

**NOMINATIONS OF GEN LLOYD J. AUSTIN III,
USA, FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE
OF GENERAL AND TO BE COMMANDER, U.S.
CENTRAL COMMAND; AND GEN DAVID M.
RODRIGUEZ, USA, FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO
THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO BE COM-
MANDER, U.S. AFRICA COMMAND**

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2013

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:05 a.m. in room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Carl Levin (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Levin, Reed, Nelson, Hagan, Blumenthal, Donnelly, Kaine, Inhofe, McCain, Chambliss, Ayotte, Fischer, and Graham.

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

Majority staff members present: Creighton Greene, professional staff member; Michael J. Kuiken, professional staff member; Gerald J. Leeling, counsel; Peter K. Levine, general counsel; William G.P. Monahan, counsel; Michael J. Noblet, professional staff member; and William K. Sutey, professional staff member.

Minority staff members present: John A. Bonsell, minority staff director, Adam J. Barker, professional staff member; Steven M. Barney, minority counsel, Christian D. Brose, professional staff member; Thomas W. Goffus, professional staff member; and Anthony J. Lazarski, professional staff member.

Staff assistants present: Kathleen A. Kulenkampff, Mariah K. McNamara, and Lauren M. Gillis.

Committee members' assistants present: Carolyn Chuhta, assistant to Senator Reed; Jeff Fatora, assistant to Senator Nelson; Christopher Cannon, assistant to Senator Hagan; Marta McLellan Ross, assistant to Senator Donnelly; Karen Courington and Mary Naylor, assistants to Senator Kaine; Lenwood Landrum, assistant to Senator Sessions; Todd Harmer, assistant to Senator Chambliss; Brad Bowman, assistant to Senator Ayotte; Peter Schirtzinger, assistant to Senator Fischer; and Craig Abele and Matthew Rimkunas, assistants to Senator Graham.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARL LEVIN, CHAIRMAN

Chairman LEVIN. Good morning, everybody, and welcome.

This morning, the committee considers the nominations of two very distinguished officers to two of the most active and challenging combatant commands (COCOM): General Lloyd Austin, United States Army, nominated to be Commander, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), and General David Rodriguez, U.S. Army, nominated to be Commander of the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM).

These two combatant commands, CENTCOM and AFRICOM, are the centers of gravity for our military's operations to counter the threat of terrorism. Both nominees have served our country with distinction, and I want to thank each of you for your decades of military service and your willingness to serve, once again.

I understand that General Austin's wife, Charlene, and General Rodriguez's wife, Ginny, are with us this morning; I want to acknowledge them and thank them for their sacrifices, their support to our nominees throughout the years, which is so essential to the success of our nominees. As is the committee's tradition, our nominees are invited to introduce any family members or friends who may be with them this morning, with their opening remarks.

If confirmed, General Austin will assume command of CENTCOM during a critical transition period for our military operations in Afghanistan. In the coming months, Afghan forces will assume the lead responsibility for providing security throughout their country, with coalition forces stepping back to a support role. On Tuesday, President Obama announced, during the State of the Union Address, plans for drawing down half of the 66,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan this year, a 34,000-troop reduction by February 2014.

The President continues to consider options for a significantly reduced U.S. military presence in Afghanistan after the end of 2014, which will depend on many things, but, in part, on negotiations with the Government of Afghanistan over legal protections for our troops. The President has made clear that the missions of any residual U.S. military presence in Afghanistan after 2014 will be limited to counterterrorism operations, and training and advising Afghan forces.

General Austin would bring exceptional experience to overseeing this transition, having commanded U.S. Forces in Iraq during the reduction of U.S. Forces and equipment from Iraq.

Just this past weekend, our forces in Afghanistan have had a change of command, with General Joseph Dunford replacing General John Allen as Commander of the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) and Commander, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan.

I want to take this opportunity to thank General Allen for his thoughtful and devoted leadership in Afghanistan, for his forthrightness in his interactions with me and the rest of the members of this committee.

When Senator Reed and I visited Afghanistan in January, we saw real signs of progress, including the Afghan security forces increasingly taking the lead responsibility for protecting their country. Good-news stories about Afghanistan and the Afghan security forces don't seem to get the coverage in the U.S. media that is

given to negative stories. For example, it was widely reported that only 1 of 23 Afghan brigades is rated by ISAF as independent. On the other hand, we heard, from our commanders in Afghanistan, that 87 percent of operations in Afghanistan's critical Regional Command East are carried out solely by Afghan security forces.

Another mainly success story is now the 18,000-strong Afghan Local Police (ALP) program. These community defense forces, when coordinated with district-level Afghan National Police and Afghan army forces, are more and more effective in empowering Afghan communities to defend against Taliban intimidation and violence. Plans are being developed to increase the authorized size of the ALP program from 30,000 to 45,000.

The next CENTCOM commander will also play an important role in shaping our enduring partnership with Afghanistan after 2014, a partnership that I fully support. I am concerned, however, by plans to reduce the Afghan National Security Forces by a third, starting in 2015, from 352,000 to 230,000 by 2017. I believe that any future reductions in the size of the Afghan forces should be based on security conditions in Afghanistan at that time. As Afghan security forces make progress in providing for their country's security, we should reassure them that we will continue to support these efforts by deciding that, as we withdraw our forces, that there won't be a drawdown in Afghan forces.

Progress in Afghanistan remains fragile. Significant challenges to Afghanistan's long-term stability remain. Among the greatest threats to stability are the safe havens for Afghan insurgents across the Pakistan border, which the Government of Pakistan has failed to disrupt or eliminate. In addition, the major shortcomings of the Government of Afghanistan in delivering governance and fighting corruption creates political and economic instability that could exacerbate the challenges to the 2014 transition.

In addition to Afghanistan, CENTCOM must contend with one of the most significant issues in our current national security debate: the threat posed by Iran and its continued pursuit of its nuclear program. As the CENTCOM commander, General Austin will be at the tip of the spear with regard to preparing, militarily, for the potential of an armed conflict with Iran. I share the President's view that all options must remain on the table with respect to Iran.

Iran's hand can be seen throughout the region, including its relentless pursuit of instability and fomenting of violence through proxies, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, and through its own covert activities in the region. Already, destabilizing events in Syria, Yemen, Gaza, Egypt, Iraq, and Sudan are made worse by Iran's funding and supply of terrorist organizations seeking to undermine governments and to spark further conflict among sectarian and tribal groups. CENTCOM has a critical role to play in leading efforts across the region to counter Iran's malign influence.

Events in Syria continue to deteriorate. The impact of the Assad regime's increasing dependence on support from Iran, and desperate actions to hold onto power, can be seen in the thousands of refugees that flow into the towns and villages of Syria's neighbors. While the United States is focused on providing humanitarian relief and nonlethal assistance to the Syrian opposition, the CENTCOM commander will be asked to advise on the situation in

Syria, including whether to provide lethal assistance to the opposition, whether the United States should conduct limited strikes against key Syrian military capabilities, and whether the United States should seek to build a coalition of nations to take more significant military action. These are extraordinarily complex issues that General Austin will be asked to share his views on today.

CENTCOM's area of responsibility (AOR) remains the central location of many of the nonstate terrorist threats that our Nation faces. In addition to core al Qaeda in Pakistan and the reemergence of al Qaeda in Iraq, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula remains focused on attacking the United States and our interests. Our CENTCOM forces continue to assist our Yemeni security partners in preventing al Qaeda from taking advantage of areas in Yemen, where the government has limited control. The events in Benghazi were a poignant and powerful reminder of our need and public expectations for a capability to respond quickly to crises around the world. This is one of the major evolving situations that General Rodriguez is going to have to address, and will consume a great deal of his time. But, it's far from limited to Benghazi and to Libya. We have struggled, in Africa, to find footholds to allow for responses to the type of events that occurred in Benghazi or to allow us to conduct day-to-day operations, like intelligence collection. AFRICOM has received less, in the way of resources and support, than other geographic commands, and this disparity, indeed, may grow in a resource-constrained environment. These challenges, combined with destabilizing impacts of terrorist and criminal networks, will make General Rodriguez's task at AFRICOM among the most complicated in the Department.

An additional matter in the AFRICOM AOR that this committee watches closely is the ongoing U.S. support operations in Central Africa to assist the multinational effort to remove Joseph Kony and his top lieutenants from the battlefield. This committee—and Senator Inhofe has been very, very active in this effort—has sought to ensure that this mission is adequately resourced, including additional intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities.

General Rodriguez, I know that you're familiar with this mission, and the committee looks forward to hearing from you about it, and to working with you on it and so many of the other challenges that you will be facing.

I'm going to turn the gavel over to Senator Kaine, who has agreed to take over, because I must go to the floor.

I now call upon Senator Inhofe.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JAMES M. INHOFE

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I join you in welcoming our witnesses. I've had an opportunity to get to know them in the past, and visit with them personally, and I'm very anxious to move on with this.

I thank Charlene and Ginny for being here. You're the guys who work harder than they do, so we appreciate all your sacrifices.

If confirmed, General Austin, you're going to be in charge of overseeing, arguably, the most volatile region of the world, and in the midst of a declining defense budget. Just last week, Secretary Panetta announced the indefinite delay of the Truman Carrier Strike

Group deployment in the Middle East, a development that was undoubtedly welcomed by the regime in Tehran.

In Egypt, despite the best hopes of the Arab Spring, President Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood Government have shown a troubling hostility towards the opposition groups and minorities, and have taken an increasing bellicose tone toward our ally, Israel. These developments require us to think long and hard over what assets we're going to be sharing with them, the controversial F-16 transfers, and frankly, I didn't agree with that. But, it's a tough area, and I think, if you look through that area—and, General Austin, you have Iran, we know, that is determined to acquire nuclear weapons capability. But, it's been going on for a long time. We've found that our intelligence has really been behind the curve on their capability of what they've developed so far. It's serious. It's a big step, over there.

In Iraq, our premature withdrawal has directly contributed to a deteriorating security situation, and allowed al Qaeda to reestablish a foothold in Syria. Assad's reign of brutality has now claimed the lives of over 60,000 Syrians, and risks spilling into neighboring countries.

Pakistan, we see a nuclear-armed government teetering on collapse, while militant groups, all the military groups, have enjoyed that as a safe haven.

Afghanistan, you'll oversee our operation and manage the transition of combat responsibilities to the Afghan security forces. Without doubt, we have to make sure that the force structure matches the mission and is driven by the facts on the ground, and not arbitrary dates. We've talked about this in my office. General Rodriguez, you and I have spoken about the squeeze in the Middle East. I've often said that it's kind of the neglected continent. I was somewhat instrumental when we established AFRICOM; and so, it was no longer in three different commands, but in one unified command. It's a tough area. It's a tough area that has never had adequate resources to carry out—what I consider adequately carrying out the mission. Certainly, the Chairman mentioned the problem with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and that is a problem, and it's one that is not just confined to a few people that started in northern Uganda; now has spread throughout eastern Congo and on up through the Central African Republic, and south Sudan, I might add.

But, it's connected. It's all terrorism, and it's all connected together, and it is a serious problem that we are going to have to deal with. It's the smallest of the Department of Defense's (DOD) regionally focused combatant commands, with less than 5,000 boots on the continent. That's a huge continent. Your work is cut out for you; we've talked about that, you and I, in my office, in somewhat detail.

While the challenges you will both face are very daunting, I'm confident that the two of you are up to the task. But, it's going to be heavy lifting.

As I said to you, General Austin, in my office, are you sure you want to do this? You said yes.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator KAINE [presiding]. Thank you, Mr. Ranking Member.

General Austin, General Rodriguez, we're ready to hear your opening statements and testimony. Again, we appreciate you being here, and your service.

We'll begin with General Austin, and General Rodriguez to follow.

STATEMENT OF GEN LLOYD J. AUSTIN III, USA, NOMINEE FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO BE COMMANDER, U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

General AUSTIN. Good morning, sir, Senator McCain, Ranking Member Inhofe, distinguished members of the committee.

I want to thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today. I also want to thank you for the steadfast and strong support that you have shown, and continue to show, to our men and women in uniform, our Army civilians, and their families. It is remarkable, all that they have accomplished over the past nearly 12 years of war. It was made possible, in no small part, through your personal efforts, and those of your colleagues. So, my thanks to all of you.

I'd like to take a moment to introduce my wife, Charlene. I've been incredibly fortunate to have her as my partner for more than 30 years. She represents the many wonderful spouses, who are the true unsung heroes of these conflicts, as they've supported us back home, and, in doing so, enabled our success.

My thanks to you, Charlene, for your love and support, and for your many sacrifices, and Happy Valentine's Day. [Laughter.]

I'm glad, today, to be joined by my teammate, General David Rodriguez. He, too, is accompanied by his bride, Ginny, who, like Charlene, has done a tremendous amount for our soldiers and families over the years.

Dave and I have served together a number of times over the years, to include in combat. He is a gifted leader and a decorated soldier, and I'm pleased that he's been nominated to command U.S. Africa Command.

Ladies and gentlemen, it has been a tremendous privilege for me to serve my country in uniform for nearly 4 decades, and I am grateful to be able to continue to serve. I am honored and humbled to have been nominated by the President to serve as a commander of CENTCOM. If confirmed, I pledge that I will apply all of my experiences and judgment, to the best of my abilities, to help preserve and advance our Nation's interests in that region of the world.

General Mattis has led CENTCOM masterfully over these past 2½ years. Our Nation owes him a debt of gratitude. The impact of his leadership and the efforts of his team during this decisive period have been tremendous. If confirmed, I intend to sustain and continue this important work; for the reality is that, while much progress has been made in the CENTCOM area of responsibility, there is still a great deal more to be done. Our national interests, and those of our allies and friends, demand vigilance as well as our continued commitment to do our part to help address the many challenges that exist, and to achieve and maintain security and stability throughout the Middle East and in South and Central Asia.

Of course, our foremost priority remains the ongoing mission in Afghanistan. Soon, we will be required to complete the transfer of responsibilities to the Afghans, and also transition our people and equipment out of that country, just as we did in 2010 and 2011, when I served there as the Commander of U.S. Forces-Iraq. This represents a herculean undertaking, and, if confirmed, I will do everything within my power to help set the broader conditions for our success in this most important endeavor.

Meanwhile, one must simply watch the evening news to understand that the world we live in remains complex and extremely volatile. Much of the instability and associated challenges reside in the CENTCOM area of responsibility. While we have to be pragmatic, we must always be prepared to respond to contingencies, whenever and wherever they occur around the world. If we truly want to have an effective and lasting impact in the region, our friends and allies must be assured of our support, and our potential adversaries must understand that there will be consequences for their actions.

As this past decade of conflict has clearly demonstrated, success in our many endeavors will require effective application of the full continuum of our Nation's instruments of power and influence, military as well as economic and diplomatic. Having worked closely with senior military and civilian officials from the various U.S. agencies and organizations, and also having worked closely with leaders from other countries and partner nations while serving in Iraq as a commander of U.S. Forces, I can personally attest to the effectiveness of these kind of collaborations. If confirmed, I will continue to cultivate my existing relationships while pursuing additional opportunities and partnerships that will surely prove beneficial to our efforts.

Senator Kaine, Senator Inhofe, and members of the committee, these are historic times and difficult times. However, amidst the many challenges that exist reside opportunities, and certainly the shared desire of people to see peace and harmony and prosperity achieved, and even in those places that have never before experienced them. I fully appreciate that the work ahead will be great, and the road will not be easy, but, if confirmed, I pledge to give all that I have towards ensuring our success, and the success of our allies and friends around the world, in this most worthy endeavor.

Thank you again for this opportunity and for your steadfast support for our service men and women and their families. I look forward to your questions.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, General Austin.

General Rodriguez.

**STATEMENT OF GEN DAVID M. RODRIGUEZ, USA, NOMINEE
FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO
BE COMMANDER, U.S. AFRICA COMMAND**

General RODRIGUEZ. Senator Kaine, Senator Inhofe, distinguished members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I am honored the President has nominated me to serve as the next Commander of U.S. Africa Command. If confirmed, I'll look forward to working closely with this committee, as well as all our

joint and interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational partners, to address the challenges we face and the opportunities to increase stability on this strategically important continent. Strong partnerships are key to gaining and maintaining stability in the 54 nations of Africa.

I would also like to thank this committee for the sustained support it has provided to our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, coastguardsmen, and Department of Defense civilians, and their families, during this time of conflict. They all selflessly serve the Nation, at home and abroad, often in harm's way, but always ready to assume their share of the risk, and all are eternally grateful for the backing and support of the American people and Congress.

I want to acknowledge the tremendous effort of General Ham and his team at the U.S. Africa Command. His leadership helps sustain strong partnerships, providing the foundation for our continued engagement across the continent and globally. He has done a superb job, and I hope that, if confirmed, I can expand on the work he has done.

To General Lloyd Austin, exceptional soldier, leader, and a good friend, we have served together throughout peace and war in our careers, and have a significant number of deployments between us. I'm honored to share this experience with both Lloyd and Charlene, and am certain that, if confirmed, Lloyd will continue his remarkable service to the Nation and our servicemembers.

I also want to thank my wife, Ginny, for her decades of service as an Army wife. Ginny has cared for, and looked after, soldiers and their families with energy, empathy, and understanding. She's also a wonderful mother to our children: Amy, a former Army officer and current student at the University of North Carolina; Melissa, a schoolteacher in North Carolina; David, who works with the Department of the Navy in Washington, DC; and Andrew, an infantry lieutenant in the Army.

I thank the committee again for allowing me to appear before you today, and I look forward to your questions.

Thank you.

Senator Kaine. Thank you, General Rodriguez.

Here's the procedure we will follow. I have a set of standard questions, that we ask all witnesses, that I will ask both of you to respond to. We'll then proceed to rounds of questions, alternating between representatives of the two parties; and the rounds of questions will be 7 minutes long. If there are additional questions in the second round that members want to ask, we'll proceed in that way.

Let me begin with the standard questions that we ask the witnesses. These are to help us exercise legislative and oversight responsibilities.

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

[Both witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

Senator Kaine. Do you agree, when asked, to give your personal views, even if those views differ from the administration in power?

[Both witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

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

[Both witnesses answered in the negative.]

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

[Both witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

Senator KAINE. Will you cooperate in providing witnesses and briefers in response to congressional requests?

[Both witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

Senator KAINE. Will those witnesses be protected from reprisal from their testimony in any such briefing?

[Both witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

Senator KAINE. Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify, upon request, before this committee?

[Both witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

Senator KAINE. Do you agree to provide documents, including copies of electronic communications, in a timely manner when requested by a duly-constituted committee, or to consult with the committee regarding the basis for any good-faith delay or denial in providing such documents?

[Both witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

Senator KAINE. With that, we will move to the questions, and I will begin with Senator Donnelly.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank you, General Austin, General Rodriguez, for your service to the Nation, and to your families, for everything you have done. You may want to take them, for a Valentine's Day lunch, to the Senate Cafeteria. Then again, you may not. [Laughter.]

General Austin, as we heard the President say, the other night, he is looking to withdraw 34,000 troops from Afghanistan. My question is, can that be done in a way that does not leave Afghanistan less stable?

General AUSTIN. Thank you, sir.

Whereas, I was not a part of the process that helped to generate the proposals for the numbers of troops to be drawn down, and the rate at which they should be drawn down, I can tell you that, from having been a part of that process before, the types of things that commanders consider, going into those recommendations, really account for whether or not they can accomplish the assigned objectives and missions. So, I would assume that General Allen and General Mattis, as they went through that process, provided their best military advice. I would assume that to be the case. But, having not been a part of that, I cannot speculate as to whether or not—

Senator DONNELLY. How quickly will you become a part of that, and taking a look at that and making that determination?

General AUSTIN. If confirmed, sir, I will get into that right away and confer with General Dunford and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and make sure that I have full understanding of the objectives, the missions, and the resources that have been provided to accomplish those objectives.

Senator DONNELLY. You will give us your unvarnished opinion as to the plan, how it works, and whether it will meet your strategic objectives as you look at the situation that we're in?

General AUSTIN. I will, sir, and the objectives that are outlined by the senior leadership, that have been provided to us.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you.

General Rodriguez, as we look at your mission, one of the things that strikes me is—and, of course, in CENTCOM, too, how important it's going to be to build up our partners there so that they can be self-sustaining in protecting their own nation. How critical a focus is that going to be for you as you move into this position?

General RODRIGUEZ. Thank you, Senator. That's a critical focus, because, obviously, the objective is to have Africans provide security and stability for themselves. There are a wide range of tools that we have to do that, and that will be a main focus.

Senator DONNELLY. It seems that that could be the key to success, is being in a position where the training we provide enables them to stand up on their own.

General Austin, as we look at the region that you will be commanding, one of the challenges has always been Pakistan, and our working relationships with Pakistan. As we go through the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, both men and women and equipment, and again, you mentioned that you had not yet been fully involved on that plan but, I would think one of the things we want to do is continue to work closely with Pakistan on that plan, but also have alternative options, if there are bumps in the road, as we proceed forward with orders and with other things. Are you going to be looking at that as part of what you look at when you get the plan in your hands?

General AUSTIN. Absolutely, sir. I think our relationship with Pakistan is critical. It is a key country in the region. My goal would be to immediately work to continue to build upon the existing relationship, which is on somewhat of a positive slope right now, a positive path. I want to continue to build on that. Again, they will be key going into the future, sir.

Senator DONNELLY. General Rodriguez, as we look at your region, we just saw an extraordinarily tragic situation in Benghazi. When we look at the countries there, and we look at the challenges that those nations already have in protecting themselves—and we often depend on home-nation security for our own consulates and embassies. As you look at that, will you be asking for a time-and-distance study? How fast can we get to our consulate? Where is the closest location we have to that consulate? So that you have a plan that can make sure, if our consulates are in danger, we will be there to protect them?

General RODRIGUEZ. Senator, if confirmed, I'll do a thorough study of time, distance, as well as capabilities, spread throughout the region, who can respond in a timely manner and ensure that the Department of State is informed so, together, we can make good decisions on how to best support our Americans, worldwide, and especially in the African continent.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you.

General Austin, as we transition from Afghanistan, the military gains in security that we have achieved—with all your experience

in Iraq, with the transition there—I think one of the biggest challenges is, as the military leaves, how do we make sure that some of the gains in, not just military, but in state functions in Afghanistan, that we're able to hold onto them? What experiences that you took away from Iraq can help with that in Afghanistan as we move forward?

General AUSTIN. Certainly, sir, I think our embassy will remain engaged and continue to work with the Afghan leadership, to help them build capacity and work with issues on their political system. But, I think having a competent security force helps to create the time and space for an immature political system to mature. We would hope that we would have the opportunity for that to develop, the Afghans would make the right choices, going into the future. Certainly, having advisors around to help advise the military also helps to influence the rest of the environment, as well. I think the activity between the embassy staff and what our military is able to do, and keeping the Afghan security forces focused, I think that creates some time and space for the political system to mature a bit.

Senator DONNELLY. General Rodriguez, General Austin, thank you so much for your service. You and your family have dedicated your life to our country, and we're incredibly grateful to you.

Thank you.

General RODRIGUEZ. Thank you, Senator.

Senator KAINE. The ranking member, Senator Inhofe.

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I agree with the remarks by the Senator, on your service and the time, and the fact that I've had the opportunity to be with you in the field and at various times. Let's see, General Rodriguez, we spent some New Year's Eves together over there; so we got to know each other pretty well.

Anyway, as I said in my opening statement, you guys have some really serious problems that you're facing over there.

Let's start off on AFRICOM, because that's something I was perhaps a little more familiar with.

One of the problems is—and we all go through this, and you guys are not immune from it, like crew rest. When you're trying to get to places, and you're in Stuttgart, and you have 54 countries and over 12 million square miles—to adequately support AFRICOM—I'm going to ask you a question, in a minute, about the resources—but, in terms of time and distance, have you thought about how you're going to handle that as you get a crisis in sub-Saharan Africa, you're going to have a hard time getting there. What do you think about that location?

General RODRIGUEZ. Yes, sir. I think that's going to require a solid coordination between all the interagency partners so that we can best understand indications and warnings, prior to those incidents happening, so we can best posture ourselves to be able to respond appropriately. But because of the time, the distance, and the basing challenges that we have, that's going to continue to be a challenge. I will, if confirmed, look at that very carefully, put some requirements to the leadership, and then ensure that everybody understands the risk that's involved in what our Americans throughout the region are taking on.

Senator INHOFE. Yes, it's something you have no control over. That's where it is right now. Frankly, when we started AFRICOM, I was pushing very hard for Ethiopia, or someplace, for headquarters in Africa. The problem there is the reputation of our involvement in Africa, it is being misinterpreted as a colonialism type of an approach. But, I have to say this, every President that I talk to, including Kikwete, in Tanzania, they all have said, "We recognize that would be easier, but there's no way that we can sell it to the people." So, that's going to be there.

The reason I bring this up is there is always a lot of people here in the United States, members, our good friends in the Senate, who would like to move that headquarters stateside. I think that it's the best we can do right now, in Stuttgart, and I think you would agree that it would be very difficult to move that headquarters and operate.

What do you think about this, have you had time to look and see, in terms of resources—as I said in my opening statement, we have 5,000 boots on the ground; that's not much for an area like that—do you have any comments, going in, right now, as to how you're being resourced, particularly with the drawdowns that we're talking about at the current time?

General RODRIGUEZ. Senator, thank you. The challenges across the depth and breadth of Africa that we're facing, with the resource constraints that we're all living under will be a challenge. Again, we just have to make great assessments of where we're going to accept risk, to ensure everybody knows and understands that. The coordination between the interagency partners will be critical as we move forward.

We all, as commanders, have to help our leadership assess the risk throughout the combatant commands. If confirmed, I'll execute that, to the best of my ability.

Senator INHOFE. The Chairman, in his opening remarks, talked about the LRA and Joseph Kony. People are now aware of that. There was a time when they weren't, when you first got involved over there. My question is, if we're successful in our operation, in helping them take out Joseph Kony, would you continue there, and recognize Kony and the LRA as part of a terrorist group that go far beyond what—originally, it was just northern Uganda, then spread up to south Sudan and down into eastern Congo—that it is widespread, and it is a serious problem? I'd like to get your commitment to stay involved in that, and recognize it for the problem that it is.

General RODRIGUEZ. Yes, sir. If confirmed, I commit to you that I will continue to watch Kony and the LRA, and the entire negative impact it has on the region, as a whole.

Senator INHOFE. Yes, and there are so many other areas that people are not really aware of right now, but one of the things that I would like to—I wasn't going to dwell on this, this long, but—we made a good decision, back, right after September 11, when we decided, as a policy for this country, that we were going to recognize Africa as the squeeze takes place in the Middle East, and the terrorism goes down through Djibouti and the Horn of Africa—that our idea was to put in five African brigades—to help them, not us—but, to help train the Africans, who are very receptive to the

idea, so that when that happened down there, we wouldn't have to use our forces. It's kind of been floundering. I'd like to ask you to make those five African brigades a top priority during the time that you're spending down there.

General RODRIGUEZ. Will do, Senator.

Senator INHOFE. That's good.

General Austin, as I said a minute ago, and as I asked you in my office, are you sure you want this job? It's a tough area there. I would just like to ask you, in just whatever time it takes, to kind of look at the sequestration and how that's going to affect you in that critical region that I outlined, area by area, in my opening statement.

General AUSTIN. Yes, sir. I believe that sequestration will have enormously negative effects on the Services' ability to resource our efforts. What will happen is that all the Services are committed to supporting the current fight, which is what we should be doing. Over time, the follow-on deployers will be less ready. Our ability to respond to emerging contingencies in the region—we'll have less of an ability to do that. We'll have less flexibility and fewer options, because of some of the pressure now, with pressure on the budget.

Senator INHOFE. You mentioned four areas, and you called them "four principle levers," the last time you were here before this committee. They were mil-to-mil engagements, plans and operations, security cooperation programs, and posture and presence. Of those four, what are going to be impacted the most by sequestration, should it become a reality?

General AUSTIN. Certainly our presence and our posture in the region will be impacted. We're seeing that, the leading edge of that, with the delay of the deployment of the carrier. Again, that begins to take away some of the flexibility and the options available.

Senator INHOFE. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator KAINE. Thank you.

As a schedule accommodation, I'm switching my time spot with Senator Nelson, and his questions will be next.

Senator Nelson.

Senator NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The delay of the deployment of that carrier—which otherwise would go to the Persian Gulf region?

General AUSTIN. That would be a part of its responsibilities as it completes its tour. Yes, sir.

Senator NELSON. I asked that question because, of course, one of the continuing high-visibility questions is what's going to happen in Iran. If Iran were to continue with the development of a nuclear weapon, we would need all the military assets that we could muster. The General has just pointed out that a sequester is going to keep that carrier in port, which is not a good thing, because if we ever got into it in Iran, or if Iran ever started their own aggressive action by mining the Strait of Hormuz, we would need all of our Navy assets that we could bring to bear. That's a fair statement, isn't it, General?

General AUSTIN. Yes, sir. General Mattis has laid out what his requirements are. Those requirements have been vetted and ap-

proved. Again, if he doesn't get the full complement, then he'll have to do some things to mitigate that.

Senator NELSON. General, what do you see will be the remaining force when we are withdrawing, in 2014, from Afghanistan?

General AUSTIN. Sir, I believe that those decisions are still being made by the leadership, with the input of General Dunford and General Mattis. I'm not a part of that process—I don't know what the objectives are that the leadership will want to accomplish. That really drives what the force structure should look like, going forward.

Having been a commander in the field, where I was working hard with the leadership, to define options, and I found it very unhelpful when somebody, who wasn't a part of the process, speculated on what the troop strength should be.

Senator NELSON. In your experience, where you have worked with the indigenous forces and the leadership of a country like Afghanistan, can you give us your observations of the progress of that society, over the course of the last few years? Basically, what I'm getting at is, have the Afghani people progressed to the point that it's going to be very hard for the Taliban to take over, once we leave, and take them back to that feudal society that they were? What's your observation?

General AUSTIN. Sir, first of all, I think that two of the key elements that—or three key elements—that kind of go into this equation, as to whether or not things will remain on track or not, are, number one, do we have a credible security force to help guard against the challenges that will no doubt come in the future? We've worked hard with the Afghans to build a security force of 352,000, in a relatively short period of time, and it's still evolving in capability.

The second thing is that I think the political processes have to mature. I think the people have to begin to have faith in their leadership, and the leadership has to be inclusive, has to reach out to the people, and they have to provide a good governing mechanism for the country. That is critical.

I think the security forces can provide the space for that to develop. It's going to take some time.

The third piece of this is the corruption that we've seen in the country, over time they really have to get control over that and begin to move that in the right direction.

I think, when those things happen—and certainly, they're capable of happening—then—or working together—then I think things will continue to move in the right direction.

Senator NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator.

Senator McCain.

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you to the witnesses and their wonderful wives, for their service to our country. We're very proud to have you serving in such positions of responsibility.

General Austin and General Rodriguez—General Rodriguez, you recently served in Afghanistan, as the commander of the International Joint Command within ISAF. I'll ask you both the same question.

The President has announced 34,000 troops, more than half our force currently serving in Afghanistan, will return home by the end of the year. Was this recommendation of the uniformed military via the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs? Was this a recommendation of the military?

General AUSTIN. Senator, I don't know what the specific recommendation was. As I understand it, the——

Senator MCCAIN. No one has told you or General Rodriguez what the recommendation of the military was?

General AUSTIN. No, sir, I was not a part of that process. I know they——

Senator MCCAIN. So, you are excluded from knowing what the recommendation of the military was?

General AUSTIN. I was not——

Senator MCCAIN. Especially given the new responsibilities you have.

General AUSTIN. No, sir, I was not included in that process.

Senator MCCAIN. Did either of you recommend this option?

General RODRIGUEZ. No, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. In your best professional military advice, is the withdrawal of 34,000 troops this year in line with the conditions on the ground, as you saw them?

General AUSTIN. Sir, I defer to the current commander——

Senator MCCAIN. You really have no opinion whatsoever about whether we should withdraw 34,000, half our force, by the end of the year? Is that correct?

General AUSTIN. Having not been a part of the process, sir, I don't think that I should offer an opinion on this, because I don't know everything that went into their calculus.

Senator MCCAIN. General Rodriguez, you feel the same way?

General RODRIGUEZ. Yes, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. Even though you recently served there?

General RODRIGUEZ. Yes, sir. I've been gone for 18 months, and things have changed tremendously. I can tell you that I was a part of the change in the strategy when we put the surge forward there, that the concept of what we were looking to do, strategically, is continuing. But, as far as the specific situation in the country that warrants those decisions, I am not current in that area, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. So, you wouldn't have any guess as to how many forces you believe are necessary to achieve our goals? You wouldn't have any. Whew.

General Austin, you were our commander in Iraq when the President decided to end negotiations with Iraqis and withdraw all U.S. troops by the end of 2011. Do you think that Iraq is more stable today than it was a year ago?

General AUSTIN. Sir, I'm certainly troubled by some of the things that——

Senator MCCAIN. Do you believe Iraq, today, is more stable than it was a year ago?

General AUSTIN. I think the stability has held, sir. I think it's fragile, and it's trending towards being more problematic, as we watch what's happening with the Kurd-Arab relationships, with the recent Sunni protests. I think a lot of that's brought on by a failure to solve some political issues.

Senator MCCAIN. So, whether we had troops there—a residual force there, or not, wouldn't have mattered?

General AUSTIN. I think that, certainly—if we could have continued to advise and assist the Iraqis, I think, certainly, it would have continued to make them better.

Senator MCCAIN. You were present in the room when Senator Graham and I asked you, after Maliki asked us, what level of troops would we, the United States, want to remain there in order to maintain that stability. Do you remember your answer? You said, "We're still working on that." Do you remember that?

General AUSTIN. Sir.

Senator MCCAIN. How long did they work on that, General Austin?

General AUSTIN. Sir, I think we worked with the Iraqi leadership all the way up until the point in time when they decided that they weren't going to be able to give us the protections that we needed to keep our troops there.

Senator MCCAIN. Because, of course, it was down to 3,500. Isn't that correct?

General AUSTIN. No decision had been made at that point in time, sir, because—

Senator MCCAIN. Wasn't our number back down to 3,500 troops left behind? Isn't that an accurate statement? It's written in Michael Gordon's book, and it's well—knowledge. Isn't that true? You were there.

