men and women in uniform, the
5 first protection. We are laser-focused on that today, and
6 if confirmed, it would remain my number one priority,
7 taking care of our men and women in uniform.

8 Senator Hirono: Well, you know, we have some 40,000
9 troops that are in the area, so force protection of those
10 troops would be really critical. But do you have any ideas
11 about what Central Command can do to ensure that that
12 region becomes more stable?

13 Admiral Cooper: I think for the last --

14 Senator Hirono: For example, would you support
15 diplomatic efforts --

16 Admiral Cooper: Senator, absolutely.

17 Senator Hirono: -- as a first step?

18 Admiral Cooper: Absolutely. Step one is
19 diplomatically led, as we saw over a multi-month period,
20 and in support of that a number of options, as required by
21 law, were provided to support that diplomatically led
22 effort. And if confirmed, I would provide those same set
23 of options.

24 Senator Hirono: Does Central Command have a role in
25 fostering these diplomatic engagements, discussions?

1 Admiral Cooper: Central Command certainly has a role
2 in the mil-to-mil underpinning that support the diplomatic
3 engagements. We have had that for decades. It is
4 particularly strong now, and if confirmed, I would look to
5 nurture those relationships.

6 Senator Hirono: So how would Central Command balance
7 the need to counter continued protecting our allies, i.e.,
8 Israel, with the emerging threat to U.S. forces, some
9 40,000 troops in the region, following this weekend's
10 strike of Iran's nuclear facilities?

11 Admiral Cooper: Senator, this is something we have
12 been focused on for many years, particularly illuminating
13 since the October 7th attacks in 2023, and it is a priority
14 effort every single day, and I would anticipate that would
15 continue. And if confirmed, it would certainly be a
16 priority of mine.

17 Senator Hirono: Well, we have a situation in which
18 the head of our intelligence forces, well, basically
19 intelligence agency, says that Iran was not pursuing its
20 nuclear ambitions, and meanwhile you have a President who
21 says, "I don't believe her." This does not give us much
22 reassurance of what is actually happening in the region.

23 So, Mr. Chairman, thank you. I know I am beyond my
24 time. But the volatility remains. Thank you very much.

25 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator Hirono.

1 Senator Cotton.

2 Senator Cotton: Gentlemen, congratulations on your
3 nominations. Thank you to your families for their
4 sacrifice over the years, and most importantly, thank you
5 to the men and women you represent in your organizations
6 and will represent, for their service, as well. I want to
7 commend you both and comment everyone who was involved in
8 the exceptionally successful mission against Iran over the
9 weekend.

10 Admiral Cooper, I want to return to a brief point you
11 made with Senator Wicker. Although we have dealt a massive
12 setback to Iran's nuclear threat, which is the worst kind
13 of threat they could pose to us, Iran still poses a severe
14 threat to our troops and to Americans around the world,
15 right?

16 Admiral Cooper: They do. They possess considerable
17 tactical capability, one element of which we saw yesterday,
18 which we thwarted in defense of Al-Udeid Air Base.

19 Senator Cotton: And as the next Commander of Central
20 Command, one of your top priorities will be to continue the
21 aggressive defensive posture and to continue the deterrence
22 that has now been reestablished against Iran to defend our
23 troops in the region, as well as all of our friends in the
24 region, Israel and the Arab nations.

25 Admiral Cooper: Absolutely, sir. It would be an

1 important priority, deterring Iran and proxies.

2 Senator Cotton: And I know that President Trump is
3 mindful about this, that just because they had a very weak
4 response yesterday, it was telegraphed in advance, does not
5 mean that there might be another response, in a day, or
6 week, or month, or year, or 3 years, and it could be
7 missiles or rockets against our troops or it could be
8 trying to blow up an embassy around the world or targeting
9 American citizens for terrorist attacks, something that we
10 have to be constantly on guard against because Iran has
11 been terrorizing American civilized world for 46 years. Is
12 that right?

13 Admiral Cooper: Completely agree, sir. We have got
14 to be in a three-point stance, ready to go every single
15 day.

16 Senator Cotton: And at bottom, Iran did not become a
17 terrorist state because the United States bombed their
18 nuclear bunkers. The United States bombed their nuclear
19 bunkers because they are a terrorist state. Is that right?

20 Admiral Cooper: I would agree.

21 Senator Cotton: Thank you. The strikes over the
22 weekend showed the importance of having the world's very
23 best industrial base and best munitions, the first time
24 those have been employed in combat operations, and they
25 were incredibly successful. But the wars both in the

1 Middle East, since October 7th, and in Ukraine, has also
2 revealed the fragility of munitions production in this
3 country and the defense industry. Would you agree that we
4 need to do a lot more to increase capacity for our
5 munitions industrial base?

6 Admiral Cooper: I would, sir. It is an area of
7 significant concern. I know this is an area that senior
8 DoD leadership is focused on right now. It is not a new
9 issue. It has been around for some time. But clearly it
10 is one we need to focus on right now.

11 Senator Cotton: And General Grynkewich, I assume both
12 in your current role in the Joint Staff and also your
13 anticipated role in Europe you would agree, as well, that
14 we need to significantly expand munitions production in
15 this country?

16 General Grynkewich: Senator, I would. As the
17 Director for Operations on the Joint Staff with the
18 responsibility, along with my colleagues in logistics and
19 sustainment, for managing those munitions and pushing them
20 to the fight, I am acutely aware of some of the limitations
21 that we have. And if confirmed, I would continue to
22 advocate for strong investment, on both sides of the
23 Atlantic, in the industrial base.

24 Senator Cotton: And our industrial base includes our
25 defense contractors, companies that make this in the

1 private sector, but also includes our organic industrial
2 base within the Department. And given the track record
3 over the last 3 years, would you agree that we really need
4 an all-of-the-above strategy, we need to push both the
5 private sector and lean on the assets we already have in
6 the Department of Defense to produce the munitions our
7 warfighters need?

8 General Grynkewich: Senator, I would. The organic
9 industrial base does need that investment and attention.
10 And on the private sector side, I would say we need to
11 focus not just on traditional prime contractors but also
12 expand the competitive space to new entrants, to get as
13 much production capacity as possible.

14 Senator Cotton: Thank you. Admiral Cooper, I think I
15 saw you vigorously nodding your head in agreement. Would
16 you like to state that for the record?

17 Admiral Cooper: Absolutely. I think the
18 characterization of an all-of-the-above strategy is the
19 appropriate characterization.

20 Senator Cotton: Okay. The operation last weekend, I
21 guess a couple of Thursdays ago, in Iran, with the use of
22 drones, launching them inside the country, as well as a few
23 weeks ago by Ukraine inside Russia, has revealed once again
24 the threat that drones can pose to our bases here in the
25 United States. And I have worked with Senator Gillibrand

1 and a lot of other Senators to address that threat here in
2 the U.S., and we are going to try to pass legislation to
3 expand the Department's authorities on it.

4 But General Grynkewich, it is also a real threat in
5 Europe, the prospect of NATO or American positions being
6 attacked by drones, as we saw in Iran, or as we saw in
7 Ukraine. How do you assess the drone threat right now in
8 the European theater?

9 General Grynkewich: Senator, I think it is an acute
10 threat, that is a new technology, and our investment in
11 both counter-UAS capability and the ability to do the same
12 sort of activities with our own drones needs vigorous
13 attention.

14 Senator Cotton: Thank you. I agree it is an acute
15 threat. If Israel can do it to Iran, if Ukraine can do it
16 to Russia, we need to assume that the bad guys could do it
17 to us and our troops and our bases, as well, whether
18 overseas or even here at home, and we need to counteract it
19 rapidly. Thank you.

20 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Cotton. Senator
21 King.

22 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Senator
23 Lankford and I, 3 weeks ago, were in your AOR, Admiral, in
24 Baghdad and Erbil, Beirut, Amman, Turkey, and Istanbul.
25 And first I want to say what wonderful people we have

1 working for us. All the people we met -- our military
2 people, particularly in Lebanon, State Department,
3 intelligence community -- this country is very fortunate to
4 have the quality people that we have in dangerous and
5 difficult circumstances. You are nodding. I presume you
6 agree with that observation.

7 Admiral Cooper: Sir, we have extraordinary men and
8 women serving overseas today and throughout the world.

9 Senator King: One of the things we learned, in all of
10 those countries, was that none of those countries want us
11 to leave. There are uncertainties and instabilities. For
12 example, in Iraq, probably the last proxy standing right
13 now of Iran are the Iran-inspired militias in Iraq. They
14 have an election coming up this fall, and that has been one
15 of the significant dangers.

16 What I am getting at is, it seems to me given the
17 renewed volatility -- this region has been volatile, it
18 seems like, forever -- but the renewed volatility in the
19 last several months, is not a good time to be drawing down
20 our forces, because they are viewed as stabilizing forces
21 in all of those countries in the Middle East. Do you have
22 thoughts about that?

23 Admiral Cooper: Senator, I think it is first and
24 foremost important to remember what our forces are doing in
25 Iraq and Syria, and that is focusing on the counter threat,

1 the Defeat ISIS operation, with 20 other countries.

2 Senator King: And that was going to be my next
3 question. In addition to the Iran militias, ISIS, there is
4 a deep concern about ISIS reconstituting in Syria, given
5 the changes there. So the point is, I believe it is not a
6 time to be retrenching, given the developments of just the
7 last several months.

8 Admiral Cooper: Sir, I completely agree. I think
9 stability is a critical aspect of security in the region,
10 and particularly those countries. Our approach today is to
11 assess and move forward on a conditions-based assessment.
12 I think given the dynamic nature of what is happening
13 today, that assessment in the future could look different
14 than it does today perhaps. And if confirmed, I am
15 committed into my tenure to continue to assess on what our
16 posture needs to look like and make recommendations
17 accordingly.

18 Senator King: Well, the other topic that we have not
19 discussed today is Syria, and Syria is in a very, I would
20 almost add precarious, but it is in an important place.
21 Everyone we talked to said al-Sharaa is what we have got,
22 and that there is really no Plan B. And Ambassador Barrack
23 has done a good job, I think, of being the envoy, but it
24 seems to me that Syria is a place that we need to watch.
25 Because if he goes away, then all of a sudden it is open

1 season for ISIS and other potential terrorist groups.

