

**Opening Statement of U.S. Senator Jack Reed
Ranking Member, Senate Armed Services Committee**

**Room SD-G50
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Thursday, March 12, 2015**

**To receive testimony U.S. Northern Command and U.S. Southern Command
in review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2016
and the Future Years Defense Program.
(As Prepared for Delivery)**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to join you in welcoming our witnesses, particularly Admiral Gortney who is appearing before this Committee for the first time in his current role. I also want to thank both of you, and your families, along with the many men and women who serve under you, for your unwavering commitment to our nation.

Admiral Gortney, as you know, one of the three pillars of our defense strategy, as laid out in last year's Quadrennial Defense Review, is to "protect the homeland, to deter and defeat attacks on the United States, and to support civil authorities in mitigating the effects of potential attacks and natural disasters." Similarly, President Obama's National Security Strategy, released last month, emphasizes the defense of our homeland as a primary responsibility. This, simply stated, is your very important mission.

To that end, while Admiral Haney, the Commander of STRATCOM, is responsible for synchronizing global missile defense planning and operations support, you are responsible for the operation of our homeland ballistic missile defense system. We look forward to hearing about the improvements that are planned for the ground-based missile defense system, the progress being made to test, correct, and field additional interceptors, the enhancement of sensors and discrimination capabilities, and the status of the redesigned kill vehicle.

In addition, NORTHCOM works closely with other federal agencies, the governors, and the National Guard to collaborate on responding to natural and manmade disasters and partners with Canada and Mexico to promote security across our borders. I look forward to hearing about your current efforts, and how these would be impacted by the return of sequestration.

In Southern Command, one of the primary threats is posed by illegal narcotics trafficking and organized criminal networks. These organizations create devastating instability in nations throughout our hemisphere, including the corruption of civilian and security institutions and brutal violence inflicted upon the people of the region. Whether it is illegal drugs for sale or individuals escaping violence in their home towns – the consequences of crime do not stop at the border, and what often starts as SOUTHCOM's problem, soon becomes NORTHCOM's headache.

An obvious answer, then, is to address the problem at its root. But, complicating SOUTHCOM's ability to respond is the fact that sequestration has reduced the military services support of your requirements, and reduced the funding in the Defense-wide counterdrug account. In your submitted opening statement, you characterize the impact of these reductions as “managing to keep the pilot light of U.S. military engagement on in the region—but just barely.” This is a stark warning, and one that is certainly amplified when considering the cuts on the civilian side of our government as well.

General Kelly, given that fiscal constraints are likely to continue, I am interested in your insights into how SOUTHCOM can successfully engage in the region. For example, SOUTHCOM is also training and equipping security forces of friendly nations; training and equipping peacekeepers for deployment to peacekeeping operations across the globe; and enabling, advising, and supporting Colombian military and law enforcement operations. These activities often provide benefits far beyond the investment. How can we leverage these “low cost, high yield” activities? Are there other innovative ideas we should be implementing?

General Kelly, Admiral Gortney, you are both exceptional officers who I am glad we have leading these commands. I look forward to your testimony and a discussion of the challenges we face.