General AUSTIN. I was, sir. Again, I presented a range of options—

Senator MCCAIN. But, don't you know that the administration position was back down to 3,500? They didn't tell you that?

General AUSTIN. Sir, I was aware of what the number was. I don't recall, specifically, what the final option was, being considered.

Senator MCCAIN. You really don't remember, specifically, an important issue like this, that it wasn't 3,500?

General AUSTIN. Sir, in that range of options—again, since we never closed, I've never—

Senator MCCAIN. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff testified that the number was down to 3,500. General Dempsey did, before this committee. You didn't know that? Even though—

General AUSTIN. Sir—sir—

Senator MCCAIN.—though you were there?

General AUSTIN. Sir, I did know what the number was. And—

Senator MCCAIN. And it was 3,500.

General AUSTIN. It was a small number, yes, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. Whew. Which is why—and it's been well documented—these—the Iraqis decided that to try to obtain immunity of over 3,500 troops wasn't worth the effort. You believe Iraq is headed in a positive or negative direction?

General AUSTIN. Sir, I think—again, some of the things that we're seeing in Iraq are very troubling, with the Arab-Kurd tensions, with the Sunni protests. On the other hand—

Senator MCCAIN. Iranian aircraft overflying Iraq with arms for Bashar Assad, for the total estrangement between Barzani and Maliki, continued violence in Kirkuk and other areas along the bor-

der, the vice president of Iraq having to flee the country because there's murder charges brought against him. Does that indicate to you that Iraq is headed in the right direction?

General AUSTIN. It does not, sir. There are some things that are very troubling. There are also some things that I think indicate that, if they make the right decisions, they have a chance to move in the right direction. They're pumping 3.3 million barrels of oil a day; they've been challenged, several times, in terms of security, but the security forces have really held, and they're still loyal to the civilian leadership. They haven't fractured. There are a couple of things in there that do indicate that, if they begin to make the right decisions politically, then I think they have a chance of moving in the right direction. But, at this point, they've not made those decisions, and it is troubling.

Senator MCCAIN. General, your predecessor, General Mattis, had a well-deserved reputation of speaking truth to power, and in testifying before this committee in a frank and honest opinion. We have our responsibilities. Our responsibilities can only be carried out if we have frank and honest—as you were just asked if you would do, at the beginning of the hearing—opinions. I'm disappointed by your testimony today, that I have to draw these facts out from you, that you and I both know are facts. I hope the next time you're before this committee, that you will be more forthcoming in your answers. We deserve it. We have our responsibilities, as well as those that you will assume.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator.

Senator Blumenthal.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to join in thanking both of you for your extraordinarily distinguished career, and your families for their service and sacrifice, as well, and to wish you well in your new commands, the next chapter of your military careers.

General Austin, we had a very informative and important discussion yesterday on the subject of sexual assault, with a number of my colleagues, and a number of yours, and I would like to ask you and General Rodriguez for your commitment that you will pursue, as vigorously and aggressively as possible, the predatory crime, the vicious criminal offense of sexual assault and rape, wherever it occurs under your commands.

General AUSTIN. Sir, you have my commitment, I will do so.

General RODRIGUEZ. I will, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you.

Let me ask, by the way, have each of you seen the documentary movie "Invisible War"?

General AUSTIN. I have seen it, sir.

General RODRIGUEZ. I have seen it, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Will you make it your policy and practice that, that movie, among other training aids, is seen by all of the commanders, at whatever level, under your command?

General AUSTIN. Yes, sir. As you may know, sir, in the Army, we have encouraged our leadership to use that as a training tool.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. General Rodriguez?

General RODRIGUEZ. Yes, sir, that's correct.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I'd like to ask you for more than just encouragement, but actually make it a matter of your general order, or whatever, however you want to implement within your command, that it be used as a training device.

General AUSTIN. Sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you.

General RODRIGUEZ. Yes, sir, it's a requirement.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you.

Let me ask you about—General Austin—focusing on Afghanistan. I recently had the privilege of traveling to Afghanistan with a number of my colleagues, including Senator McCain, who led the trip, and Senator Graham, Senator Ayotte, and others. I want to focus, for the moment, on contracting there.

We understand, from the Special Inspector General in Afghanistan, that 43 contractors, in effect, are doing business with the enemy, but they have not been processed by the Army for suspension and debarment, partly because of obstacles—legal obstacles and others—now in the law of the United States; section 841, in particular.

I'd like your personal commitment, as CENTCOM commander, that you will personally review these cases and use the authority you have to stop U.S. taxpayers' money from being funneled to the Taliban, and that you will help us—Senator Ayotte and I, in particular, are working on this issue—help us to strengthen the law.

General AUSTIN. Sir, you have my commitment.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you. Very aptly, your prepared testimony mentions the importance of "unity of effort"—that's your phrase, and I think it's a good one—on the battlefield. I think it's equally important that we have that unity of effort in stopping American taxpayer money from, in effect, aiding the enemy in Afghanistan, where corruption has been, unfortunately, so rampant.

One of the areas where I think section 841 can be applied more effectively is in the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and State Department aid. I'd like your commitment that you will help us, in effect, improve the law in that regard.

Thank you. I understand you have made that part of your commitment, that you will help us do that.

General AUSTIN. Yes, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you.

Let me ask you now, General Austin, about Syria. As part of that trip, we visited the refugee camp in northern Jordan, at Zaatari. I must say, very powerful and moving experience, to see the conditions of the camp, the numbers of children, the challenges in providing education, healthcare, basic sanitary conditions. I'd like your commitment that you will do everything possible to provide a drastic and dramatic increase in humanitarian aid to the refugees in Syria and elsewhere, besides Zaatari, but also in Jordan, where there are those refugee camps.

General AUSTIN. Sir, I'll do everything within my power to work with all the appropriate elements of the interagency to ensure that we're doing everything we can to support the refugees.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you. I think a number of us also were impressed by the herculean efforts being made by the King of Jordan, and by the Jordanian people, to aid those refugees. Just

an extraordinary humanitarian effort. But also their commitment to aid in military assistance, the freedom fighters in Syria.

Let me ask you, don't you think the United States can provide more training and technical assistance, at the very least—in terms of communications equipment, logistical aid—to the opposition forces in Syria?

General AUSTIN. Sir, not being in the seat yet, my vantage point is that of many people on the outside looking in on this. I don't know the specifics, as many specifics as I'd like to know, about the opposition, and what is in the realm of the possible.

What I'd like to do is, if confirmed, I'd like to have the ability to go in and assess, to see what's possible. If there are things that are possible, what options do we have? I don't feel as if I can give you a very concrete and informed recommendation, at this point.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I hope that you will share the sense of urgency that many of us feel about this situation and about the very dire predicament of many of those courageous fighters who are opposing the murderous and barbaric regime that the Assad Government, if it still is a government, has become. I would invite you—in fact, I'd urge you—to present to this committee your recommendation, as soon as possible, because I think we feel that sense of urgency, and I hope that more can be done, militarily, to deprive Assad of his superiority, where he has it, in the air, and his forces on the ground that he is using, very simply, to slaughter the citizens of his own country.

General AUSTIN. Yes, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My time is expired, but, again, my thanks to each of you for your extraordinary service in the past and in the future, and again, to your families.

Thank you.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator.

Senator Ayotte.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank General Austin and General Rodriguez, and their families, for, absolutely, your extraordinary service to our country, and very much appreciate your being here.

I wanted to follow up to what Senator Blumenthal discussed on section 841. As you recall, Senator Brown and I had worked on this no-contracting, or the enemy provision, that has given some authority to DOD to cut off enemy funds. I just want to join what Senator Blumenthal has said, that I look forward to working with him, and look forward to your commitment to make sure that we can give you all the tools that you need, including extending those tools to the State Department to cut off funds that go to our enemies. I appreciate your commitment on that, and look forward to working with Senator Blumenthal and both of you to make sure that happens.

General Austin, I wanted to ask you—when Senator Donnelly had asked—you mentioned you had been through the process before, of deciding what a follow-on force should be. That was in the context of commanding Iraq? Is that right?

General AUSTIN. That's correct, ma'am.

Senator AYOTTE. When you were the commander in Iraq, what was your recommendation to the administration on the troop levels that should remain, assuming we could negotiate a status of forces agreement?

General AUSTIN. Ma'am, I presented a range of options to the leadership. I provided that recommendation. I've never made public what my recommendations were.

Senator AYOTTE. It was reported, at the time, that your recommendations were between 14,000 to 18,000 troops. Was that accurate?

General AUSTIN. Again, ma'am, I provided that to the President, in confidence, and I have not made that public, and would not like to make that public.

Senator AYOTTE. Let me ask you this, General. The recommendations that you provided, and the number that was ended up, that Senator McCain just asked you, was that number significantly below what you recommended?

General AUSTIN. It was, ma'am.

Senator AYOTTE. Okay. Thank you.

You have said, in answer to Senator McCain, at this point, you've not been involved in the decisions on the troop withdrawal in Afghanistan, or the follow-on force, following 2014. Is that right?

General AUSTIN. Yes, ma'am.

Senator AYOTTE. Have you spoken to either General Allen or General Dunford about this topic?

General AUSTIN. Have I spoken with them?

Senator AYOTTE. Have you spoken to them about what their recommendations are?

General AUSTIN. No, ma'am, I have not.

Senator AYOTTE. Senator McCain asked you about the 34,000 withdrawal that the President announced the other day. There was a report in the Washington Post that General Dunford, whom I'm sure you have great respect for, as well as General Allen, that they had been seeking a reduction of no more than 25,000 troops during that same period. That would have been significantly—certainly, the President's recommendation is much higher. Would that surprise you? Have you followed any of the public reporting on this?

General AUSTIN. I have read some of what's in the media. But, my experience, there, ma'am, is that, that's not always accurate, because it doesn't have the complete—

Senator AYOTTE. Let me follow up. Military officials, on background, were saying that, "Pulling out 34,000 leaves us dangerously low on military personnel, while the fledgling Afghan army and police need our support. It's going to send a clear signal that America's commitment to Afghanistan is going wobbly."

I guess I would ask you—I'm actually very surprised, as well, that you've not had conversations, given that you're taking over in CENTCOM, with General Allen or General Dunford about this very important question at this point. But, I would ask you, if we're in a position where the withdrawal puts us in a situation where we're going to be dangerously low on military personnel, I would expect you to come forward to this committee—when asked—and tell us your professional opinion as to what we should be doing. Will you do that?

General AUSTIN. I will do that, ma'am. I would say that there are a number of things that the commander considers as he makes his recommendation: the tasks that he's been presented with, that he has to accomplish; what—his assessment of the environment that he has to work in; any significant transitions—"transitions" meaning things like an election; other things, like maybe the fighting season that he has to go through. All that goes into his calculus to provide a range of options, in terms of recommendations there. As the leadership looks at it, they will consider other things, and I just don't have any idea of what, exactly, went into that specific calculus. So—

Senator AYOTTE. General Austin, I went to a troop deployment, on Sunday, in New Hampshire, of a Guard unit that's going to Khost Province in Afghanistan.

General AUSTIN. Yes, ma'am.

Senator AYOTTE. One of the worries that I have is that the numbers that are being floated by the administration on the follow-on—don't we get to a point where, if we don't have sufficient numbers there, we have to worry about the protection of our own forces?

General AUSTIN. Yes, ma'am. That clearly is one of the things that commanders must take into consideration, whether or not they'll be able to provide the adequate force protection for their troops as they're conducting operations in the area. Again, depending on what the specific missions are that they'll be asked to do, and how much of it they'll be asked to do, when you factor in force protection and other things, then that really kind of lays out what the commander thinks his requirements are. Again, typically he will present a range of options.

Senator AYOTTE. I understand it, but certainly we need to take into account the protection of our own troops there. If we get to a number that's so low that we can't protect our own troops, I'm going to be very concerned about that, and I expect your professional opinion on that as we go forward on this follow-on.

Just so that everyone understands, why does it matter? Why does a good outcome in Afghanistan matter?

I'd like an answer from both of you on that.

General AUSTIN. Yes, ma'am, thanks. It clearly is important to the region. It's important to the United States of America. We have a lot invested. We'd like to see this country continue to move forward. We'd like to see the political system begin to grow. I think, if the right things happen, it'll stabilize things in the region, and certainly it'll help us with our relationship with Pakistan and some other things.

I think it's important for the region, and it's also clearly important for the country of Afghanistan, important to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and important to the United States of America.

Senator AYOTTE. I know my time's up, but, General Rodriguez, I would like your opinion as to, why does this matter, in terms of the protection of our country, our interests? We've sacrificed so much there, and obviously, I think it's important that we understand, why does the stable Afghanistan, the outcome of that, matter?

General RODRIGUEZ. Stable Afghanistan, ma'am, means that's one of the things that was the objective, so that it never became a haven for al Qaeda and its adherents so they could never attack both the U.S. Homeland, U.S. interests, and our allies worldwide.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you. I'll have followup questions for both of you.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator.

Senator REED.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Generals, thank you for your service to the Army and to the Nation. I can't think of two more dedicated and experienced officers to lead our forces in the various areas of command you're being assigned.

In fact, General Austin, correct me if I'm wrong—you were a brigadier general in the invasion of Iraq, with the 3rd Infantry Division (ID), you were a major general in Afghanistan, commanding the 10th Mountain Division, you were a three-star in Iraq, in the multinational forces. You are, I think, maybe one of the few combatant commanders that are going to an AOR where you've commanded at every general officer level. Is that correct?

General AUSTIN. That's correct, sir.

Senator REED. I don't think we could find someone better acclimated to the various challenges; and there are quite a few throughout the region.

One of the issues that's been touched upon is Iraq. From your perspective, are the problems there more political in nature or more the military capacity? Because what we've seen has been, I think, a very chaotic political situation—demonstrations, sectarian tensions—but, the Iraqi security forces seem to be performing reasonably well, given the training and the investment we've made. Is that a fair assessment?

General AUSTIN. Sir, I would say from my perspective, that's a fair assessment, that the security forces have done reasonably well.

Senator REED. Going forward, the challenges there seem to be more political than any type of military threat from the outside, or an uncontrollable internal threat. Is that a fair assessment, too?

General AUSTIN. Yes, sir.

Senator REED. Thank you.

One of the key factors and key roles that you play—it's not just making sure our forces are well prepared, well organized, and well deployed—it's communicating, explicitly and implicitly, with leaders in different countries. I can think of several in your AOR. One is Pakistan, and one is Egypt, because of our relationship to the militaries. Do you have any perspective now with respect to your likely engagement with General Kayani in Pakistan and the Egyptian Army?

General AUSTIN. Yes, sir. I look forward to trying to develop a—or, not trying, but developing a good working relationship with General Kayani and the military leadership in Pakistan. I think it's essential to our overall relationship, and I think it will be very helpful in us trying to move forward with what we're doing in Afghanistan.

In Egypt, we have long enjoyed a great military-to-military relationship that's been very helpful to us. We will continue to try to build upon that, going into the future.

Senator REED. Let me ask you another question, and that's with respect to our forces in Afghanistan. As the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, your current role, it would be highly unusual that you would be participating in the deliberations of strategy, going forward, in Afghanistan or any other area of operation. Is that fair to say?

General AUSTIN. That's correct, sir.

Senator REED. Yes. The planning was done appropriately through CENTCOM, General Mattis, beginning with General Allen and his colleague, going up into the Secretary of Defense's office, not through the Vice Chief's office, to the President for the final decision. That's the way it's done.

General AUSTIN. That's correct, sir.

Senator REED. Your collaboration has been—and it'll increase—certainly increase if you're confirmed; and I have every expectation you will—but, at that point, you will be having an opportunity to work closely with General Dunford and all of the commanders for a period of several months, I believe.

General AUSTIN. That's correct, sir. It will give me an opportunity to engage leadership on the ground, to get a clear understanding, from the staff at CENTCOM and also the Joint Staff, in terms of all of the elements that have gone into this, which is typically a pretty tightly controlled process, and rightfully so.

Senator REED. Right. Thank you very much.

General Rodriguez, again, thank you for your service. You're taking over a region which is our newest unified command, one which is facing a new set of challenges that, 4 or 5 years ago, were not relevant. I think it's appropriately—and fitting—that you're both sitting side by side, because what happens in Egypt has certain effects in your command, and what happens in your command has certain effects throughout General Austin's command. But, can you give us your sense, right now—and again, being the U.S. Army Forces Command commander, you have not, on a day-to-day basis, been engaged in deliberate planning—can you give us your sense of what the threats are in AFRICOM, and how well positioned you believe AFRICOM is?

General RODRIGUEZ. Yes, sir.

Sir, the threats in AFRICOM really revolve around three major areas. Of course, one being al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, which is where the French operation, supported by the African nations and the United States, is ongoing. Then also, al Shabaab, over in Somalia, and then Boko Haram. Also the LRA, as discussed earlier here. Those are the major threats to stability, militarily; but, of course, they have significant other ones in both government as well as health issues.

Senator REED. Yes, I think you've touched on something that, again, is a critical issue that cuts across both AORs; that is, governmental capacity, the ability of government to provide basic service, the ability of governments to function, at least to respond to the true needs of their people. One of the issues that we've talked about, General Rodriguez, is that we have had military training op-

erations that have gone in, over the last several years, into African countries, as far as AFRICOM, with mixed results. Do you have any specific ideas about how you would improve the military training teams that will be a major aspect of your operational capacity?

General RODRIGUEZ. Yes, sir. If confirmed, I will look at that very, very hard. As General Ham has stated in the past, some of the training has been focused on tactical and technical, and some of the things that we did not emphasize were the values of the army, as well as the role of a military in a democracy. Those are some of the things that he's already started to work on, and I'll watch that very carefully—if confirmed—and assess that, and go forward in the best way possible, sir.

Senator REED. My time is expired, but, again, gentlemen, there are very few people who have served the Army and the Nation with your courage and your distinction and your dedication to the soldiers. For that, I thank you.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator.

Senator Fischer.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Senator Kaine.

I, too, would like to thank you, gentlemen, and your families, for your service and dedication to this country. I would also like to thank you, and thank the servicemembers that you represent, and their families, for their service to this country, as well.

If I may, I'd like to continue on that Washington Post article that came out recently. It did suggest that the Pentagon is pushing a plan that would keep only about 8,000 troops in Afghanistan. I know that, General Austin, you weren't a part of the planning process, thus far, but can you support a plan that would schedule withdrawal of troops in advance? We're looking at a withdrawal of troops in Afghanistan, and, according to this article, from about 8,000 down to a thousand, within a very short period of time. I have questions if we can even maintain our mission, let alone complete the mission.

How can you make decisions on troop withdrawal, when, as you stated previously, so much depends upon conditions on the ground, what the government is doing, what their abilities are, up to that point? How would you approach a proposal like that?

General AUSTIN. I certainly would, first, really work hard to make sure I fully understood what the leadership wanted to get done, moving into the future. Certainly, my advice, as a commander on the ground or Commander of CENTCOM, I would provide my advice to them, based upon where I think the security forces are, and conditions in theater, and what I think we needed to do to move forward, to make sure we maintain the gains that we've achieved.

But, I think so much is tied to what it is, what policy objectives that the leadership wants to accomplish. Based upon that, I would outline the forces required. I would consider the fact that there's a NATO complement to whatever forces we're going to have. Again, it really depends on what level that we're advising and assisting the Afghan security forces at. Then, how I assess that we need to do that.

If I'm confirmed, as I go in, those are things that I will work with General Dunford on, look at very closely, early on. I know that the

leadership is still in the process of making the decisions on what it's going to look like, post-2014.

Senator FISCHER. Do you think it's useful to put those numbers out there so far in advance? Is there a military reason it's useful to put those numbers out there?

General AUSTIN. I do know that we're a part of a coalition effort. I do know that —members of the coalition are trying to determine what their commitment's going to be, going forward. They would like—my guess is that they would like as much predictability as possible.

Senator FISCHER. I appreciated Senator Reed's question that he asked General Rodriguez. How would you prioritize, General Austin, the threats in your future command? What do you see those as being?

General AUSTIN. It's a very complex and dynamic region, volatile region. We see a number of things that are kind of working together to fuel that instability. You see sectarian strife in a number of places. You see governments, that are former autocratic governments, that are either failed or failing, creating further instability. The instability is an issue there.

Again, we are certainly concerned about the Iranian aggression in the region, which adds to the complexity there. Of course, there's specific issues of Syria and the continuing work that we have to do in Afghanistan, as well. A number of things that have to be added together.

Also, there is a persistent threat from elements, like al Qaeda and al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, that have the ability to generate a threat to the Homeland. That is very, very important.

Senator FISCHER. Are we going to be able to meet those, with the troops that are projected to be there? Are we going to accomplish our mission? We've had so many families, in this country, sacrifice. Is it going to be worth it to them? I know you do this every day—how do you look at families and say to them, "We're going to pull out, maybe at levels that I think might be dangerously low, as I'm getting information on this"? How are you able to do that? When do we reach a hollow force, where the men and women that we send into harm's way are no longer protected?

General AUSTIN. We're going to do everything that—the leadership will continue to do everything that we can within our power to make sure that, when our troops are introduced into a dangerous situation, or into combat, that they are ready. Whatever we have to do to prioritize resources to make sure that we support the folks that are doing the hard work of the country, we're going to continue to do that. Again, the Services have been clear about the fact that they're going to support our troops that are in combat.

As we look at the shrinking top-line budgets here—the shrinking top line of the budget—it's going to make it more challenging for us to have forces that are ready to address emerging contingencies. That's my concern, going into the future.

Senator FISCHER. I would ask both of you gentlemen for your commitment to this committee, and to me, that you will always be honest and let us know that.

General AUSTIN. You have my commitment.

General RODRIGUEZ. You have my commitment.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you so much. Again, thank you for your patriotism, your dedication, and your service to us.

Thank you.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator.

Generals Austin and Rodriguez, welcome. I echo the comments made by my colleagues, of appreciation for your service, your stellar credentials.

I'm given additional confidence by the fact that you've worked so closely together in the past, because I think the CENTCOM/AFRICOM real estate and challenges have an awful lot of overlap, and that should give us confidence, as well.

Just to mix things up, I think I'll start with General Rodriguez, a few questions.

AFRICOM has an unusual mission. As I understand from our discussion, your deputy commander is a State Department official, and it is a mission that is heavily focused on partnerships with other agencies, and with the training mission with other governments. I'd like you, just for a minute, to talk about that unusual nature of the mission, and your own background. How it fits you to work in that kind of a very multilateral environment.

General RODRIGUEZ. Thank you, Senator.

As you said, the headquarters was designed a little bit differently than most of the other combatant commands, and has more inter-agency people assigned to the headquarters. I think all that is a great benefit to the organization, who stretches and reaches across the interagency in an effort that's required to be done that way in that interagency effort.

In the "building partner capacity" piece, all of our operations are really just like the ones that General Austin is talking about—is about helping to build the capacity of that nation to protect itself and provide stability for itself. We have worked very hard over the years, and we both have significant experience trying to build the Iraqi security forces, as well as the Afghan security forces to do it themselves, and also to work with our multinational partners to also ensure that they're part of the solution, both in our NATO allies and allies throughout the world, as well as the host-nation countries.

I look forward, if confirmed, to try to continue that effort to help Africans prepare themselves to take care of themselves.

Senator KAINE. General Rodriguez, some of the most challenging attacks on American embassies in our history have occurred in the AFRICOM footprint. I've been to two hearings, now, on the Benghazi attack—one, a Foreign Relations Committee hearing, and one a hearing of this committee—and still have some confusion about security that's provided to our diplomatic personnel around the world.

In the Benghazi situation, we were dealing with military security through the Marine security guards; we were dealing with State Department security—State Department personnel—but, also, two local militias—one unarmed, one that was apparently on some sort of strike or work slowdown because of a dispute over wages and benefits. I'd just like to hear you talk about the embassy security—recognizing that State takes lead on that—but, the embassy secu-

rity challenges in AFRICOM, and how you would approach them, as the commander.

General RODRIGUEZ. Thank you, Senator. The challenges, as you state and we discussed earlier, were about the time-and-distance factors. If confirmed, I will work very closely with Department of State, who has the primary responsibility, as you've stated, to understand and have the best situational understanding that we can have, so we have threats and warnings, so that we understand the ones who are most threatened, so that we can respond appropriately.

We also have to prioritize our collection assets for the things that we don't know, it's a joint and interagency, as well as multinational, process to get the best situational understanding we can.

The second thing is, of course, in collaboration with the State Department, to make sure that the State Department understands our responsiveness and what we can do, so that they can make the best decisions and recommendations to the leadership.

Lastly, the response forces have already increased, in the aftermath of the Benghazi attack, and some of the lessons that were learned. There is now a new Commanders in Extremis Force that is forward-stationed, and we have more forces forward-stationed, as well as a special Marine Air-Ground Task Force that is also in Djibouti right now. In another month, there'll be a regionally aligned force from the Army who is allocated to AFRICOM to help with these challenges.

Senator KAINE. Great.

General RODRIGUEZ. Thank you, Senator.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, General.

General Austin, to return to a point that we've talked about briefly, in your advance policy questions, you stated that maintaining a credible naval force in the region, covered by sufficient aviation combat power, is essential to demonstrating an enduring commitment to regional partners. We've had discussion on this committee, just this week, about the aftermath of the decision of the deferred deployment to the USS *Truman*. Just focusing on that and the sequester, from your perspective as you prepare to take command of CENTCOM, what is the impact of a reduced naval presence in the region? Will it complicate your ability to carry out your mission?

General AUSTIN. I think it will, sir. I think, certainly, again, those forces have been outlined by General Mattis as what he needs to accomplish the goals and objectives that he's laid out. That's been supported by the Joint Chiefs, and resourced by the Office of Secretary of Defense. This has gone through a pretty deliberate process to allocate those resources and forces.

When he doesn't have those available, or when a commander doesn't have them available, then, again, it really begins to take away his flexibility to address emerging situations. Once you reduce the presence in the region, you could very well signal the wrong things to our adversaries. We'll want the commander—and I'll certainly want to have, if I'm confirmed—to have as many options available as possible to address the current situation and any emerging situations or crisis.

Senator Kaine. Let me ask you this. The “send the wrong message to allies or adversaries,” what about the message that it sends, just from your own experience, inside the organization, as you deal with your officers and enlisted? What’s the buzz as they continually watch Congress run up against one kind of fiscal crisis after the next, that gives no certainty to the military about its resource capacity?

General Austin. It certainly can be disheartening, sir, if we kind of know we have things that we’re trying to accomplish, we know that we need resources, and it’s difficult to get those resources. Having said that, it’s the spirit of our military to try to find a way to be successful. But, we want to make sure that, if at all possible, we’re resourcing them with the adequate things—with the things that they need to be successful.

Senator Kaine. Thank you very much, to both of you.

Senator Graham.

Senator Graham. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I understand we’re going to have two rounds, if you could just let me know when 7 minutes is up, I have a few more questions. I’ll try not to hold everybody up.

Senator Kaine. Great. We’ll move right into a second round as soon as you’re finished if no one else comes.

Senator Graham. Okay. Thank you very much.

This is one of the most important hearings we’ve had in, probably, a very long time. That’s saying a lot, given the hearings we’ve had in recent time.

Both of you, thank you for your service. I know you well, appreciate your families. You’re fine men.

General Austin, here’s my dilemma. I’m not so sure—and I may be wrong—that you cannot tell us what you recommended about troop levels. I don’t know if that’s an executive privilege, or not. I’ll have to think about that. I don’t know if you have the right to do that, quite frankly.

I know what you told me. You told me, on the tarmac in Baghdad, that we needed somewhere between 18,000 and 20,000. I said, “That may be more than the market can bear.” You said, “Well, look at the numbers.” I know what your recommendations were; it was somewhere in the mid-15,000 to 16,000. I think the bottom line, for most people, was 10,000. I have an exchange between me and General Dempsey about how the numbers went from 19,000, I think, all the way down to 5,000, and eventually to 0.

I’d like to put in the record the exchange I had with Chairman Dempsey about the ever-changing numbers in Iraq.

[The information referred to follows:]

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON SECURITY ISSUES RELATING TO IRAQ

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2011, U.S. SENATE, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
WASHINGTON, DC.

Senator Graham. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you both for testifying. This is a very important issue for the country, and I think we have had a good discussion.

Number one, I completely concur with the idea that American troops should not be left behind in Iraq without legal protections. It is not fair to them. To say that the Iraqi legal system is mature is being gracious. If an American soldier were accused of rape anywhere in Iraq, I do not think they would get a fair trial. So at

the end of the day, Iraq has a long way to go on the legal side and I think a long way to go on other sides.

My concern is that I have never bought into the idea that the impasse was getting the parliament to approve an immunity agreement. I will just give you one vignette. I went over with Senator McCain and Senator Lieberman in May to talk to the prime minister about a follow-on force, and I was discussing with him that no American politician, Republican or Democrat, would accept a follow-on force without legal protections. As we were talking about it, he says, well, how many people are you talking about? What is your number? I turned to Ambassador Jeffrey and General Austin and said you have not given them numbers. He says, no, we are still working on that. That is in May.

So let us get into this, General Dempsey. 16, 10, 5, cascading. Is it your testimony that we were proposing 16,000 to the Iraqis and they said no? Then we came back with 10,000 and they said no. Then we came back 5,000 and they said no. Then it got to be zero.

General DEMPSEY. No, that is not what I testified to.

Senator GRAHAM. What caused the cascading effect? General Austin told me—and I will just tell you now because it is so important—he thought we needed 19,000. And I said, Lloyd, that is probably going to be more than the market can bear. I said that because I am concerned about American politics too.

Then the numbers were around 15 to 16. Then we started about 10. It came to 10, and nobody got below 10. So I know what General Austin had on his mind.

At the end of the day, General Dempsey, you are right. It is about the missions you want that determines the numbers. We have got through it pretty well. Iraq does not have the intel capacity we do. We need to make sure they have better intelligence. They do not have an air force. We need embedders. We need trainers. We need CT. We need to referee the Kurd-Arab dispute. I think 10 or 12 is what you need. At the end of the day, we are down to zero.

I guess my question is, is Iran comfortable with a democracy on their border in Iraq, Secretary Panetta?

Secretary PANETTA. I think they are very nervous about having a democracy on their border.

Senator GRAHAM. Let me tell you what the speaker of the Iraqi parliament, a Sunni, Mr. Najaf, said. Iraq now suffers from points of weakness. If neighboring countries see that Iraq is weak and incapable of protecting its border and internal security, then definitely there will be interference. This interference does not exist now. He was talking about how Iran would step up their efforts to destabilize Iraq if we all left.

Do you agree that is a more likely scenario? They are doing it now. They are only going to do it more if we do not have anybody there.

Secretary PANETTA. I think there will be a continuing threat. I think that the reality is that the Iraqis do not want to have Iran exert that kind of influence in their country.

Senator GRAHAM. Now, if the Sunni speaker of the parliament is worried about that, is there any doubt the Kurds want us there? If it were up to the Kurds, there would be 50,000 American troops in Kurdistan. Do you agree with that?

Secretary PANETTA. Yes.

Senator GRAHAM. So we know the Sunnis are worried about this, and we know the Kurds would have 50,000 if we would agree to put them there. I would not agree to that, but they are very welcoming of U.S. troops. So I am getting a little bit concerned that all the blame on the Iraqi political system is maybe not quite fair.

Secretary Panetta, you were a politician in another life. Would it be a political problem for President Obama to announce this year that we are going to keep 15,000 people in Iraq past 2012? Did that ever get considered in this administration? Did anybody ever talk about the numbers changing because the Democratic base would be upset if the President broke his campaign promise?

Secretary PANETTA. Not in any discussions that I participated in.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you think it ever happened anywhere? Do you think anybody in the White House ever wondered about the political effect of having troops in Iraq on the 2012 election? You talk openly about the Iraqis having political problems. You do not think there are any politics going on on our side?

Let me ask you about Afghanistan, General Dempsey. Did any commander recommend that all of the surge forces be pulled out by September 2012?

General DEMPSEY. I honestly do not know, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, let me tell you. The testimony is clear. No option was presented to the President in July to recover all surge forces by September 2012, and you put General Allen in a terrible spot—the administration has. I think it is no accident that the troops are coming home 2 months before this election in Afghani-

stan, and if you believe that to be true, as I do, I do not think it is an accident that we got to zero.

Now, at the end of the day, we are at zero. Do you think the people in Camp Ashraf are going to get killed? What is going to happen to them?

General DEMPSEY. Senator, the State Department is leading an effort to ensure that we work with the Iraqi—

Senator GRAHAM. Can you tell the people back here that the likelihood of their friends and family being killed is going up greatly if there are no American forces up there policing that problem?

General DEMPSEY. I will not say anything to those people because I am not involved in the outcome.

Senator GRAHAM. Fair enough.

I asked Admiral Mullen, your predecessor, what is the risk of an Arab-Kurdish conflict over the oil reserves around Kirkuk in terms of a conflict if we are not present. He said it was high. Do you agree with that?

General DEMPSEY. I might have said moderate because of my own personal contacts with both the Kurds and the Iraqis.

Senator GRAHAM. So you believe that there is a moderate risk, not a high risk, if there are no U.S. Forces policing the Kurd-Arab borderline disputes and the Kirkuk issue.

General DEMPSEY. I do. I would like to take some time to articulate why I believe that, but if you would like me to take that for the record, I would be happy to do so.

Senator GRAHAM. I would.

Now, do you believe it is smart for the United States not to have counterterrorism forces? Is it in our national security interest not to have any counterterrorism forces in Iraq?

General DEMPSEY. It is in our national security interest to continue pressure on al Qaeda wherever we find them either by ourselves or through partners.

Senator GRAHAM. But do you think the counterterrorism problem in Iraq is over?

General DEMPSEY. I do not.

Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Panetta, you have been great about this. You said there are a thousand al Qaeda in Iraq, and I know in your old job that you are very worried that they are going to reconstitute. So will you do the best you can to convince the Iraqis—and I tell you what. I am willing to get on a plane and go back myself—that they would benefit from counterterrorism partnership with the United States?

Secretary PANETTA. I have made that clear time and time again.

Senator GRAHAM. They just tell you they are not concerned about that.