2 Admiral Cooper: Senator, I completely agree. I think
3 stability in Syria hinges upon the current leader remaining
4 in place, and that is important for U.S. homeland defense
5 and homeland defense forward. As you described, Ambassador
6 Barrack is leading this effort diplomatically. The U.S.
7 military has had a nascent role, but certainly our role
8 would be to provide best military advice on what that could
9 look like going forward.

10 For sure right now our troops in Syria remain focused
11 on a counter-ISIS mission. It is also the perspective of
12 the new Syrian government to counter ISIS. So we will see
13 what that looks like in the future, but I think it is an
14 encouraging sign.

15 Senator King: General Grynkewich, the issue of
16 Russian activity along the border of the Baltic states, my
17 understanding is that there is some probing and buildup of
18 Russian troops along that border. Is that something that
19 we should be watching carefully?

20 General Grynkewich: Senator, I think we should, and
21 particularly as the Russian war economy continues, if and
22 when we are able to achieve the objective of a ceasefire in
23 Ukraine, Russia will have a lot more troops that they can
24 put in that region, which will be a force in being, from a
25 military perspective, we will have to pay a lot of

1 attention to.

2 Senator King: A friend in Maine and I were discussing
3 this, and he said, "Russia isn't interested in any other
4 parts of the world. It is just Ukraine." My response was,
5 "Why did Finland join NATO after 75 years? They know what
6 Russia can and probably would do."

7 Is it important for us strategically to continue the
8 support of the Ukrainians, in the kind of way that we have
9 done in the past, to maintain our military intelligence
10 support?

11 General Grynkewich: Senator, I think the Ukrainians
12 have done an incredible job defending. They are forcing
13 the Russians to make only incremental advances at a
14 tremendous cost, and I think we should continue the effort
15 to support them that has allowed them to perform so well.

16 Senator King: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 Chairman Wicker: Senator King, you and Senator Cotton
18 have both made very strong bipartisan points, and I
19 appreciate that line of questioning, in particular.
20 Senator Rounds.

21 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, to
22 both of you and to your families, thank you all for your
23 service to our country.

24 You both come as very qualified individuals to the new
25 jobs in which you will step into very shortly. I want to

1 take a little bit of time, though, and talk about what I
2 think is one of the most important aspects of this new
3 position that each of you will be in very shortly, and that
4 is the difference between when we ask someone who does not
5 wear the uniform of the United States of America but rather
6 a suit and tie, and when they come before this Committee,
7 some from outside of government who will give us their
8 opinion about issues and policies and positions.

9 But then we have the individuals who come from an
10 administration, and I have been here 10 years now, and I
11 have seen four different administrations, in which
12 individuals come and they give us their opinion on what
13 happens, or a position with regard to policy. We take
14 their statements with a grain of salt, recognizing that
15 they represent an administration's point of view.

16 But when we come to you, as members of the armed
17 services, from the different branches, and we ask for your
18 professional military opinion, it is perhaps one of the
19 most important things that you can do to provide us,
20 directly and without color, the black and white of exactly
21 what you think, because that is what we rely on in terms of
22 truth.

23 And I want to go into this a little bit, because just
24 as an example, most recently a number of us have asked
25 specific questions with regard to the spectrum and about

1 the importance of the spectrum and managing it on behalf of
2 the defense of our country by the Department of Defense.
3 And on over 28 different occasions we have asked
4 specifically members of the United States Armed Services,
5 who were wearing the uniform, their professional military
6 opinion. And in some cases I suspect that their honest and
7 straightforward answers have probably gotten them into a
8 little bit of hot water with individuals who simply wear a
9 suit and time in an administration. But nonetheless, they
10 have adhered to the principle that they are required to
11 give us a straightforward answer. It is the most important
12 thing that you can do in coming before this Committee.

13 I lay that out for you because this is what makes the
14 difference between a young man's ability to defend himself
15 on the battlefield, and I am going to start, General
16 Grynkewich, you served and you have flown in a fourth-
17 generation aircraft. You have flown a fifth-generation
18 aircraft. Things are going to change very rapidly on the
19 battlefield for young men and women. Today, on the
20 battlefield, would you say that if the enemy can see you, a
21 young man or a woman, regardless of whether he is in a tank
22 or whether he is in an aircraft or in a command center, if
23 they can see you, they can kill you. Is that a fair
24 statement?

25 General Grynkewich: Senator, I think it is in most

1 cases. There are a few times when they can see us and try
2 to take a swipe at us, and we have ways to evade or defeat
3 that. But it is the transparency on the modern battlefield
4 is apparent, I think, based on what we have seen, both in
5 Brad's current AOR as the Deputy Commander and in the
6 Russia-Ukraine fight.

7 Senator Rounds: Thank you. And Admiral Cooper, same
8 question to you. If they can see you, can they kill you,
9 or at least they are going to do their best to try and kill
10 you?

11 Admiral Cooper: Senator, absolutely. Retaining our
12 advantage, whether that is a stealth advantage or advantage
13 of maneuver or our overmatch, which we have at times, in a
14 spectrum, is critical.

15 I would also add, with respect to the spectrum, I
16 spent my entire adult life at sea on guided missile
17 destroyers and guided missile cruisers. They are national
18 assets. They would be rendered highly ineffective without
19 the type of spectrum management that you have been
20 advocating for.

21 Senator Rounds: Thank you. This is the reason why I
22 think it is absolutely critical, and there are going to be
23 lots of questions up here about munitions and everything
24 else. But if I could simply, once again, strongly
25 recommend that when the question from any member of this

1 Committee, Republican or Democrat, is given to you, and
2 they ask for your professional military opinion, it is
3 because we are trying to find out exactly what is going on.
4 And even if it is uncomfortable, this is where the rubber
5 really meets the road, is when you provide that information
6 to us, we make better decisions. And that is, I think,
7 what this place is all about, is the oversight does not
8 work if we cannot count on you for that straightforward,
9 hard-hitting response to our questions.

10 With that I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 Chairman Wicker: Amen, Senator Rounds. Thank you for
12 that question. Senator Kaine.

13 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and
14 congratulations to the nominees. I am particularly glad
15 Admiral Cooper, your role as the lead of the Liaison Office
16 here in Congress will give you just innate sensitivity to
17 the relationship that the Article I and Article II branches
18 must have on these important issues. So congratulations to
19 both of you.

20 I will put it on the table. I am very disturbed with
21 the U.S. getting into an offensive war with Iran, and I am
22 praying, and I know we all are, that the ceasefire is going
23 to hold. That would be great news for the region, great
24 news for us.

25 I think there are differences of opinion in this body,

1 as there would be in the American public, about the virtues
2 of offensive war between the United States and Iran, and I
3 understand those differences. But I hope my colleagues
4 will agree that something of this magnitude should not be
5 the decision of one person. The framers of the
6 Constitution decide, very carefully, that the initiation of
7 offensive war is something that should happen after a vote
8 of Congress. And in this instance there was not only no
9 congressional authorization, there was no congressional
10 consultation, and there was not even congressional
11 notification.

12 I have taken the position since I came here under
13 President Obama's second term, President Trump's first
14 term, President Biden's term, President Trump's second
15 term, that I do not want to have the decision about whether
16 we send our sons and daughters to war rest on one person,
17 however much I agree with that person. I do not think it
18 should rest on the shoulders or rest on the say-so or the
19 whims or the daily mood, vibe, or attitude of one person.

20 And particularly when, in this instance, the Israeli
21 Foreign Minister had said the nuclear program of Iran had
22 been knocked back at least 2 or 3 years, when our own
23 intelligence says they were not moving to a nuclear weapon.

24 The need to strike without even notifying Congress I
25 find deeply discouraging. There are some things President

1 Trump has done diplomatically recently I very much support,
2 and I hope I might get to those in a minute. But I just
3 hope my colleagues will stand for the proposition, whatever
4 you think about the virtues of a war with Iran, that
5 Congress should be weighing in on this, yes or no.
6 Congress should be consulted. We are the people's elected
7 representatives, and we look our constituents in the eye,
8 who have got kids or spouses in the military, and we ought
9 to be having a debate and having a vote, and not just
10 allowing this to be done on autopilot by a single person,
11 whether or not we share the party affiliation or whether we
12 agree with that person.

13 Senator Cotton said something that is very true and
14 that picks up, Admiral Cooper, on something you said. You
15 said that Iran was the chief sponsor of terrorism in the
16 region, and they are, and the chief source of instability
17 in the region, and they are. And Senator Cotton said they
18 have posed risks to Americans for the last 46 years, and
19 they have. Everything that he said was true, and
20 everything that you said was true.

21 But, you know, in law we used to say the truth, the
22 whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Sometimes we omit
23 the whole truth. And I think if we are going to grapple
24 with hopefully diplomatic resolutions to these issues, we
25 have got to be completely truthful.

1 Everything that you said about Iran was accurate. But
2 what nobody seems ever to say in a committee like this is
3 that the United States acted to change the Iranian regime
4 in 1953, by knocking of a democratically chosen prime
5 minister at the behest of the British, whose oil interests
6 were at stake. This is widely acknowledged and admitted.
7 Anybody wants to research Operation Ajax, go take a look at
8 it. Eisenhower project that knocked off the Iranian
9 civilian, democratically elected government.

10 After that happened, the U.S. helped install a
11 dictator, the Shah of Iran. We trained the Secret Police
12 of Iran, and that dictator brutally ruled Iran for about 25
13 years. And Iran, which had been very pro-American, because
14 America fought for Iranian sovereignty at the end of World
15 War II, when the Soviet Union wanted to gobble it up, that
16 25 years of the U.S. propping up a dictator over Iranians
17 led to deep anti-American hostility.

18 When the Shah was thrown out of office, the U.S. gave
19 the Shah refuge. The Iranians asked for him back to try
20 him, and we refused. The Iranians took over the Embassy
21 and held American hostage, in violation of international
22 law.

23 In subsequent years, the United States military shot
24 down an Iranian passenger -- the USS Vincennes shot down a
25 passenger get in the 1980s. Killed 290 Iranian civilians.

1 That was on us, not on them.

2 The U.S. gave weapons to Iraq when Saddam Hussein
3 invaded Iran, a huge war in the region that cost 300,000
4 Iranian lives. And the U.S. provided weapons for Iraq to
5 help them kill Iranians.