Secretary PANETTA. What they tell me is that they are concerned about that. They obviously have their forces that are dealing with that.

Senator GRAHAM. Is it your testimony the Iraqis would not have 3,000 U.S. Forces? They do not want any U.S. Forces at all. They are not willing to expend the political capital to get this agreement done because they just do not see a need for U.S. Forces. Is that the Iraqi position that they have come to the point in their political military life that they just do not need us at all?

Secretary PANETTA. I think the problem was that it was very difficult to try to find out exactly—when you say the Iraqi position, what exactly the Iraqi position was at that point.

Senator GRAHAM. What is the Kurdish position in Iraq about U.S. Forces?

Secretary PANETTA. Well, I do not think there is any question they would like to—

Senator GRAHAM. So what is the Sunni speaker of the parliament's position about U.S. Forces?

Secretary PANETTA. I think the same.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, when I was with Prime Minister Maliki in May, the next day he announced that he would accept a follow-on force if other parties would agree. So how did this fall apart?

Secretary PANETTA. I heard the same statements and read the same statements. But the problem is in the negotiations that involved the Ambassador, that involved General Austin, in those discussions they never came to the point where they said we want this many troops here.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, I can tell you—and I have taken my time. I can tell you in May they had no number given to them by us. They were in the dark as late as May about what we were willing to commit to Iraq. So this is a curious outcome when you got Sunnis and Kurds on the record and the prime minister of Iraq saying he would accept a follow-on force if the others agreed. I do not know who does the

negotiation for the United States, but if I had three people saying those things, I thought I could get it over the finish line. But we are where we are.

Thank you for your service.

Senator GRAHAM. The point, Mr. Chairman, was that the Iraqis were not saying, “18,000 too many, 15,000 was too many.” That wasn’t the exchange.

Did Prime Minister Maliki tell you that he thought 18,000 were too many?

General AUSTIN. No, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. So, this was coming from the White House; this is what Chairman Dempsey said, that the numbers were cascading down, were not because the commanders were saying, “I overshot.” It’s because the political people were saying, “That’s too many,” and you kept coming down and down; and at 10,000, I think, you finally said, “That’s the lowest I can go.” The cascading effect of the numbers being reduced were not the Iraqis saying, “We can’t have all that many troops,” it was that our own White House—and they have every right to do this, by the way—was saying, “We just don’t agree with the commander’s recommendation.”

Do you remember that exchange between me and Prime Minister Maliki, in May, when we were over there, in 2011?

General AUSTIN. I do, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. He turned to me and says, “Well, how many troops are”—cause we were asked to go to Iraq—myself, Senator Lieberman, and Senator McCain—by Secretary Clinton, to see if we could push the Iraqis to make sure we had legal protections for our troops. I’m with the President on this; I wouldn’t have one troop in Afghanistan or Iraq without a status of forces agreement, that he was absolutely right to insist on that. But, when Prime Minister Maliki said, “How many are you going to recommend?” I turned to you and Ambassador Jeffrey, and you said, I believe, “We’re still working on that.” Do you recall that conversation?

General AUSTIN. Yes, sir, I do.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

I was a bit astonished, because it’s not that General Austin didn’t know what he needed, it’s just nobody would tell him what they were going to approve.

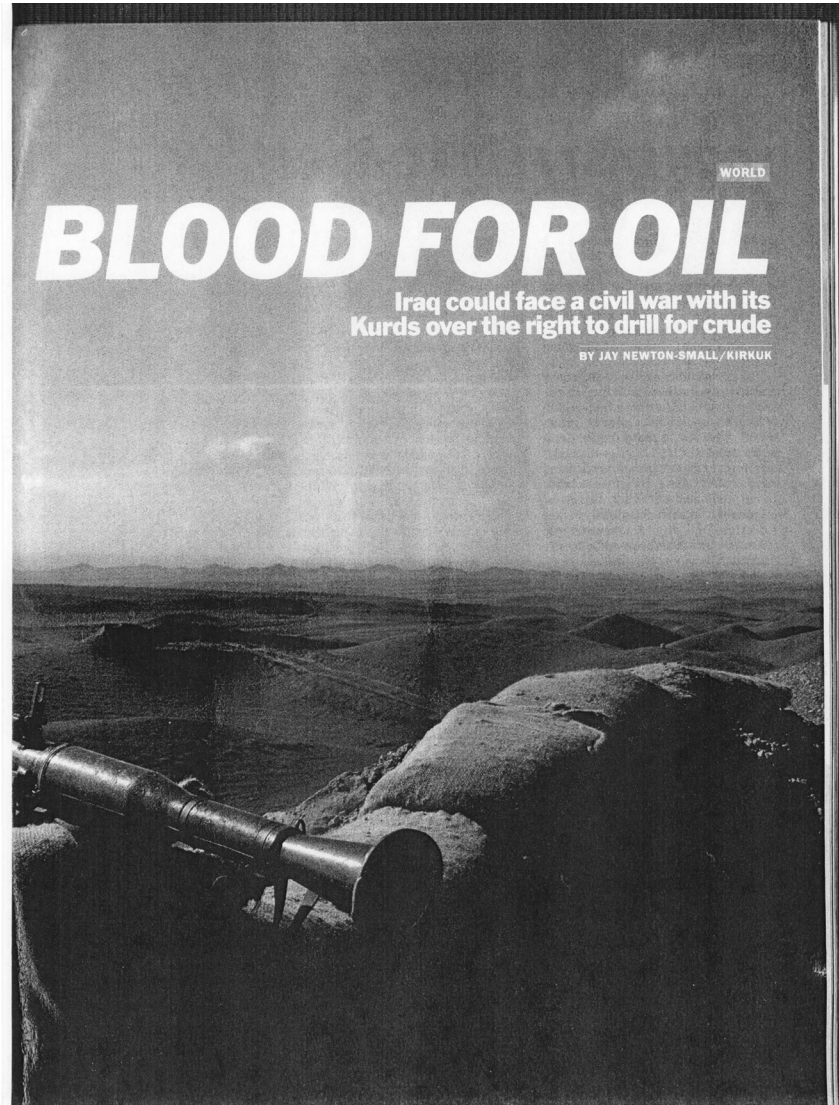
I just want people to be clear that General Austin always had a firm view that we needed—18,000 to 20,000 is what he first said, and I said, “General Austin, that may be more than the political market can bear,” because I’m not insensitive to the fatigue back here at home. So, you kept putting pen to paper. I know very well that you were making the best recommendations you could.

My problem is not with you, General Austin. You put the numbers to paper, and, at the end of the day, we have none.

I just want to put into the record a load of articles about Iraq: “Blood for Oil,” “Iraq’s Return to Bloodshed,” “Why Kurds Versus Arabs Could Be Iraq’s Next Civil War,” “Be Warned, Americans’ Withdrawal From Iraq Heralds a World of Instability.” I’d like permission to put all these articles into the record.

Senator KAINE. Without objection, they’ll go into the record.

[The information referred to follows:]



LOOK EAST FROM THE KURDISH TRENCHES

on a dusty ridge outside the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk and you can see the cause of it all: a rudimentary oil field where water wells are being sunk and sites are being cleared for drilling.

Now look south into the valley below the Kurdish positions and you can see two Iraqi army units poised to make sure that drilling never begins.

Since November, a crisis of oil, money and history has been building in the semiautonomous northern Iraqi region of Kurdistan. Some 30,000 Kurdish soldiers face just as many regular Iraqi army troops, setting the stage for a civil war in a country that has already endured more than its share. Under these lands lie an estimated 66 billion barrels of oil, enough to shift the global market for crude and alter Iraq's economic fortunes—provided the resource doesn't tear apart the country first.

Both armies arrived in Kirkuk at the end of November after a gas-station shoot-out nearby between Iraqi police and Kurdish troops left one dead and both sides furious. The forces have been tripping over each other since, in patrols through the divided city of Kirkuk and throughout the surrounding disputed territory, which is a bit larger than Kuwait. The situation has become tense for both sides. "I'm going to fight them," Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki warned his staff and allies in December. "I will use force to prevent them from working in the disputed area." With the two armies mustered in such close proximity, war may not wait; a suicide bomber killed at least 36 people and wounded more than 100 at a Kirkuk police station on Feb. 3. "Accidents happen," says Harry Schute, a former U.S. Army colonel who led U.S. forces into Kurdistan in 2003 and returned in his retirement to advise the Kurdish government on security issues. "This could blow up to be a war that no one wants."

Civil Affair

THE TINDERBOX HAS BEEN YEARS IN the making. Kurds—a nomadic Indo-European ethnic group spread across parts of Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq—have sought an independent state since 1920, with limited success. But Kurds in

northern Iraq were largely able to govern themselves from 1991 to 2003 in Iraq and had little or no contact with Baghdad. Only after the fall of Saddam Hussein, however, did the Iraqi Kurds begin to flex their muscles on energy policy, claiming the right to sign deals with foreign oil companies and drill on lands they historically claimed. When the Kurdistan Regional Government opened up to drilling in 2004 it sweetened the offer by allowing foreign oil companies to keep far more of the profits than the post-Saddam government was offering from oil fields in southern Iraq. Baghdad in 2011 threatened to cancel all its contracts with companies drilling elsewhere in the country if they signed up with the Kurds, but that didn't deter more than 50 multinationals from making deals with the north, including majors like ExxonMobil, Chevron, Total and Gazprom. "U.S. firms want to be able to work anywhere in Iraq and base their business decisions on which province or region is the most attractive for investors," says Hussain Qaragholi, president of the U.S. Business Council in Iraq, whose board includes ExxonMobil and Chevron.

Of course, oil isn't worth much unless you can ship it to the people who want to buy it, and Iraqi Kurdistan is landlocked. So last month the Kurds struck a provisional deal with neighboring Turkey to build a pipeline to carry any oil drilled on Kurdish lands—or even disputed territory—out of Iraq. There's just one problem: under the new Iraqi constitution, Baghdad controls all oil exports. And without a pipeline to move the crude to market, drilling in Kurdistan makes little sense. The result is an increasingly nasty standoff that's brought to the surface deep divisions between the Kurds and Baghdad.

The Iraqi government has threatened to forcibly halt any Kurdish exports of oil by truck—about 70,000 barrels a day head out by road to Turkey—and to stop the pipeline's construction, which is scheduled to begin later this year. Last May, al-Maliki sent President Obama a letter asking him to persuade ExxonMobil to either abandon or slow down its Kurdish activity. The appeal had little effect; Obama informed al-Maliki that he has no control over private companies, though



DIFFERENT TAKES

\$1.50

Amount of profit per barrel that the Iraqi government allows oil companies

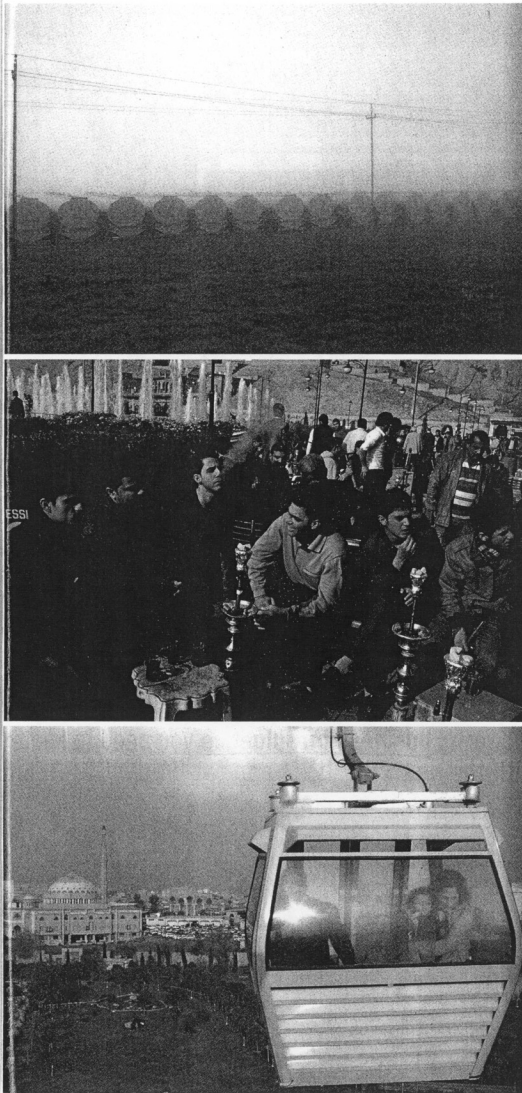
\$30.00

Amount of profit per barrel that the Kurdish government allows oil companies

the White House warned all U.S. oil firms working in Iraq that signing contracts without the approval of Baghdad exposed them to international legal risks.

The company with the most at stake is ExxonMobil, the first oil major to sign on with the Kurds in 2011. It is the only company to own contracts—three of its six Kurdish parcels—in the disputed territory. The company began exploratory work on one of those disputed plots early this year, and ExxonMobil representatives arrived in Baghdad in January to try to negotiate a peaceful solution. Those talks are ongoing. For ExxonMobil and the other oil majors, the political risk of taking sides in a civil dispute is balanced by major potential rewards. Some of the best oil fields in all of Iraq happen to be in territory that's under dispute. A 2012 International Energy Agency report predicted that with the right investment, Iraq as a whole could double oil production to 6.1 million barrels a day by 2020 and raise it to 8.3 million barrels by 2030, making it the single biggest contributor to global oil-supply growth.

But that can happen only if Baghdad and the Kurds can reconcile their differences, and by late November, it became clear just how dire the dispute



A separate people From top: tankers are lined up to export oil; young Kurdish men smoke shisha in Erbil; a Kurdish family rides a gondola high over the city

was. An estimated 60,000 Kurdish and Iraqi troops marched to Kirkuk, taking up positions across the disputed territory. On Dec. 19, the *peshmerga*, as the Kurdish troops are called, fired on an Iraqi helicopter. The disputed region has been hit by a wave of sectarian bombings in the past month that have killed more than 90 people and injured more than 500—violence that alarmed State Department officials. Administration officials, including U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Robert Beecroft, have stepped in to try negotiating a settlement, but no timeline has yet been set for troops to withdraw. On top of everything else, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd and an experienced peacemaker, has been incapacitated since suffering a stroke on Dec. 17.

Battle Lines

DESPITE THE DRAMA, WAR SHOULD STILL be avoidable, in part because peace would be a lot more profitable. Until they can start exporting their oil in bulk, the Kurds remain reliant on Baghdad for revenue. When the new Iraqi government was formed, the Kurds were given 17% of all oil revenue annually, which today accounts for nearly all the Kurdistan Regional Government's budget. Turkey, thirsty for oil and concerned with its own Kurdish population, prefers to maintain the peace. For its part, Baghdad has its hands full with an outbreak of Sunni violence in recent weeks spilling over from neighboring Syria, including mass protests and a bombing of Shi'ite pilgrims after al-Maliki moved against his Sunni Finance Minister Rafia al-Issawi.

Still, nerves are so tense that even a minor blunder could spark a war that neither side really desires. Back in Kirkuk, a Kurdish soldier named Welî Abdulla stands on that dusty ridge looking down through the row of machine guns and rocket-propelled-grenade launchers aimed at his fellow Iraqis below. In between the weapons someone has propped a solitary rose and a tiny Kurdish flag. "We do not want to fight," he says, grasping the rifle slung diagonally across his chest and glaring down the hill. "But if we have to fight, we will defeat the Iraqi army." There will be oil—or there will be blood. ■

The Washington Post

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Iraq's return to bloodshed

By Kimberly Kagan and Frederick W. Kagan, Published: February 8

Kimberly Kagan is president of the Institute for the Study of War. Frederick W. Kagan is director of the Critical Threats Project and a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

Eighteen days of protests in Egypt in 2011 electrified the world. But more than twice that many days of protest in Iraq have gone almost unnoticed in the United States. Iraqi army troops killed five Sunni protesters in Fallujah on Jan. 25, after a month of anti-government protests in Anbar, Nineveh and Salahuddin provinces and elsewhere for which thousands turned out. Al-Qaeda in Iraq and Iranian-backed Shiite militias are re-mobilizing. Iraq teeters on the brink of renewed insurgency and, potentially, civil war.

This crisis matters for America. U.S. vital interests that have been undermined over the past year include preventing Iraq from becoming a haven for al-Qaeda and destabilizing the region by becoming a security vacuum or a dictatorship that inflames sectarian civil war; containing Iranian influence in the region; and ensuring the free flow of oil to the global market.

While tensions have risen over the past two years, the triggers for recent eruptions are clear. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, a Shiite, had the bodyguards of Finance Minister Rafie al-Issawi, who is Sunni, arrested for alleged terrorist activities on Dec. 20 — almost exactly one year after he ordered the arrest of Sunni Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi's security detail. Hashimi fled to Turkey and is unlikely to return soon to Iraq, where he was sentenced to death after Maliki demanded his trial in absentia for murder and financing terrorism.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/iraqs-sectarian-tensions-erupt-anew-into-bloods...> 2/13/2013

The threat to Issawi, a moderate technocrat from Anbar, galvanized Iraqi Sunnis, who rightly saw Maliki's move as sectarian and an assault on government participation by Sunnis not under the prime minister's thumb. Three days after the arrests, demonstrations broke out in Ramadi, Fallujah and Samarra. Three days after that, a large protest closed the highway from Baghdad to Syria and Jordan. The popular resistance spread to Mosul on Dec. 27.

These protests erupted during a constitutional crisis and as an expanding Arab-Kurd conflict has become increasingly militarized. Iraqi President Jalal Talabani was incapacitated by a stroke on Dec. 17 and has been out of the country for treatment. Iraq's constitution specifies a line of succession — but with one vice president in exile and the other a Shiite and obvious Maliki proxy, Iraq has been, in effect, operating without a president. Political processes that require presidential involvement have been paralyzed, including moving forward with long-standing efforts by Sunnis and Kurds to hold a parliamentary vote of no-confidence in Maliki.

Talabani had been the critical link holding Baghdad and Kurdistan together since tensions rose following a 10-day standoff between Iraqi army units and Kurdish pesh merga troops in October, after Maliki sent the army toward the disputed city of Kirkuk. That move followed a series of skirmishes and mobilizations along the "Green Line" separating Kurdistan from Arab Iraq and a series of attacks in the area by al-Qaeda in Iraq.

The recent protests underscore the collapse of the inclusive political accommodation reached in 2007, which had been reconfirmed by the formation of a grand Sunni-Shiite-Kurd coalition government after parliamentary elections in 2010. By November 2012, Maliki had evolved to openly discussing his intention to form a "majoritarian government" that would exclude the most important Sunni representatives. In mid-December he participated in creating a Shiite grand alliance as the launching pad for that government. The principal Sunni political leaders, including Issawi, parliamentary speaker Osama al-Nujaifi and Anbari tribal leader Ahmed abu Risha announced their intention to form their own coalition. In short, Iraqi politics was re-fragmenting along sectarian and ethnic lines even before the protests began.

Understood in this context, the Iraqi army's killing of protesters in Fallujah last month is a watershed event similar to the destruction of the Askariya shrine in Samarra in February 2006, though the crisis will not escalate as quickly. Sunni-Shiite tensions have hitherto played out in political forums. The key actors in today's crisis are not the Sunni political leaders but, rather, Anbari tribal leaders, including Ali Hatem Ali Suleiman, one of the most powerful leaders of Iraq's largest Sunni tribe. Suleiman and fellow leaders of the Dulaim tribe were essential to engineering the Anbar Awakening in 2007 and Sunni participation in the government, for which they rejected al-Qaeda in Iraq and renounced violence against the state. They responded to the killings of protesters last month by threatening open war against the state for the first time since 2007. So far at least, they have restrained protesters and resisted violent confrontation.

For his part, Maliki has sought to deescalate the conflict and to mollify protesters. Tehran has also been working — to persuade Iraq's Sadrists, whom Maliki has alienated in his consolidation of power, to abandon their support for their Sunni brethren. Their combined efforts appear to be working: The Sadrist Bloc, which had refused Maliki's request for suggestions to replace Issawi and other Sunni politicians, has put forth a substitute finance minister.

These efforts, ostensibly toward political resolution, actually increase the likelihood of sectarian war by continuing the marginalization of Sunni political leaders without addressing Sunni tribes' core grievances — and by re-creating a Shiite front that had splintered.

Al-Qaeda in Iraq has already taken advantage of this situation through its front group, the Islamic State of Iraq, which deployed combat teams in Fallujah last month that targeted Iraqi army positions and killed several soldiers. The jihadists' black flags have appeared at Sunni protests and memorial ceremonies for the fallen. The group is back in the havens it held in 2006. If Maliki does not allow proper Sunni representation in government, al-Qaeda will gain greater popular tolerance and foreign support.

Over the past year, the situation in Iraq has become explosive while sectarian sentiment and armed violence in neighboring nations have escalated dramatically. Americans have become accustomed to watching Iraq approach the precipice and draw back. But circumstances have changed with the withdrawal of all U.S. forces and Maliki's year-long efforts to intimidate his opponents through political, judicial and military maneuvers. If Maliki does not accept many of the protesters' reasonable demands and allow meaningful Sunni participation in government, prospects for stopping Iraq's descent into sectarian conflict are grim.

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Wednesday, Jul. 22, 2009

TIME

Why Kurds vs. Arabs Could Be Iraq's Next Civil War

By Andrew Lee Butters

With a projected capacity of about 40,000 bbl. a day, the new oil refinery inaugurated on July 18 by the Kurdish regional government of northern Iraq is modest even by the standards of Iraq's dilapidated oil industry. But its significance shouldn't be underestimated: in Kurdish minds, the region's ability to refine the oil it pumps is a vital step toward deepening its autonomy from the Arab-majority remainder of Iraq. ([Read "The Reasons Behind Big Oil Declining Iraq's Riches."](#))

Until recently, Iraqi Kurdistan had no refineries of its own, and though the area is sitting on a huge pool of oil, it had to rely on gasoline supplies from elsewhere in Iraq, Turkey or Iran. Fearful of giving Iraq's ethnic Kurdish minority any control over the country's most precious resource, Saddam Hussein had not only declined to build refineries in the region; he made sure Iraq's oil pipelines bypassed Kurdish areas, and his army forcibly removed much of the Kurdish population from Kirkuk — the most important oil-producing area in the north — and repopulated the city with Arabs from the south. ([Watch a video about the gas shortage in Iraq.](#))

Since Saddam's demise, however, the autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is steadily developing an independent oil industry in northern Iraq. It has discovered and begun to develop new oil fields inside its boundaries, and has entered production-sharing deals with foreign oil companies that were made without the consent of the federal government in Baghdad. Those deals have raised suspicions among Iraq's Arab-dominated government that KRG is not simply taking on more of the prerogatives of sovereign statehood but is actually laying the economic infrastructure for independence.

For their part, Kurdish officials suspect that Baghdad's failure to pass a national oil law (which would give Iraq's provincial governments greater control over the industry in their territory) and its failure to press ahead with a referendum to settle Kurdish claims to Kirkuk and other disputed areas are signs that the Arab majority plans to settle matters in its favor. ([Read "The U.S. Military: Mediating Between Kurds and Arabs."](#))

Such is the enmity, in fact, that KRG's president, Massoud Barzani, and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki haven't spoken in over a year. Recently, KRG Prime Minister Nechirwan Barzani said that Arab-

Kurdish relations in Iraq are at their lowest point since Saddam was in power. With Iraq's Sunni-Shi'ite sectarian violence largely in check, the Kurdish-Arab dispute has become the most worrisome fault line in Iraq.

Ever since the U.S. invasion, the Kurds of northern Iraq have enjoyed many of the trappings of sovereignty. Kurds have their own parliament and executive government, plus an 80,000-strong army (the Pesh Merga militia) and control over their borders, which Baghdad-controlled security forces are not allowed to enter. Despite the fact that the vast majority of Kurds want independence from Iraq, their leaders have proceeded with caution, mindful of the risks. Their small, landlocked region is surrounded by neighbors — Turkey, Syria, Iran — whose own restive Kurdish minorities make them hostile to the prospect of an independent Kurdish state emerging in Iraq. (See why Arab-Kurd animosity threatens Iraq's fragile peace.)

While the rest of Iraq was in the grip of insurgency and sectarian civil war, the Kurds quietly advanced their economic-development policies, building an international airport, business hotels and hydro-electric dams and — most important — doing oil deals. They explained this autonomous engagement with international oil markets on the grounds that they couldn't wait for the barely functional Iraqi state to get its house in order. Indeed, such is the dismal state of Iraq's oil production (not yet back at pre-invasion levels, which were a fraction of its full potential) that in June, the Iraqi government allowed the Kurds to begin pumping oil extracted from newly developed Kurdish oil fields through federal pipelines for export sale to Turkey. (Currently, only Iraqi government companies can sell oil, the revenue from which is shared among the regions.)

Kurds have also grown impatient with Baghdad's stance on disputed territories. According to the Iraqi constitution, the central government should hold a referendum in the Kurdish-populated areas of four Iraqi governorates in northern Iraq (including Kirkuk) to determine whether they should remain under Baghdad's control or become part of the KRG. But even before that takes place, the constitution commits the Iraqi government to a potentially explosive reversing of Saddam's "Arabization" policies in these areas, moving Arabs out and Kurds in.

The Iraqi government has postponed the referendum several times from its original date in 2007, citing the understandable excuse that it could spark a new civil war between Kurds and Arabs.

But now that Iraq's government is increasingly stable, Kurdish leaders fear that Baghdad is merely playing for time, allowing the Iraqi military to grow in strength and capability as the U.S. moves to draw down, allowing the Iraqi government eventually to settle the issue the old-fashioned way: with tanks. Already, Kurdish and Iraqi forces have nearly clashed on several occasions in the disputed territories.

Last month, Kurdish lawmakers passed a regional constitution that unilaterally laid claim to the disputed territories and the oil resources in them. Though some Iraqi officials have said that the constitution amounts to a Kurdish declaration of independence, Kurdish leaders are pushing for a referendum to be held on the constitution as early as August.

Meanwhile, the domestic politics of both the Kurdish region and the wider Arab Iraq are pushing the two sides toward confrontation. In Kurdistan, where parliamentary elections will be held on June 25, a new party called Change is mounting the first significant challenge to the duopoly of Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, led by Iraqi President Jalal Talabani. The new party is gaining ground by tapping into growing dissatisfaction with government corruption and nepotism. Although the parties credited with delivering today's de facto independence are likely to win, they have moved to strengthen their position by sharpening their tone toward Baghdad as the election approaches.

Baghdad has troubles of its own, which creates an incentive for Kurd-bashing. Most Iraqi Arabs have even less faith in their corrupt leadership class than Kurds have in theirs. And as al-Maliki consolidates his grip on power and styles himself as Iraq's new strongman, he may find that promising to push back against Kurdish efforts to dismember Iraq could help rally Arab Iraqis, both Sunni and Shi'ite, behind him. Hey, it worked for Saddam.

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Rising Strife Threatens Tenuous Iraqi Stability



Azhar Shahid/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

Police forces removed the body of man killed in a clash with the police at a checkpoint in Ramadi, Iraq, in Anbar Province.

by MICHAEL S. SCHMIDT
Published: January 22, 2012

BAGHDAD — Violence and political instability have escalated across Iraq since the withdrawal of American forces, as political and sectarian factions have fought for power and influence in a struggle that, within weeks, has threatened to undo the stability that allowed the pullout in the first place.

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 The most recent turbulence came over the weekend when a Shiite governor threatened to blockade an important commercial arterial road from Baghdad to the semi-autonomous Kurdish region in the north if Kurdish officials did not hand over Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi to government authorities. The Shiite-led national government has accused Mr. Hashimi, a Sunni, of running a sectarian death squad.

On Sunday, the advocacy group **Human Rights Watch** said the Americans had left behind a "budding police state," with the country's Shiite leadership increasingly ruling by force and fear. Insurgent attacks have surged across the country, and as security forces loyal to the Prime Minister **Nuri Kamal al-Maliki**, a Shiite, have pressed a campaign against Sunni politicians, arresting several in the past week.

The turmoil has come at a time when Iraqis had hoped their leaders would be emboldened by their new independence to tackle the nation's multitude of problems — finally confronting the social, economic and religious divisions that were papered over by the presence of American troops.

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But while there remains hope that Iraqis can still unite, the country is far from the "sovereign, stable and self-reliant" place President Obama described it as last month.

"Before the United States withdrew, our politicians were saying that we are a government of national unity, and that we are a democracy, and that is all they talked about," said Dr. Basam Edis, 45, a physician from the northern city of Mosul. "Now people are wondering if militias will take control of the cities again. It is all happening because our politicians are now fighting for a bigger piece of the pie."

He added, "Our politicians have become vampires who do not care about us."

The worst break came when Mr. Maliki ordered Mr. Hashimi's arrest last month. In response, Sunni politicians boycotted Parliament and cabinet meetings, bringing an already unproductive political process to a halt. Sunni-majority provinces began talking about greater autonomy or even breaking away from the central government.

Amid the paralysis, Mr. Maliki publicly threatened to release secret information that he said would implicate politicians in terrorist plots. Then, last week, Mr. Maliki stripped the boycotting Sunni ministers of their posts. Sunni politicians responded by calling him a dictator.

The political dysfunction has become so acute that it is considered a positive sign that Shiite and Sunni leaders are at least arguing about who will attend meetings to discuss where a next round of meetings will be held. Those meetings would then aim to resolve the political crisis.

"All these years, the United States stayed here trying to polish the political process so they would have an excuse to leave Iraq victorious," said William Warda, an analyst in Baghdad. "But the fact is, they left a very shaky political structure, one that has a very weak foundation. It is like a building standing on a match. What has happened since the withdrawal has proved this even more."

The criticisms from Human Rights Watch were released in their annual report on human rights in various countries. The group said that the Iraqi government had significantly restricted freedom of expression in the nation over the past year and that security forces had intimidated, beaten and detained activists, demonstrators and journalists.

"After the formal withdrawal last month, the political clampdown has intensified, and Maliki has threatened his political opponents with jail," the group's Middle East director, Sarah Leah Whitson, said in an interview.

At the same time, Al Qaeda has increased its attacks while shifting its focus toward Iran's influence in Iraq. On three different days in the past month, the daily death toll rose past 60, and on more than a dozen days the toll was more than 10. Without the help of American Special Operations forces, the Iraqi military and police forces have appeared unable to curb attacks on religious pilgrims, civilians and security officers.

"The United States withdrew rapidly after being repeatedly attacked by our mujahedeen in order to save their military from a quagmire," Al Qaeda in Iraq said in a recent posting on its Web site. "The American military withdrawal is a defeat in every sense of the word, but the war is not over because Iran is trying to establish a Shiite buffer zone in Iraq and extend its Islamic revolution to Medina and Mecca," it said, referring to Muslim holy sites in Saudi Arabia.

Al Qaeda said the Iranian government, which trained and financed militias in Iraq involved in sectarian violence and attacks on American troops, had helped destroy Iraq by "killing the best families, the elite, the educated."

As problems have persisted inside Iraq, its leaders have struggled to deal with neighbors, including Turkey, one of the largest foreign investors.

According to members of Mr. Maliki's bloc, the Turkish prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, called Iraqi politicians about 10 days ago and told them that they should peacefully deal with one another as they try to resolve their differences.



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Around the same time, Mr. Erdogan called Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. to express his concern about the tensions between Shiites and Sunnis in Iraq, warning that the crisis could lead to a sectarian war.

The calls angered Mr. Maliki because he felt that Mr. Erdogan, a Sunni, was criticizing how he was dealing with the country's affairs. In a television interview, Mr. Maliki said that Mr. Erdogan was acting as though he controlled Iraq, and said that Mr. Erdogan should stop meddling.

The issue has lingered. Last week, the head of Iran's Quds Force was reported to have said that Iraq and southern Lebanon were under Iranian control. In response, top Kurdish, Sunni and Shiite politicians in Iraq called on Mr. Maliki to reprimand the Iranians as he had the Turks.

"I expected a lot of wisdom and a sense of calm between the Iraqi officials, especially after the United States troops withdrew," said Abdul Baqi Abboud, 59, a teacher from Basra. "But the contrary has happened, and they have acted recklessly and without a sense of responsibility. They have proved that they are teenagers, and we will now expect more problems."

Reporting was contributed by Yasir Ghazi, Duraid Adnan and Omar al-Jawoshy from Baghdad, and an Iraqi employee of The New York Times from Mosul.

A version of this article appeared in print on January 23, 2012, on page A4 of the New York edition with the headline: Rising Strife Threatens Iraqi Stability.

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For Iraq, Year Ends the Way It Began, With Guns Drawn

Officials in Baghdad, including American diplomats, are trying to mediate a dispute with the Kurdish government in the north.

By TIM ARANGO and DURAJID ADNAN
Published: December 3, 2012

BAGHDAD — It was just the sort of episode that observers have long worried could provoke a serious conflict: when federal police agents sought to arrest a Kurdish man last month in the city of Tuz Khurmatu in the Kurdish north of the country, a gunfight ensued with security men loyal to the Kurdish regional government.

When the bullets stopped flying, a civilian bystander was dead and at least eight others were wounded.

In response, the Iraqi prime minister, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, rushed troop reinforcements to the area, and Masoud Barzani, the president of Iraq's semiautonomous northern Kurdish region, dispatched his own soldiers, known as the Peshmerga, and the forces remain there in a tense standoff.

Almost a year after the departure of the United States military closed a painful chapter in the histories of both nations, Iraq finds itself in a familiar position: full-blown crisis mode, this time with two standing armies, one loyal to the central government in Baghdad and the other commanded by the Kurdish regional government in the north, staring at each other through gun sights, as officials

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Asad Lashari/Reuters

Kurdish security forces, called the Peshmerga, have been in a standoff with the Iraqi Army near Kirkuk, a

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northern city claimed by Arabs and Kurds.

in Baghdad, including American diplomats and an American general, try to mediate.

Like bookends, Iraq is closing the year just as it began, with a major confrontation that has exposed sectarian and ethnic rifts that hundreds of billions of American dollars and thousands of lives have not reconciled. At the outset of the year, it was the sectarian divide between Shiites and Sunnis that was on vivid display when the government of Mr. Maliki, a Shiite, issued an arrest warrant on terrorism charges against the Sunni vice president, Tariq al-Hashemi.

"The year started with the warrant against Hashemi and is ending with tanks on the edge of the Kurdish mountains," said Sarmed al-Tai, a columnist for the newspaper Al Mada, which ran a story on Sunday on the anniversary of the American military's departure, describing the exit as "leaving a large vacuum and a significant deterioration of the national partnership."

As American troops left at the end of 2011, Mr. Maliki sent tanks to surround Mr. Hashemi's home in the Green Zone of Baghdad. An arrest warrant led to Mr. Hashemi's self-imposed exile, first in the Kurdish north and then Turkey; a trial in absentia followed, then the handing down of not one but two death sentences. Mr. Hashemi now lives in a suburban high-rise apartment in Istanbul, where he is protected by Turkish guards and remains defiant.

"Legally, I am still a vice president," he said in a recent interview, adding, "I do have a lot of time to look after the future of my country."

The latest crisis is an ethnic one, between Kurds and Arabs, and the consequences are potentially more serious because the Kurds, in contrast to the Sunni Arabs, enjoy a measure of autonomy in the north, control their own security forces and have longstanding ambitions for independence.

Tuz Khurmat, the city where the clash occurred, is of mixed ethnicity, where Turkmen, Arabs and Kurds compete for power. It lies in a region around the city of Kirkuk, an area of vast potential oil wealth that is at the center of a longstanding power struggle between Kurds and Arabs. As part of his brutal rule, Saddam Hussein moved tens of thousands of Arabs into the area, to dilute what was historically a Kurdish stronghold. After his fall, thousands of displaced Kurds demanded the right to return to the homes they had been driven from, creating tensions that have yet to subside.

The latest crisis began after Mr. Maliki sought to consolidate his control over security in Kirkuk, where Kurdish and Iraqi forces have shared responsibility for security, and it reached a critical stage after the gunfight.

"This is a red line for the Kurds," said Joost R. Hiltermann, an Iraq expert at the International Crisis Group. "Maliki is essentially taking control of the police. And the Kurds will never give up the city."

Efforts at mediation, backed by the Americans, have so far failed to reach resolution. On Monday, Mr. Maliki and Mr. Barzani sent more troops to the area, with each side accusing the other of doing so first. Mr. Maliki warned the Kurds of the "seriousness of their behavior" and warned of its "consequences." A spokesman for the Peshmerga said, "Anything is possible."

1 | 2 [NEXT PAGE »](#)

Tim Arango reported from Baghdad, and Duraïd Adnan from Baghdad and Kirkuk, Iraq.

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The Kurds (Iraqi Kurdistan)

Updated: Dec. 6, 2012

The Kurds are a distinct ethnic group without a nation of their own.

About 25 to 30 million live in the Middle East. Throughout history, the majority inhabited the mountains and plateau regions where Iran, Iraq and Turkey meet. About half the Kurds live in Turkey, accounting for an estimated 20 percent of the total population there. There are believed to be approximately 5.7 million Kurds in Iran and about 1.5 million in Syria. There also important communities of Kurds in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden.

America's involvement with Iraq, where Kurds make up about 20 percent of the population, has led to the creation of a semi-autonomous region that is the closest thing to a Kurdish state since the end of World War I.

But while the Kurds of northern Iraq have prospered, the growth of their power there has been at the price of the dream of true independence. And while they have exploited their role as holding the balance of power in a country divided between a Shiite Muslim majority and a resentful Sunni minority, their position will remain vulnerable as long as Iraq lurches from political crisis to crisis.

On top of the tensions in Iraq and long-simmering Kurdish autonomy movements in Iran and Turkey, the civil war in Syria is presenting the Kurds with a new set of hopes and dangers.

The Kurdish militias in northern Syria had hoped to stay out of the fighting there. They were focused on preparing to secure an autonomous enclave for themselves within Syria should the rebels succeed in toppling the government. But slowly, incoherently, they have been dragged into the fighting and now have one goal in mind, their autonomy, which also means the balkanization of the state.

Analysts fear this combustible environment could presage a bloody ethnic and sectarian conflict that will resonate far beyond Syria's borders. There is concern that Iraq's Kurds, who are already training Syrian Kurds to fight, may jump into the Syria fight to protect their ethnic brethren. That could also pull in Turkey, which fears that an autonomous Kurdish region in Syria would become a haven for Kurdish militants to carry out cross-border attacks in the Kurdish areas in southeastern Turkey.

A Standoff Between Kurds and the Iraqi Government

Meanwhile, in Iraq, as 2012 drew to a close, violence erupted in a standoff between the northern Kurds and the Baghdad government. The crisis began after Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, the Iraqi prime minister, sought to consolidate his control over security in the city of Kirkuk, where Kurdish and Iraqi forces have shared responsibility for security. In November, federal police agents sought to arrest a Kurdish man, and a gunfight ensued with security men loyal to the Kurdish regional government.

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Defying Common View, Some Syrian Kurds Fight Assad

By C. J. CHIVERS. Sabnem Arsu contributed reporting from Antakya, Turkey.

Thousands have taken up arms on the rebels' side, saying that they have also suffered under President Bashar al-Assad.

January 23, 2013, Wednesday

MORE ON KURDS AND: KURDISTAN WORKERS' PARTY, FREE SYRIAN ARMY, ASSAD, BASHAR AL-, MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA UNREST (2010-), KURDS, TURKEY, SYRIA

The Kurds Navigator

A list of resources from around the Web about the Kurds as selected by researchers and editors of The New York Times.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE RESOURCES

- Kurdistan (Iraq) Regional Government
- Kurdistan investment information
- Kurdish Institute of Paris
- Kurdish Encyclopedia
- American Kurdish Information Network
- News and background.
- AKA Kurdistan
- Cultural background.
- Timeline since 1918

FROM THE COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

- Tensions Rise in Kurdish North Daily Analysis, Feb. 8, 2008
- Turkey's Iraq Surge Dec. 18, 2007
- Inside the Kurdish Worker's Party Backgrounder: Oct. 19, 2007
- The Iraqi Kurdish Question April 23, 2007

FROM THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

- The Brewing Battle Over Kirkuk July 18, 2006

OTHER COVERAGE

- Who Are The Kurds? A Washington Post report with background information about the Kurds.
- "The Survival of Saddam: The Kurds' Story", Frontline

BOOKS

- "Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence" By Aliza Marcus [2007]
- A modern history of the Kurds By David McDowall [2000]
- No Friends but the Mountains: The Tragic History of the Kurds By John Bulloch and Harvey Morris [1992]

DOCUMENTS

- The Kurds in Post-Saddam Iraq Congressional Research Service, Sept. 25, 2008
- Is Iraqi Kurdistan a Good Ally? American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, January 2008

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Iraq-Kurd deal offers hope, but challenges remain

9:55a.m. EST December 15, 2012



(Photo: Enad Matti, AP)

BAGHDAD (AP) — A deal brokered by Iraq's president this week gives the central government and the Kurdish minority an opportunity to step back from a military standoff that has threatened to tip the country back into armed conflict just a year after the last American troops left.

The Kurds, a different ethnic group from Iraq's majority Arabs, have their own armed fighters and enjoy considerable control over an increasingly prosperous enclave in Iraq's mountainous north. Thursday's accord calls for the eventual withdrawal of Iraqi military and Kurdish fighters who in recent weeks moved into disputed areas where both seek to extend their influence.

There is no timetable governing the pullout of troops, tanks and artillery on either side, meaning tensions could quickly flare back up. Distrust remains high, and the two sides are far from reaching a lasting deal over how to manage energy resources and divvy up the growing profits oil brings in.

"This is only the symptom," Martin Kobler, the U.N. envoy to Iraq, said of the military standoff in an interview this week. "We have to go to the root. And the root is the Arab-Kurdish understanding. ... Distribution of wealth in this country is distribution of power, period."

The dispute that has played out over the past month shows just how unstable Iraq remains nearly a decade after the U.S.-led invasion, and injects an added level of uncertainty into a Middle East grappling with the potential collapse of Syria, on Iraq's doorstep.

A shootout between Iraqi police and Kurdish guards in the disputed northern city of Tuz Khormato kicked off the most recent bout of brinkmanship in mid-November. One civilian was killed and several police officers were wounded in the gun battle, the first deadly clash between the two sides in years.

Both sides responded by moving additional troops into the disputed areas. The buildup happened after Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki created a new military command overseeing security forces in contested areas bordering the Kurdish region. Kurds saw that as a provocation.

Tensions spiked earlier this week when the president of the Kurdish region appeared on television inspecting his green camouflage-clad troops near Kirkuk, an oil-rich city outside the Kurds' autonomous enclave that has long been seen as a likely flashpoint for ethnic conflict. Massoud Barzani was shown alongside one of his sons, who was outfitted in full combat gear.

Iraqi Arabs bristled at the symbolism of the visit, which drew barbed comparisons to ousted dictator Saddam Hussein. Yassin Majid, an Iraqi lawmaker allied with al-Maliki, was among the most vocal.

"Barzani's visit to Kirkuk was meant to send a message of war to all Iraqis. ... This reminds us of Saddam when he used to take his sons while visiting military units on the front lines," Majid said. "Barzani is acting like the president of a neighboring country to Iraq and ... he is pushing things toward war."

Despite the bluster, both sides benefit from not allowing the standoff to spiral into a shooting war.

Full-blown fighting would spook the foreign investors who have flocked to the Kurds' self-rule region. It would also set back the central government's efforts to restore stability and security after years of violence.

Those realizations may have helped push Barzani and al-Maliki to agree to Thursday's deal, which calls on both sides to halt all media campaigns that could lead to more tension and work toward eventually withdrawing their military forces from disputed areas.

Under the plan, committees will be set up to create security forces made up of local inhabitants — a process that could prove tricky because it will have to balance competing ethnic and sectarian claims.

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, himself a Kurd, helped negotiate the accord.

Ali al-Moussawi, a spokesman for al-Maliki, said he is optimistic but noted that the "real test will be the actual withdrawal of the deployed forces." The

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2012/12/15/iraq-kurd-deal/1771149/>

2/13/2013

Kurds likewise remain cautious about the issue of security forces for the disputed areas.

"This issue is sensitive and it needs work on the tiniest details so that any agreement, if reached, would guarantee that what has happened recently would not be repeated," the Kurdistan Regional Government said in a statement.

The remaining risks are real. Iraqi and Kurdish officials, as well as foreign diplomats, fear that a miscalculation by a single soldier on either side might spark a firefight that could escalate.

The American military kept tensions between the two sides in check over much of the past decade. But the last American troops left on Dec. 18, 2011 — except for a small number of personnel attached to the U.S. Embassy that are responsible for facilitating Iraqi arms purchases and training Iraqis to use the weapons.

"After 2011, Iraqi politics are operating under their own logic again," said Toby Dodge, an analyst at the International Institute for Strategic Studies think tank in London. "Al-Maliki's consolidating and expanding (power). The Kurds are the last autonomous force that stands in his way."

American military commanders were aware of the risks of Arab-Kurd friction, which they described as one of the biggest threats to Iraq's security in the years before the U.S. pullout. Concerns about ethnic violence prompted the U.S. to create checkpoints jointly run by American, Iraqi and Kurdish forces in the disputed areas, effectively forcing the two sides to work together.

In recent weeks, American officials have pressed the Iraqi government and the Kurds to stop their troop movements and provocative statements while working toward some type of agreement.

Troops from both sides faced off near the Syrian border over the summer too, but American observers viewed the latest standoff as more worrying.

"There's an intensity here that wasn't present back in July on the Syrian border," said a U.S. Embassy official, who was not authorized to speak publicly about the matter so insisted on anonymity. "It's an on-the-ground form of negotiation that's really risky."

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Conflicts Brew Between Kurds, Arabs In Iraq

by KELLY MCEVERS

November 26, 2012 3:00 PM

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Arab-Kurd skirmishes in southern Iraq late last week injured dozens of people and killed at least one. Now troops from both sides are escalating and tensions are high again. This all comes as Kurdistan president Massoud Barzani battles Iraqi Central government Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. Analysts say Barzani has been emboldened by independent oil contracts, the increasing support of Turkey, and ongoing events in Syria.

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MELISSA BLOCK, HOST:

And now to Iraq, where it's been almost a year since American troops pulled out. The U.S. had hoped to leave a few thousand soldiers behind, but couldn't strike a deal with the Iraqi government. The fear was, without U.S. troops to mediate, lingering conflicts between Arabs and Kurds would escalate. Well, that fear now seems to be coming true.

NPR's Kelly McEvers sent this report from northern Iraq, where a small skirmish has sparked a major escalation.

KELLY MCEVERS, BYLINE: So we're standing here, along a pretty major thoroughfare. We're about - what, 70 kilometers south of the city of Kirkuk. This area right here, Tuz Khurmatu, is where the trouble started a few days back. We're about to talk to a man who

owns a restaurant here, where we're standing, and a bakery just up the road. He says he saw what happened.

ABBAS SAEED MOHAMMAD: (Speaking foreign language)

MCEVERS: The restaurant owner is Abbas Saeed Mohammad. He says the latest troubles between Arabs and Kurds started a little more than a week ago, when a carload of guys stopped for gas along this road, but refused to pay. The gas seller was a Kurd. The guys in the car were Arabs, who claimed to work for the federal police.

MOHAMMAD: (Through translator) And then one of the federal police took out his gun and pointed it at his head. They say, 'I'll shoot you dead if you ask for money.'

MCEVERS: Kurdish bodyguards, posted on a roof nearby, saw the confrontation; and shot at the Arabs in the car.

MOHAMMAD: (Through translator) And - you know, everybody started to shoot, after the first bullet was shot...

MCEVERS: Ten people were injured, and one passerby was killed. In another place, this incident might have been contained. But this is the so-called disputed territory of Iraq, where Arabs, Kurds and Turkmen live side by side - not always happily. For months, Kurdish and Arab leaders have been sparring at the national level. The president of the semi-autonomous Kurdish region, Massoud Barzani, tried - but failed - to oust Iraq's Arab prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, earlier this year. Then, Maliki's forces opened a command center for the central government's troops in the disputed territory. Kurds saw this as an encroachment, and answered back with threats of their own troop buildup. Then came the shooting at Tuz Khurmatu.

(SOUNDBITE OF VEHICLES)

MCEVERS: On our way into the town, we saw Arab troops - from Baghdad - heading into Kirkuk. And over the weekend, Kurdish officials released a video of their own tanks heading into Kirkuk, too.

(SOUNDBITE OF CROWD CHATTER)

MCEVERS: At this press conference in Tuz Khurmatu, local officials - representing Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen - hold hands to show they're unified at the local level, and they don't want any trouble. But

it seems that the local leaders have little say in the matter. Saad al Mutallabi is part of the ruling, Arab-dominated party in Baghdad. He says Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani is emboldened by the presence of oil and gas in Kurdistan; and by contracts with super-giants like Exxon Mobile.

SAAD AL-MUTALLABI: And the thing that he doesn't understand - that one artillery shell that lands close to Exxon Mobil, Exxon Mobil will leave the country.

MCEVERS: That sounds like a threat, I say.

AL-MUTALLABI: Well, if it's - I think Iraqi people will retaliate when they see that their national interest is at risk.

MCEVERS: The question is: Is all this tough talk from Arabs and Kurds real threats, or just bluster? Joost Hiltermann, of the International Crisis Group, says it's mainly bluster. He says Kurdish leader Barzani has been emboldened by the oil contracts, but also by better ties with Iraq's neighbor Turkey. But he says Barzani still relies on Maliki's central government, for a chunk of Kurdistan's budget. And despite possible Kurdish gains in nearby Syria, Barzani's dream of an independent Kurdistan is still way off.

JOOST HILTERMAN: The Kurds will make progress in the current period. They can take advantage of the new opportunities created in the region - in Syria and in Iraq, and in Turkey. But I don't think that independence will be the result - at least, not now.

MCEVERS: Kurdish and Arab military leaders tentatively agreed today to pull their troops back to previous positions. But the restaurant owner back in Tuz Khurmatu, is not optimistic. It's not the politicians in high places who suffer from this war of words, he told us. It's us, the people on the ground.

Kelly McEvers, NPR News.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

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In Iraq, Exxon oil deal fomented talk of civil war

By Ben Van Heuvelen, December 18, 2012



The damage from a car-bomb attack in the Iraqi city of Kirkuk on Nov. 27. The... (Marwan Ibrahim/AFP/Getty...)

BAGHDAD — With their opposing armies massed on either side of the contested border dividing southern and northern Iraq, leaders in Baghdad and the semiautonomous Kurdistan region are warning that they are close to civil war — one that could be triggered by Exxon Mobil.

Although leaders on both sides are negotiating a walk back from the brink, they also say their armies could easily be provoked into battle. One of the most sensitive tripwires is Exxon, which is preparing to drill for oil in the disputed territories at the heart of the military standoff. Iraq's two most explosive political conflicts — over land and oil — are primed to

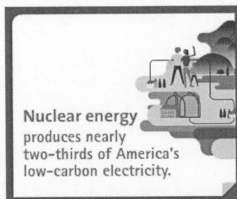
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"The prime minister has been clear: If Exxon lays a finger on this territory, they will face the Iraqi army," said Sami al-Askari, a member of parliament and confidant of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. "We don't want war, but we will go to war, for oil and for Iraqi sovereignty."

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Iraq's major ethnic groups have laid competing claims to a belt of land between the Kurdistan region and southern Iraq. An unofficial "line of control" bisects the disputed areas, demarcating the southern border of Kurdistan-governed territory.

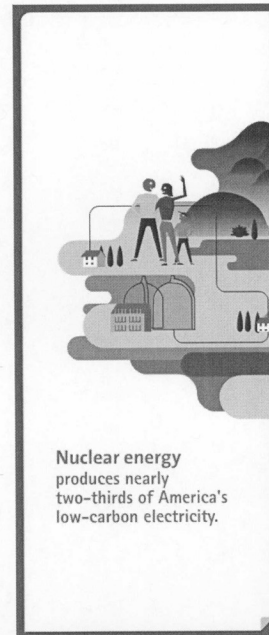
The crisis began after a Nov. 16 battle in the town of Tuz Khurmatu, whose ethnic tensions are typical of the disputed areas. A shootout erupted when federal forces tried to arrest a Kurdish fuel seller, who asked Kurdish soldiers, known as the pesh merga, to protect him.

Maliki and the Kurdistan region's president, Massoud Barzani, quickly ordered thousands of reinforcements to move toward the line of control. "We do not want war," Barzani said in a speech to troops on the front lines, "but if war comes, then all Kurdish people are ready to fight."

Iraqi Kurds are scarred by memories of Saddam Hussein's campaigns of ethnic cleansing. After the fall of his regime, they staked out substantial autonomy in northern Iraq, and now the Kurdistan region has many features of an independent state.

Many of the region's southern Iraqi neighbors, however, complain that the Kurds are grasping for territory that is not rightfully theirs. Authorities in Baghdad say they had to deploy thousands of Iraqi troops to prevent further Kurdish encroachment.

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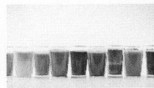
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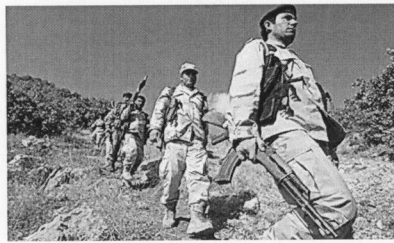
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Kurdistan conflict threatens to bring new violence to Iraq

War in Syria exacerbates religious and ethnic tension amid speculation over a declaration of independence

Christophe Ayad

Guardian Weekly, Tuesday 14 August 2012 08:59 EDT



Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga fighters. Last month they prevented the Iraqi national army reaching a crossing into Syria. Photograph: Saffin Hamed/AFP/Getty Images

Just how far will the dispute between Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan go? Clashes between the Iraqi prime minister, [Nouri al-Maliki](#), and the Kurdish president, Massoud Barzani, have been escalating since the US withdrawal at the end of 2011, leading to speculation about the declaration of an [independent Kurdish state](#). Certainly the hypothesis of an armed conflict between the central Iraqi government and the autonomous Kurdish region cannot be excluded.

One recent example of current tensions occurred last month when the Kurdish peshmerga prevented the Iraqi national army from reaching the Fishkhabur crossing into Syria in the Zimar region, one of the "disputed territories". According to AFP, an anonymous Iraqi source has accused the Kurdish authorities of illegally buying anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons "with help from a foreign country". Fingers point to Turkey, which supports Iraqi Kurdistan and is in conflict with Baghdad. Last spring Barzani tried in vain to dissuade the [US from selling F16 fighter planes](#) to Iraq.

This tension has been exacerbated by the war in Syria. Barzani supports the rebels whereas Maliki, who is pro-Iran supports Bashar al-Assad. Profiting from this situation, the Iraqi branch of al-Qaida has resurfaced and on 23 July claimed responsibility for a series of [attacks that killed 116 people](#).

Baghdad and Erbil have an endless list of grievances, ranging from border controls and the integration of the peshmerga to the Iraqi national army, to the delimitation of Kurdistan and the sharing of wealth between the centre and the autonomous region – especially oil.

There is a fear that growing Kurdish independence will serve as an example to the Sunni provinces, or even to the oil-rich Shia province of Basra in the far south of Iraq, which produces 2m of the 2.5m Iraqi barrels a day. "Al-Maliki would far rather be the leader of

a large country than the master of a 'Shia-istan' in the south of Iraq," was one western diplomat's analysis. Conversely, Barzani sees himself as the defender of Iraqi minorities in the face of Shia "hegemony". That is why he granted asylum to the Sunni vice-president Tariq al-Hashemi in December 2011, after he was judged in abstentia in Iraq for having headed a death squad during the civil war (2005-2008).

The Kurdish-Sunni rapprochement, promoted by Turkey, has led to a coalition that is seeking to overthrow Maliki – so far without success. In retaliation, the Iraqi prime minister denounced his opponent's corruption and nepotism on a private Kurdish television station last June, pointing out that Barzani's son heads the autonomous region's security services while his nephew is prime minister.

At the core of this friction lies the issue of Iraqi Kurdistan's independence. According to one diplomat, Barzani's dilemma is as follows: "He knows that Kurdistan is not ready and that other countries in the region would not appreciate a declaration of independence. But he is also aware that the longer he waits, the stronger Baghdad will become."

This article originally appeared in [Le Monde](#)

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UPDATE 2-Iraqi Kurds defend oil policy, reject BP Kirkuk deal

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Fri Jan 18, 2013 5:09am EST

*** KRG calls plan with BP for Kirkuk illegal**

* Baghdad and Kurdistan locked in long oil dispute

* Kurdish region has begun to truck oil to Turkey

By Patrick Markey

BAGHDAD, Jan 18 (Reuters) - Iraq's Kurdistan has defended its oil policy as constitutional, and rejected a deal between Baghdad and BP for an oilfield in the disputed city of Kirkuk as an "illegal" step in the autonomous region's feud with the central government.

The statement came after Iraq's oil minister said Baghdad's government would sue companies exporting crude from Kurdistan, warned of cuts to the self-ruled region's federal budget and announced an accord with BP in Kirkuk.

Iraq's Arab-led central government and Kurdistan Regional Government or KRG, run by ethnic Kurds, are locked in a widening dispute over control of oil revenues, oilfields and territory that is fraying the country's uneasy federal union.

The ethnically mixed city of Kirkuk, sitting on the internal border between Iraq and Kurdistan, is at the heart of their long-running battle over constitutional rights to the OPEC member's crude reserves, the world's fourth-largest.

"Iraq's citizens are simply tired of this sort of language of threat and intimidation, which in the cynical pursuit of narrow political agendas serves only to create division and strife," the KRG said in a statement on its website.

"In terms of oil and gas management, the KRG firmly believes in, and abides by, the letter and spirit of Iraq's permanent, federal constitution."

Speaking to Reuters on Wednesday, Oil Minister Abdul Kareem Luaibi said Baghdad intends to sue Genel Energy - the first company to export oil directly from Kurdistan - and may slash the government's allocated 17 percent budget to the region unless it halts what he rejected as smuggling.

Luaibi announced a preliminary agreement with BP to revive the northern Kirkuk oil field, which - apart from being at the centre of the fight between Kurdistan and Iraq - is suffering massive output declines.

"He reveals details of an illegal and unconstitutional plan to allegedly allow BP to enhance the recovery of some of the depleted fields in Kirkuk... without consulting and obtaining approval of the other parties to the dispute," the KRG said.

LONG-RUNNING FEUD

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The feud between Baghdad and the Kurdistan enclave, which has run its own regional administration and armed forces since 1991, has escalated since the KRG began signing deals with oil majors like Exxon Mobil and Chevron.

Iraq's government claims only it has the constitutional authority to export crude oil and sign deals, but Kurdistan says the constitution allows it to agree to contracts and ship oil independently of Baghdad.

Baghdad and Kurdistan late last year both sent troops to reinforce positions along their internal border in a major escalation of tensions between the two regions, but neither appeared to have the stomach for open conflict.

The KRG has given permission to Genel to truck exports directly from Kurdistan's Taq Taq oilfield to Turkey, bypassing the federal pipeline system linking Kirkuk with the Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan.

While the central government dismisses that as smuggling, the KRG said the barter with Turkey was making up part of Kurdistan's entitlement to 17 percent of refined products since Baghdad was not supplying the full amount.

The regional government also rejected Luaibi's suggestion that Baghdad might cut Kurdistan's 17 percent allocation of the federal budget.

"The federal oil minister is stepping well beyond his remit in speaking about the federal budget, creating yet another smokescreen for the incompetency of his ministry and of the federal administration," it said.

The move to truck oil directly to Turkey came after Kurdistan exports were halted via the Baghdad-controlled Iraq-Turkey pipeline due to a dispute over central government payments to oil companies working in Kurdistan.

Baghdad has made one payment in 2012, but Iraqi officials said last month they would not pay firms a second installment because Kurdistan had failed to reach agreed production under a deal made in September.

The central government says Kurdistan is expected to provide 250,000 bpd to Iraq's 2013 oil export target of 2.9 million bpd. In 2012, the KRG was to contribute 175,000 bpd to the federal budget, but handed an average of 61,000 bpd, Luaibi said.

"Had it not been for the federal government's obstructionist policies, the Kurdistan Region could now be exporting 500,000 barrels per day or some \$18 billion per year," the KRG said.

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January 17, 2013 6:02 pm

Kurds hit out in Iraq oil conflict

By Michael Peel in Abu Dhabi

Iraq's internal battle over oil deepened on Thursday as the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region condemned a threat from Baghdad to cut its budget over its decision to start independently exporting crude to Turkey.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) warned that "intimidation" from the Iraqi capital would create "division and strife" – a resonant message after a string of sectarian terrorist attacks across the country killed more than 50 people in the past two days.

Analysts say the escalating dispute over control of Kurdistan's oil is one of the biggest threats to the stability of Iraq's fragile, post-US occupation, political settlement and the ambitions of Nouri al-Maliki, prime minister, to entrench his authority.

"The oil issue is an existential threat to Maliki," said Toby Dodge, author of a soon-to-be-published book called *Iraq: From War to a New Authoritarianism*. "And the Kurdistan Regional Government and Maliki know it."

Abdul Kareem al-Luaibi, Iraq's oil minister, made the Kurdistan budget cut threat this week, warning the region's authorities that it was "high time" they stopped the "very dangerous behaviour" of "illegal" crude exporting.

Mr Luaibi threatened to sue Genel Energy, the independent oil producer headed by Tony Hayward, the former BP chief executive, which has just started transporting oil from one of its Kurdistan fields to Turkey.

Genel declined to comment, although one person close to the company said it was "very clear" that its contracts enabled it to export crude with the KRG's approval.

Safeen Dizayee, a KRG spokesman, said Mr Luaibi's threat reflected "a degree of panic and desperation" and a "lack of respect" for the Iraqi constitution and the people of Kurdistan. He said: "Iraq's citizens are simply tired of this sort of language of threat and intimidation, which – in the cynical pursuit of narrow political agendas – serves only to create division and strife."

"It would appear the overriding philosophy is that if your own policies have failed, lash out and blame others."

While the Iraq government disputes Kurdistan's right to exploit and export the oil on its territory independently, Baghdad has grown increasingly alarmed as leading oil companies, such as ExxonMobil, Chevron and Total, have signed production-sharing deals with the authorities in Erbil, Kurdistan's capital.

The struggle over Kurdistan's resources is part of a complex series of overlapping political fights in Iraq between Mr Maliki – a Shia Muslim Islamist – and factions including Moqtada al-Sadr, a firebrand Shia cleric, and Sunni minority representatives who have been holding street protests in recent weeks.

Insurgents, widely thought to be Sunni extremists, killed 22 people in Iraq on Thursday in bomb attacks aimed mainly at Shia pilgrims. The slaughter came a day after another wave of bombings killed at least 33 people, with one targeting an office of the Kurdistan Democratic party of Massoud Barzani, the KRG president, in the disputed town of Kirkuk.

The balance of Iraq's volatile politics will be tested in local elections due in April, while the forthcoming national budget may give Mr Maliki an opportunity to shore up some deteriorating relationships, especially with the Kurds.

"Maliki has probably been provoked by this [oil dispute] and he doesn't quite know how to respond," said Reidar Visser, an Iraq specialist and editor of the Gulf Analysis website.

"In the past, Maliki has often used the budget to build bridges to the Kurds at the last minute."

Additional reporting by Guy Chazan in London

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ARBIL, Iraq | Thu Feb 7, 2013 9:16am EST

(Reuters) - Iraqi Kurdistan will press ahead with building its own oil export pipeline to Turkey, the region's energy minister said on Thursday, despite U.S. objections due to fears the project could lead to the break-up of Iraq.

The autonomous Kurdish region is locked in a turf war with the central government in Baghdad over how to exploit Iraq's hydrocarbon riches and divide up the proceeds.

Baghdad says it alone has the authority to control exports of the world's fourth largest oil reserves, while the Kurds say their right to do so is enshrined in Iraq's federal constitution, drawn up following the U.S.-led invasion of 2003.

"We want to have an oil pipeline to ourselves," Iraqi Kurdish Minister for Natural Resources Ashti Hawrami said at a news conference in the regional capital Arbil. "It is currently in the works and we will continue until it is completed."

Crude from the Kurdistan region used to be shipped to world markets through a Baghdad-controlled pipeline to Turkey, but exports via that channel dried up in December, from a peak of around 200,000 barrels per day (bpd) due to a row over payments with Baghdad.

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The United States says the solution lies in a national hydrocarbons law that has been delayed for years by a power struggle between Iraq's Sunni, Shi'ite and Kurdish factions, which has intensified since U. S. troops withdrew a year ago.

"The Iraqis have been struggling to pass a hydrocarbons law. It is very important that they succeed in that," U.S. Ambassador to Turkey Francis J. Ricciardone said in Ankara on Tuesday.

Reluctant to wait, Kurdistan has been looking to resource-hungry Turkey for answers. A broad energy partnership between them ranging from exploration to export has been in the works since last year.

Majority Sunni Turkey's deepening ties with the Kurdistan region in northern Iraq have heightened tensions between Ankara and the Shi'ite-led government in Baghdad.

"If Turkey and Iraq fail to optimize their economic relations... There could be more violent conflict in Iraq and the forces of disintegration within Iraq could be emboldened," Ricciardone said.

Kurdistan is already bypassing the federal pipeline network by trucking small quantities of crude over the Turkish border in exchange for refined oil products.

"The issue is that we are entitled to 17 percent of (Iraq's) refined products, but the central government sends us only 3 percent and our refining capacity is not enough to satisfy domestic demand," Hawrami said.

(Reporting by Isabel Coles in Arbil and Nick Tattersall in Ankara; Editing by Anthony Barker)

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Iraq's relations with Arab world deteriorating days after Baghdad summit

By Liz Sly, April 04, 2012



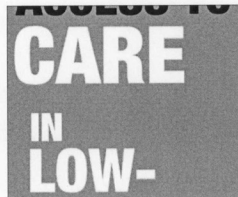
Arab leaders gathered for the annual Arab League summit in Baghdad last... (Karim Kadim/AP)

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resolve its own internal problems. On Sunday, Maliki issued a forceful defense of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, saying his ouster would destabilize the region. On the same day, at a U.S.-backed gathering of "Friends of Syria" in Istanbul, Saudi Arabia endorsed a plan to fund and equip Syrian rebels.

Maliki's comments triggered blistering attacks in Saudi newspapers, which often reflect official thinking.

In an editorial in the Saudi-owned al-Sharq al-Awsat, editor Tariq Alhomayed called for sanctions on Maliki "to prevent the emergence of a new Saddam or another Bashar."

BAGHDAD — Iraq's fugitive vice president, Tariq al-Hashimi, flew to Saudi Arabia on Wednesday as the goodwill generated between Iraq and its Arab neighbors by an extravagant summit in Baghdad last week began unraveling.

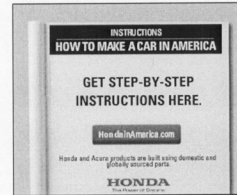
The visit by Hashimi, who is wanted by Baghdad authorities on charges of terrorism, came as Iraqi officials announced they had called off a national reconciliation conference planned for Thursday that was supposed to ease tensions between Shiite Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and the Sunni and Kurdish factions in his coalition government.

Parliament speaker Osama al-Nujaifi told reporters that the meeting had been postponed indefinitely because of "mounting differences" on a range of issues, just one of which is the arrest warrant that the Shiite-led government has issued for Hashimi, a Sunni.

Hashimi's visit to Saudi Arabia and the cancellation of the conference highlighted the danger that the increasingly intractable political crisis in Iraq will draw in the country's neighbors at a time of increasing polarization in the region over how to address the unrest in Syria.

Maliki had agreed to hold the reconciliation conference as a last-minute concession to the Sunnis and Kurds ahead of the Baghdad summit, which the government hoped would showcase Iraq as stable, safe and assuming its rightful place in the firmament of Arab nations after the withdrawal of U.S. troops late last year.

But relations with Arab states have since been deteriorating fast, along with any hopes that Iraq will soon be able to



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Iraq, Kurds, Turks and oil

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A tortuous triangle

The governments of Turkey, Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan play a dangerous game

Dec 22nd 2012 | ERBIL | From the print edition

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SNAKING their way from Kirkuk, a city 240 kilometres (150 miles) north of Baghdad, through Kurdistan and across Turkey's eastern region of Anatolia to the Mediterranean are pipes that once carried 1.6m barrels a day (b/d) of Iraqi oil to the global market and yielded fat transit fees to Turkey along the way. The infrastructure underpinned the two countries' mutual dependence. But nowadays the balance of power has shifted. A third party, the Iraqi Kurds, has changed it. It is unclear who will emerge on top. But Iraq's central government in Baghdad is on the defensive.