6 We invaded a next-door neighbor to the east,
7 Afghanistan, to topple a regime. We invaded a next-door
8 neighbor to the west, Iraq, to topple a regime. We took a
9 diplomatic deal with Iran, the first in 7 years that was
10 actually working, according to the IAEA and President
11 Trump's first National Security Cabinet, and we tore it up.

12 If we are going to try to find a diplomatic
13 resolution, we not only have to acknowledge the Iranian
14 terror that you truthfully recognized, but we also have to
15 recognize that in a diplomatic solution, they have some
16 points of concern, as well. And if we do not deal with all
17 of them, we will not find the diplomatic resolution that we
18 would want rather than war. Thank you.

19 Chairman Wicker: Senator Ernst.

20 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Gentlemen, I
21 want to thank you for being here today. I especially want
22 to thank your spouses and your family members for being
23 here, as well. We know it takes a whole group of folks to
24 help you succeed in what you do, and we are very grateful
25 for their service, as well.

1 I would like to start with you, Admiral Cooper. Of
2 course, Operation Midnight Hammer is on everyone's minds.
3 And I want to thank the incredible pilots, warriors,
4 support teams for all that they did to make it a very
5 successful mission. I am extremely proud of Team America.

6 So I will start with you. Senator King had mentioned
7 ISIS, and I want to go a little bit further on that,
8 because we still see them as a big threat to those
9 Americans and others that serve and live in the Middle
10 East. Just last week, we saw ISIS extremists bomb a church
11 in Damascus, so we know that they are still operating. It
12 is a clear indication that that threat requires continued
13 vigilance.

14 So given the current volatility across the region,
15 just in your estimation, looking at the resurgence of ISIS,
16 other terrorist organizations, what indicators are you
17 watching most closely when it comes to those terrorist
18 groups?

19 Admiral Cooper: Senator, first, thank you for your
20 time yesterday, and I thank you for the question.
21 Defending the homeland, broadly, and defending it forward
22 is of critical importance to us. Specifically, that
23 translates into keeping our thumb on ISIS, which
24 predominantly today exists in three places: ISIS in Syria,
25 to a lesser degree ISIS in Iraq, and then ISIS-K, also

1 known as ISIS Khorasan, on the Afghan-Pakistan border.

2 We are focused on this problem set every single day.

3 I only have to go back a few months to the events in New
4 Orleans, in our own country, at the beginning of the year,
5 the events as you described in the church bombing, to show
6 that ISIS remains a threat. And as we look to the future,
7 and if confirmed, I will remain nose down on this threat.
8 It is an absolute priority.

9 Senator Ernst: And no doubt we would love to see all
10 of our American troops be able to withdraw from other
11 places around the globe, but we know that that is not
12 realistic, and our American military men and women provide
13 great stability, whether it is in Syria, Iraq, other
14 places. We have 1,800 Iowa Army National Guardsmen that
15 were just mobilized to go into Iraq and Syria. They will
16 have boots on the ground very soon to continue with those
17 stability operations.

18 As we look at other ways that we might be able to
19 bring troops home, you know, again, maybe not realistic at
20 this time, if you can walk us through our partners in the
21 region, and would they be able to fully absorb those
22 missions and provide for the stability without American
23 presence?

24 Admiral Cooper: Senator, U.S. presence is
25 indispensable in the execution of the counter-ISIS mission

1 today. We had led it. We lead it today, and I anticipate
2 we will lead it into the future. Every decision made on
3 force posture is going to be conditions based as I look to
4 the future, and if confirmed, I will absolutely adhere to
5 that. We are fortunate to have, in the Defeat ISIS
6 coalition, more than 20 countries contributing, but America
7 is leading it.

8 Senator Ernst: Absolutely. And I appreciate that,
9 and I agree with that sentiment. And it is extremely
10 important to have American military leadership. I also
11 believe in diplomacy, but there are times when we need our
12 boots on the ground to provide that leadership for other
13 nations. They look to us for that leadership. Very, very
14 important.

15 And in the time that I have remaining, General
16 Grynkewich -- I am sorry, we are all stumbling all over
17 your name; I apologize -- we have got quite a number of
18 troops that serve in Europe today, in EUCOM, and about
19 100,000 in Europe, 20,000 deployed to Eastern Europe.
20 Again, for you, we have not announced any formal draw-downs
21 of military men and women in Europe, but how do you assess
22 our current force posture in Europe, and what adjustments
23 may be necessary to sustain deterrence and reassure our
24 NATO allies?

25 General Grynkewich: Senator, in my current role on

1 the Joint Staff I am very acutely aware of the global
2 demand on our forces, for both the AOR that Brad works in
3 today, in Europe, and in the Indo-Pacific. So as I look at
4 what that European force posture needs to be, clearly there
5 has been some benefit for the plus-up of forces that we
6 have had. But clearly the force is also stressed, and
7 there may be needs to make adjustments.

8 I will need to perform a full assessment on that, but
9 as part of that assessment I will certainly look at
10 creative ways that we can bolster our partners on the
11 continent, and your National Guard and their work that they
12 are doing in Kosovo and the state partnership program --

13 Senator Ernst: Thank you.

14 General Grynkewich: -- is certainly a key element that
15 would be considered as part of that.

16 Senator Ernst: I appreciate it. We love our American
17 military leadership. So thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you,
18 gentlemen.

19 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Ernst. Senator
20 Warren.

21 Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and
22 congratulations to both of you on your nominations.

23 So it seems like Donald Trump is once again playing
24 red light-green light, this time war with Iran. Three
25 nights ago, he bombed three sites and warned of, quote,

1 "many targets left to strike" and threatened, quote,
2 "tragedy" if Iran did not immediately capitulate. Last
3 night he declared the war is over, but now the ceasefire
4 seems to be changing every few hours, and no one seems to
5 know if it will hold.

6 Now, no one wants Iran to have a nuclear weapon, but
7 experts in intelligence have told us, time and time again,
8 Iran's nuclear program cannot be bombed out of existence.
9 So the question is, what is President Trump's plan?
10 Another endless war in the Middle East?

11 Vice Admiral Cooper, you are currently the Deputy
12 Commander of U.S. Central Command. You are nominated to be
13 Commander. But you are already there. You do not decide
14 policy. Obviously, you carry out the President's orders.

15 So today I just want to ask you if you have any
16 clarity from President Trump, the Commander in Chief who
17 chose this war, on what comes next? So Vice Admiral
18 Cooper, has President Trump communicated to you whether or
19 not he could contemplate American troops fighting in Iran?

20 Admiral Cooper: Senator, as we sit here today, and as
21 has been well described, a very dynamic time --

22 Senator Warren: Yes.

23 Admiral Cooper: -- literally right now, as we are
24 sitting here, the military's number one priority is the
25 safety and security of our men and women in the Middle

1 East. That remains our priority.

2 As I look to the future, with the prospect of
3 confirmation, my obligation, and, in fact, my duty, would
4 be to provide the Secretary of Defense and the President a
5 range of options to deal with policies that he would lead.
6 And that is exactly what I would be committed to.

7 Senator Warren: So are you working on plans to deploy
8 troops if the President orders it?

9 Admiral Cooper: Senator, as you well know, we are
10 working on plans every single day. I think this forum is
11 not the appropriate forum to talk about specific plans, on
12 force posture, or what we are doing today. I certainly
13 could capture that in a classified environment, as I
14 understand is [inaudible].

15 Senator Warren: So I am just trying to get whether or
16 not there are plans. I am not asking for what the plans
17 are, in particular. But I take it from what you are saying
18 the President has not ruled out American boots on the
19 ground in Iran?

20 Admiral Cooper: Senator, I think from a military
21 perspective it is critically important today that we
22 provide the maximum latitude and decision space for the
23 Secretary of Defense and the President to decide on key
24 plans and directions, and we will be standing by to execute
25 those, as it is our duty to do.

1 Senator Warren: So on Saturday, President Trump and
2 his Administration claimed that the goal was to end Iran's
3 nuclear program, not regime change, and declared complete
4 victory, with no evidence to support that. And then on
5 Sunday, the President reversed course, posting, quote, that
6 "if the current Iranian regime is unable to make Iran great
7 again, why wouldn't there be regime change?" And yesterday
8 he congratulated everyone on a ceasefire and said, quote,
9 "God bless Iran."

10 Vice Admiral Cooper, has President Trump communicated
11 to you how long he intends this war could go on if the
12 ceasefire breaks?

13 Admiral Cooper: Senator, our role, from a military
14 perspective, is to remain ready for a wide range of
15 contingencies and protect our people, and that is exactly
16 what we are doing today.

17 Senator Warren: So that means you are prepared for a
18 protracted war. Is that right?

19 Admiral Cooper: I think it would be inappropriate to
20 comment on any specific action, but we are prepared for a
21 wide range of contingencies, which is what would be
22 expected --

23 Senator Warren: Well, I am just asking about your
24 preparations. I am not asking what actions you will take.

25 Our servicemembers who volunteer to give so much have

1 a right to know that the President of the United States
2 values their lives, and sends them into harm's way only
3 when we clearly have a plan to understand how this protects
4 the United States of America.

5 I am very concerned about the President's on again-off
6 again explanations of why this bombing has taken place, and
7 that he is doing it with no constitutional authority. Only
8 Congress can declare war, and the Senate must vote
9 immediately to prevent another endless war.

10 So I want to raise one more question, and that is
11 reports that the Trump administration now wants to
12 dismantle reforms developed under the first Trump
13 administration to prevent civilian harm. Killing civilians
14 is not only wrong, it threatens national security. General
15 Stanley McChrystal called it insurgent math, meaning that
16 for every civilian you kill, you create 10 new enemies.

17 Vice Admiral Cooper, why is it important to U.S.
18 national security to prevent civilian harm?

19 Admiral Cooper: Well, Senator, first thank you for
20 your advocacy and passion on this issue. I share your same
21 passion. I think it is a national security issue that
22 risks degrading our credibility and trust and puts troops
23 at risk. And if confirmed, I will continue to do what I do
24 today, which is take an organization that has moved idly
25 from compliance to having civilian harmless mitigation as

1 part of our culture. It is important.

2 Senator Warren: I appreciate that. Thank you, Mr.
3 Chairman.

4 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Warren. Senator
5 Scott.

6 Senator Scott: Thank you, Chairman. Well, first off,
7 congratulations to both of you. Congratulations to your
8 families. Thank you for your service. Thank you for the
9 sacrifice of your families.