Wars, saboteurs and, since the 1990s, economic sanctions have left the Iraqi sections of the pipeline system in a mess. Barely a fraction of its capacity is used. One of the two parallel lines stands empty and the source that once fed them, the giant Kirkuk oilfield, is dilapidated. The oil ministry in Baghdad has vague ideas about revamping the pipeline, perhaps to carry crude extracted near Basra, in the far south, though this would need an expensive new pipeline to link both ends of the country.

But Turkey is hatching a different plan for its section of the Kirkuk-to-Ceyhan pipeline. Its souring relations with the government in Baghdad have spurred it to cultivate new ties with the Iraqi Kurds' regional government in Erbil, which oversees the oil and gas that Turkey's growing economy craves. A wide-ranging energy deal is in the works that will see state-backed Turkish firms and Western oil majors plough money into Kurdish infrastructure and oilfields, connecting them to Turkey and the world beyond. The deal could eventually allow for up to 2m b/d of Kurdish oil exports to go through Turkey.



Last year, trade between Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan amounted to \$8 billion. Turkish money has paid for pristine airports in Erbil and Dohuk, an Iraqi Kurdish city further north, and for other large projects. Not long ago, Turkish politicians, wary of their own large and restless Kurdish minority still fighting for autonomy (or more) in eastern Turkey, barely acknowledged Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region.

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Now Turkey's government is using its commercial clout to press the Iraqi Kurds' president, Masoud Barzani, to help restrain militant Kurds within Turkey. A stroke recently suffered by Jalal Talabani, a Kurd who is president of federal Iraq and who has often mediated between his kinsmen and the rulers in Baghdad, may make it even harder to keep the calm.

Oil and gas are at the core of this warm new relationship between Turkey and Iraq's Kurds. "Turkey has made a strategic shift in its relations with us," says an official in a ministry in Erbil. "Whatever the scenario, our market is in Turkey."

Nuri al-Maliki's government in Baghdad, dominated by Shia Muslims, has unwisely pushed Turkey into this oily Kurdish embrace. Mr Maliki's close ties to Iran and support for President Bashar Assad in Syria have angered Turkey's government and convinced it not to rely on Iraq. The refuge offered by Turkey to Tariq al-Hashemi, Iraq's vice-president, who was sentenced to death in absentia by a court in Baghdad in September, has also upset Mr Maliki, who has duly insulted Turkey's leaders. In November his government expelled Turkey's state oil company from a block in Iraq, plainly out of political spite. In December he ordered his air-traffic controllers to deny landing rights to Turkey's energy minister, Taner Yildiz, who was en route to Erbil for an investor conference.

Iraq's central government seems bent on wrecking the Kurds' thriving oil industry, saying that their regional government has no legal authority to export oil independently or sign contracts with developers. The government in Baghdad has delayed payments to Iraqi Kurdistan's oil producers, who say they are owed about \$1.5 billion. Some explorers fret that they will never recoup their cash. Pars Kutay, an executive at Genel Energy, a Turkish oil-producer in Kurdistan, says that depending for payment on Iraq's central authorities is like "pumping oil into a black hole". Kurdish oil exports are now said to have collapsed to around 30,000 b/d.

This helps no one. Oil explorers in Kurdistan, now including big spenders like ExxonMobil and Chevron, are said to have so far invested about \$10 billion. Future exports of 2m b/d, as envisaged by the regional government in Erbil, would yield far greater sums. Under Iraq's revenue-sharing scheme more than four-fifths of the money from such sales would go to Baghdad, 17% to the Kurds. If the region's oil were allowed to flow, Kurdistan, now a drain on Iraq's budget, would soon be a net contributor, says Ashti Hawrami, the Kurds' oil minister. "It is a win-win."

But the centralising Mr Maliki is deeply loth to give the Kurds their head. Their oil policy, he says, threatens to tear Iraq's fragile federation apart by fostering similar aspirations in its oil-producing provinces in the south. Western governments, fearing that Iraq's disintegration would strengthen Iran, are siding with Mr Maliki. The Americans are pressing Turkey to tone down its support for Iraq's Kurds.

In recent weeks Mr Maliki has mobilised Iraq's army along the fault-line that divides the Kurdish region from the rest of Iraq. Bombs have killed at least ten people in the past fortnight in Kirkuk. Kurdish leaders say that they are ready to fight and have sent thousands of their fighters, known as *peshmerga*, to face down the Iraqi army. From a ridge north-west of Kirkuk, they peer through binoculars at Iraqi troops massing a few hundred yards below on the plain. "If one *peshmerga* is killed," says a Kurdish officer, "it is war."

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Sunni sheikh to al-Maliki: Hand over soldiers behind shootings or 'face losses'

By Mohammed Tawfeeq and Chelsea J. Carter, CNN
updated 10:18 AM EST, Sat January 26, 2013

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STORY HIGHLIGHTS

Four Iraqi soldiers have been killed in clashes in Falluja, officials say.

Four soldiers also have been abducted, police officials say.

Sheikh Ahmed Abu Risha is demanding the prime minister hand over the soldiers involved.

At least seven people were killed and 47 wounded in shootings during protests Friday.

Baghdad (CNN) -- Thousands of mourners turned out in Falluja Saturday, hours after a powerful Sunni sheikh called on Iraq's Shiite prime minister to hand over soldiers responsible for killing anti-government protesters in Anbar province or face "losses among their ranks."

The warning came as reports emerged that four soldiers were killed and four were abducted after security forces fired on a Sunni anti-government protest in Falluja, raising fears of retaliations that could ignite sectarian violence.

Sheikh Ahmed Abu Risha, who is credited with rallying Sunni tribal leaders to turn on al Qaeda in Iraq, gave Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's government seven days to hand over to Anbar's criminal court those involved in the shootings.

"We warn al-Maliki that the people of Anbar have another choice, if their demand is not met," Abu Risha told supporters in a televised statement broadcast by a number of Iraqi news outlets. Abu Risha's words carry weight, as he is head of a 160,000-member clan, a subset of the Dulaim tribe, one of the largest of all Middle East tribes.



Provincial health officials said that at least seven people were killed and 47 wounded in the shootings Friday during the demonstration in Falluja in the western Anbar province, a Sunni stronghold where protesters have been denouncing what they call second-class treatment by the Shiite-dominated government.



In an interview with Al-Baghdadiya TV, Abu Risha also demanded al-Maliki withdraw troops from Falluja ahead of Saturday morning's funeral procession for those killed.

"They need to go back to their barracks and be stopped, or there may be losses among their ranks or the ranks of the police. With all honesty, Falluja is boiling," he said.

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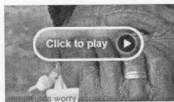
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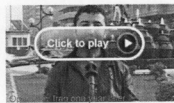


Advocates say the exam includes unnecessary invasive and irrelevant procedures -- like a so-called "two finger" test.



The funeral procession drew thousands of mourners who shouted, "God is great, God is great" and "al-Maliki is the enemy of God," and demanded that al-Maliki be removed from office.

"Al-Maliki is a leader of militias, he is a criminal, he should be fired from his position immediately" Ahmed Ismael, one of the mourners, told CNN.



"Al-Maliki should be tried for crimes he has committed against Iraqi people. This is one of his crimes" Ismael added.

35 killed in Iraq suicide bombing, police say

The caskets bearing the bodies of the dead were carried on the shoulders of mourners and were buried in Falluja's famous Martyr's Cemetery.

Abu Risha is head of the Anbar Awakening Council, a group composed primarily of Sunni Arab fighters who turned on al Qaeda in Iraq, which was made up of predominantly Sunni extremists, in late 2006 and who joined forces with the U.S.-led coalition.

While a number of the members of the council, also known as the Sons of Iraq, have been integrated into Iraq's security forces, Abu Risha has said he maintains a militia of about 80,000. Al-Maliki's government has put the number at 50,000, according to published reports.

Abu Risha took over as head of the province's Awakening Council after his brother Sheikh Abdul Sattar — also known as Abu Risha — was assassinated in 2007.

Abu Risha's demand that troops withdraw from Falluja was backed by a number of religious leaders in the city.

By nightfall Friday, Iraqi soldiers withdrew from several security posts in and around the city and went back to their main military headquarters in Falluja, according to police officials in the city.

There were conflicting accounts about what led to the shootings.

Witnesses told CNN that Iraqi soldiers opened fire after they ordered the demonstrators to stop filming dozens of Iraqi security forces on the rooftops surrounding al-Itisam Square, while others said Iraqi soldiers fired when protesters started throwing objects at them.

Security officials said the shootings occurred when protesters began throwing rocks. When the soldiers opened fire, protesters responded by burning military vehicles and civilian cars.

By Friday night, dozens of angry protesters had attacked an army checkpoint in southern Falluja, setting the building on fire and burning an army vehicle, police officials said. The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, were not authorized to release details to the media.

Two soldiers were killed in that attack, the officials said. Two more soldiers were killed by snipers on Saturday morning, they said.

That was followed Saturday by the abduction of four soldiers from near a military base near Falluja, the officials said. The four, who were in civilian clothing, were on their way home for a short vacation when they were kidnapped, they said.

Al-Maliki on Friday said the violence in Falluja doesn't surprise his administration. He cited "conspiracies" plotted by regional intelligence services, vestiges of the old regime, al Qaeda and those with sectarian agendas.

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Disney: Star Wars spinoffs there will be

updated 7:37 AM EST, Wed February 6, 2013



That galaxy far, far away is apparently bigger than first thought. The "Star Wars" franchise will get two spinoff movies, Disney announced.

The government, he said, has warned before about "those who have hostile agendas against Iraq, its political process and its democracy." He said dangers are "increasing day after day in an attempt to blow up the security situation in the country and drag the armed forces into confrontations."

The protest in Falluja was the latest in a series held in predominantly Sunni regions of Iraq. They have been countered by mostly Shiite, pro-government demonstrations, raising fears that the sectarian division could bring violence in the streets.

The protests have grown in recent weeks. They began in late December when Sunni demonstrators took to the streets in Anbar province, which borders Jordan and Syria, to protest al-Maliki's order to arrest the bodyguards of Finance Minister Rafea al-Esawi, a Sunni.

The arrest of al-Esawi's bodyguards came just hours after President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd who is widely viewed as a stabilizing political force in Iraq, left the country about two weeks after suffering a stroke.

The protesters also are demanding the release of detainees they said are held without charges, calling the government corrupt and accusing it of unfairly targeting Iraq's Sunni people.

Iraq's Arab Sunnis and Kurds have accused al-Maliki and his Shiite political party of working to consolidate power in Iraq by cutting them out of the political process, an allegation that comes as U.S. lawmakers raise concerns about Iraq strengthening its ties with Shiite-dominated Iran.

Sunnis make up about 20% of Iraq's estimated population of more than 27 million, whereas about 60% to 65% are Shiite.

Since the fall of Saddam Hussein's Sunni-dominated regime in 2003, Sunnis in Iraq have been largely disaffected. The gulf was widened in 2005 when Sunnis boycotted the country's election, opening the way to a heavily dominated Shiite government.

The sectarian divisions translated into violence in the streets in 2006 and 2007, with fighting that nearly ripped the country apart.

CNN's Mohammed Tawfeeq reported from Baghdad and Chelsea J. Carter from Atlanta. CNN's Amir Ahmed contributed to this report.

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Iraq's Sadr Encourages Antigovernment Demonstrations

By YASIR CHAD and CHRISTINE HAUSER
Published: January 1, 2013

BAGHDAD — A populist Shiite leader in Iraq, **Moktada al-Sadr**, expressed support on Tuesday for fresh protests against Prime Minister **Nuri Kamal al-Maliki**, a fellow Shiite but his political opponent, saying that Mr. Maliki bears “full responsibility” for the unrest in the country.

 As with many developments in Iraq, the timing and venue of Mr. Sadr's comments to reporters were as notable as their meaning. He spoke in Najaf, one of the holiest cities of his Shiite sect, just as Iraq ended its bloodiest year since 2009, a reflection of unabated ethnic, sectarian and political tensions among the country's Kurdish, Arab, Sunni and Shiite populations.

 Asia for Images/In Pictures Press
Moktada al-Sadr spoke in Najaf on Tuesday.

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Several times during the gathering, Mr. Sadr directed his remarks at Mr. Maliki, who has taken recent steps that suggested he was asserting greater control over many aspects of the government and that prompted fears he was cracking down on his political opponents. Mr. Sadr's remarks could indicate that he is trying to test the political waters or possible support from the street before Iraq's provincial elections, which are scheduled for the spring.

Mr. Sadr also tried to assert broader credibility for the anti-Maliki protests by comparing them to the movements that have swept many Arab countries in the past few years, calling for new government leaders and better representation.

“The Iraqi spring is coming,” Mr. Sadr said, in a tone that implied a warning to Mr. Maliki.

“We are with the demonstrators, and Parliament must be with them, not against them,” he said. “The legitimate demands of the demonstrators, by which people know what they want, should be met.”

Mr. Sadr was careful to appear moderate and to say he was speaking for all Iraqis in his remarks, which his media office distributed to journalists throughout the country. He said he supported the widespread demonstrations as long as they were peaceful and did not seek to create divisions, driving the last point home by adding that he was willing to go to Sunni-dominated Anbar Province to take part in protests.

Demonstrations against Mr. Maliki's Shiite-dominated government erupted in Sunni areas last month in response to a raid by security forces on the office and home of the Sunni finance minister, Rafie al-Issawi. In one protest last week, tens of thousands of Sunni Muslims blocked Iraq's main trade route to neighboring Syria and Jordan, Reuters reported.

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Aside from reaction in the street, the raid had immediate political fallout. Mr. Issawi described it as a "pre-election blow" intended to weaken Mr. Maliki's rivals. Leaders from the Sunni-dominated bloc, Iraqiya, threatened to pull out of the government and called for a no-confidence vote on Mr. Maliki.

Mr. Sadr's voice has now added his voice to the discord that has left the country in disarray a full year after the withdrawal of American forces left seemingly intractable problems among political factions and ethnic groups.

Tensions between the Kurds in the north and the government in Baghdad, who were already at odds over sharing oil revenues, have risen as soldiers squared off with Kurdish militias after Mr. Maliki sought to consolidate his control over security in the north.

Further political uncertainty occurred at the end of 2012 when the Kurdish president, Jalal Talabani, suffered a stroke and was [flown to Germany](#) for treatment.

Sunni Arab and Kurdish officials have accused Mr. Maliki of trying to monopolize power before. In September, Tariq al-Hashimi, the vice president of Iraq and a prominent Sunni Muslim, was [convicted of murder](#) and sentenced to death in absentia on accusations that he oversaw death squads. Sunni supporters accused the Shiite-led government of trying to sideline them.

The discord has translated into bloodshed. While attacks have not been as frequent or widespread as they were during the height of the insurgency, Iraqis marked the end of 2012 with a grim milestone.

Iraq Body Count, a nonprofit group that tallies casualties, said Tuesday that civilian deaths from attacks in Iraq [rose to at least 4,471](#) in 2012 from 4,136 in 2011, the first annual rise since 2009. Deaths during the final two weeks were still being tallied.

"Over all, 2012 has been more consistent with an entrenched conflict than with any transformation in the security situation for Iraqis in the first year since the formal withdrawal of U.S. troops," the group said.

Yasir Ghazi reported from Baghdad, and Christine Hauser from New York.


This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: January 5, 2013

Because of an editing error, a headline on Wednesday about antigovernment protests in Iraq misstated the title of the country's leader, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki. As the article correctly noted, he is the prime minister of Iraq — not the president, a head of state position held by Jalal Talabani.

A version of this article appeared in print on January 2, 2013, on page A5 of the New York edition with the headline: Shiite Rival Encourages Protests Against President of Iraq.

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Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I just want everybody to know, General Austin thought long and hard about a residual force.

Now, do you remember, when you were first getting the job, taking it over from General O. (Odierno), we had an exchange where I said, "In football terms, how would you put us, in terms of our situation in Iraq in June 2010?" He said, "I think you've—I did, sir. I think we're on the 10 yardline, and I think that the next 18

months will determine whether we get to the goal line or give, really, the Iraqis an opportunity to get to the goal beyond 2011." I said, "We're having a new quarterback," and you said, "Sir, I'll take the ball." You agreed with me that we were inside the 10, that we needed a residual force. You talked about the Arab-Kurd conflict. You told me, in no uncertain terms, "One of the friction points in Iraq was at Kirkuk." Do you remember that?

General AUSTIN. I do, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you remember the Lions Brigade concept, where you had Iraqi security forces?

General AUSTIN. I do, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. You had the Peshmerga Brigade, and you had U.S. Forces, working as a team. I think that may have been your idea. It was working so well, because the Peshmerga are, basically, paramilitary forces that are Kurds. Now you see a shooting war about to erupt, I'm afraid, between the Peshmerga and the traditional Iraqi Security Forces. You told me that, if we had about 5,000 people at the Article 140 boundary line, we could keep tensions down. Do you remember that?

General AUSTIN. I do, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you remember telling me that we were one perceived slight or insult away from these guys shooting each other, and we need to have a follow-on force to keep tensions low?

General AUSTIN. That was my assessment, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. It was a good assessment.

What you see now, Mr. Chairman, is the "Blood for Oil" article is a story, last week, about how close they've come to firing at each other over the oil problems in Kirkuk.

I want to introduce into the record the exchange I had with General Dempsey, General Odierno, and General Austin, in 2010 and 2011, about what happened in Iraq.

Senator KAINE. Without objection, it will be entered into the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

NOMINATIONS OF GEN RAYMOND T. ODIERNO, USA, FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND COMMANDER, U.S. JOINT FORCES COMMAND; AND LTG LLOYD J. AUSTIN III, USA, TO BE GENERAL AND COMMANDER, U.S. FORCES-IRAQ

THURSDAY, JUNE 24, 2010, U.S. SENATE, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
WASHINGTON, DC.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Congratulations to both of you on the job you have done and the new jobs you're going to undertake, here.

General O—I always butcher your name, I'm just going to call you General O—there must be a height requirement for these jobs. [Laughter.]

We mentioned yesterday the World Cup is going on and it's fun to watch, and I'm pulling for the U.S.A., but I have really no idea what they're doing when they play soccer. So, we're going to talk football. I think you indicated, we're probably on the 10-yard line when it comes to Iraq?

General ODIERNO. I did, Senator. I do think we are on the 10-yard line. I think the next 18 months will determine whether we get to the goal line, or really give the Iraqis an opportunity to get the goal line beyond 2011.

Senator GRAHAM. But, from our national perspective, we're on the 10, and I think you said we probably have four downs? It's first and 10 on the 10, we have a new quarterback coming in.

General ODIERNO. That's right.

General AUSTIN. I'll take the ball, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. I couldn't have found a better guy to be the new quarterback.

Now, the Sons of Iraq, how is that going, General O, in terms of getting those people integrated in the Iraqi security forces?

General ODIERNO. We started out with about 103,000 Sons of Iraq. About 40,000 have been transitioned into other Government of Iraq jobs. They actually stopped the transition because they were starting to realize the value in many areas of what they were providing in terms of intelligence and other things, so they've slowed that down, and they're now doing some reevaluation of the Sons of Iraq program, and how they want to transition that.

Senator GRAHAM. Are they still getting paid?

General ODIERNO. They are.

Senator GRAHAM. One thing that we need to watch for, General Austin, is you have thousands of young Sunnis that are receiving a government paycheck, I think it's like \$90 a month, is that right?

General ODIERNO. Three hundred.

Senator GRAHAM. Three hundred? Okay, \$300 a month. We have to make sure that if that pay stops that we have a plan, do you agree with that, General Austin?

General AUSTIN. I absolutely agree with that, Senator. I was there, again, in the early days we begin to transition the Sons of Iraq to working for the government and work along with the Prime Minister to outline a plan to effectively transition them. I think they've done a pretty good job, and we need to continue to do that in the future.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay, who's paying? Is that coming from the Iraqi budget?

General AUSTIN. Absolutely.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

Now, Article 140 boundary dispute issues, I think there are a couple of trip wires left in Iraq and one of them that stands out to me is how do you resolve the Arab-Kurdish conflict in Kirkuk and the boundary dispute. If you could both give me, maybe, a 30-second overview of where we're at and what could we do in Congress to help you?

General ODIERNO. We have established a tripartite security architecture in the disputed areas for about 6 months now, and it's been very successful in reducing tensions. It's Pesh Merga, Iraqi Army and U.S. Forces manning checkpoints and joint security areas where they do patrolling in these areas, and it has calmed things down considerably. The United Nations (U.N.) is now taking on the role of now mediating the long-term issues of the border issues and the status of Kirkuk and other issues.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you think that will get resolved for this new government in a year?

General ODIERNO. It depends. My guess is, some of that will be discussed during the governmental formation process. How well that goes could determine how quickly it could happen. I do believe though, to solve the whole problem, it will be longer than a year.

Senator GRAHAM. General Austin, do you agree that is one of the big outstanding issues that the Iraqi people have to resolve?

General AUSTIN. Senator Graham, I absolutely do.

I think that, I would be delighted if it could be resolved in a year but—

Senator GRAHAM. Probably not.

General AUSTIN. I really believe that it's going to take awhile.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you feel like we have enough resources and focus to help them get it resolved?

General AUSTIN. I think that we're doing the right things in terms of working with the government to help them build confidence—bring about confidence-building measures to bring the two sides closer together. I think, again, it's encouraging to see that the U.N. is continuing to try to help, we'll require their help in the future.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

General AUSTIN. But this is going to take a lot of work.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

The hydrocarbon law. Have you had to pass the hydrocarbon law, is that right, General O?

General ODIERNO. That's correct, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. From my point of view, for what it's worth, is that until the Iraqis have a statute that divides the oil up between each group where everybody feels like they're getting the resources of the country fairly shared, it's going to be a tough go. Do you see a breakthrough in the hydrocarbon law any time soon?

General ODIERNO. I think the hydrocarbon law, itself, probably might not get passed. But, I think there are other alternatives.

Senator GRAHAM. They do it year-by-year, budgeting-wise, don't they?

General ODIERNO. Yes, year-by-year, but also they get a revenue sharing agreement—

Senator GRAHAM. Right.

General ODIERNO.—I think would be important. I think that's something that people are looking at now, and I think that would help significantly.

We've had some thawing, there was an argument about whether the Kurdistan Region could develop their own oil, they have solved that problem. They have now begun to develop that. The Government of Iraq, the Central Government is helping them, so that's a breakthrough. We're starting to see small breakthroughs in the overall resolution of this. But again, there's still work that has to be done in that area.

Senator GRAHAM. The rules of engagement—as I understand it, we're partnering with the Iraqi security forces, we have right of self-defense, obviously, but when you make a raid, now, at night, do you have to get a warrant?

General ODIERNO. Under the security agreement, all operations must be warranted.

Senator GRAHAM. Is that working okay?

General ODIERNO. It is working very well.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you have good confidence in your judicial system, there are no leaks?

General ODIERNO. It's not perfect.

Senator GRAHAM. Not perfect.

General ODIERNO. No system is perfect. But our ability to present evidence and get warrants, we absolutely have the ability to do that. That's working well.

Senator GRAHAM. That's very encouraging.

One last question to both of you. General O, we're talking about the consequences to the United States of winning in Iraq, and I think they're enormous. Probably a good time now, given Afghanistan and where we are at in the world—if, for some reason, we didn't make it into the end zone, what would be the consequences of Iraq failing?

General Austin, if you could tell this committee, what are the one or two things that keep you up at night when you think about Iraq?

General ODIERNO. First, if we had a failed state in Iraq, it would create uncertainty and significant instability, probably, within the region. Because of the criticality of Iraq, its relationship to Iran, its relationship to the other Arab states in the region, if it became unstable, it could create an environment that could continue to increase the instability. If it becomes unstable and ungoverned, it opens the area, potentially, for terrorists, in order to allow Iraq to become a place where terrorism could be exported.

Now, I don't believe we're close to that. I believe we're far away from that happening. I think we're definitely on the right path. But those are the kinds of things that would happen if we had a complete breakdown inside of Iraq.

General AUSTIN. Senator Graham, we will be successful in Iraq, we will get the ball into the end zone. I believe that because of all of the great work that our young men and women continue to do on a daily basis and the commitment of this entire country to accomplishing that in the right way.

You mentioned the thing that keeps me awake at night, the one thing that is foremost in my mind is that if their leadership is unable to transfer power in a peaceful manner, that would create conditions that would cause us to, perhaps, revert to sectarian behavior and people to lose confidence in their ability to be properly represented. That is one of the major things.

But I am confident that, based upon what we've seen thus far, this peaceful transition will occur. It will just take some time for them to form a government.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you very, very much.

Now, let's move to Afghanistan. I'm not going to block your nomination, that's not my intent. But, I do believe it's only fair to the committee that you go talk to General Allen. Pick up the phone. I know he's on leave. Do you agree he's one of the finest officers you've ever served with?

General AUSTIN. He is a fine man, sir. Yes, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you agree with that, General Rodriguez?

General RODRIGUEZ. Yes, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. You all have been at this for a very long time. All of you. I just can't thank you enough. My time's about to expire, so we'll do a second round.

What I would like you to do—and you can give this to me in writing—I want you to go talk to General Allen about his recommendations in Afghanistan, and see if they make sense to you, because—and I'm not going to reveal this to the committee—I know, exactly, his bottom line. I know Senator Ayotte knows his bottom line. I want to find out what's the proper role of this committee in divulging information, because I really do believe we have a right to know what commanders are recommending, as much as the Commander in Chief, because we fund wars. This idea you can't tell us is something I want to explore.

I'm going to stop now, let my colleagues do a second round. Would you please go to General Allen and get briefed on his recommendations—bottom line, top line—and write to me as to whether or not you think they're sound, before we vote. This could be done, I think, relatively quick.

[The information referred to follows:]



UNITED STATES ARMY
THE VICE CHIEF OF STAFF
Washington, DC 20310-0201

15 February 2013


The Honorable Lindsey Graham
United States Senate
290 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Graham,

As you requested, I have spoken with General Allen about his recommendations for U.S. troop reductions and troop levels in Afghanistan post-2014 (a range of options reflecting a top and bottom line). I know that General Allen put considerable thought into his assessment of the conditions on the ground, and what it will take to accomplish the currently assigned missions sets, sustain the gains achieved over the past 12+ years, successfully conduct transition/retrograde and properly secure our forces. Based upon my experiences in Iraq and my current understanding of operations in Afghanistan I believe the recommendations Gen Allen made are sound.

If confirmed, one of my first priorities will be to visit Afghanistan, talk with Gen Dunford and conduct a complete assessment of all factors and conditions on the ground.

Respectfully,


General Lloyd J. Austin III
Vice Chief of Staff, Army

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

Senator KAINE. We'll move to a second round.

I just want to point out that the questions that the witnesses both answered at the beginning indicated that they would provide answers unless they had a good-faith reason, in consultation with

the committee, not to provide them. I believe some of General Austin's answers have kind of been along that scheme. But, to follow that instruction, and he will come back to the committee.

Senator GRAHAM. That's it, Mr. Chairman, I——

General AUSTIN. Yes.

Senator GRAHAM. Really, I think we have a right to get this, but I don't want to put these gentleman in a bad spot.

General AUSTIN. Right.

Senator GRAHAM. That's why I'm going to wait.

Senator KAINE. Either we'll get the answer or a good-faith description for why you believe certain conversations cannot be revealed. We'll get one or the other.

We'll move to a second round of questions, with no one here who has not asked a first round.

I'll go to Senator Ayotte.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I share Senator Graham's request, and, obviously, would like to understand, if you can't provide that information, why that is, because I think that is something important for this committee to take up, because we have to make decisions on resources that are very important, and we have an oversight function. I very much respect the President's function as Commander in Chief, but this is a very important issue.

We were on the same trip to Afghanistan, and having seen the conditions on the ground, and having been to a recent deployment ceremony, I just want to make sure, also, when our guys are still there, that we have enough people there to protect the guys and gals we have on the ground. I appreciate that very much.

I have a question for General Rodriguez. Can you help me understand what's happening in eastern Libya right now with the Qaddafi arms cache that was not secured after the NATO activity in Libya? What is happening with those arms? Where are they going? What efforts are we making to secure those arms?

General RODRIGUEZ. Yes, ma'am. They had significant arms caches throughout Libya; and many of them, of course, in eastern Libya, which is the most unstable part of Libya right now. The Intelligence Community has assessed that those continue to move. Many of them have moved southwest, toward the northern Mali issue, and has increased the capacity of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.

The United States and allies have several initiatives to try to attempt to stem that flow. Most of them are on training and equipping efforts for both the Libyan army as well as the Libyan border control people who benefit from some of the training that we're doing.

Then, the military-to-military relationships and the coordination that we're doing are all focused to try to get those under control and limit the ability of that to continue to migrate away from Libya and into the hands of terrorists.

Senator AYOTTE. Just so we understand—when we were on our trip, we also went to Egypt—those arms are being trafficked through the Sinai; the arms are going into Syria; they are also going into Mali and other places, where they're getting in the wrong hands. That continues, as we sit here today.

General RODRIGUEZ. Yes, ma'am, that continues, again, in all those directions, that's right. It's not only toward Africa, ma'am.

Senator AYOTTE. In eastern Libya right now, we have those military-to-military relations, but we don't have a position where the Libyan Government is actually stopping the transfer of those arms, right now, to the wrong people.

General RODRIGUEZ. Eastern Libya is the most destabilized place, and the militias—there's no state control of many of those militias, and that's a challenge that the government is dealing with right now.

Senator AYOTTE. So, we still really need to get much tougher on these arms. This is a dangerous situation, there have been reports that some of these arms may include Manportable Air-Defense Systems (MANPADS), correct?

General RODRIGUEZ. Yes, that's correct, ma'am.

Senator AYOTTE. I hope that, certainly, we need to take greater action on this, because these arms are very dangerous. They're getting into the hands of terrorists, and this is continuing. I look forward to supporting you and the administration to take whatever steps need to be taken to make sure that happens.

I would also point out that I believe that this is one of the reasons when we think about the concept of a light footprint, and we're engaged in an area, that those arms should have been secured right following our involvement so that we weren't in the situation where we're chasing them around, trying to get them from dangerous individuals, who are then using it to attack us and our allies.

General RODRIGUEZ. Yes, ma'am.

Senator KAINE. General Austin, General Rodriguez, a quick question. Would you agree with me that the number of troops in any theater is not an end, but it is a means to an end, a means to accomplishing a defined mission?

General RODRIGUEZ. Yes, sir.

General AUSTIN. Yes, sir.

Senator KAINE. If you are each confirmed in your positions, do you agree that, at any time, if you think that the number of troops assigned, or the number of troops you're dealing with, is not sufficient to accomplish the end that you are charged with accomplishing, that you'll share that concern, under appropriate channels, with your colleagues and superiors?

General RODRIGUEZ. I will, sir.

General AUSTIN. I will.

Senator KAINE. All right.

Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. If we told both of you that you're the only two soldiers left in Afghanistan, you would stay and fight to the end, wouldn't you?

General AUSTIN. If there's work to be done, Senator, I would.

Senator GRAHAM. Would you also tell us, "We have a high opinion of ourselves, but the chance of success would be pretty low"?

General AUSTIN. That's correct.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. What I want to know is, do you agree with me, General Austin, the last card to play in Afghanistan is

the residual follow-on force, in terms of our presence of “closing the deal”? This is a very important decision to make.

General AUSTIN. Yes, sir, I would.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. I appreciate that very much.

Senator Kaine, you’re absolutely right about numbers, but General Austin, is Iran watching what we’re doing in the region?

General AUSTIN. They clearly are, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you agree with that, General Rodriguez?

General RODRIGUEZ. Sir, everybody’s watching what we’re doing.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. If Syria is deteriorating—and we seem to be leading from behind there—if Iraq is deteriorating, and we pick a number in Afghanistan that makes it a high likelihood of failure, that would be sending the wrong signals, do you agree, to the Iranians, if what I say is true?

General AUSTIN. I would, sir, I would agree with that.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. If you had a recommendation of 8,000 troops in 2014, by 2017 we would be down to 1,000, don’t you think the enemy would be focusing on the 1,000, not the 8,000?

General AUSTIN. I clearly think that they would, sir. I think that would—

Senator GRAHAM. Yes. I think that everybody would be focusing on the low number, not the high number.

I don’t know what the numbers are going to be, but I do want to say this to the administration. I know the war is unpopular. I want to end it well. Like Senator Levin, I think we can be successful in Afghanistan. The key is their security forces. But, we have to have enough capability to keep them moving forward. I know the number General Allen picked.

NATO will not stay, in any numbers, if we have 1,000 troops. Do you agree with that? No NATO nation’s going to get to our right.

General AUSTIN. That’s my assessment, yes.

Senator GRAHAM. I’ll wrap this up, Mr. Chairman, by saying that—I’ll make some of my questions in writing—I believe we’re at a pivotal moment in the war in Afghanistan, that NATO is not going to stay unless we show a willingness to stay beyond Kabul itself, and that the enemy will look at the bottom number, not the top number. But, if the President will follow General Allen’s recommendations, within reason—and he’s the President, not me; he has every right to pick the number; every military commander agrees with it, and I agree with that—but, as a member of the opposition party, and as somebody who cares about this, I will either stand with him or lodge my objections. I just want the administration to know that, if they can leave a sufficient force behind, beginning in 2014—and it can be as low as 9,000 or 10,000—that I will stand with them, that I will keep funding the Afghan army, that I want this to turn out well. I know it won’t be popular at home, but it’s the right thing to do. I do want the administration to know, they have every right to make this decision, but if they overrule the commanders and create a force that cannot, in my view, be successful, I cannot, in good conscience, vote to continue this operation.

Mr. Chairman, I can’t think of a worse outcome for America than for us to lose in Afghanistan after a dozen years of fighting, bleeding, hundreds of billions of dollars. That’s the place we were at—

tacked from. How do you win in Pakistan if you lose in Afghanistan?

Mr. Chairman, I will end with this thought. If we don't get this residual force right to continue the momentum, Afghanistan will fall apart quicker than Iraq, and all hell is going to break out.

Thank you very much.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator.

A third round of questions, also 3 minutes.

Senator Ayotte.

Senator AYOTTE. General Rodriguez, would you consider Boko Haram a terrorist organization?

General RODRIGUEZ. Senator, Boko Haram has committed some acts that can be associated with terrorism. That's a policy decision that has to be made. If confirmed, I'll study that issue and make my recommendations on whether it gets classified as a terrorist organization, or not, ma'am.

Senator AYOTTE. I would very much like your opinion, given some of their activities, including a car bomb attack against the United Nations headquarters.

General RODRIGUEZ. Yes, ma'am.

Senator AYOTTE. I would certainly appreciate your opinion on that.

[The information referred to follows:]

Boko Haram has committed some acts that can be associated with terrorism. Designating Boko Haram as a terrorist organization is a policy decision. I will study this issue and make my recommendation on whether Boko Haram should be classified as a terrorist organization.

Senator AYOTTE. Also, General Rodriguez, in thinking about what happened in the attacks on our consulate in Benghazi, from your assessment—and obviously, you'll be taking over that area of responsibility, and you and I have talked about it—what are some of the lessons learned, do you think, from that?

General RODRIGUEZ. Ma'am, lessons learned, that both DOD and the Department of State are taken on as the gaps that were created—or were there, in intelligence—that didn't provide the sufficient indication or warnings for us to be able to respond properly. The security decisions that get made by the Department of State have to be well informed by the Department of Defense, so we need to do some closer cooperation there.

Then, the response forces that are available to the combatant commanders need to be continually looked at and appropriate for the situations that are out there throughout the region.

Senator AYOTTE. You talked about the forces that would be—as I understand it, going to Stuttgart, that we would have in place, that we didn't previously have in place—but, how's that response time, though, when you think about it? Because we're not going to be Djibouti or Aviano—and also, thinking about the air assets; will we have any AC-130s or anything that, if we had to go to that area again to respond—how would we handle it?

General RODRIGUEZ. Yes, ma'am. I think that, again, we'll—if confirmed, place those requirements on the Department of Defense. Again, they'll have to make some risk decisions, based on the situation across the combatant command's area of responsibility, where to put those. The best we can do is to make sure everybody under-

stands the risk that they're incurring, so we can make good decisions on where to keep our people and where not to keep our people.

Senator AYOTTE. I look forward to continuing to—as you're confirmed, to work with you on that. I think that's a challenge that we face in that area, and particularly with what we talked about, with the arms that are still flowing in that area, that are very dangerous, to a whole host of areas that are getting in the wrong hands of al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations.

General RODRIGUEZ. Yes, ma'am.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator Ayotte.

I return the gavel to Chairman Levin.

Chairman LEVIN [presiding]. Thank you so much.

I very much appreciate, Senator Kaine, your taking over the gavel this morning.

Just a few questions, if they haven't already been asked. I was trying to catch up to what questions were being asked.

General Austin, in your judgment, are the Afghan security forces on track to assume the lead responsibility for security in Afghanistan, starting this spring?

General AUSTIN. My judgment's based upon my interaction with the commanders in the field. I was just recently in Afghanistan—during the Thanksgiving holiday—and, as I went around the country, the commanders that I talked to felt that the Afghans had developed significant capability, and were in the lead, in many cases, throughout the country. They were hopeful and very positive about where they were, and very hopeful that things would continue in the right direction.

Based upon that assessment, I think the Afghans will be capable of taking the lead in the prescribed timeline.

Chairman LEVIN. When Senator Jack Reed and I traveled to Afghanistan in January, we heard, from our military commanders, that the Afghan National Security Forces are in the lead already in the vast majority of operations and in the very challenging Regional Command East, that Afghan security forces were conducting operations by themselves in 87 percent of the operation. Have you heard that figure? If not, would that not be a very reassuring fact?

General AUSTIN. Sir, I've heard similar reports, and it is, indeed, reassuring. Again, I talk to both brigade commanders in that area and also the division commander, and they were very positive about the performance of the Afghan security forces.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

One more question on Afghanistan, and that's a subject which I've gotten into repeatedly, and Senator Graham and I have worked together to make the same point, and that has to do with the future size of Afghan security forces. The current proposal is to reduce the size of the National Security Forces in Afghanistan by about a third after 2014, from 352,000 down to approximately 230,000. I believe it sends the wrong signal to the Afghans to do that. They are looking for reassurance that the United States and our allies are committed to an enduring relationship with Afghanistan. We wrote the President again last year—Senator Graham, Senator McCain, Senator Lieberman, myself—to convey that point.

At the time when we are drawing down our troops, it is the wrong message to be drawing down or suggesting the drawdown of Afghan forces from their current level to a significantly lower level.

I'm wondering, General Austin, whether or not you feel that we should keep the Afghan security forces at the 352,000 level beyond 2014.

General AUSTIN. Sir, I think keeping the larger-sized force would certainly, as you pointed out, reassure the Afghans. It would also reassure our NATO allies that we remain committed.

In addition to that, sir, I think a larger Afghan force would help to hedge against any future Taliban mischief. You could reasonably expect that an enemy that's been that determined, that agile, will very soon, after we transition, begin to try to test the Afghan security forces. Further, I think that size of a force provides additional capability to allow the political processes to mature a bit. I think, because of that, it seems to me that a larger force would be of benefit.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Just one question for you, General Rodriguez, and this has to do with the in-extremis force that is desirable, and other contingency response forces that would be useful, to put the AFRICOM commander in a stronger position to respond to contingencies such as we saw in Benghazi. If you've not been asked that question, can you tell us whether you would look for ways to find the greater capability to provide contingency response forces, beyond what they currently are, and were, in the case of the Benghazi matter?

General RODRIGUEZ. Yes, Senator, I would. If confirmed, that will be one of the top priorities I have, and I'll report back to the committee on that. They've already made some significant improvements in that, and we have to continue to do that.

Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Thank you both. We look forward to your confirmation.

Again, I want to thank Senator Kaine for taking over this morning. It's very much appreciated.

General RODRIGUEZ. Thank you, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. We will stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:05 p.m., the committee adjourned.]

[Prepared questions submitted to GEN Lloyd J. Austin III, USA, by Chairman Levin prior to the hearing with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

DEFENSE REFORMS

Question. The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 and the Special Operations reforms have strengthened the warfighting readiness of our Armed Forces. They have enhanced civilian control and clearly delineated the operational chain of command and the responsibilities and authorities of the combatant commanders, and the role of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They have also clarified the responsibility of the military departments to recruit, organize, train, equip, and maintain forces for assignment to the combatant commanders.

Do you see the need for modifications of any Goldwater-Nichols Act provisions?

Answer. The Department has made great progress in the joint arena since the enactment of Goldwater-Nichols. The Services and Joint competencies have proven their effectiveness and capabilities in more than a decade of war. While there is no

room for complacency, I don't believe there is a need for any major modifications to the act.

Question. If so, what areas do you believe might be appropriate to address in these modifications?

Answer. I do not believe there is a need for any major modifications to the Goldwater-Nichols Act. Beyond the Act, however, Congress may want to look at ways to increase integration of non-military agencies in appropriate training and force readiness environments in order to build a more effective whole-of-government approach to crisis prevention and resolution.

RELATIONSHIPS

Question. Section 162(b) of title 10, U.S.C., provides that the chain of command runs from the President to the Secretary of Defense, and from the Secretary of Defense to the combatant commands. Other sections of law and traditional practice, however, establish important relationships outside the chain of command. Please describe your understanding of the relationship of the Commander, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), to the following officials:

The Secretary of Defense.

Answer. Subject to direction from the President, the Commander, CENTCOM performs duties under the authority, direction and control of the Secretary of Defense. In addition, the Commander, CENTCOM is responsible to the Secretary of Defense for the preparedness of the command to carry out its missions.

Question. The Under Secretaries of Defense.

Answer. Commander, CENTCOM coordinates and exchanges information with the Under Secretaries of Defense as needed to set and meet CENTCOM priorities and requirements for support.

Question. The Assistant Secretaries of Defense.

Answer. Commander, CENTCOM coordinates and exchanges information with the Assistant Secretaries of Defense as needed to set and meet CENTCOM priorities and requirements for support.

Question. The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Answer. The Chairman is the principal military advisor to the President, National Security Council and the Secretary of Defense. Section 163 of title 10, U.S. Code, allows communication between the President or the Secretary of Defense and the combatant commanders to flow through the Chairman. As is custom and traditional practice, and as instructed by the Unified Command Plan, I would communicate with the Secretary through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I anticipate a close dialogue with the Chairman on all significant matters.

I would communicate and coordinate with the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as required and in the absence of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Question. The Service Secretaries and Service Chiefs.

Answer. The Secretaries of the Military Departments are responsible for the administration and support of forces assigned to the combatant commands. Commander, CENTCOM coordinates closely with the Secretaries to ensure that requirements to organize, train, and equip forces for CENTCOM are met.

Commander, CENTCOM communicates and exchanges information directly with the Service Chiefs to facilitate their responsibility for organizing, training and equipping forces. Successful execution of the CENTCOM mission responsibilities requires close coordination with the Service Chiefs. If confirmed, I intend to work closely with the Service Chiefs to understand the capabilities of their Services to clearly communicate to them the CENTCOM theater's requirements and to ensure effective employment of the Services' capabilities in the joint and coalition execution of the CENTCOM mission.

Question. Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command.

Answer. Commander, CENTCOM maintains a unique relationship with Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, due to the volume of collaboration required to successfully execute missions within the area of responsibility. Our relationship, like those with other combatant commanders, is critical to the execution of our National Military Strategy and characterized by mutual support, frequent contact and productive exchanges of information on key issues.

Question. The other combatant commanders.

Answer. Commander, CENTCOM maintains a close relationship with other geographic and functional combatant commanders. These relationships are critical to the execution of our National Military Strategy and are characterized by mutual support, frequent contact and productive exchanges of information on key issues.

Question. Commander, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Afghanistan/Commander, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A).

Answer. Commander, CENTCOM maintains operational control (OPCON) over U.S. Forces assigned to NATO-ISAF in his role as the Commander, USFOR-A, which is CENTCOM's current main effort and top priority for mission support. For forces further assigned from USFOR-A to NATO-ISAF, this OPCON authority is largely transferred to Joint Forces Command Brunssum and Supreme Allied Commander Europe as "NATO-OPCOM". Thus mission direction for NATO-ISAF is a shared responsibility between CENTCOM and SACEUR chains of command. For this reason we moderate any interactions with Commander NATO-ISAF by close coordination with Commander JFC Brunssum and SACEUR.

Question. The respective U.S. Chiefs of Mission within the CENTCOM AOR.

Answer. Commander, CENTCOM maintains a close working relationship with all U.S. Ambassadors to countries in the CENTCOM region. We coordinate carefully to ensure that operational and security cooperation activities remain consistent with each Ambassador's priorities and Mission Strategic Plan as needed to ensure unity of effort between U.S. military and other U.S. Government activities in the CENTCOM region.

Question. The respective U.S. Senior Defense Officials/Defense Attachés (SDO/DATT).

Answer. Commander, CENTCOM is in the rating scheme for Defense Attachés and maintains close relationships and coordination with Senior Defense Officials. The commander relies on the SDOs to provide the information necessary to ensure that CENTCOM's security cooperation activities stay in-step with each Ambassador's priorities and Mission Strategic Plan.

QUALIFICATIONS

Question. If confirmed, you will be entering this important position at a critical time for CENTCOM.

What background and experience do you have that you believe qualifies you for this position?

Answer. Over the course of my 37-plus years serving in the U.S. military, I have commanded at every level, to include at the Corps and Theater levels. I spent much of the past decade commanding forces throughout the CENTCOM region. At the two-star level, I commanded 10th Mountain Division and Task Force-180 in Afghanistan. At the three-star level, I commanded Multi-National Corps-Iraq. Most recently, as Commander of U.S. Forces-Iraq, I commanded all forces in that country and oversaw the successful transfer of responsibilities to the Iraqi Security Forces and U.S. State Department representatives, as well as the transition of military forces and equipment out of Iraq. I have worked closely with partners from across the Interagency and have existing relationships with civil and military leaders throughout the CENTCOM AOR. My past experiences have afforded me an in-depth understanding of the nuanced challenges and opportunities that exist in that region of the world. I also served previously as Director of the Joint Staff and as CENTCOM Chief of Staff. These experiences have provided me with an understanding of the command as well as some of the relationships and processes that exist at the highest levels.

MAJOR CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Question. If confirmed as the Commander of CENTCOM, you will be responsible for all military operations in the CENTCOM area of responsibility.

In your view, what are the major challenges and opportunities that would confront you if you are confirmed as the next Commander of CENTCOM?

Answer. The Middle East represents an extremely complex and dynamic environment. Ethnic, sectarian and ideology-based conflicts are continuing to play out within countries and between countries across the region. Challenges abound; as do opportunities. Among the many challenges we are faced with is the significant threat posed by violent extremist organizations. Our priorities in the near-term are: (1) Afghanistan—we must continue to support the mission, with some ~66,000 servicemembers still serving in country; (2) Iran—we want to see a non-nuclear Iran that respects its neighbors; (3) Syria—we would like to see an end to the civil war and a stable government; and (4) The broader Middle East—we want a region where stability and security prevails; we want the conditions set to allow for economic growth and opportunity; and, representative government that is underpinned by rule of law. In general, we want a region where all States play a constructive role in managing and maintaining stability. Our key opportunities lie in the domain of

collective security and building regional partners' security capacities. Many of our partners in the region have shown interest and made steady progress to date in taking on their share of regional security. We will continue to encourage this interest and capacity building across the region.

Question. If confirmed, what plans do you have for addressing these challenges and opportunities?

Answer. I will address these challenges and opportunities using four principle levers: military-to-military engagements, plans and operations, security cooperation programs, and posture and presence. CENTCOM will employ these levers always focused on working by, with and through our partners to the greatest extent allowable to bolster regional security and promote stability. Military-to-military engagements lay the foundation for and bolster our broader diplomatic and political relationships. It is often the bedrock of the relationship and affords us the trust necessary to dialogue quietly about contentious issues. Plans and operations are developed and executed in conjunction with our fellow combatant commands, interagency organizations and international partners as necessary to address developing contingency and crisis situations. Security Cooperation Programs build partner capacity as the responsible way to reduce U.S. presence in the region and effectively support their ability to carry more of the region's security burden. Posture and presence in the future will be leaner but supported by a base infrastructure that enables rapid reinforcement.

Question. One challenge with which you may have to deal, if confirmed, is the impact of the combination of sequestration and the continuing resolution on the ability of the Military Services to meet the demands of the combatant commanders as well as the execution of your operating budget. Admiral Winnefeld, the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was recently quoted as saying, "We are taking a very close look at how we 'appetite suppress' some of the demand signals that are out there," he said. "We find that there are some forces out there in the world today that have been asked for and have been provided to (combatant commanders) that might be servicing a lower level of interest."

What is your understanding and assessment of the impact of pending Defense budget cuts to CENTCOM's operational planning, requests for forces, and operating budgets? If confirmed, how would you prioritize the use of available funds?

Answer. All Service Chiefs have been clear and consistent in saying that sequestration will have devastating impacts on operations. That said, they've also been clear in stating that they will continue to support the ongoing operations in Afghanistan, first and foremost. But, there is shared concern about the impact of cuts on the readiness of forces responding to emerging contingencies. If confirmed, I will continue to work closely with the Military Service components to address any concerns they have with meeting our high priority operational requirements. I will also defend the authorities which support our strategic partnerships which are vital to our ability to promote regional security and stability throughout the region.

Question. In your opinion, what are your considerations or alternatives if an adequate aircraft carrier presence in the Gulf cannot be sustained by the Navy beyond March 2013?

Answer. The prudent measure is to maintain continuous aircraft presence in the Arabian Gulf region, with two carriers in assessed periods of heightened risk. Maintaining a credible naval force in the region covered by sufficient aviation combat power is essential for demonstrating an enduring commitment to regional partners, building trust and relationships, and the rapid projection of power in a crisis. While naval and air component commanders continue to work alternative strategies to deliver combat power in the Arabian Gulf from a single carrier positioned outside of the Gulf, these alternatives are predicated upon uninterrupted access to overseas bases and facilities.

Question. If sequestration were to occur, what would be your assessment of the level of risk to the U.S. national security objectives in the CENTCOM AOR?

Answer. Sequestration would significantly increase the risk to ongoing missions in the CENTCOM AOR. Certainly we can expect that if sequestration occurs those units that are required to address emerging challenges will be less ready than in the past or have less capability. While the effects of sequestration will negatively impact all of the services and combatant commanders, sequestration will arguably have the greatest operational impact on the CENTCOM AOR due to geography, the pace of ongoing combat operations and the likelihood of numerous contingencies.

DEFENSE STRATEGIC GUIDANCE

Question. The Defense Strategic Guidance, "Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for the 21st Century Defense", announced by President Obama on Janu-

ary 5, 2012, includes, among other things, the intention of the administration and the Pentagon to “rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region.” In his associated remarks, Secretary Panetta explained that the “U.S. military will increase its institutional weight and focus on enhanced presence, power projection, and deterrence in Asia-Pacific. . . . At the same time, the United States will place a premium in maintaining our military presence and capabilities in the broader Middle East.”

What do you anticipate will be the impact of this guidance on the operations and activities of CENTCOM?

Answer. The guidance does increase emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region while enhancing U.S. technological capabilities in the PACOM area of responsibility (AOR). However, our Defense Strategic Guidance reflects a global strategy. The world we live in remains complex and extremely volatile. In fact, much of the instability resides in the CENTCOM AOR where significant challenges persist. While I understand that in an era of constrained resources we must prioritize; the combatant commander is responsible for ensuring that, at all times, the command is postured to protect vital national interests in the region. If confirmed, I will continue to assess conditions in the CENTCOM AOR and request the resources required to sustain operations.

READINESS OF FORCES

Question. What is your assessment of the readiness of U.S. Forces that have been deployed to Operation Enduring Freedom?

Answer. Our forces are the best-trained, best-equipped, and most experienced in our Nation’s history; and, that includes forces deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Pre-deployment training at the various joint training centers provides tailored counterinsurgency scenarios and incorporates up-to-the-minute lessons learned from troops on the ground in Afghanistan. I have worked hard in my current position as Vice Chief of Staff of the Army to ensure that all levels of command are appropriately focused on ensuring the continued and future readiness of U.S. Forces in theater.

Question. Have you observed any significant trends in or apparent gaps with respect to personnel, equipment, or training readiness in units as they deploy to or upon their arrival in Afghanistan?

Answer. No. Overall, the readiness of units arriving in the AOR has been high and the Services have done well preparing units to deploy. Where issues have arisen, the Services have been adaptive and they have routinely incorporated feedback from theater thereby making necessary adjustments in force preparations.

Question. What are your views, if any, on the growing debate over whether U.S. Forces are putting too much emphasis on preparing for counterinsurgency and irregular warfare operations or too little emphasis on preparing for high intensity force-on-force conflict and full spectrum operations?

Answer. This debate reflects how the U.S. military has adapted over the past decade-plus of war. Army doctrine reflects this adaptation, stating that our formations must be capable of performing unified land operations across a broad range of operations: offense, defense, stability, and defense support to civil authorities. There is a recurring dialogue between commanders at all echelons to ensure that there is a shared understanding of the essential tasks that must be trained. The commanders’ assessment of the situation, mission, time, and resources drives how commanders execute unit training and preparation. Ultimately, this is a dynamic process. It is at the heart of the military’s efforts to build and sustain readiness, and it ensures that our formations are capable of accomplishing the mission across the full range of operations.

Question. What is your opinion on adding a third maneuver battalion to the Brigade Combat Team structure?

Answer. The addition of the third maneuver battalion will greatly enhance the depth, versatility and combat capability of our Brigade Combat Teams (BCT). Analysis shows that the redesigned BCT will provide equal capacity to meet combat commander demand while providing a more robust formation at the point of decision. The three battalion design is more lethal, survivable and flexible. Importantly, it also increases the commander’s options as the formations execute operations across the full range of military operations. Ultimately, the addition of the third maneuver battalion is a key development for the Army as it transitions from current fight and postures for the next conflict.

AFGHANISTAN COUNTERINSURGENCY STRATEGY

Question. Do you support the counterinsurgency strategy for Afghanistan?

Answer. Yes, I support the current approach of: (1) building Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) capacity; (2) countering violent extremist organizations; and (3) setting conditions for final transfer to ANSF control and change of mission by the end of December 2014.

Question. If confirmed, are there changes you would recommend to the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan?

Answer. The current strategy is showing progress; and, I have every confidence in the commanders leading the effort. That said, if confirmed, I will continually assess the situation on the ground, consult with U.S. leaders, partners, regional leaders and NATO commanders and provide my best military advice on this matter to my chain of command. I will also follow up with the members of this committee, as requested.

Question. What is your assessment of the progress of the campaign in Afghanistan?

Answer. Efforts to counter the insurgency and prevent terrorist safe havens have been and remain effective. Coalition operations have continued to focus on degrading insurgent networks while building the capacity of our ANSF partners to maintain security. We were largely successful during the 2012 fighting season and we met our campaign objective to force the enemy out of population centers. We continue to transition the responsibility for security to the ANSF and we have seen a decrease in violence in areas under ANSF responsibility. That being said, challenges remain—particularly in areas along the border with Pakistan and areas in southern Afghanistan where the Taliban continues to operate. There also remain the dual challenges of narcotics and corruption that threaten long-term stability. Afghanistan's nascent government and upcoming elections scheduled for 2014 also pose significant challenges with respect to maintaining the gains achieved in recent years.

SECURITY TRANSITION IN AFGHANISTAN

Question. President Obama and Afghan President Karzai recently announced that the transition to an Afghan lead for security throughout Afghanistan will occur this spring, a few months ahead of schedule. As part of the ongoing transition, coalition forces are shifting increasingly to an advise-and-assist mission but will continue to support Afghan security forces until the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission concludes by no later than the end of 2014.

Do you support the announced transition of the security lead to Afghan security forces throughout Afghanistan by this spring?

Answer. Yes, I support plans for ANSF assuming the lead for security across all of Afghanistan by mid-2013, as agreed to at the Chicago NATO Summit in May 2012. The current security situation and capability of ANSF supports continued adherence to the transition plan. Afghans have already assumed the lead through much of the country and have validated NATO's incremental decisions to make these transfers. That said, we will certainly incorporate lessons learned from our experiences in Iraq. Among them we recognize that ISAF will be called upon to provide critical enablers and advisory support to the ANSF as they assume the lead for security operations. ISAF will also be required to maintain sufficient combat power to respond to contingencies and conduct operations alongside the ANSF.

Question. Do you support the shift in the mission of coalition forces to an increasingly advise-and-assist role in support of Afghan security forces?

Answer. Yes. The current situation supports the shift to an advise-and-assist mission in support of ANSF. If confirmed, I will monitor changing conditions and dialogue with commanders, regional leaders and partners to ensure the situation supports the employment of general purpose forces in a Security Force Assistance (SFA) role. Balanced SFA enables ISAF to provide tailored forces that support sustainable development of the ANSF as they move into the lead, as well as special and general purpose forces to support developing Afghan Army and Police operations through 2014. The ultimate aim is to build ANSF capacity and set conditions for them to assume lead for the security of their country. Much like in Iraq, as the ANSF capabilities and capacity improve, coalition forces will provide less frequent training and advice at the lower levels and focus efforts at the higher echelons to better integrate our enabler support.

Question. Do you agree that the success of the mission in Afghanistan depends on having Afghan security forces, rather than coalition forces, taking the lead for security and conducting unilateral operations to the maximum extent?

Answer. Yes. History has shown that indigenous forces are best suited to assume lead responsibility for the security of their country. A great deal of the country has already transitioned to ANSF in the lead, and we have seen low levels of violence

in these transitioned areas. ISAF will continue to provide critical enablers and advisory support to ANSF formations as they assume lead responsibilities.

Question. What is your assessment of the capacity and performance of the Afghan security forces in assuming the lead for security in areas designated for transition, including in contested areas?

Answer. Over the past several years, we have helped grow the ANSF into a force that will eventually reach 352,000. The ANSF is steadily improving in military capability and professionalism. There is still work to be done before they will be self-sufficient and capable of providing sustainable security for the long term. However, the ANSF is on track to assume full security responsibility across Afghanistan by the end of 2014. During 2012, the Afghan National Army demonstrated their ability to plan, conduct and sustain large-scale operations. Their combat enabler capabilities are still developing due to late fielding, but they are improving in their ability to conduct fire support, rotary wing support and even limited medical evacuation.

Question. Do you believe that a responsible transition of the mission for U.S. Forces in Afghanistan from combat to a support role should be based on conditions on the ground in Afghanistan?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will work closely with leaders in theater, to include General Dunford, to assess the conditions on the ground and provide my best military advice with respect to the transition of mission to my chain of command.

Question. Under the current conditions in Afghanistan, would you support making such a transition by no later than the end of 2014?

Answer. I support the current plan to complete the transition by the end of 2014, per the President's policy. If confirmed, I will continue to assess the situation, along with the leaders on the ground, and provide my best military advice on the timeline and related transition requirements.

Question. What conditions, if any, would drive you to recommend to the President to not transition from a combat to a support role?

Answer. We are transitioning from leading partnered counterinsurgency operations to providing Security Force Assistance through training, advising and assisting the ANSF based on the current assessment of conditions on the ground. A number of factors were considered when making the decision on pace and course of our transition efforts. Indeed, it would be difficult to name a single factor that would drive a commander to recommend a change to the current plan. If confirmed, I will continue to assess conditions on the ground and provide my best military advice to my chain of command.

DRAW DOWN OF U.S. FORCES IN AFGHANISTAN

Question. In September 2012 the drawdown of the 33,000 U.S. surge force in Afghanistan was completed, bringing U.S. troop levels down to approximately 68,000. President Obama recently reaffirmed his pledge to continue the drawdown of U.S. Forces from Afghanistan at a steady pace. He also stated he would soon announce the next phase of the U.S. drawdown based on the recommendations of the ISAF Commander and other commanders on the ground in Afghanistan.

What is your understanding of the missions to be conducted by any residual U.S. Force that may remain in Afghanistan after 2014?

Answer. My understanding of the missions to be conducted by residual U.S. Forces remaining in Afghanistan after 2014 will be counterterrorism; train, advise, and assist the ANSF; and provide support to Department of State civilian missions. Most importantly, force protection is inherent in everything we do in theater.

Question. In your current position as Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, have you provided any recommendations on the size and missions of any residual U.S. Force that may remain in Afghanistan after 2014?

Answer. No.

Question. Based on your experience as the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army and your experience in the Iraq drawdown, what missions and force size do you recommend for a residual U.S. Force in post-2014 Afghanistan?

Answer. I am not currently in a position to provide such a recommendation. I would defer to the current CENTCOM commander and the commander on the ground to provide their recommendations.

Question. In your view, how should the requirement to provide force protection for our troops be taken into consideration in any decision on the size of a residual U.S. Force in Afghanistan post-2014?

Answer. Force protection is an inherent part of everything we do and therefore must be included in the planning effort.

Question. How does the early transition to Afghan lead for security announced by Presidents Obama and Karzai impact our mission and objectives for the 2013 and 2014 fighting seasons?

Answer. The transition is and has always been conditions and capability based. The early transition announcements reflect the improving security situation in Afghanistan and ANSF's capabilities to assume the lead and should have no impact on our mission objectives.

Question. What force structure do you think is appropriate for the 2013 and 2014 fighting seasons?

Answer. If confirmed, I will assess the force structure capabilities and capacities that we will maintain over the next 2 years to ensure they continue to meet our objectives. We will transition to full security lead by the Afghans in the spring and we will need to ensure that we have set the proper conditions for successful elections in 2014. We will also need to ensure that we have the proper forces to smoothly transition to the train, advise and assist mission by December 2014.

Question. What, in your view, should be the pace of reductions in U.S. Forces during each of 2013 and 2014?

Answer. This is an operational maneuver. As such, the pace of reductions should be based on the commander's assessment, the enemy situation, conditions on the ground, to include ANSF capabilities, and mission requirements in order to maintain the campaign's momentum and to avoid jeopardizing the gains we have made. At the same time, we must be clear that we will not abandon Afghanistan. This is a decisive time in the country's history and decisions we make now regarding degrees of support, how the U.S. drawdown proceeds, to include the preservation of enablers in terms of logistics, medical evacuation, communications, and air support will be essential for our partners.

LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES

Question. What is your assessment of the speed and reliability of logistical convoys through the Pakistan Ground Lines of Communication (GLOC) to support our forces in Afghanistan?

Answer. Movement in Pakistan is subject to a number of recurring challenges including environmental conditions, political factors and the ongoing security situation. We have cleared out nearly all cargo previously stranded in Pakistan as a result of the closure that began in November of 2011, and we recently commenced test shipments of new cargo. We anticipate challenges as the Government of Pakistan (GOP) struggles internally to implement new transit processes that were agreed to during 2012. The GOP appears committed to resolving these issues and facilitating successful, sustained cargo movement. It is our intent to use the PAK GLOC consistent with route capacities, GOP capabilities, the security situation, and environmental conditions.

Question. In your view, what improvements, if any, need to be made in light of the logistical throughput rate of the Pakistan GLOC?

Answer. The current proven capacity of the PAK GLOC will support the volumes that we anticipate being shipped via Pakistan. Infrastructure improvements are not required to support anticipated volumes, but may provide a positive impact supporting longer term nation building, transit and trade in the region.

Question. To what extent has CENTCOM developed a common operating picture to improve its processes for tracking equipment and supplies in Afghanistan?

CENTCOM leverages both automated systems of record and manual reporting processes to obtain a common picture of equipment and supplies in Afghanistan. In addition, CENTCOM is partnering with the Joint Staff and U.S. Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) to develop a common operating picture to track the end-to-end retrograde process.

Question. General Austin, you served as the Commanding General of U.S. Forces-Iraq during the withdrawal of U.S. Forces from Iraq consistent with the 31 December 2011 deadline in the U.S.-Iraq Security Agreement.

Taking into account your experience in Iraq, what are the biggest risks and mitigation strategies associated with drawing down U.S. Forces from Afghanistan and retrograding military equipment to the United States?

Answer. The geographic and topographic complexities of Afghanistan will make the retrograde of materiel and personnel very challenging. The largest risk to retrograde operations is the threat of disruption to PAK GLOC and the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) operations. To mitigate this risk, the CENTCOM Materiel Recovery Element (CMRE) was established to increase both volume and velocity of retrograde efforts. Transition and retrograde will also need to be conducted while

contending with an able and determined enemy. As the size of our footprint shrinks, force protection and availability of enablers will increase in importance.

Question. How do you intend to address any conflicts between the objectives of mission accomplishment in the 2013 and 2014 fighting seasons and the logistical challenge of drawing down forces and retrograding military equipment?

Answer. The accomplishment of our mission in 2013 and 2014 fighting seasons will be inextricably linked to the imperative of drawing down forces and retrograding equipment. The drawdown and retrograde are in themselves significant military operations that must be fully nested within the ground tactical plan and plans for operational maneuver. Fighting season considerations, force levels and retrograde actions cannot be considered in isolation. The ground commander must plan operations, assess risk and mitigate conflicts as a whole to ensure all efforts within theater are nested and synchronized.

STATUS OF FORCES AGREEMENT FOR AFGHANISTAN

Question. As called for in the Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement signed in May, the United States and Afghanistan are holding talks on a Bilateral Security Agreement, which will provide essential protections for any limited U.S. military presence in Afghanistan after 2014.

Do you agree that it is essential that any status of forces agreement for U.S. military forces in Afghanistan after 2014 provide immunity for U.S. troops from prosecution in Afghan courts?

Answer. Yes. Exclusive jurisdiction is an essential requirement.

Question. If confirmed, would you recommend that the United States withdraw its military forces from Afghanistan if those forces do not have such immunity?

Answer. Yes. Without jurisdiction over our troops, our activity in Afghanistan must be limited to traditional security assistance. Combat and training activities cannot be conducted without this protection.

Question. Based on your experience in the Iraq drawdown, what are the risks associated with removing all U.S. military forces from Afghanistan?

Answer. Removing all U.S. military forces threatens the achievements gained in Afghanistan over the last 12 years of sustained combat. Such a withdrawal could open the door to a return of al Qaeda, collapse of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and lead to increased instability in the region. Also, it could delay the maturation of Afghan forces at a critical point in their development.

AFGHANISTAN NATIONAL SECURITY FORCES

Question. What is your assessment of the progress in developing a professional and effective Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF)?

Answer. ANSF operational effectiveness continues a general upward trend as they continue to improve and professionalize. The ANSF have increasingly taken the lead in areas previously secured by U.S. surge forces, and have been able to expand their reach, occupying patrol bases and combat outposts that had previously been too dangerous to hold. The ANSF have also increased their abilities to plan, carry out, and sustain high-level kinetic actions involving multiple ANSF forces.

Question. What is your assessment of the capacity of the ANSF to take the security lead and to conduct unilateral operations?

Answer. The ANSF have made substantial progress during the past year, and are steadily building a force that will assume full responsibility for security operations throughout Afghanistan by the end of 2014. The ANSF are unilaterally conducting the vast majority of operations in Afghanistan, although many of these are routine patrols. Force generation and development efforts continue to yield advancements in operational effectiveness. During the previous year, ANSF made strides in performance, increasingly moving into the lead for security operations. As of the end of the last reporting period, ANSF partnered with ISAF on more than 90 percent of all operations and was in the lead in more than 50 percent of these actions.

Question. What do you see as the main challenges to building the capacity of the ANSF and, if confirmed, what recommendations, if any, would you make for addressing those challenges?

Answer. There are five key challenges to building the capacity and capability of the ANSF: leadership, logistics, counter-IED, attrition and literacy. Counter-IED continues to pose a significant challenge. Attrition rates have improved; however, we must continue to monitor levels. We must also continue to help the ANSF to professionalize the force; train and develop leaders; build their enabler capacity; and, further expand literacy which will have a lasting impact on the country. If confirmed, I will work closely with General Dunford to ensure that he has the resources

necessary to develop a sufficient and sustainable ANSF that can operate independently of coalition assistance.