10 So I was at the White House yesterday, and as you
11 expect, President Trump was elated with the success of the
12 bombings in Iran, and was very hopeful that there is a
13 ceasefire that is going to hold. I think we would all love
14 to make sure Iran does not have nuclear weapons. And so I
15 am very appreciative that the President was willing to make
16 the decision to do it. Not many people would have made
17 that decision, and it looks like we are going to get a
18 positive outcome.

19 So for both of you, is the world a safer place with
20 President Trump in office and Iranian nuclear facilities
21 taken out? Whoever wants to start.

22 General Grynkewich: Senator, no country in the world
23 wants Iran to have a nuclear weapon. It is a safer place
24 the farther back that is put.

25 Admiral Cooper: The world is safer with Iran not

1 having a nuclear weapon, Senator.

2 Senator Scott: How do you think it changes the
3 dynamics for some people that have decided to be our
4 enemies, like Russia and Communist China and North Korea?
5 How do you think it changes their thought process, knowing
6 that the United States, that we have a President who is
7 willing to defend the freedom of the world, and especially
8 our freedom?

9 General Grynkewich: Senator, I will echo some of the
10 comments the Ranking Member and Chair made earlier on the
11 incredible performance of the Joint Force, projecting
12 American combat power from the continental United States,
13 halfway around the globe. I think that sends a message to
14 everyone about the ability of America to reach out and
15 touch any target, any time we want to.

16 Admiral Cooper: Senator, my assessment would be that
17 China and Russia are looking at this from a deterrence
18 angle. We all know that deterrence has four components:
19 capability, capacity, will, and messaging. This was a
20 strong demonstration of will. And I would anticipate that
21 other countries are watching.

22 Senator Scott: Thank you. For each of you, when you
23 take over your roles, what will be your thought process to
24 make sure we have the right assets, the right people, the
25 right strategy in the areas that you are going to be

1 responsible for?

2 General Grynkewich: Chairman, I have had the benefit
3 of a global view of problems from my current position on
4 the Joint Staff, and as I dive into issues on the European
5 continent, the types of things that I will be focused on
6 will include the readiness of our warfighters, and that
7 includes both U.S. warfighters and, if I am lucky enough to
8 be confirmed, the warfighters across the 32 nations of the
9 Alliance.

10 I also think that it will be very important to look at
11 the pivots and the character of war that are occurring
12 right now in terms of unmanned and digital technologies,
13 both from things like unmanned surface vehicles, unmanned
14 aerial vehicles, but also the underlying application of
15 artificial intelligence and the connective tissue that
16 allows us to effectively command and control. So those
17 will be some of my key focus areas.

18 Admiral Cooper: Senator, I would leverage the 4 years
19 of experience I have had, including 3 years living about
20 100 miles from Iran, and orient my priorities generally in
21 three areas. Defending the homeland, and that translates
22 to keeping our thumb on terrorists in the Middle East. I
23 would look at deterring Iran and its proxies. I think that
24 is a critical element of our national security. And also I
25 would look at countering China. I also agree, with my

1 friend, Grynch, here, that the character of warfare is
2 changing, and I think everything that we can do tactically
3 to get warfighting tools in the hands of the warfighters
4 faster is something that should be pursued with a sense of
5 urgency.

6 Senator Scott: Thank you. Admiral Cooper, what is
7 the importance of the Abraham Accords and our military
8 relationships with the partnerships with the Arab countries
9 that are supportive of Israel?

10 Admiral Cooper: Sir, when the Abraham Accords were
11 signed in the fall of 2020, and then we saw CENTCOM shift
12 from a European orientation into -- Israel shift from a
13 European orientation to CENTCOM, I think the complements of
14 those two events and the alignment and agreement that Iran
15 is the principal threat presents extraordinary
16 opportunities to advance security and enhance deterrence
17 through the Abraham Accords countries.

18 Senator Scott: Okay. Well, thanks for your service.
19 Congratulations on your nomination. I know you guys both
20 will do a great job.

21 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Scott. Senator
22 Kelly.

23 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen,
24 thank you for being here today. Congratulations to you
25 both on your nominations.

1 I want to take a moment to discuss ISR, the
2 requirements in EURCOM and CENTCOM, two theaters that I
3 think routinely make some heavy use of ISR. Could each of
4 you please just briefly describe the ISR requirements in
5 your respective theaters and how important ISR is for you
6 to execute your strategy?

7 Admiral Cooper: Senator, thank you very much for
8 that. I think of this in two buckets: the ISR necessary
9 to keep our eyes on and defend our homeland against the
10 terrorists throughout the region, and I also think it is
11 important to have the ISR to keep our eyes on and deter
12 Iran, the two principle areas that we are focused on today.

13 Senator Kelly: And General?

14 General Grynkewich: Senator, in the European theater
15 intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance is
16 absolutely essential. It is essential to keeping track of
17 Russian activity, both in the maritime and the air domain.
18 It is essential to protect the avenues that might threaten
19 our homeland, and essential to monitor the eastern flank of
20 the Alliance.

21 Senator Kelly: You know, one trend, I think, I think
22 it is fair to say, is the reliance on space-based platforms
23 instead of, you know, aircraft. I think my view is we
24 probably continue to need both. In CENTCOM, Admiral, you
25 now have a challenge here, possibly ahead of you, with

1 regards to the Strait of Hormuz and the possibility that
2 the Iranians could use sea mines on the straits deployed by
3 ships. I do not think they can deploy them by aircraft. I
4 might be wrong about that.

5 Could you talk about how the ISR requirement, if you
6 have to deal with a continuing aggressive Iran, but with
7 regards to closing down the straits and what that could
8 mean to operations for the Fifth Fleet and for CENTCOM?

9 Admiral Cooper: Senator, in my own experience from
10 having commanded the Fifth Fleet for nearly 3 years, as
11 well as the associated mine task force, which is coalition
12 in nature, I think we have sufficient capacity and
13 capability to handle the threat. ISR is a critical enabler
14 to getting to the left of any Iranian actions. It would
15 certainly be important for us to watch what they are doing
16 in an attempt to both anticipate and then react faster. It
17 is a significant threat, it is a known threat, and one that
18 we are watching every single day.

19 Senator Kelly: And what would the reaction be if they
20 start to deploy sea mines? Do you have the adequate number
21 of minesweepers? Do you try to remove them? How do you
22 protect shipping going through that 30-mile strait?

23 Admiral Cooper: It is a complex problem, for sure.
24 Iran has thousands of sea mines. It is a fairly narrow
25 area. We do have a sufficient and the largest mine force

1 in the world, presently in the Middle East.

2 Senator Kelly: Do you know how they would deploy
3 them? Like specifically, what ships of their would be used
4 to deploy sea mines?

5 Admiral Cooper: We do have a good understanding of
6 what that looks like.

7 Senator Kelly: And do we track where the ships are
8 located, and would we know if they start pulling out of
9 port?

10 Admiral Cooper: We track them closely, and yes, we
11 would know.

12 Senator Kelly: All right. Thank you. I have got
13 another quick question about close air support. We are in
14 the process of divesting -- and this is for you, General,
15 primarily -- divesting from the A-10 platform, our premier
16 close air support airplane. Special Operations forces will
17 have an armed overwatch capability with the OA-1K.

18 Possibility we could try to do this more with F-16s, F-35s.

19 I just want to get your opinion, because there is also
20 a trend here away from what we think of, you know, lower to
21 the ground, slow movers, Apaches as an example. We are no
22 longer going to upgrade AH-64D's to E's. But if we wound
23 up in a conflict in Europe, I think closer air support is
24 something we are going to continue to need. I just want to
25 get your thoughts on that, and where we should go.

1 General Grynkewich: Senator, thanks for the question.
2 I do agree, given the characteristics and geography of
3 Europe, close air support would be essential to any battle
4 that we found ourselves in, if we unfortunately got to that
5 point. And it will be important to show that we have that
6 capability as a deterrent to help us not get there.

7 Two things I think about with respect to the future of
8 close air support. One is if we are using traditional
9 aircraft to execute this mission I do need those aircraft
10 to be survivable in a much more densely protected, from an
11 air defense perspective, environment, and we see that in
12 Ukraine, where neither side is able to get close air
13 support into the battlefield in a traditional sense because
14 of the air defense. So they have resorted to now less
15 traditional means of close air support, using first-person
16 viewer drones, one-way attack drones, et cetera, and I
17 think we need to look at both of those aspects of a future
18 battlefield.

19 Senator Kelly: All right. Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
20 Chairman.

21 Chairman Wicker: How is that working, the use of
22 alternative close air support?

23 General Grynkewich: Senator, my assessment is that
24 some of those alternatives are proving to be extremely
25 lethal on the battlefield in Ukraine, and the pace of

1 innovation that we have seen, really on both sides of the
2 equation, has shown that smaller drones, precisely
3 maneuvered, with lethal payloads can have a devastating
4 effect on enemy forces on the front line.

5 Chairman Wicker: At less expense to the taxpayer?

6 General Grynkewich: Yes, sir. Much less expense.

7 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Senator
8 Tuberville.

9 Senator Tuberville: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good
10 morning. Thanks for both of you's service and moving your
11 families around. Kind of like a coach. You know, you
12 don't stay very long in one spot.

13 Admiral, it is good to see your family here. Auburn
14 folks. Good Alabama folks. Live in Montgomery, I think,
15 right? Might be my neighbor here in a year and a half
16 after I run for Governor and win it, Alabama. So hopefully
17 they vote for me.

18 General, let me ask you this. What is your
19 relationship with the NATO commanders in the bigger
20 countries that we have?

21 General Grynkewich: Senator, I have worked with
22 European partners around the world over the years in a
23 variety of coalition environments, and I know many of the
24 leaders across all of those countries. It is a solid
25 relationship, sir.

1 Senator Tuberville: How about Turkey?

2 General Grynkewich: Sir, I have had the privilege of
3 visiting Türkiye several times over the course of my
4 career, and I have great respect for the military
5 capabilities that they can bring to bear.

6 Senator Tuberville: Largest military in NATO -- is
7 that right?

8 General Grynkewich: Yes, sir.

9 Senator Tuberville: Yeah. Let me ask you this
10 question. This Ukraine-Russia war has been going on for a
11 long time. A lot of people killed. We have spent a lot of
12 money. Can Ukraine win?

13 General Grynkewich: Senator, I think Ukraine can win.
14 I think any time your own homeland is threatened you fight
15 with a tenacity that is difficult for us to conceive of, if
16 we have not found ourselves in that same situation.

17 Senator Tuberville: Yeah. They have absolutely
18 fought hard. You have got to give it to them.

19 Admiral, we have not talked about the Houthis. I
20 think we bombed them for 30 straight days. Is that
21 correct?

22 Admiral Cooper: Sir, we bombed them for 51 straight
23 days in conjunction with Operation Rough Rider.

24 Senator Tuberville: Yeah. Have we stopped?

25 Admiral Cooper: Sir, the President gave the military

1 a very precise mission, which was to restore the freedom of
2 navigation, and that mission was successfully executed. We
3 have freedom of navigation today. We agreed at a ceasefire
4 several weeks ago, now 40 days ago, that if the Houthis did
5 not shoot at us, we would not shoot at them. They have not
6 shot at us. We have not shot at them. And we have
7 multiple examples of destroyers going back and forth
8 through the Bab al-Mandab.

9 Senator Tuberville: Destroyers, but what about
10 merchant ships?

11 Admiral Cooper: There are merchant ships going
12 through the Bab al-Mandab today. If we walk back to the
13 fall of 2023, when the Houthis started their kinetic
14 actions, it took several months for the flow of commerce to
15 leave the Red Sea. I would expect it is going to take
16 several months for it to fully come back.

17 Senator Tuberville: My understanding is the Houthis
18 are one of the strongest groups that are backed by Iran.
19 Is that correct?

20 Admiral Cooper: Sir, they have been supported with
21 arms, people, training, ISR, for the better part of 10
22 years, so they are well supported.

23 Senator Tuberville: Yeah. Does China support them
24 too?

25 Admiral Cooper: They do.

1 Senator Tuberville: Yeah. So do you think this is
2 going to be an on-and-off project with the Houthis over the
3 years, or are we going to be able to stabilize it?

4 Admiral Cooper: I think we are now 40 days into this.
5 The ball is in the Houthis' court. We are prepared for a
6 range of actions. But I think the policies associated with
7 the ceasefire remain in place, and we will just be
8 prepared, from a military perspective, for a wide range of
9 contingencies, as is our obligation to do so.

10 Senator Tuberville: Do we actually know who the
11 leadership is that controls the Houthis?

12 Admiral Cooper: We do, sir.

13 Senator Tuberville: Yeah. And General Carillo has
14 been over the past few months, obviously. Do we talk to
15 them? They talk back to us? How does that work?

16 Admiral Cooper: Communications with the Houthis is
17 done through diplomatic channels, and the Houthis are a
18 foreign terrorist organization. We do not have a
19 communication via the military.

20 Senator Tuberville: So the President, when he works
21 and tries to calm the situation down, who does he talk to?

22 Admiral Cooper: Sir, he uses the envoy for the Middle
23 East, Ambassador Steve Witkoff, who helped enable the most
24 recent ceasefire.

25 Senator Tuberville: Yeah. They must be some tough

1 rascals. I mean, we bomb them for 51 days, and they are
2 still kicking, right?

3 Admiral Cooper: They are extremely well supplied by
4 the Iranians.

5 Senator Tuberville: They are supplied, but what, are
6 they dug in?

7 Admiral Cooper: As we have seen throughout the
8 region, groups are going underground -- Hamas, Hezbollah,
9 the Houthis. This is a serious issue that we will have to
10 look at into the future.

11 Senator Tuberville: Yeah. We do make a bomb, in
12 Huntsville, called MOAB. They do a lot of damage. I think
13 we have seen that in Afghanistan. We have got a few left,
14 so maybe in the future if we cannot get them to reconcile,
15 because we are going to have to have full passage in the
16 Red Sea. You know, if we are going to get AI going, we are
17 going to have to get supply chains going. We cannot
18 haphazardly wonder if they are going to sink one of our
19 ships.

20 But thank you. Good luck to both of you. Thank you
21 very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 Admiral Cooper: Thank you, Senator.

23 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Tuberville. I am
24 going to recognize Senator Blumenthal next, but let me ask
25 this. General Grynkewich, the Houthis are not an ethnic

1 group, are they?

2 General Grynkewich: Sir, they are a religious group
3 more than anything, but also some tribal affiliations that
4 underlie them.

5 Chairman Wicker: They exist for a purpose. They have
6 constituted themselves for one purpose, have they not?

7 General Grynkewich: Sir, they view themselves as the
8 enemies of America, Israel, and the Jewish people.

9 Chairman Wicker: So if they are withholding, for now,
10 is it your judgment that they have reformed and that they
11 will not reign war or terror on us or the region in the
12 future?

13 General Grynkewich: Senator, I would argue, from my
14 time in the current role on the Joint Staff and previous
15 time in Central Command that the Houthis are likely to be a
16 persistent problem that we will be dealing with in the
17 future a few times again.

18 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Senator
19 Blumenthal.

20 Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thank you
21 both for your service, to your families, as well, and thank
22 you for the conversations that you had with me last week.

23 I join you in expressing my gratitude and admiration
24 for the incredible work done by our service men and women
25 in the latest strike against Iran, the use of our B-2s and

1 the intelligence that we were able to glean that enabled
2 the strike, even though we do not know fully the extent of
3 its success, I think is deeply impressive. So I want to
4 join in thanking our own military.

5 But let me ask you, Admiral Cooper, how would you
6 assess the importance of the Israeli military and
7 intelligence contribution to making it possible for us to
8 engage in that military operation? Would it have been
9 possible without the Israelis, in effect, disabling and, in
10 some instances, destroying the capability of their proxies
11 in Iran itself and its air defenses?

12 Admiral Cooper: Senator, thank you for that. Without
13 getting into specifics, which I think are best addressed in
14 a classified environment, I think it is fair to say, and as
15 the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs articulated this past
16 weekend, that there were Israeli actions that we benefitted
17 from, but were not directly tied, to associated with this
18 specific operation.

19 Senator Blumenthal: It may not have been a direct
20 partnership, but certainly the contributions of the Israeli
21 military were actually extraordinarily significant in
22 whatever success we had. Would you agree?

23 Admiral Cooper: I agree.

24 Senator Blumenthal: Let me ask you now, to follow up
25 on some of the questions that have been asked, you and I

1 talked about the importance of drones and unmanned aerial
2 systems. My view is that the nature of modern warfare is
3 changing before our eyes, in real time. The threat that we
4 see now in the area where you are going to have
5 responsibility, where you have had that responsibility, is
6 asymmetric from many of those terrorist groups that
7 attacked, for example, Tower 22, and killed a number of our
8 servicemen there.

9 Are we sufficiently protected in the area now against
10 possible Iranian retaliation against the 40,000 men and
11 women in uniform that we have in that area?

12 Admiral Cooper: Senator, I do agree that the nature
13 and the character of warfare is changing before our very
14 eyes, and this is why I think the important work of this
15 Committee, whether it is the FORGED Act or anything
16 associated with it, where you can accelerate the delivery
17 of counter-UAS systems or other warfighting tools into the
18 hands of the warfighters forward. Those are all value
19 added and needed imminently.

20 If I look back specifically towards the Tower 22
21 incident, and the ensuing, now, 18 months, we have made
22 considerable improvement across the board, layered defense,
23 employing both kinetic capability and non-kinetic
24 capability. We really are leaps and bounds ahead of where
25 we were before.

1 Having said that, I would never be satisfied that we
2 have the maximum readiness. I will never be satisfied that
3 we have enough to protect our men and women in uniform, and
4 if confirmed, I would focus on this every single day.

5 Senator Blumenthal: We have done a lot, but we have
6 more work to do.

7 Admiral Cooper: For sure.

8 Senator Blumenthal: The Ukrainians are producing 4.5
9 million drones this year. The report I have seen is that
10 the United States is producing about 100,000. I am not
11 sure that those figures are exactly right. They are in the
12 public realm. But clearly, in my view, the United States
13 is not producing enough drones. We are not supporting the
14 industries that produce those drones as much as we should.
15 Would you agree we need to do more?

16 Admiral Cooper: Yes, sir. In my own experience,
17 having commanded the Navy's first unmanned and artificial
18 intelligence task force, I am very familiar with the
19 capabilities that exist in America's elite tech sector. I
20 believe that we need to leverage that tech sector to the
21 maximum capability and deliver capability in the very near
22 term, because we could do more, to your point.

23 Senator Blumenthal: General, I am delighted to hear
24 that you think Ukraine can win. My view is Ukraine must
25 win. It must win because if it fails, Putin will present a

1 threat to our NATO allies. Do you agree?

2 General Grynkewich: Senator, I think however the war
3 in Ukraine ends, Putin has developed a war economy and a
4 war machine that is underpinned by that war economy, that
5 will create a force in being that just by its very presence
6 will be something that, from a military perspective, we
7 will have to carefully consider how to provide options to
8 the Alliance, in the SACEUR role, if I am confirmed, and to
9 the Secretary and the President in my EUCOM role, if
10 confirmed.

11 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you. I look forward to
12 continuing these conversations with both of you and really
13 welcome you being so forthcoming. Thank you.

14 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.
15 Gentleman, the figures about drone production, with regard
16 to Ukraine versus the United States, are they accurate? Is
17 that a pretty accurate assessment of the production rate?

18 General Grynkewich: Senator, I do not know if the
19 exact numbers are accurate, but the order of magnitude and
20 the scale that Senator Blumenthal was describing I think is
21 representative of the problem we face.

22 Chairman Wicker: And Admiral Cooper?

23 Admiral Cooper: Yeah, same perspective, sir. Order
24 of magnitude and scale is about the same. I agree.

25 Chairman Wicker: It is hard to understand how we go

1 forward without increasing our rate, and that is my
2 opinion. Do either of you care to comment on that?

3 Admiral Cooper: Sir, I think America's extraordinary
4 tech sector has the capability and will to produce at
5 scale. It is just simply a matter of prioritization with
6 the appropriate authorities.

7 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. And now
8 Senator Budd.

9 Senator Budd: Thank you, Chairman. It is good to see
10 you both. I have enjoyed our conversations recently, and
11 Admiral, you are always a wonderful host over in NAVCENT,
12 so thank you for that, and hello from my wife to yours.