Question. Do you support plans for building and sustaining the ANSF at 352,000 personnel?

Answer. Yes. The target end strength provides the capacity for achieving security and stability in Afghanistan.

Question. Do you agree that any reductions in the ANSF from this 352,000 level should be based on security conditions in Afghanistan at the time those reductions would be expected to occur?

Answer. Yes. A sufficient and sustainable ANSF is necessary for Afghanistan's long-term stability and security. The current ANSF sustainment plan will maintain Afghan forces at surge strength of 352,000 through 2018, to allow for continued progress toward a sustainable secure environment in Afghanistan. As security conditions on the ground continue to improve, ANSF will undergo a gradual, managed force reduction to a final force structure that is both adequate to meet security requirements and fiscally sustainable in the long term.

INSIDER THREAT

Question. In 2012 the number of so-called "green-on-blue" incidents, in which ANSF personnel or ANSF impersonators attacked U.S. or coalition soldiers, increased significantly. The rise in the number of insider attacks has led U.S. and Afghan military leaders to take a number of precautions against such insider threats, including expanding Afghan counterintelligence efforts to identify possible Taliban infiltrators, increasing cultural sensitivity training, and expanding the "Guardian Angel" program to protect against the insider threat in meetings between coalition and Afghan forces.

What in your view are the causes of the increase in insider attacks and what has been their impact on the military campaign in Afghanistan?

Answer. Insider attacks are an insurgent tactic designed to create a seam and sow mistrust between ISAF and ANSF forces. Most likely the increase in insider attacks reflects a combination of factors including the increase in the number of ANSF personnel and a greater number of Coalition Force (CF) trainers living and working with the ANSF. Overall, these attacks, while tragic, have not had a significant impact on the campaign.

Question. What is your assessment of the impact of these green-on-blue attacks on the level of trust between coalition and Afghan forces?

Answer. Clearly these types of attacks have the potential to impact morale and to compromise bonds among coalition members. However, during my recent visit to Afghanistan I did not see indications of either low morale or mistrust among coalition and Afghan forces.

Question. What is your assessment of the measures that have been taken by ISAF and Afghan leaders to address the insider threat? Are there additional steps that you would recommend to address this threat, if confirmed?

Answer. Since January 2012, there has been a significant increase in the ISAF and ANSF efforts to mitigate insider attacks. In August 2012, ISAF and the ANSF forces formed the Insider Threat Action Group and the Insider Threat Mitigation Team to jointly identify and implement insider threat mitigation efforts. Steps are being taken by Afghans to institute a number of insider threat countermeasures and supplement the vetting process in order to remove undesirable members of the ANSF. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Commander, ISAF, to ensure appropriate measures are being taken and the necessary resources allocated to protect coalition forces.

Question. In light of the spike in insider attacks, do you see a need to reconsider current plans for embedding small Security Force Assistance Teams of U.S. military advisors with Afghan military units to assist in the transition to an Afghan security lead?

Answer. Presently, no; but, this is a critical question and if I am confirmed, I will work with General Dunford as conditions warrant to evaluate the potential risks to our embedded advisors as transition progresses.

RECONCILIATION

Question. In your view, what should be the role of the United States in any reconciliation negotiations with the Afghan Taliban and other insurgent groups?

Answer. Achieving a durable peace in Afghanistan will require some form of political settlement among Afghans. That settlement must ultimately be brokered among the Afghans themselves. Afghanistan is adamant that the Afghan Government must maintain control of any reconciliation negotiations. The U.S. role should acknowl-

edge that the Afghanistan Government is the lead for reconciliation and focus on acting as a mediator and encouraging other nations to play a constructive role.

Question. What additional steps, if any, should the United States be taking to advance the reconciliation process?

Answer. The United States could work to bring other key AOR partners with a vested interest in securing a stable Afghanistan into the reconciliation dialogue to offer their assistance in support of the peace process.

Question. In your view, what should be the role of Afghanistan's neighbors, in particular Pakistan, in the reconciliation process?

Answer. Neighbors in the region have legitimate interests in Afghanistan and need to play a constructive role in the reconciliation process. Specifically Pakistan must take steps to ensure that militant and extremist groups cannot continue to find safe haven in Pakistani territory. It should actively support the Afghan-led process. Ultimately, Pakistan and the other regional neighbors will benefit from improved stability in Afghanistan.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

Question. Special Operations Forces depend on general purpose forces for many enabling capabilities, including intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR); logistics; and medical evacuation. Admiral McRaven, Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, has said "I have no doubt that special operations will be the last to leave Afghanistan" and has predicted that the requirement for special operations forces may increase as general purpose forces continue to be drawn down.

If confirmed, how would you ensure adequate enabling capabilities for Special Operations Forces (SOF) as general purpose forces continue to draw down in Afghanistan?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with SOCOM to assess SOF enabling requirements and source them with existing CENTCOM assets or through the request for forces process.

Question. The find-fix-finish operational model is greatly enhanced by opportunities to capture and interrogate enemy personnel, but that capability may be eroded as the U.S. military and intelligence footprint is reduced. An inability to mount capture operations could lead to a greater emphasis on lethal actions, potentially affecting public opinion.

What long-term risks are imposed on counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan as a result of fundamental changes in the operational environment for SOF?

Answer. As coalition and U.S. SOF are reduced in size and scope with the draw-down, the ANSF will play an ever-increasing greater role in counterterrorism. U.S. and coalition operational risk is reduced as these forces step back and settle into a train, advise and assist capacity. Long-term strategic risk lies with the capability and capacity of ANSF SOF to efficiently and effectively execute counterterrorism. However, this risk is also reduced through adequate ANSF SOF training and with the provision of adequate operational enablers to ANSF SOF.

Question. Last April, the United States and Afghanistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the "Afghanization" of direct action counterterrorism missions in Afghanistan, which reflected the shared intention of having Afghan security forces in the lead in the conduct of such operations with U.S. Forces in a support role.

Why is it important for Afghan Special Operations Forces to be in the lead on night raids?

Answer. As a sovereign nation, Afghanistan certainly should be in the lead in these types of operations. Historically, indigenous forces defeat insurgencies. Successful transition will be characterized by our Afghan partners taking increasing responsibility for the planning and command of these night operations.

Question. General Allen and others have praised the Village Stability Operations (VSO) and Afghan Local Police (ALP) programs—both U.S. Special Operations missions—as critical elements of the counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan. However, President Karzai recently stated his position that U.S. Forces should withdraw from Afghan villages.

What are your views on the value of these programs and do you believe they should be part of the long-term strategy in Afghanistan (i.e. post-2014)?

Answer. Denying adversaries control over populations is essential to prevailing in a contest to establish governance. The VSO and ALP programs have proven effective by enabling local security and re-establishment or re-empowerment of traditional local governance mechanisms. "Bottom-up," population-focused stability efforts to improve security and development undermine hostile influence and control in con-

tested, strategically important areas. These programs will prove valuable and effective as part of the long-term strategy in Afghanistan.

Question. What is your understanding of President Karzai's position with regard to the VSO and ALP programs?

Answer. President Karzai desires an Afghanistan that is protected and secured by Afghans. His support for the VSO and ALP programs hinges on them being Afghan-led, and the traditional "arbaki" (local militia) aspect of the programs. Support for these programs at the local level has heavily influenced his support for them at the national level.

Question. Recently, the Special Operations Joint Task Force-Afghanistan (SOJTF-A), was established to improve coordination among U.S., coalition, and Afghan special forces. This new command structure unified, for the first time, command of all capacity building, counterinsurgency, and counterterrorism activities conducted by special operations forces in the country.

Do you believe unified command of all special operations activities is important and if so, why?

Answer. Yes. Synchronization and unity of effort among special operations activities is absolutely critical and what a unified command provides. The recent establishment of NATO Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan, and the Special Operations Joint Task Force-Afghanistan (NSOCC-A/SOJTF-A) into a combined organizational structure provides a robust, properly sized and structured headquarters that avoids duplication and ensures the best use of available funding, manpower and infrastructure.

Question. Do you believe general purpose forces could be assigned to the new Special Operations Joint Task Force, as has been done previously, to augment special operations forces carrying out the Village Stability Operations and Afghan Local Police programs?

Answer. General purpose and Special Operations Forces are task organized to produce superior results. It is my experience that when different forces work together they achieve outcomes that exceed their capabilities when operating alone.

AFGHAN PUBLIC PROTECTION FORCE

Question. What is your opinion of the progress and future prospects for the Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF) and its ability to transition all ISAF fixed-site and convoy security missions by March 2013?

Answer. National Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A) assesses that APPF cannot achieve complete transition before September 2014 even though Presidential Decree (PD) 62 requires that all ISAF sites and convoys currently secured by Private Security Companies (PSC) be transitioned to APPF by 20 March 2013. According to PD62, if policy does not change it will be illegal to contract services of PSCs after 20 March 2013. ISAF does not currently have the process or manpower in place to undertake this task and the APPF lacks the capacity to replace all PSC-provided functions at ISAF locations. ISAF is finalizing a contingency plan relating to APPF.

NO CONTRACTING WITH THE ENEMY

Question. A year ago, at the request of the Department of Defense (DOD), we enacted the "No Contracting with the Enemy Act," which gives CENTCOM important new tools to ensure that DOD funds do not go to support individuals and entities that actively support the insurgency or actively oppose U.S. or coalition forces in Afghanistan. Earlier this month, DOD officials informed us that little action has been taken pursuant to these new authorities.

What is your understanding of the reasons for CENTCOM's failure, to date, to make aggressive use of the No Contracting with the Enemy Act?

Answer. Based on my experience in Iraq, I understand the importance of preventing funds from getting into the hands of the enemy. If confirmed, I will certainly work to ensure that CENTCOM is in compliance with the "No Contracting with the Enemy Act" provisions.

Question. What steps, if any, will you take if confirmed to ensure that CENTCOM takes full advantage of the authority provided by Congress to ensure that DOD funds do not go to support individuals and entities that oppose our interests in Afghanistan?

Answer. If confirmed, I will rely on my commanders in Afghanistan and intelligence sources to identify companies or persons that may be subject to the "No Contracting with the Enemy Act". When presented with evidence of support to the enemy or opposition to the United States or coalition, I will issue findings against

those companies or persons in accordance with the authorities granted to me by Congress.

AFGHANISTAN AIR FORCE

Question. How do you believe the delays and disruptions in programs to buy airlift and light tactical aircraft for Afghanistan's air force have affected Afghanistan's ability to accept responsibility for its own security?

Answer. To date, there have been no known short-term impacts. However, as the transition continues, the ANSF will experience more equipment and personnel challenges without planned aircraft enablers. ANSF will be required to rely more on indirect fires and mobile land forces with reduced close air support.

U.S. STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP WITH PAKISTAN

Question. What is your assessment of the strategic relationship between the United States and Pakistan? What would you consider to be areas of shared strategic interest between the two countries?

Answer. The strategic relationship between the United States and Pakistan remains strained, but is improving. Pakistan's willingness to cooperate on key U.S. goals has been limited primarily to issues such as counterterrorism and Afghanistan. As such, we have reduced the scope of our security assistance to focus on those areas where our strategic interests overlap, namely counterterrorism and counter-insurgency capabilities.

Question. What do you consider to be the major challenges in the U.S.-Pakistan strategic relationship?

Answer. Challenges do exist in the U.S.-Pakistan relationship. Among them, Pakistan's at-times divergent interests in Afghanistan, its existential fear of India and its nuclear arsenal remain roadblocks to establishing a long-term, strategic partnership. That said, Pakistan is, and will remain important to achieving U.S. goals in the region, especially as we transition in Afghanistan. The reality is that most challenges can be managed by exercising strategic patience and taking the long view on the relationship.

Question. If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you recommend for U.S. relations with Pakistan, particularly in terms of military-to-military relations?

Answer. The overall military-to-military relationship continues to improve and I believe we should seek to continue this trend. The continued importance of the Pakistani military lends credence to the continued provision of security assistance as an important engagement tool for maintaining access and influence. We must continue our "whole-of-government" approach towards Pakistan to ensure all avenues of engagement remain open.

U.S. SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO PAKISTAN

Question. Since 2001, the United States has provided significant security assistance to Pakistan. In addition, the United States has provided significant funds to reimburse Pakistan for the costs associated with military operations conducted by Pakistan along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and other support provided in connection with Operation Enduring Freedom.

In your view, how effective has the assistance and other support that the United States has provided to Pakistan been in promoting U.S. interests?

Answer. Overall, U.S. support to Pakistan has been moderately effective in promoting U.S. interests. At best, our assistance has enabled the Pakistani military to increase its effectiveness against violent extremists. It has also enabled us to sustain military-to-military relations. However, the high level of financial support has not fully translated to the desired effects the United States anticipated.

Question. Do you support conditioning U.S. assistance and other support to Pakistan on Pakistan's continued cooperation in areas of mutual security interest?

Answer. Putting specific conditions on U.S. assistance helps to ensure that our support to Pakistan furthers U.S. interests. Without such caveats, Pakistan may be tempted to apply our support towards efforts they deem to be in their national interest, which may or may not overlap with ours.

COMBATING TERRORISM

Question. What is your assessment of the threat posed by al Qaeda (AQ) and its associated forces to the U.S. Homeland, U.S. interests overseas, and Western interests more broadly?

Answer. Despite the immense pressure placed on al Qaeda leadership in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula, the global al Qaeda movement re-

mains resilient. Regional instability in CENTCOM's AOR and evolving security conditions resulting from the Arab Spring are creating opportunities and potential safe havens for the AQ movement. AQ, its affiliates and allies are exploiting weak governments in places like Yemen to gain new footholds, plan attacks against U.S. Forces, our interests, those of our Western partners and potentially the U.S. Homeland. AQ's affiliates and allies pose an enduring and persistent threat to the U.S. Homeland and Middle East stability and security.

Question. Within the CENTCOM AOR, what do you consider the highest counterterrorism priorities?

Answer. I believe the counterterrorism priorities are Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq, and, in the near-term, Syria. Despite our efforts, the AQ movement remains resilient due to the rapidly changing and emerging geopolitical environment in the Middle East and North Africa. AQ senior leadership in Pakistan will likely retain their safe haven and continue to provide leadership and moral authority to AQ affiliates as U.S. and coalition forces withdraw. AQ in the Arabian Peninsula is emerging as the most dangerous of the AQ affiliates and persists as the Yemeni Government tries to dislodge the group from its southern Yemen safe haven. AQ in Iraq is reconstituting, increasing attacks meant to destabilize the Iraqi Government and incite sectarian conflict. Finally, AQ in Iraq's Syria-based offshoot, the Al-Nusrah Front, is increasing in capability and influence.

Question. What is your understanding of the Department's role in the U.S. strategy to combat terrorism in the CENTCOM AOR?

Answer. The Department's role in the U.S. strategy to combat terrorism in the CENTCOM AOR is to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda and any Violent Extremist Organization (VEO) that poses a direct threat to U.S. assets, allies, and interests abroad. The Department must be part of a "whole-of-government" approach to combating long-term terrorism threats. Combined with diplomatic and economic mechanisms against state-enablers of terrorism, DOD can provide intelligence collection, training, support, and targeting to support counterterrorism efforts.

Question. Given your current knowledge of CENTCOM programs, do you believe the Command's resources are aligned in a manner consistent with these counterterrorism priorities?

Answer. Yes. CENTCOM resources are utilized to employ a whole-of-government approach to reach many of its desired end states mentioned above. Partnerships with U.S. Government entities such as the State Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Agency, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the like are paramount in the efficient utilization of resources.

IRAQ LESSONS LEARNED

Question. Did you agree with the President's decision on the withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Iraq? If so, why? If not, why not?

Answer. Yes. Given the unwillingness of the Iraqi Government to grant protections and immunities to our servicemembers, thereby putting them at risk from prosecution in Iraqi courts, the United States had very few options. Our mission in Iraq today, which operates as part of the diplomatic mission, has been very successful at sustaining the crucial military-to-military relationship with the Iraqi Armed Forces.

Question. What do you believe are the major lessons learned from the Iraq invasion and the follow-on efforts to stabilize the country through 2011?

Answer. I believe the most significant lesson learned was that the U.S. military is as capable and resilient—people, equipment, systems, and leadership—as at any time in our history, and it reaches its full potential when integrated and synchronized across a joint framework that has unity of purpose and effect. The second lesson I took away from our Nation's commitment in Iraq was the need for a thorough, interagency, multi-national approach to planning and execution that delivers flexible military plans and operations that can be adjusted to account for the ever-changing conditions of warfare. The third lesson I took away from Iraq in December 2011 was that the military instrument of power has limitations and is best used as part of a whole-of-government(s) approach to the complex challenges we see today across the globe. Finally, I re-learned the value of close, personal relationships between coalition, host nation, interagency and other partners as teams of teams work to make progress in support of national goals.

Question. What is your understanding and assessment, if any, of the Department's adaptations or changes in policy, programs, force structure, or operational concepts based upon these lessons learned?

Answer. It is my understanding that the Department has applied several lessons learned, specifically to the approaching transition in Afghanistan. In my current po-

sition, I can see our approach to challenges is informed by experiences in Iraq. I am not in a position to assess the changes at the Department level, but there is a clear intent to use not only experiences in Iraq, but also experiences in combating terror and military engagements/operations over the past decade to inform policy, program, force structure, and operational concept decisions in the current and future environment.

Question. If confirmed, what additional changes, if any, would you propose making to policy, programs, force structure or operating concepts based on the lessons of combat and stability operations in Iraq?

Answer. Our relationship with the Iraqi security forces is incredibly important and robust. If confirmed, I will continue our efforts to improve the capability of Iraqi security forces while transitioning to a normal security relationship. Our goal has been and will continue to be a self-sufficient Iraqi military that provides for the defense of Iraq. Maintaining an appropriate sized Office of Security Cooperation in Iraq (OSC-I) with the required authorities is critical to this effort. Iraq's nascent government teeters between democracy and oligarchy. Although this problem cannot be solved solely through military means, OSC-I's success in maintaining strong mil-to-mil relations will afford other U.S. Government agencies the time and space needed to achieve U.S. objectives.

SECURITY SITUATION IN IRAQ

Question. What is your assessment of the current security situation in Iraq?

Answer. The tenuous security situation in Iraq reflects an immature government and security institutions, ethno-sectarian divisions and daunting external challenges. Following an unsuccessful effort by opposition political parties to unseat Prime Minister Maliki through a no confidence vote, Sunni opposition to perceived central government sectarianism and authoritarianism has intensified; and Kurdistan Regional Government and Government of Iraq security forces remain in a tense stand-off in the disputed areas around Kirkuk. Additionally, although well below 2006 levels, Iraq has been unable to break the cycle of extremist violence that has plagued the country since the withdrawal of U.S. Forces. Specifically, al Qaeda in Iraq has proven its resilience by maintaining a consistent tempo of high profile attacks against primarily government targets over the past year.

Question. What are the main challenges to stability and security in Iraq over the coming months?

Answer. The main challenges to stability include heightened Arab-Kurd tensions, unresolved sectarian tensions, extremist violence intended to undermine the government, and the potential for spillover from the Syrian conflict. The threat of an Arab-Kurd conflict has increased steadily in the past year as virtually every aspect of the Arab-Kurd relationship has worsened. Lagging political progress resulting from a lack of political reconciliation has resulted in increasing Sunni political opposition to the Shia-dominated government and made a return to sectarian violence possible. Al Qaeda in Iraq has continued its cycle of violence and appears to be well postured to sustain current levels of violence into the future. The Syrian conflict has the potential to exacerbate many of the existing tensions already present in Iraq: galvanize the Sunni opposition, strengthen AQI, flood the country with refugees, and make weapons available to extremists, all stressing the nascent Iraqi Government.

U.S.-IRAQ STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP

Question. The withdrawal of U.S. Forces from Iraq at the end of 2011 has been described as the beginning of a new chapter in the strategic relationship between the United States and Iraq. The U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement sets out a foundation for a normalized U.S.-Iraqi relationship in areas of mutual economic, diplomatic, cultural and security interests. Secretary of Defense Panetta and the Iraqi Minister of Defense recently signed a MOU for Defense Cooperation between the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Iraq and the Department of Defense of the United States.

How do you see the U.S.-Iraq strategic relationship developing in the coming years and in what areas do you see potential for developing that relationship?

Answer. The domestic and regional political challenges facing Iraqi leaders are not likely to subside and could complicate our overarching strategic relationship. However, we have been quite successful over the past year in sustaining our mil-to-mil relationship with the Iraqi Security Forces. I believe this could serve as a launching point to further expand our economic, cultural and diplomatic relationships under the Strategic Framework Agreement.

Question. What do you see as the greatest challenges for the United States-Iraqi security relationship over the coming years?

Answer. Domestic challenges, including ethnic and sectarian tensions and a lack of inclusiveness in the political system, if not effectively addressed, will complicate our security relationship. Meanwhile, we may have differing views from our Iraqi partners on regional conflicts, such as that in Syria, which may limit Iraq's willingness to partner with us.

Question. What is your understanding and assessment of the recently concluded MOU? In your view, how does this agreement on defense cooperation promote U.S. security interests with respect to Iraq and the region?

Answer. In my current position I am unable to provide an informed assessment of the recently concluded MOU. I understand the MOU is an official commitment between the U.S. Government and the Government of Iraq for a long-term security relationship. If confirmed, I will work with leaders in both nations to sustain, establish, and develop programs that pursue our shared goals. In the strategic realm, this agreement draws Iraq one-step closer to our Nation.

OFFICE OF SECURITY COOPERATION IN IRAQ

Question. In fiscal year 2012 and fiscal year 2013, Congress authorized the Secretary of Defense to support the transition in Iraq by providing funds for the activities and operations of the OSC-I. In the report to accompany the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013, the conferees expressed their expectation that the administration will accelerate the transition of the OSC-I to a normalized status comparable to Offices of Security Cooperation in other countries in the region, and that funding for OSC-I activities and operations will be transitioned out of DOD to other sources, as is the case for offices of security cooperation in other countries.

Do you support the transition of the OSC-I to a normalized office of security cooperation comparable to those in other countries in the region?

Answer. Yes. I fully support DOS's transition for Iraq as it was intended at the outset of planning. The normalization and transition activities of OSC-I are a reflection of the development of our security relationship with the Government of Iraq and represent a significant milestone towards an enduring strategic partnership.

Question. If confirmed, will you ensure that the transition of the OSC-I to a normalized status, including funding from sources other than the DOD, is completed in a deliberate manner?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will ensure that the OSC-I transition is planned and executed in a deliberate manner that meets all policy and legal requirements.

Question. Based on your experience during the drawdown of U.S. Forces in Iraq, do you agree that setting a target date is critical for ensuring that the transition of the OSC-I to a normalized status occurs in a deliberate manner?

Answer. The conditions and requirements for the drawdown in Iraq were bounded by a timeline, which is a different situation than transition of a security cooperation mission, but I would say that planning for strategic transitions should balance conditions, risks, and timelines that are in line with U.S. policy. As time passes, leaders will assess changing conditions and risk to mission to ensure that timelines are met or extended in a manner that best achieves the goals of the transition. In the end, the U.S. and Iraqi goal should be a security cooperation organization of the right size and with the right amount of resources to effectively pursue a positive, long-term strategic relationship. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that conditions and risks are clearly stated and options are presented that reflect the results of deliberate planning.

Question. If confirmed, what timeframe would you recommend as an appropriate target for transitioning OSC-I to a normalized status?

Answer. In my current position I am unable to provide an informed recommendation for a target date, but I have every confidence in the leadership team in Iraq and the planning for the current approach to the transition. If confirmed, I would consult with the interagency team to ensure that the military components of the transition were properly aligned and prepared for transition. I would also provide best military advice on the execution of the transition, presenting options that ensured our goals were met and our relationship with Iraq strengthened. If conditions change, I would also make case-by-case recommendations on programs that could be considered for acceleration or delay.

SYRIA

Question. The civil war in Syria continues and President Assad's commitment to continuing his regime's ongoing operations appear unwavering despite broad international condemnation. To date, the United States has limited its support to opposi-

tion forces to non-lethal assistance to forces on the ground, as well as technical assistance to elements of the opposition working to build a cohesive political entity.

In your view, what is the proper role on the U.S. military in this conflict?

Answer. This is a complex problem requiring a regional solution. Certainly at this time, based on the complexity and volatility of the conflict, a regionally-led diplomatic and political strategy, with the United States in support, has the best chance of succeeding and enduring. However, we do need to remain vigilant and conduct appropriate planning to contain two emerging threats, the loss of control by the Syrian regime of its CW stocks and Advanced Conventional Weapons and the growing influence of violent extremists like the Al-Nusrah Front. Both of these emerging threats have the potential to spillover from Syria into neighboring countries, all of whom are U.S. allies and partners.

Question. In your view, should the United States provide other kinds of support to opposition groups on the ground in Syria, including the provision of lethal support?

Answer. Based on the divergent interests and fractured nature of the armed opposition groups in Syria, there would be great risk to providing them with lethal aid at this time. The influential role of violent extremists like the Al-Nusrah Front within the opposition and the close proximity of Iranian surrogates and Lebanese Hizbollah to the conflict increase the chance of lethal aid finding its way into the hands of malign actors opposed to U.S. interests. The United States is best served by looking for opportunities to provide humanitarian aid and non-lethal assistance to acceptable elements of the opposition while working with regional partners to develop a diplomatic and political solution to the conflict.

Question. In your view, what should be NATO's role with respect to Syria (i.e. should NATO consider a military intervention, the creation of a no-fly zone, or other military operations to protect civilians and support opposition forces)?

Answer. Any viable and enduring solution to the Syria crisis must rely heavily on leadership and participation from our regional partners. Having said that, NATO is currently providing Turkey with ballistic missile defense to hedge against potential Syrian military aggression. Any further role will be determined through consultation with Turkey and our other NATO allies.

Question. In your view, would the removal of the Assad regime be a strategic defeat of Iran in the region?

Answer. The loss of Assad will be a significant blow to Iran's prestige and regional influence and will at least temporarily degrade its operational reach into the Levant by calling into question its longtime logistics hub in Syria. However, consistent with its hedging strategy, Iran will seek to develop other avenues for supporting its proxies and surrogates throughout the region and possibly even focus more attention on countries with large Shia populations like Iraq and Lebanon.

Question. In your view, what role, if any, has the Government of Iraq played with regard to supporting the Assad regime or the armed Syrian opposition?

Answer. The Government of Iraq is attempting to remain neutral regarding the Syrian crisis and prefers a diplomatic solution to end the conflict. Understandably, Iraq is worried about spillover and is seeking to bolster the security of its border. Although the Iraqi Government is not directly aiding the Assad regime, it may have tacitly supported Assad through Iranian over-flights to Syria. Iranian aircraft, over-flying Iraqi territory, have transported humanitarian aid to the Assad regime and it is likely these shipments have included lethal aid. Iraqi authorities have conducted some cargo inspections, but have not fully addressed U.S. demands to ensure over-flights do not carry lethal aid.

IRAN

Question. Iran continues to expand its nuclear program and has failed to provide full and open access to all aspects of its current and historic nuclear program to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

What is your assessment of the military and political threat posed by Iran?

Answer. Iranian military capabilities are significant as compared to its neighbors, and thus enable Iran to pursue a policy focused on reducing U.S. regional influence and asserting Iranian dominance in the region. The expansion of Iran's military and nuclear program over the last decade provides, in part, Tehran the confidence to threaten and coerce neighbors; disrupts international trade and commerce; and targets U.S. and partner interests in the region. Iran also maintains a significant asymmetric capability via its threat network, led primarily by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Quds Force (IRGC-QF) and its regional surrogates, and to a lesser degree the Ministry of Intelligence and Security. Iran uses this threat network to covertly execute its strategic objectives in the region, advance its destab-

bilizing agenda to include the provision of financial and lethal aid, and could use this network to attack United States' interests and our allies.

Question. What is your assessment of U.S. policy with respect to Iran?

Answer. U.S. policy, aimed at preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, is appropriate and critical to avoiding a regional arms race and preserving stability in the Middle East. The U.S. Government's dual track strategy of engagement combined with pressure in the form of sanctions and diplomatic and political isolation is the right approach, and most likely to provide an enduring solution to the challenge posed by Iran's nuclear pursuits. The current strategy has rallied international support and significantly degraded Iran's economy, and as we sharpen the choice for the regime in Tehran, our parallel efforts of building our regional partners' military capabilities and maintaining credible deterrence remain critical elements of our broader multi-vector approach.

Question. What more do you believe the United States and the international community can and should do to dissuade Iran from pursuing nuclear weapons?

Answer. I believe we should continue to employ the dual track strategy of engagement and pressure to achieve our goals. Whenever possible we should continue to strengthen the international sanctions regime so as to increase the pressure on the Iranian Government, while continuing to work with our international partners to underscore to Iran the costs it will bear for its nuclear non-compliance, as well as the deepening isolation it will face on the regional and global stage. Meanwhile, as we draw down forces in Afghanistan and as the overall size of the U.S. military presence within the Middle East decreases, it will become increasingly important that the United States maintain appropriate military capability in the region in order to be able to respond to a range of contingencies. This capability will also reassure our partners as we continue to build partner capacity in response to increasing Iranian malign activity. U.S. Government actions vis-a-vis Iran are closely knit together so as to achieve a "whole-of-government" approach to this problem set. By combining our efforts with the activities of our partners and friends worldwide, we have the best chance of achieving the objectives we seek in dissuading Iran from the pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability.

Question. In your view, what are the risks associated with reducing U.S. presence in the Middle East with respect to the threat posed by Iran?

Answer. There are significant risks associated with a reduced U.S. regional presence. U.S. Forces demonstrate our resolve and our commitment to regional security and the free flow of commerce, as well as a reflection of our continued efforts to build the capacity of regional partners. U.S. Forces provide a deterrent to Iranian overreach and their drive for regional hegemony, and ensure we are prepared to respond to a range of regional contingencies. However, the United States should not carry this burden alone. An appropriately sized force contributes to increased burden sharing by training with regional partners to enhance their capacity to better defend themselves. Nonetheless, we must balance CENTCOM's regional risk assessment with DOD and Service requirements to manage the overall readiness of the Force and the costs of associated deployments. This places a premium on building partner capacity and working by, with and through our regional partners to achieve a better balance of shared defense requirements. If confirmed, I will assess CENTCOM's force posture, and my staff and I will work closely with the Joint Staff to determine the correct U.S. presence in the Middle East.

Question. In your view, what has been the effect of sanctions against Iran—how effective have they been and should additional unilateral or multilateral sanctions be levied against Iran?

Answer. Iran's economy has been severely impacted by the unprecedented international sanctions that have been imposed, especially the sanctions against the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) and the EU oil embargo. These sanctions have reduced the availability of hard currency and resulted in a sharply depreciated currency and high inflation rates. I expect these conditions to be exacerbated by additional sanctions that went into effect on 6 February that prevent foreign banks from repatriating Iran's oil revenues, effectively locking them up overseas. These restrictions will likely cause further deterioration of Iran's economy, such as expanding trade deficits, reduction in the availability of hard currency, a further depreciated Rial and higher inflation.

Question. In your view, what role should CENTCOM play in countering Iran's support of international terrorism throughout its AOR?

Answer. CENTCOM, in very close coordination with SOCOM, plays a pivotal role in deterring Iran's support to terrorist organizations and countering Iran's malign influence. The Iranian Threat Network (ITN) is a worldwide network whose elements execute direct action, intelligence operations, influence building and terrorism against United States' interests, as well as partner nations. From the time of its

creation, in response to the 1979 Iran crisis, CENTCOM has been crucial in defending U.S. interests within the Middle East. We will continue to work with our regional partners to build capacity to counter international terrorism in and outside the AOR. CENTCOM will continue to be the U.S. military's lead for defending U.S. interests in the region, maintaining the free flow of international commerce and protecting regional partners.

EGYPT

Question. What is your assessment of the security situation in Egypt?

Answer. In the near-term, large-scale civil unrest related to the ongoing political and economic crises presents an immediate threat to stability and security in the country. Internal security forces have struggled to control the types of large-scale demonstrations seen in Egypt in the past 2 years. Additionally, Egypt's security situation is impacted by the growth of violent extremist organizations in the Sinai Peninsula and increased arms smuggling from Libya and Sudan. The situation on the ground is further exacerbated by the government's inability to stabilize the political system. The poor security climate is hindering Egypt's economic recovery because it discourages foreign investment and the return of Egypt's large tourist economy.

Question. What is your assessment of the U.S.-Egypt security relationship?

Answer. The Egyptian Armed Forces (EAF) has proven to be a reliable partner for us as we navigate Egypt's internal transition and seek to promote regional stability and security. We have relied on it during times of crises and it has been responsive and professional in its actions. EAF has announced its intentions and followed through in consistent fashion. Egypt indirectly supports U.S. regional objectives by allowing unfettered overflight permissions and Suez Canal transit courtesies not typically afforded to other nations. Additionally, Egypt's strategic importance and regional leadership role make it one of the most important partners in CENTCOM's theater of operations. Close defensive ties allow for open dialogue to discuss hard issues and identify areas for enhanced cooperation.

Question. What is your assessment of the role Egypt plays with respect to regional stability? In your view, should the U.S. Government continue to provide defense articles and services, including but not limited to the F-16s, purchased by the Egyptian military using U.S. Foreign Military Financing funds?

Answer. By providing equipment and training the United States has helped Egypt to maintain a strong and disciplined professional defense force which is critical to ensuring Egypt's continued role as a regional leader, able to act as a moderating influence and contribute actively to the resolution of regional conflicts. For the past 30 years, the F-16 aircraft has been a key component of the relationship between the U.S. military and the Egyptian Armed Forces (EAF). Maintaining this relationship and assisting with the professionalization and development of the EAF's capabilities to secure its borders is an essential element of our efforts to stabilize Egypt and the region.

Question. Egypt has been criticized for its perceived failure to act along the Egypt-Gaza border to counter the smuggling threat posed by cross-border tunnels. Egypt has also played an important role, however, in ensuring peace on the southern border of Israel.

What is your assessment of Egypt's efforts to counter the flow of rocket and other advanced munitions into Gaza?