13 Admiral Cooper, last May I met with Prime Minister
14 Barzani of the Iraqi Kurdistan regional government in my
15 office here, and also visited the region last year. So I
16 was concerned to hear about delays in the delivery of U.S.-
17 provided defense equipment to the Kurdish Peshmerga forces.
18 As you know, the Peshmerga, they play a very important role
19 in preventing the resurgence of ISIS in Iraq.

20 So are you tracking delays in the delivery of
21 equipment through Baghdad?

22 Admiral Cooper: Senator, first thank you for your
23 passion in supporting the Peshmerga. Great teammates. I
24 have been tracking the delays. They are friction points
25 that I think we have been able to work through, and if

1 confirmed, it would be a matter of priority for both me,
2 the staff, and the tactical staff on the ground to
3 eliminate those friction points, get the resources into the
4 lands of the Peshmerga as soon as possible.

5 Senator Budd: Any particular levers that you have at
6 CENTCOM to make sure that those delays are ended and that
7 they receive their defense equipment in a timely manner?

8 Admiral Cooper: I think we have a very strong mil-to-
9 mil relationship with the Iraqi Security Force and the
10 Iraqi military. We lever that to help break down some of
11 those barriers, and I am optimistic we can work through
12 those friction points.

13 Senator Budd: Thank you, Admiral. The United States
14 and Israel, they have worked together a number of years to
15 address the challenges of locating, mapping, and destroying
16 hardened, buried targets and tunnels in their networks. I
17 have led this in the Senate, securing funding last year for
18 the program to do that.

19 Can you describe the ongoing challenges and the
20 relevance of countering subterranean threats in CENTCOM,
21 and whether continued funding in this area is needed?

22 Admiral Cooper: Sir, I think in the Central Command,
23 and I think we would have to anticipate in the future
24 globally, you are going to see threats begin to go
25 underground, whether we are talking about Hamas, Hezbollah,

1 the Houthis, the Iranians. Other adversaries are clearly
2 watching and seeing where they can gain advantage. In my
3 current capacity I have visited, on multiple occasions, the
4 subterranean commando unit in Israel that goes after this
5 problem set. I think as we look to the future and if
6 confirmed, I think we need to focus on two areas: sensors
7 and munitions, and if confirmed, I would advocate for both
8 of those.

9 Senator Budd: So you said they have gone underground,
10 and you mean that very literally, and this program is still
11 very relevant.

12 Admiral Cooper: Humans, robots, dogs, they have done
13 it all.

14 Senator Budd: Thank you, Admiral.

15 General, good to see you. I enjoyed our visit
16 yesterday. Technology is changing the character of
17 warfare, as demonstrated by the Ukrainians in the fight
18 against Russians. If confirmed in your new role as Supreme
19 Allied Commander, Europe, how will you -- the question is
20 really about prioritization -- how will you prioritize
21 investments in emerging technologies, and what areas do you
22 think are most critical?

23 General Grynkewich: Senator, thank you. If
24 confirmed, as I look across the Alliance, there are certain
25 countries who would have a very strong value proposition in

1 terms of being able to bring unmanned technologies to bear,
2 whether they are aerial technologies or maritime unmanned
3 capabilities, as well, that have proven very effective in
4 the Black Sea region, for example.

5 I would definitely put a high priority on those. They
6 are very cost effective. They are a way to build mass on
7 the modern battlefield. And understanding that we will
8 face mass, in terms of the Russian threat, I think
9 developing that asymmetric option is going to be essential
10 to European security in the future.

11 Senator Budd: Thank you.

12 Admiral, it is really disheartening for all of us to
13 see the state of Afghanistan, especially after the Biden-
14 Harris administration's disastrous withdrawal and the
15 abandonment of so many Afghans to return to Taliban rule.
16 So my concern in the region is the return of terrorist
17 networks like ISIS-Khorasan, to the country but also to the
18 broader region.

19 Admiral, if confirmed, what will you do and how will
20 you work with regional partners to deny extremist groups
21 safe haven in South Asia?

22 Admiral Cooper: Senator, ISIS-Khorasan, also known as
23 ISIS-K, operates principally on the Afghan-Pak border. The
24 mechanism we use to address this issue today is through a
25 mil-to-mil relationship with Pakistan, specifically focused

1 on counterterrorism. We have seen the benefit of this
2 relationship in the last couple of months with the handover
3 of the Abbey Gate mastermind to U.S. authorities several
4 months ago. And if confirmed, I would continue to invest
5 in this mil-to-mil counterterrorism relationship with
6 Pakistan. It is good for America, and it helps to keep
7 America safe.

8 Senator Budd: Thank you, Admiral. I wish you both
9 good luck.

10 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Budd. Senator
11 Duckworth.

12 Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want
13 to start by associating myself with my colleague, Senator
14 Kaine's, many strong statement on the need for
15 congressional authorization for exactly the kind of
16 military strike on Iran that the President illegally
17 ordered on Saturday.

18 I have been committed to Congress reasserting its
19 responsibility under the War Powers Act since my first
20 election, and I support Senator Kaine's War Powers
21 Resolution. In fact, I ran for Congress because of this
22 issue, so that when the drums of war start beating in
23 Washington again, I would be in a position to make sure
24 that our leaders fully consider the true costs of war, not
25 just in dollars and cents but in the sacrifices and blood

1 of our troops.

2 I have long said that Iran cannot obtain a nuclear
3 weapon, but this goal could and should have been pursued
4 through diplomatic means. There was no imminent threat to
5 the United States or our troops. It was not time to
6 strike, not when the democratically elected representatives
7 of the American people have not had a chance to weigh the
8 costs and risks against the gains to make an informed
9 decision on behalf of our constituents, and to make sure
10 that the President is not getting us into yet another
11 forever war in the Middle East.

12 Servicemembers will be the ones to risk their lives if
13 we get drawn into another unnecessary war with no plan and
14 no end state. Their Commander in Chief owes it to them,
15 and to all Americans, to uphold the Constitution that they
16 swore to uphold and defend.

17 Vice Admiral Cooper, I know that you are here to be
18 considered to be CENTCOM Commander, but you have also been
19 serving as the Deputy Commander, with all the events this
20 weekend, absent a CENTCOM posture hearing. I have
21 questions for you in that capacity, because I deem it
22 relevant to how you will perhaps carry out your role as
23 CENTCOM Commander, should you be confirmed.

24 To your knowledge, what the CENTCOM recommend to the
25 White House in terms of congressional declaration of war

1 and consultation prior to the operation?

2 Admiral Cooper: Senator, first I am mindful and
3 highly respectful of the role that you, this Committee, and
4 the Congress play overall. I think the matter of
5 directions given and orders given are related to policy and
6 best addressed by the Office of the Secretary of Defense
7 and the White House. Our role, from the military
8 perspective, as it has always been, and, if confirmed, I
9 will adopt the same approach, would be to provide the
10 widest range of options to our decision-makers and remain
11 as ready as possible to implement them, when ordered.

12 Senator Duckworth: All that is true, but you did not
13 answer my question. My question was, to your knowledge,
14 what did CENTCOM recommend to the White House, in terms of
15 congressional declaration of war and consultation, prior to
16 the operation? What was your recommendation? I was not
17 going to ask you what they ordered you to do. I asked you
18 what was your recommendation.

19 Admiral Cooper: Senator, in my current capacity I am
20 very familiar with all the operations associated with these
21 last couple of weeks. I think those conversations are best
22 conducted in a classified environment.

23 Senator Duckworth: Okay. Let's do that then. I look
24 forward to hearing from you in a classified environment.

25 What is the end game that is currently being sought

1 and how will you know at CENTCOM if that has been achieved?

2 Admiral Cooper: Senator, we have maintained, first
3 and foremost, a focus on protecting our men and women in
4 uniform and for their safety. That is our priority today.
5 We maintain a readiness for a wide range of contingencies,
6 as expected, and my role, specifically, if confirmed, would
7 be to provide my best military advice to support the
8 policies as they would be given to us in the future.

9 Senator Duckworth: So you are saying you do not have
10 an opinion on what the end game would be or what the
11 benchmark would be, and you cannot tell us that?

12 Admiral Cooper: Our role --

13 Senator Duckworth: We are just going to bomb a
14 foreign nation and not know what the end goal is, or the
15 offramp is?

16 Admiral Cooper: Of course, those end states and goals
17 are all obviously always driven by policy, and the United
18 States military will stand by to implement the policy
19 direction, as ordered.

20 Senator Duckworth: Well, I was alarmed by the
21 President's reckless statements on Sunday that suggested he
22 might order a military regime change as the end game in
23 Iran. Like many who served and sacrificed in Iraq, I am
24 sick with anger and dread at the thought that in 2025, the
25 President of the United States is talking of toppling

1 another government in the Middle East, drawing Americans
2 into a destabilizing military action in a volatile region,
3 and owning the chaos that follows, perhaps for decades to
4 come.

5 Vice Admiral Cooper, will you commit that if confirmed
6 as the Commander of CENTCOM and tensions with Iran
7 continue, you will provide recommendations to give Iran an
8 offramp from further military action without seeking regime
9 change in Iran as an option, not necessarily -- the White
10 House will decide what they will decide, but will you
11 provide that as one of the options?

12 Admiral Cooper: I would provide my best military
13 advice based on the policy direction given to us, Senator.

14 Senator Duckworth: Okay. With current uncertainty
15 leaving many American citizens in the region to fear being
16 caught in the crosshairs, I am concerned about whether we
17 are doing enough to support Americans who may want to
18 evacuate. Admiral Cooper, can you speak to the ways that
19 CENTCOM may help facilitate a safe and smooth evacuation of
20 American citizens from a dangerous region, if required?

21 Admiral Cooper: Senator, CENTCOM is always postured
22 to support the diplomatically ordered evacuations of a
23 variety of forms. We have seen recently an authorized
24 departure from Bahrain. We have seen authorized departure
25 out of Israel. We have seen separate diplomatically led

1 departures from Baghdad. But in general, we are always
2 postured to support diplomatic and policy-led direction for
3 evacuations.

4 Senator Duckworth: I think that would give Americans
5 in the region comfort to hear that. Thank you.

6 Admiral Cooper: Yes, ma'am.

7 Senator Duckworth: Mr. Chairman.

8 Chairman Wicker: Yes. Senator Schmitt.

9 Senator Schmitt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will
10 say, though, that I am actually kind of taken aback. The
11 hypocrisy and cognitive dissonance I have heard from the
12 other side of the aisle in this hearing is stunning, even
13 by Washington standards.

14 Let's pick apart a couple of these arguments. First
15 of all, President Trump avoided -- avoided -- much to the
16 chagrin of many who wanted more entanglements in the Middle
17 East, a very surgical and strategic strike that was in the
18 core interest of the United States of America, period. The
19 regime change that he was talking about was from the
20 inside. If that is going to happen, that is going to
21 happen.

22 But the Democratic Party, effectively, at this point,
23 is the pro-war party. There is no diplomacy. It is just
24 about pick your theater. That is where they want to go.
25 The whole idea that Iran was even in this position is

1 because Obama sent them truckloads, or I should say
2 pallets, of cash, and Joe Biden looked the other way. And
3 then they were able to arm and fund the Houthis and Hamas
4 and Hezbollah, a problem that then had to be dealt with by
5 Israel.

6 So this sort of looking the other way now, and using
7 language like not being tied up in a forever war, listening
8 to my Democratic colleagues, that is where we would be
9 right now in Europe and in Ukraine. They want the
10 immediate admission of Ukraine into NATO, and the United
11 States directly engaged. Thank God we have a President
12 that will engage in diplomacy and understand, by the way,
13 the inconsistencies that I hear from the other side of the
14 aisle. On one hand, Ukraine is going to win. But on the
15 other hand, Putin is on the verge of steamrolling through
16 Europe. It is nonsense. It does not make any sense.

17 But the fact is the Democrats are criticizing
18 President Trump right now, who achieved something that, if
19 you would have been sitting here 2 years ago and looked at
20 a map of the Middle East, it would have been impossible to
21 think of. He used the bunker-busting bombs, by the way,
22 flown out of those B-2s from Missouri. They were in the
23 air 30 hours and refueled. Through subterfuge and
24 exquisite execution, dropped those bunker-busters on
25 something the size of the desk that you are at, General,

1 and they completed that mission.

2 And the President acted under his core Article II
3 powers. Spare me the next constitutional crisis. Every
4 week, by the way, it is some ridiculously fake, new
5 constitutional crisis. Obama used that same authority to
6 drop thousands of bombs. We did not hear a word. The only
7 think that binds the Democratic Party right now is that
8 they are anti-Trump. They stand for nothing, nothing else,
9 in incoherent, wandering foreign policy, a domestic agenda
10 that has been adopted by the radical left. That is it.

11 And by the way, I also want to point out that through
12 every conferee that has come through this Committee and
13 others, the question has been asked, "Will you abide by the
14 law?" We are literally now less than 12 hours after a
15 district court judge, approved by this Senate, when the
16 Democrats were in charge and a lame duck President, who is
17 now defying the Supreme Court, a district court judge who
18 is now defying the Supreme Court, who said you have to
19 deport these seven criminals who raped grandmas and people
20 with disabilities.

21 So let's have a bit of a reality check about what is
22 going on in this country right now. Maybe we could
23 actually celebrate a President who executed something in
24 the core national interest of the United States, and then
25 got on the phone and got two parties together, who have

1 been at war for effectively generations.

2 So there are certain moments that you just feel like
3 you are outside of your own body, watching something that
4 is so inconsistent, just to score some sort of daily
5 political point.

6 Now, should we have a conversation about Article I
7 powers versus Article II powers? Absolutely. But the
8 President was clearly within his Article II powers to do
9 this.

10 So I do want to ask, with the limited time, I
11 supposed, that I have left, General, the President is
12 heading to the NATO summit. Our European allies, for a
13 very long time now, generations, have abused the generosity
14 of the United States of America because we are subsidizing
15 their social welfare programs in Europe. There is going to
16 be a commitment to 5 percent. I guess I would like to hear
17 from each one of you how you will use your role, that they
18 will actually do that. And I do not mean for pensions. I
19 mean for munitions. And 5 percent of your GDP declaration,
20 they do not win wars. Bullets do. Missiles do. Their
21 defense base is more atrophied than ours.

22 But what role can you play in your conversations with
23 leaders over there, that they are actually going to live up
24 to their commitments, as opposed to sort of just making
25 these proclamations and never really doing anything about

1 it?

2 General Grynkewich: Senator, thanks for the question.
3 If confirmed, I think that is one of my key roles is to
4 look at that increased investment that the Alliance has
5 agreed to, or is on the cusp of agreeing to at the summit,
6 and ensuring that it is put into real capability, hard
7 military capability, that will allow Europeans to take the
8 lead for European defense and allow America to continue to
9 participate in that defense but also to meet our other
10 global requirements.

11 Admiral Cooper: And Senator, I think a little bit of
12 the dynamic and situation in the Middle East, some of the
13 countries have deep pockets. They are very committed to
14 buy American weapons and sensors. I think our obligation
15 is to make sure the FMS process can deliver those weapons
16 in a reasonable time frame, and I would advocate for that,
17 if confirmed.

18 Senator Schmitt: Thank you. We have got a lot of F-
19 15s we would like to sell. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 Chairman Wicker: Good point. Senator Peters.

21 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen,
22 thank you for being here. Thank you for your service.

23 Vice Admiral Cooper, the Strait of Hormuz handles
24 approximately 21 million barrels of oil per day, accounting
25 for nearly one-fifth of global petroleum consumption and

1 making it, as you know, the most critical oil transit
2 chokepoint in the world. It also sees the passage of about
3 3.5 trillion cubic feet of liquified natural gas annually,
4 impacting Asia as well as Europe's energy security. We
5 know that a closure would not only disrupt \$1.2 billion in
6 oil exports daily, but it could also trigger double-digit
7 percentage increases in global energy prices, prompt
8 increase in insurance surcharges on shipping, and require a
9 significant military response to restore maritime security.

10 So my question for you, sir, is are current force
11 posture and naval assets in CENTCOM sufficient to deter or
12 to counter a full blockade in the straits?

13 Admiral Cooper: Senator, thank you very much for
14 that. I am very familiar with the problem set from my 3
15 years commanding the Fifth Fleet, which includes a pretty
16 substantial mine force in the region. I have also
17 personally transited the strait probably 50 times in my
18 career.

19 It is a complex problem, for sure, but it is a small,
20 narrow waterway. The key to this is getting to the left of
21 the problem, establishing a deterrent posture, which we
22 have today, and then keeping our eyes on Iranian activity,
23 which is exactly what the U.S. military is doing today.
24 And if confirmed, I would continue to do that into the
25 future.

1 Senator Peters: So what is your assessment? How
2 quickly could the U.S. and allied naval forces secure
3 freedom of navigation if commercial shipping is indeed
4 attacked in the straits?

5 Admiral Cooper: Senator, the specifics of this are
6 highly classified. But historically, in mine warfare,
7 nothing happens quickly. I think we would think of this in
8 terms of weeks and months, not days.

9 Senator Peters: What additional risk does a potential
10 closure pose to our servicemembers and logistics operations
11 in the Gulf region in addition to the oil cutoff that I
12 mentioned?

13 Admiral Cooper: As one of the three strategic trip
14 points in the Middle East, along with the Bab al-Mandab and
15 the Suez, there would be significant impact strategically.

16 Senator Peters: Vice Admiral Cooper, even before the
17 U.S. attacks on its nuclear facilities, it was reported
18 that China has been indirectly supporting Houthi rebels by
19 purchasing large quantities of Iranian oil. These purchases
20 bolster Iran's economy and enable the supply and funding of
21 Houthi's with weapons and resources.

22 Additionally, Chinese companies have been implicated
23 in providing dual-use technologies such as satellite
24 imagery, missile and drone components to the Houthis, and
25 in return, Chinese vessels have been allowed safe passage

1 through the Red Sea.

2 So my question for you is, in light of the recent
3 escalation in tensions in the region, could you elaborate
4 on how China's support of the Houthis serves the broader
5 strategic goals that they have in the Middle East, as well
6 as global trade routers?

7 Admiral Cooper: Yes, Senator, I completely agree with
8 your characterization of the Chinese involvement, and if
9 confirmed, it would be a priority of mine to call out the
10 things that the Chinese are doing and the things that they
11 are not doing. Here is what they are doing, as an example,
12 in addition to those that you provided. They are providing
13 sensors and components to the Iranians, who ship them to
14 the Houthis, who organize them and arrange them to shoot at
15 Americans. I think that is unacceptable. I think we have
16 to talk about that.

17 Here is what they are not doing. They have had a 10-
18 year period of three ships in the Gulf of Aden. They are
19 there for counter-piracy, but they have not caught a single
20 pirate. They have turned a complete blind eye to the years
21 of flow of weapons into the Houthis that have ended up
22 getting shot at Americans. I think that is unacceptable,
23 and I think we have to call that out.

24 Senator Peters: Very good. Vice Admiral Cooper, our
25 Committee received testimony earlier this year from the

1 494th Fighter Squadron leadership about the important role
2 that the F-15 Eagle has been playing in the Middle East.
3 During the April attack on Israel, the Air Force described
4 the F-15E operations as, quote, "the largest air-to-air
5 enemy engagement in over 50 years." It has been reported
6 that coalition forces in Israel destroyed nearly 99 percent
7 of all inbound weapons and drones coming in from Iran. And
8 as you know, the brand-new F-15EX is an even more capable
9 aircraft. The brand-new aircraft is building on a larger
10 payload, range, and speed, in addition to next-generation
11 capabilities to increase lethality.

12 So my question for you, in the remaining time here,
13 sir, is can you talk about the importance of the F-15, as
14 well as these future F-15EXs that are coming online, what
15 that means for CENTCOM operations and how do you envision
16 utilizing them in the future and how great is your need for
17 them?

18 Admiral Cooper: Senator, the F-15 is deployed to the
19 Central Command region today. They are doing indispensable
20 work, and my expectation is the next version of the F-15
21 would just up the ante and up the game and enhance this
22 capability. I am looking forward to the future.

23 Senator Peters: Great. Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
24 Chairman.

25 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Peters. Senator

1 Sheehy.

2 Senator Sheehy: Thank you, Chairman. So COCOM
3 commanders do not really own equipment. They rent it from
4 the services. What is your concern right now -- starting
5 with you, Admiral -- regarding our magazine depth to be
6 able to support sustained operations in CENTCOM?

7 Admiral Cooper: Senator, I am concerned about
8 everything, but one of the concerns would be munitions and
9 magazine depth, as you described. On one hand, I think we
10 have taken a very strong and positive role in judicious
11 use, as an example. Over the last year we have gone from
12 firing \$2 million missiles at \$100,000 drones to just
13 recently firing \$25,000 Vietnam-era modified rockets
14 against these \$100,000 drones.

15 So I think we are moving in the right direction in
16 that regard. I know that senior Department of Defense
17 officials are focused on this matter. I think we need to
18 move with a sense of urgency on it.

19 Senator Sheehy: And how do we close that feedback
20 loop between the warfighters, who ultimately are
21 represented by you, you are controlling the warfighters in
22 their AOR. How do we close the acquisition feedback loop
23 to ensure that as you are fighting ships in the Red Sea, as
24 you are dropping bombs on Iran or elsewhere, those magazine
25 depth needs and munitions requirements, those demand

1 signals are being real-time relayed back to the industrial
2 base and to the acquisition command so that there is not a
3 1- to 5-year lag between you getting what you need. It
4 happens much faster. What can we do, institutionally, to
5 improve that process?

6 Admiral Cooper: Senator, I think there are a number
7 of measures. One of them is the Chairman's own proposal on
8 the FORGED Act, or related proposals that simply cut the
9 red tape and provide the leverage for us to take America's
10 tech sector, who produces exquisite sensors and weapons,
11 and cut the timelines to get it from the tech sector into
12 the hands of warfighters. Anything associated with that,
13 polic or statute-wise, would be helpful.

14 Senator Sheehy: Well, I think one of the keys is to
15 involve the combatant commanders in that process. Because
16 ultimately you are the ones being asked to fight these
17 systems. And we have always divorced the design, the
18 acquisition, the program management, and the fighting of
19 the systems into many different silos. And in that siloing
20 we lose, oftentimes, the grounding of what makes those
21 systems excellent, which is grounding it with the
22 warfighter.

23 So, you know, as you are on the precipice of taking
24 over our most active combatant command, it has been so for
25 25 years -- you know, Kurilla was my boss when I fought

1 the war, great man, great American leader -- I would
2 encourage you to try to make that vocal change. I know
3 that as a uniformed officer you have to salute and move
4 out, but at the same time you can be an agent for change
5 and then help us as we try to fix this process. Because it
6 is going to take uniformed leaders and elected leaders
7 working together to make sure that we finally bridge this
8 gap, because it has been a really annoying problem that has
9 been building for decades. So I would encourage you to try
10 to make that change in uniform, ensure that your COCOM
11 demand signals make it back into the acquisition pipeline
12 quickly, so that they are reacted to.

13 What percentage right now of U.S. naval assets does
14 CENTCOM have at its disposal for the current conflicts?

15 Admiral Cooper: Yes, sir. Less than 10 percent as a
16 general rule, sitting in the theater today, depending on
17 what specialty we are talking about. I think we are a
18 little bit different from an aircraft carrier perspective,
19 as is known two carriers in the region.

20 Senator Sheehy: But we are concluding basically a
21 year and half, the longest period of sustained naval combat
22 we have seen since Leyte Gulf, and relatively your
23 allocation of naval resources, I would argue, is probably
24 not where it should be. But that is for me to say, not for
25 you to say.

1 General, over to you. So Europe, obviously, it has
2 been a while since we have had a major security crisis in
3 Europe, of course, until Ukraine. That broke 70 years of
4 relative tranquility there. How do you evaluate the
5 ability of our partners to defend themselves going forward?
6 Largely the European defense structure has really been a
7 tent with America as the sole tentpole, depending on us.
8 We know the U.K. is very much a shell of what it used to
9 be. How do you evaluate the ability of our partners in the
10 next 5 years to scale up and be ready to defend themselves?

11 General Grynkewich: Senator, I think the ongoing NATO
12 summit and the likely outcome of a commitment to increase
13 defense spending is going to result in real capability, and
14 if confirmed, I will have a key role in ensuring that it is
15 real capability and that it is the right capability to meet
16 capability targets that the Alliance has agreed upon.

17 I also think that, you talked a little bit about the
18 industrial base here on the United States side of Atlantic,
19 I think the European industrial base also requires
20 investment, and that is why, as part of that 5 percent,
21 some of that money going into infrastructure, I think, is
22 going to be absolutely essential to allow sustained
23 investment in the industrial base that incentivizes
24 companies to keep production lines open so they can meet
25 that demand signal when combatant commands make it, in time

1 of crisis, as you eloquently described.

2 Senator Sheehy: Great. Thanks for your answers.

3 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator Sheehy.
4 Senator Rosen.

5 Senator Rosen: Thank you, Chairman Wicker, Ranking
6 Member Reed, for of course holding this hearing. I want to
7 thank the nominees for your service, your willingness to
8 continue to serve, and congratulations on your nominations.
9 I see your families here. I can tell by the smiles how
10 proud they are of you, and we are thankful that you serve
11 along with them, as well.

12 Admiral Cooper, of course it is wonderful to see you
13 again. I very much, as you know, enjoyed visiting NAVCENT
14 in 2023 in Bahrain. And we learned so much about the Fifth
15 Fleet, and I know about your work, really, to promote
16 stability in the Middle East.

17 And I want to take just a moment to thank our brave
18 servicemembers who conducted these strikes on Iran this
19 past weekend. And we know, and you know, everybody
20 watching, that we have to do everything in our power to
21 ensure the safety of all of our troops, all of our
22 personnel deployed throughout the region. So I appreciate
23 their service and all of your sacrifice.

24 So about the long-term strategy to deter Iran, as we
25 wait to assess the impact of this weekend's strikes on

1 Iran's nuclear program we cannot forget Iran's continued
2 support for terrorism throughout the region. Thankfully,
3 Iran is on its back legs. The fall of Assad's brutal
4 dictatorship in Syria is already having profound
5 implications for Iran, which supported Assad's regime since
6 2011. Coupled with Hamas' defeat in Gaza and the
7 decapitation of Hezbollah's leadership in Lebanon, Assad's
8 collapse has left Tehran weaker and more isolated than it
9 has been in decades.

10 However, across the region Iran continues to work
11 against American interests and poses one of the greatest
12 and persistent threats to U.S. and coalition forces over
13 the years. Sadly, hundreds of Americans have been killed
14 by Iranian-aligned militias, including three soldiers
15 killed last year in Jordan. But our response after the
16 fact has been a strategy that is more reactive than
17 proactive.

18 Admiral, can you discuss the specific threats Iranian-
19 backed militias pose to the U.S. coalition forces, and what
20 will you advocate that we do, if confirmed, to proactively
21 counter or target them, and does CENTCOM have the necessary
22 authorities to target these militias, other than the
23 ability to act in self-defense, that is so critical?

24 Admiral Cooper: Senator, first, great to see you
25 again, and fond memories from the trip to Bahrain several

1 years ago.

2 I think you have well described what others have
3 described as a seismic shift in the region, a tectonic
4 shift strategically with respect to Hamas, Hezbollah, the
5 Assad regime's collapse, activities with the Houthis.

6 If we reflect on about the last 20 months, I think it
7 is important to remember the Iranian-maligned militia group
8 and the Houthis have attacked Americans about 500 times. I
9 do not think that is particularly well understood, but that
10 is about the number.

11 And so in this ensuing period we have implemented
12 dozens of specific measures to enhance the security of our
13 men and women at sea and on bases throughout the region.
14 It is our number one priority today, and if confirmed, it
15 would continue to be my number one priority, protecting our
16 men and women.

17 Senator Rosen: And can you advise how we work to stop
18 that flow of Iranian weapons to the proxies throughout the
19 Middle East, to stop these?

20 Admiral Cooper: We work with partners each and every
21 day, a variety of partners, whether it is in Syria with the
22 SDF, with our Iraqi friends, with friends at sea, because
23 the flow goes in the air, on the sea, and on land.

24 Senator Rosen: Thank you. I want to move over to you
25 now, General, and talk about China's lessons from Ukraine,

1 because China has been identified as the pacing challenge
2 for the Department of Defense across both the Trump and the
3 Biden administrations. As former CIA Director Burns said,
4 and I am going to quote here, "No one is watching U.S.
5 support for Ukraine more closely than Chinese leaders," and
6 that abandoning Ukraine would be, and I am going to quote
7 again, "one of the surest ways to rekindle Chinese
8 perceptions of American fecklessness and stoke Chinese
9 aggressiveness."

10 So General, what message does it send to China if the
11 U.S. ceases to support Ukraine, and what lessons is
12 Chairman Xi likely to take from the conflict of the
13 Russians are able to achieve their objectives?

14 General Grynkeiwich: Senator, the President has been
15 very clear on his objectives in Ukraine are to achieve an
16 end to the war and a ceasefire, and if confirmed, my
17 responsibility will be to provide him a wide range of
18 options in order to achieve that objective.

19 I think, in terms of the lessons from Ukraine, from a
20 purely military perspective, I would tell you there is a
21 ton of them. We are at a pivot in the character of war,
22 the use of drone technology, whether it is one-way attack
23 drones that Iran has supplied to the Russians that have
24 been used against Ukrainian cities, whether it is North
25 Korean support in ballistic missiles and troops. All of

1 those lessons are absolutely pertinent to a conflict on
2 Taiwan, and I think we are learning just as much as the
3 Chinese are from our current partnership with Ukraine.

4 Senator Rosen: Well, I am going to take this question
5 for off the record because my time is up. But I am just
6 going to let you hear it here. How do you think a rapid
7 end to the war in Ukraine in Russia's favor will affect the
8 United States' standing around the world? And I am glad to
9 take that off the record, unless the Chairman rules
10 otherwise. Thank you.

11 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Senator
12 Sheehy, do you wish to engage in a second round of
13 questioning?

14 Senator Sheehy: [Inaudible.]

15 Chairman Wicker: I want to thank our witnesses and
16 thank members of the Committee.

17 For the information of members, questions for the
18 record will be due to the Committee by 6 p.m. today. And
19 with that, and with the thanks of the Committee to our
20 witnesses, we are adjourned.

21 [Whereupon, at 11:41 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]