Answer. While Egyptian security forces have interdicted weapons shipments crossing Egyptian territory, their capabilities are limited and their success sporadic. Weapons coming into Egypt primarily from Sudan and Libya continue to transit the Sinai into Gaza. Extremists and militants are leveraging the lack of security in the Sinai and Egypt's inconsistent initiatives to their advantage.

AL QAEDA IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

Question. A number of senior U.S. officials have indicated the most significant threat to the U.S. Homeland currently emanates from Yemen.

What is your assessment of the threat posed by al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) to the United States?

Answer. Despite suffering severe territorial, personnel, and resource losses over the last year, attacking the U.S. Homeland remains a pillar of AQAP's overall strategy. As such, a small cadre of operatives continues to work tirelessly to develop plots against the West. While those operations appear to be stalled in the conceptual stages, the group's history and continued access to innovative bombmakers and western operatives suggests AQAP is capable of advancing an operation with little to no warning, particularly if counterterrorism pressure subsides.

Question. What is your assessment of the current U.S. strategy to counter al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula?

Answer. The CENTCOM strategy to counter threats in Yemen is outlined in a detailed plan of actions, activities and operations. I am not currently in a position to assess this strategy. However, I do believe that our overall approach to countering AQAP must involve our interagency and regional partners. Only by effectively employing our network can we defeat the AQAP network. If confirmed, I will study this challenge further and look to pursue a whole-of-government approach.

Question. What is the appropriate role of the U.S. military in countering the threat of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and how should this role be coordinated with other agencies and departments in prosecuting an interagency strategy?

Answer. CENTCOM, in coordination with U.S. Government agencies and the Host Nation, supports and conducts enabling and security operations to promote a secure and stable Yemen in order to neutralize threats against U.S. interests. CENTCOM supports a whole-of-government approach to improving the overall stability of Yemen. The goal is to set the conditions for Yemen to become a secure, stable and responsibly governed nation capable of providing for its own security and the needs of its population. CENTCOM Yemen Country Plan balances actions to disrupt and deny AQAP, security assistance activities, and support for other U.S. Government agencies' efforts to improve government capacity and economic development.

REGIONAL BALLISTIC MISSILE THREATS AND RESPONSE

Question. Iran has hundreds of short- and medium-range ballistic missiles today that are capable of reaching forward-deployed U.S. Forces, allies, and other friendly nations in the CENTCOM AOR. Syria also has an inventory of ballistic missiles that pose a threat to the region. The Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report of February 2010 stated that the United States intends to pursue a Phased Adaptive Approach to ballistic missile defense against such missile threats in various regions, including the Middle East.

Do you believe that such a phased adaptive approach will provide CENTCOM with the missile defense capabilities needed to defend our forward deployed forces and our allies and partners in the region?

Answer. Yes, I believe a phased adaptive approach will provide CENTCOM the missile defense capabilities needed. As a framework, this approach phased over time and adaptive in terms of tailoring capabilities to specific threats, allows for effective mission command through continuous analysis and innovative methodologies. Additionally, continuing to assist our partners as they receive new Ballistic Missile Defense systems and upgrade older systems will remain a high priority. It is imperative we work together to increase our ability to defend ourselves and counter the threat.

Question. What role do you see for the Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense system with Standard Missile-3 interceptors in U.S. missile defense capabilities in the CENTCOM AOR?

Answer. The role of the Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) system with SM-3 missile in the AOR is to provide layered, upper and lower tier protection, weighted coverage, and defense in depth of key force projection assets supporting CENTCOM CONPLANS against SRBM/MRBMs. These elements provide the ability to engage ballistic missiles at multiple levels (upper and lower tier) and ranges. The Aegis BMD system with SM-3, in coordination with Patriot, provides our only capability to execute layered defense in the CENTCOM AOR.

Question. In addition to U.S. missile defense capabilities in the CENTCOM AOR, what role do you see for other nations in the AOR to contribute to regional missile defense capabilities, such as UAE interest in purchasing the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system?

Answer. CENTCOM, in close coordination with the Department of State and the Office of the Secretary of Defense, is working hard to get countries in the Gulf to realize the importance of cooperative defense, particularly in the area of air and missile defense. To date, partners such as UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia have either purchased or are in the process of purchasing THAAD systems. The message to them and others is simple, no one can stand alone on this issue; cooperation and synchronization are critical to the successful defense of the region.

CENTRAL ASIAN STATES

Question. The Central Asian states along the NDN have played important roles during the past few years in supporting U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan. These countries could also play a key role for the retrograde of U.S. and coalition equipment out of Afghanistan over the coming months and years.

What is your assessment of current U.S. military relationships with the Central Asian states, including Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan?

Answer. The Central Asian States remain key supporting partners for our Afghanistan Strategic Partnership. As we transition in Afghanistan, securing access to the NDN for logistical resupply and retrograde operations is of particular importance as we seek to promote stability and assure our partners of our continued commitment to the region. The development of the NDN has been a critical area of investment to that end and cooperation with our Central Asian partners will gain additional importance post-2014.

Our relationship with Uzbekistan continues to improve in a deliberate, balanced way driven by regional security considerations, expansion of the NDN and mutual benefit.

Tajikistan's ability to build and maintain counterterrorism, border security, and counter narcotics capabilities is paramount in protecting our mutual interests from the threat of violent extremist organizations. We continue to use the Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan (KKT) route of the NDN as well as explore options to facilitate the transport of goods in the event of a crisis within this region.

The Kyrgyz Republic is a key partner for U.S. efforts in Afghanistan. The NDN network routes and the Transit Center at Manas remain key factors in successful operations in the region. However, the Kyrgyz Government has consistently stated there will be no foreign military at Manas after the current lease expires in July 2014.

Question. What role do you foresee the Central Asian states playing in the retrograde of U.S. equipment out of Afghanistan?

Answer. The Central Asian States remain key supporting partners for our Afghanistan Strategic Partnership. As we transition in Afghanistan, securing access to the NDN for logistical resupply and retrograde operations is of particular importance as we seek to promote stability and assure our partners of our continued commitment to the region. The supply lines through the Central Asian States provide the United States and NATO flexible and redundant retrograde options. CENTCOM will retrograde consistent volumes of equipment through the Central Asian States in order to maintain these routes as a hedge against geopolitical uncertainty that could impact other routes.

Question. What security challenges do you see in this portion of the CENTCOM AOR?

Answer. There are several violent extremist organizations (VEOs), to include al Qaeda and other Afghanistan- or Pakistan-based groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan that have expressed interest or intent to operate from and within Central Asia. The VEOs benefit from narcotics, arms trafficking, and smuggling which are pervasive threats in the region. These activities threaten legitimate commerce and the flow of strategic resources. The proliferation of material for weapons of mass destruction, associated delivery systems and the spread of technical expertise from and through the Central Asian States is another concern. Across the region there is a considerable lack of sustainable development; in the absence of economic opportunity, poor and disenfranchised communities can serve as hotbeds for the spread of violent extremism.

INDIA

Question. How does the fact that India is in the U.S. Pacific Command area of responsibility (AOR) while Pakistan is in the CENTCOM AOR affect the United States' ability to treat the region's challenges holistically?

Answer. The Unified Command Plan (UCP) "seam" between Pakistan and India does not degrade our ability to address the larger region. The CENTCOM and PACOM AOR share many of the same challenges, threats and opportunities. CENTCOM and PACOM routinely coordinate with each other to ensure unity of effort when dealing with the region's challenges.

Question. In your view, how does our military cooperation and engagement with India affect our efforts in Pakistan and Afghanistan?

Answer. Pakistan, naturally, has concerns about any military cooperation between the U.S. and India. This affects both our relationship with Pakistan and, indirectly, our efforts in Afghanistan. However, we make clear to Pakistan that our military cooperation and engagement is not a threat to Pakistan and that this is not a zero-sum game. We have important relationships and strategic partnerships with both countries that are not at the expense of either one.

COUNTER PIRACY OPERATIONS OFF THE HORN OF AFRICA

Question. Over the past few years, U.S. Forces have participated in a multi-national mission to counter piracy off the coast of Somalia. More recently, evidence suggests that the mission has achieved some measure of success, although the assigned task force continues its counter-piracy efforts.

What is your assessment of the mission thus far?

Answer. Attacks continue but with limited pirate successes due to changes implemented by the commercial shipping industry and coalition naval presence which have placed a financial strain on Somali pirates. While we are currently experiencing success, piracy activity remains driven by the desire of pirates to gain multi-million-dollar ransoms with little risk.

Question. In your opinion, how long should we continue the current mission as constituted and at what point should we consider a change to the strategy?

Answer. While the mission has achieved a measure of success, it would be premature to shift our strategy as piracy will exist until it becomes cost prohibitive. The lower numbers in pirate success rates is also based on the introduction of newer, less experienced pirate groups which could change with time. The presence of counter-piracy Task Forces not only contributes to security, but facilitates global commerce and regional prosperity. Furthermore, Maritime Security Operations offers the best opportunity to work with partners to deny violent extremists free use of the sea which also contributes to overall regional security.

Question. What do you see as the most appropriate maritime strategy in this region of the world, given the threats of weapons trafficking, human trafficking, and piracy?

Answer. The most appropriate strategy is to continue our leadership role as expressed in the President's Maritime Security Policy and the NSS Counter Piracy Action Plan in conjunction with the international community. Specifically, the U.N., NATO, and the EU; and the maritime industry in general. The use of proven tactics and procedures within DOD and the Coalition, combined with the practice of industry best management procedures (such as vessel protection and disruption techniques) have reduced the unlawful maritime activity in the Horn of Africa. The combination of military operations and industry's response has resulted in suppression of these activities. However, in order to prevent the re-emergence of this activity, we must continue to work in partnership with the international community to suppress and strive towards the eradication of this threat to free international maritime security.

Question. Given that Somalia has established a new Federal Government, how should U.S. policy toward pirate groups based in Somali territory be modified?

Answer. CENTCOM's efforts, in conjunction with the international community, have produced positive results in increasing the maritime security in the Somali Basin. We must continue to work as part of a cohesive whole-of-government effort, both within the U.S. Government and with the appropriate international organizations (such as the U.N., NATO, and the EU) and in conjunction with the Somali Government, to continue our successes in reducing the maritime security threat expressed by the pirate groups, both ashore and at sea.

ISRAEL

Question. While Israel is not part of the CENTCOM AOR, it does play a role in the Command's AOR.

In your assessment, what are the most significant threats facing Israel in the CENTCOM AOR?

Answer. The greatest threat to Israeli security is the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran. Despite sanctions and significant pressure from the international community, the Iranian regime continues to take steps that could support the development of a nuclear-weapons program. The potential of an Iranian nuclear weapon, coupled with Iran's advancement of Theater Ballistic Missiles (both accuracy and quantity), presents Israel with what they assess to be intolerable threats to their security. Hezbollah also represents a significant existential threat to Israel. Other significant threats to Israel's security include Iranian proxy elements and Palestinian rejectionists such as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). Finally, regional instability provides VEOs with opportunities to gain new footholds in areas near Israel. For instance, al Qaeda-aligned groups such as the al-Nusrah Front in Syria continue to gain strength in key Syrian cities and may target Israel when the Assad regime collapses. Similarly, violence and domestic concerns plague Egypt, which provides for under-governance in the Sinai, allowing greater freedom of action for AQ-inspired groups.

Question. If confirmed, what do you view to be your role with respect to the defense of Israel?

Answer. EUCOM is the lead military agency charged with defending Israel; however, CENTCOM has always worked very closely with EUCOM, SOCOM, and the Department of State to ensure there are no seams or gaps in our regional plans. As with our other allies in the Middle East, we must honor our commitments to Israel to support them during crisis. As the Middle East continues to deal with challenges in Egypt, Syria and Lebanon it will be critical for CENTCOM, EUCOM and SOCOM to closely coordinate our efforts to maintain a stable region and provide appropriate support to Israel.

ARAB SPRING

Question. The Arab Spring has changed—and will likely continue to change—the political dynamics in the Middle East and North Africa. These changes require the United States to adjust our military-to-military and defense civilian relations in this region. Some observers argue that the United States should reduce significantly our military-to-military contact in countries as a result of the ongoing changes and others advocate more robust and stepped-up contact with our partners in this region.

In your view, what should be the posture of the U.S. Government on military-to-military and defense civilian relations in the region, particularly with respect to Egypt and Bahrain?

Answer. Military-to-military engagements lay the foundation for and bolster our broader diplomatic and political relationships in the region, to include in Egypt and Bahrain. Much of this work is ongoing, but as resources decrease and American forward presence in the region declines, military-to-military engagements and working by, with, and through our partners will become even more important. This type of engagement is often the bedrock of our relationships and affords us the trust necessary to dialogue quietly about contentious issues.

BUILDING PARTNER CAPACITY AND SECURITY ASSISTANCE

Question. In the past few years, Congress has provided DOD a number of temporary authorities to provide security assistance to partner nations, including the global train and equip authority (“section 1206”), Global Security Contingency Fund (GSCF), and the niche authority for Yemen’s Ministry of Interior Counterterrorism Unit.

What is your understanding of the purpose of the section 1206 global train and equip authority and Global Contingency Security Fund?

Answer. The purpose of section 1206 authority (Global Train and Equip) is to enhance the capacity of foreign nations to conduct counterterrorism operations with either their national military forces or maritime security forces. Additionally, the authority allows the Department to improve partner nations’ capabilities to participate in or support military and stability operations in which the U.S. Armed Forces are a participant.

The GSCF is similar in some aspects to the section 1206 authority. Both seek to improve the capability of a foreign country’s national military forces to conduct counterterrorism operations or help a partner nation participate in or support military operations consistent with U.S. foreign policy and national security interests. However, the GSCF is not as narrowly defined or restricted as section 1206. GSCF can be used for border security, internal defense, justice sector programs (including law enforcement and prisons), and stabilization efforts within a country where instability challenges the existing capability of civilian providers to deliver such assistance. Additionally, more organization, such as within a nation’s Ministry of Interior, would be a potential recipient of GSCF funds; section 1206 restricts funding to a country’s Ministry of Defense or Maritime Security forces.

Question. In your view, what should be our strategic objectives in building the capacities of partner nations in the CENTCOM AOR?

Answer. Our strategic objectives in building partner capacities in the AOR include partners that are capable of deterring, defending, and cooperating against attack; controlling their borders; mitigating ungoverned spaces; enhancing stability; and maintaining cooperative, interest-based relations with their neighbors; and Regional Partners in the AOR that remain accessible and cooperative with the United States.

Question. The funding pool available for security assistance and other military-to-military engagement activities devoted to the CENTCOM AOR tends to be allocated to specific countries.

What is your understanding of the role CENTCOM plays in developing U.S. security assistance priorities (e.g., section 1206, Foreign Military Financing, Inter-

national Military Education and Training Assistance, Combatant Commander Initiative Fund)?

Answer. CENTCOM collaborates with the DOS and each Security Cooperation Office (SCO) to develop security assistance programming priorities which are aligned with the Department's Security Cooperation Guidance and supports the Theater Campaign Plan as well as the individual Country Plans. These priorities and recommended funding levels are submitted to DOD for inclusion in the President's budget request each year.

U.S. CONTRIBUTIONS TO INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS

Question. In testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on July 29, 2009, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations (U.N.) stated that the United States "is willing to consider directly contributing more military observers, military staff officers, civilian police, and other civilian personnel—including more women I should note—to U.N. peacekeeping operations." General Dempsey has said the United States "should consider opportunities for U.S. personnel to contribute to U.N. peacekeeping missions" and that "experience shows that even a small number of trained and experienced American servicemembers can have a significant, positive effect on U.N. operations."

In your view, should the United States increase the number of personnel it contributes in the form of staff positions and military observers to U.N. peacekeeping missions and other international peace operations?

Answer. Overall, I agree with General Dempsey's position; however, our first priority remains our significant troop commitments in Afghanistan.

Question. In your view, what are the advantages and disadvantages of contributing additional military personnel to U.N. operations in the form of staff positions and military observer positions?

Answer. U.N. peacekeeping operations are a cost-effective alternative to unilateral U.S. military action. Such missions support U.S. interests around the world, promoting stability and saving civilian lives. U.S. military personnel make significant contributions to these efforts, particularly in specialized areas such as logistics and intelligence. However, the competing requirements of additional participation in U.N. peacekeeping operations must be weighed against potential costs, to include the increase in the operational tempo of the force.

Question. In your view, would an increase in the number of U.S. military personnel assigned to U.N. peacekeeping missions in the CENTCOM AOR help you advance the theater campaign plan?

Answer. While this is not an issue that I am ready to fully assess, there are many important factors to balance in making such an assessment, including ongoing U.S. military commitments and engagements in the AOR and perceptions in the region that would result from an increase in U.S. peacekeepers. I would need to study the issue further to ensure that while addressing one issue we do not inadvertently create additional issues.

NATIONAL STRATEGY TO COMBAT TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

Question. Criminal networks are not only expanding their operations, but they are also diversifying their activities, resulting in a convergence of transnational threats that has evolved to become more complex, volatile, and destabilizing. The Director of National Intelligence recently described transnational organized crime as "an abiding threat to U.S. economic and national security interests," and stated that "rising drug violence and corruption are undermining stability and the rule of law in some countries." In July 2011, the President released his Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime: Addressing Converging Threats to National Security. One of the priority action areas designated in the strategy is "enhancing Department of Defense support to U.S. law enforcement."

What is your understanding of the President's strategy to combat transnational criminal organizations?

Answer. The President's plan for combating transnational criminal organizations is reflected in the National Security Strategy. As part of a whole-of-government approach the DOD can bring to bear unique authorities and capabilities to augment those of our law enforcement and intelligence communities. Of note is the policy's call for increasing intelligence and information sharing as well as building international capacity, cooperation and partnerships.

Question. What is your assessment of the threat to the United States posed by transnational organized crime? Would you consider it a national security threat?

Answer. The growing interconnectivity among transnational organized crime (TOC), terrorist groups, and insurgencies threatens U.S. national security interests.

TOC exploits porous borders caused by regional unrest, the speed of global trade, and the growing demand for drugs and weapons to cooperate with terrorist and insurgent groups. Similarly, terrorist and insurgent groups mobilize TOC networks to undermine governments/State institutions and engage in illicit activities (i.e., narcotics trafficking, money laundering, small arms/light weapons sales, and counterfeit goods) to bolster their resources, which improves operational capability and effectiveness.

MASS ATROCITIES PREVENTION

Question. President Obama identified the prevention of mass atrocities and genocide as a core U.S. national security interest, as well as a core moral interest, in August 2011 under Presidential Study Directive 10.

What are your views on the role the United States plays in the prevention of mass atrocities and genocide?

Answer. The United States, as a world leader, has resources which it can bring to bear to aid in the prevention of mass atrocities and genocide. The decision to commit these resources clearly resides with the President. As a military commander, I understand my responsibility under the Law of Armed Conflict to protect civilians from physical violence and to contribute to a secure, stable, and just environment for civilians over the long-term.

Question. What are your views on the adequacy of the Department's tools and doctrine for contributing to this role?

Answer. Although the CJCS has the Department's lead for further developing operational principles, the geographic combatant commands will incorporate mass atrocity prevention and response as a priority in planning, activities, and engagements. By applying our lessons learned methodology to previous and future activities we will continue to expand and refine our capabilities and capacities to respond as a decisive element of a whole-of-government effort.

COUNTER THREAT FINANCE

Question. DOD and the Intelligence Community (IC) have begun investing more resources in identifying and tracking the flow of money associated with terrorist networks and illicit trafficking, but the opportunities for tracking and degrading illicit financing flows are not yet matched by the effort and resources devoted to them. Identifying and disrupting key individuals, entities, and facilitation routes enabling the flow of money that supports terrorism, production of IEDs, narco-trafficking, proliferation, and other significant national security threats could have an outsized impact on confronting these threats.

What are your views on the role of DOD in counter threat finance activities?

Answer. It is appropriate for DOD to play a supporting role in countering threat finance activities. DOD does bring unique capabilities to the effort of the broader interagency community. DOD can provide its intelligence analysis to identify critical network vulnerabilities as well as its strategic and operational planning expertise.

Question. Are there opportunities to replicate or improve upon the network-disruption efforts of groups like the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization or the Afghanistan Threat Finance Cell in impacting other facilitation networks?

Answer. Yes. The Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization and the Afghanistan Threat Finance Cell multi-national and interagency approaches to the counter-IED and threat finance problem sets provide an effective framework that I believe may be applied to other networked problem sets such as narcotics and weapons trafficking. If confirmed, I will actively pursue such multi-nation and interagency solutions to the problems that we face in the CENTCOM AOR to the maximum extent possible.

Question. In your view, how should DOD coordinate and interface with other key agencies, including the Department of Treasury and the Intelligence Community, in conducting counter threat finance activities?

Answer. In keeping with OSD/Joint Staff/SOCOM (CTF DOD lead component) policies, DOD should coordinate counter threat finance activities with other agencies and departments through the Geographic Combatant Command's interagency process. This type of interface will ensure the IA receives one set of theater threat finance priorities, reduces redundant and conflicting DOD requests to the IA, and increases opportunities to disrupt adversary finance networks. Counter threat finance intelligence support (e.g., collection requirements, production) should be brokered through theater, component, task force J2s and directly with DOD's consolidated threat finance intelligence initiatives within the Defense Intelligence Agency.

LEBANON

Question. Over the past decade, the United States has provided over \$500 million in security assistance to the Government of Lebanon.

In your view, what is the appropriate role for CENTCOM in Lebanon?

Answer. CENTCOM continues to act as a mentor and enabler of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). Our relationship enables the U.S. and Lebanon to work toward mutually-supporting goals. A reduction of CENTCOM involvement in Lebanon would increase the temptation and necessity for Lebanon to consider taking aid from countries whose interests conflict with U.S. interests.

Question. In your view, what are the U.S. national security interests in Lebanon?

Answer. The primary U.S. security interest in Lebanon is to strengthen the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) as a counterweight to Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) and, in doing so, reduce the malign influence of Iran in the region. Instability in Lebanon plays into the interests of LH, Syria, and Iran. The multi-confessional nature of the LAF makes it a unifying force in Lebanon acting as a stabilizing force to the detriment of our adversaries in the region.

Question. The current government in Lebanon includes Hezbollah, a designated foreign terrorist organization under U.S. law.

Given the involvement of Hezbollah in the Lebanese Government, what do you believe to be the appropriate level of engagement with the Lebanese Armed Forces?

Answer. The LAF has proven itself to be independent of Hezbollah influence despite Hezbollah's involvement in the Lebanese Government. To date, Hezbollah's involvement has had no impact on our relationship and current levels of engagement with the LAF. In light of the ongoing situation in Syria, our various forms of aid to the LAF are vital to maintaining peace internally while guarding against spill-over violence from across the Syrian border. Our persistent efforts to provide military training and material support to the LAF have enabled them to be a more effective counter-balance to Lebanese Hezbollah (LH).

CHINA

Question. Over the past several years, much has been made of China's military growth and modernization and of China's influence throughout Asia, including the portions of the region that fall within the CENTCOM commander's area of responsibility. For example, many observers point out that China has developed and maintains a partnership with Iran based, at least in part, on economic and defense cooperation, and that China's policies toward Iran have hindered international efforts to deter Iran from developing a nuclear weapons capability.

Question. What do you see as the effect of China's economic and military growth on the CENTCOM AOR as a whole?

Answer. China relies heavily on energy resources found in the CENTCOM AOR (Middle East and Central Asia) to meet its growing domestic demand for energy and achieve its strategic objective of sustained economic growth. China seeks to build political and economic relationships with countries in the CENTCOM AOR to ensure that Beijing maintains access to the region's energy resources, but China plays little role in guaranteeing security and stability throughout the region. China has historically been a source of arms sales for countries seeking to upgrade their arsenals and/or procure cheaper alternatives to U.S. weapons.

Question. How does China's relationship with Iran, in particular, affect U.S. security interests in the region?

Answer. China is Iran's largest purchaser of crude oil. However, China reduced its imports of Iranian crude oil in 2012 compared to the previous year, in response to U.S. diplomacy. While China voted for sanctions on Iran in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1929, it has publicly opposed additional national sanctions that have been levied by the United States, European Union and others. Iran seeks to use its relationship with China to gain influence within the UNSC, seeking support from China during resolution votes. Iran will likely continue efforts to build on its relationship with China as it depends on Beijing to offset the high cost of business transactions due to sanctions.

DOD COUNTERNARCOTICS ACTIVITIES

Question. DOD serves as the single lead agency for the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime foreign shipments of drugs flowing toward the U.S. On an annual basis, DOD's counter-narcotics (CN) program expends approximately \$1.5 billion to support the Department's CN operations, including to build the capacity of U.S. Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies, and certain foreign gov-

ernments, and provide intelligence support on CN-related matters and a variety of other unique enabling capabilities.

In your view, what is the appropriate role of DOD—and by extension CENTCOM—in counterdrug efforts?

Answer. In the CENTCOM AOR, counterdrug authorities provided by Congress permit us to support our Federal law enforcement partners in their engagement with regional counterdrug security force organizations. These activities address many of the U.S. Government's, and by extension CENTCOM's, most pressing regional security issues. Counterdrug activities are often one of the few avenues for military engagement with our regional partners.

Question. In your view, what should be the role of the United States in countering the flow of narcotics to nations other than the United States?

Answer. The United States should always consider partnering with governments requesting counterdrug assistance when it supports U.S. national interests. Drug trafficking organizations are international by nature and the larger the coalition of the willing to address the illicit drugs business, the greater the global impact we could achieve. Counter-narcotics operations provide opportunities for developing military-to-military relationships and building partner capacity.

Question. Given that the vast majority of illegal drugs transiting in the CENTCOM AOR are not destined for the United States, should DOD invest resources in countering the flow of illegal drugs to or through the CENTCOM AOR?

Answer. It is shortsighted to view illicit drugs trafficking activity through the prism of only what comes into the United States. Narcotics play a critical role in underwriting corruption, which poses the greatest strategic threat to the ISAF campaign plan. So, while only a relatively minor portion of Afghan opiates make their way to the U.S., their impact on U.S. Government engagement in the CENTCOM AOR is significant. An effective U.S. counterdrug strategy includes attacking the illicit drugs trafficking business at every opportunity from source to end user. Counter-narcotics operations provide opportunities for developing mil-to-mil relationships and building partner capacity.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION OPERATIONS

Question. Over the past decade, DOD has funded an increasing number of military information support operations (formerly known as psychological operations) and influence programs. The Government Accountability Office reports that DOD has "spent hundreds of millions of dollars each year" to support its information operations outreach activities. Many of these programs are in support of operations in Afghanistan, but Military Information Support Teams (MISTs) from U.S. Special Operations Command also deploy to U.S. embassies in countries of particular interest around the globe to bolster the efforts of the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development. Further, the geographic combatant commands are increasingly moving into this operational space.

What are your views on DOD's military information support operations and influence programs?

Answer. Military information support operations (MISO) is a critical investment in deterrence and prevention of conflict when synchronized with interagency efforts. Integral to all phases of military operations, MISO serves to shape information environments and mitigate risk to mission and forces in advance of and during conflict.

Question. What unique value should such programs contribute in distinction from strategic communications and influence activities conducted by other government departments and agencies?

Answer. CENTCOM's Information Operations (IO) capability is unique in that it is opponent focused (military targets), tightly integrated with special and technical operations programs and inter-connected with the communications community both military and interagency. It has the flexibility to employ attributable and non-attributable means (within scope of policy) to achieve objectives unlike other Public Affairs and Defense Support to Public Diplomacy. CENTCOM's IO capability specializes in languages unique to the designated area of operations; staff and units of execution have hands-on experience understanding key opponent influence systems; and our IO is postured to rapidly target those opponents when authorized.

REGIONAL ALIGNMENT AND ROTATIONAL DEPLOYMENTS OF ARMY BRIGADES

Question. The Army plans to align general purpose combat brigades with regional combatant commands, including CENTCOM, to support theater engagement and security force assistance missions and to make those forces, and other supporting units, available on a rotational basis for deployment to those regions for training and exercises.

What is your understanding and assessment of the Army's capability and capacity to align combat brigades or other units with regional combatant commands?

Answer. As Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, I have been involved in the development of the Regional Alignment of Forces concept. I believe it is sound and will provide geographic combatant commanders with professionally trained and regionally attuned forces and capabilities that are both responsive and capable of meeting theater requirements. The Army is executing its first "proof of principle" of the Regionally Aligned Forces concept in fiscal year 2013 by aligning a brigade combat team to U.S. African Command (AFRICOM). The Army will conduct a subsequent comprehensive assessment of this effort that will further drive our understanding of our capability and capacity to execute this mission set going forward.

Question. What are your views, if any, on the use of general purpose forces for missions providing security force assistance to other nations' militaries?

Answer. Recent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have demonstrated that general purpose forces are quite capable of executing the security force assistance mission set. Moreover, general purpose forces can be a key asset as we continue to build the military capacity of our allies. As an example, our military has a rich history of cooperative small unit training exercises across a range of combatant commands. Ultimately, such efforts must be synchronized with the combatant commander's Theater Security Cooperation plan.

Question. In your view, how, if at all, should a unit's regional alignment impact the assignment of personnel, selection of unit commanders, priority for cultural and language training compared to core combat training, and identification and acquisition of special equipment?

Answer. The Army is currently conducting a comprehensive analysis of requirements and impacts of the regionally aligned forces concept. This analysis will account for factors associated with doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities. Further, the 2013 regional alignment of the brigade combat team to AFRICOM will inform this analysis. Factors associated with the alignment of divisions and corps will also inform this analysis. Ultimately, the Army seeks to support combatant commands while remaining operationally adaptable to respond to global contingencies, as required.

Question. If confirmed, how would you propose to implement the use of regionally aligned forces in support of your theater assistance and engagement strategies?

Answer. Use of regionally aligned forces to support CENTCOM theater assistance and strategy will not be fundamentally different than how other forces are now used. The significance of using such forces is that regional alignment will enhance relationships between planning staffs while improving the aligned units' familiarity with areas in which they will most likely be employed.

Question. In your view, how should funding responsibility be consolidated or distributed between the Military Departments and the combatant commands for training and employment of regionally aligned forces?

Answer. I believe the current construct established under the Goldwater-Nichols DOD Reorganization Act of 1996 adequately and efficiently defines the roles and responsibilities of the Services and defense agencies in supporting the combatant commands. The Services are and should continue to be funded to man, train and equip their forces in support of combatant command operational mission sets regardless of whether those forces are regionally aligned. However, combatant commanders should provide funds for training and exercises conducted in their AOR.

Question. In your view, is it feasible and suitable to satisfy theater engagement and assistance strategies completely with rotational forces? If not, why?

Answer. CENTCOM has successfully conducted operations, exercises and activities since its inception without permanently assigned forces. Like other commands, it plans and requests forces through the Global Force Management process. I have complete faith that all CENTCOM theater engagement and assistance strategies can be met with rotational forces, particularly regionally aligned forces.

NATO ALLIANCE

Question. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance continues to be central to our coalition operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere, even as many NATO members have significantly reduced their national defense budgets in response to economic and fiscal pressures.

Do you agree that U.S. participation in the NATO alliance contributes to advancing U.S. security interests?

Answer. Yes, members of the NATO Alliance share the same concerns for national security as we do. Participation in the Alliance furthers international security and U.S. security interests.

Question. What are the greatest opportunities and challenges that you foresee for NATO in meeting its strategic objectives over the next 5 years, particularly with regard to NATO activities in the CENTCOM AOR?

Answer. We are all operating in a challenging fiscal environment, and are seeking ways to more efficiently meet our strategic objectives. In this austere environment, there may be opportunities to expand interoperability and cost sharing through combined training exercises, utilizing our well-developed training facilities in Europe.

Question. In light of the reductions in national defense spending by some NATO members, are you concerned that the Alliance will lack critical military capabilities? If so, what steps, if any, would you recommend be taken to address potential shortfalls in alliance capabilities?

Answer. The impact of reduced spending will be felt throughout the alliance. We can work to mitigate the impact by exploring avenues of increasing interoperability, and perhaps achieving economies of scale through international cooperative research, development and acquisition.

Question. What is your assessment of the effectiveness of nations of the Middle East in recent NATO military operations in Libya?

Answer. Middle East nations have been effective in recent NATO operations and served as an integral part of the Coalition. A prime example would be the efforts by UAE, Qatar, and Jordan who flew combat sorties during Operation Odyssey Dawn in Libya. Continued training and exchanges with our partners in the Middle East forges bonds that can last generations and give us resources that when needed fulfill operational requirements and further strengthen our ties.

Question. What steps, if any, do you think CENTCOM should take to improve the interoperability of military forces from the CENTCOM region with the U.S. and other international security actors?

Answer. CENTCOM remains committed to working with coalition partners to improve stability, peace and security for all partnered nations in the CENTCOM AOR and neighboring AORs. Engagement is certainly less costly than war and ensuring the interoperability of our militaries is the requisite investment to achieve that goal. The most dramatic effect on interoperability can be achieved through increasing International Military Exchange and Training (IMET) funding for military career schools and education.

INTELLIGENCE, SURVEILLANCE, AND RECONNAISSANCE CAPABILITIES

Question. Since September 11, CENTCOM has received the overwhelming majority of the ISR support that DOD has been able to generate. The demand for more ISR has continued to outstrip the supply, even though the Secretary of Defense has taken extraordinary actions to ramp up the acquisition of more and more capable and varied ISR systems. Other combatant commands and other military missions and operations outside of the CENTCOM AOR have gone wanting.

Do you foresee, and if so to what degree, CENTCOM relinquishing existing ISR systems as forces are withdrawn from Afghanistan and as demand continues to grow in AFRICOM, PACOM and other AORs?

Answer. CENTCOM remains actively engaged with ISAF and USFOR-A on planning for ISR support through OEF Change of Mission and support to the Enduring Force Headquarters post-OEF. We have learned through experience that as our footprint shrinks the demand for ISR increases. CENTCOM will conduct an OEF Redeployment Conference and an OPLAN Development Conference within the next 60 days. Both events will enable us to further refine the ISR requirements in support of the drawdown and beyond. If confirmed, I will further assess the requirement for ISR in the CENTCOM AOR.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Question. As with other combatant commands, a science and technology (S&T) advisor is assigned to support CENTCOM.

If confirmed, what would be your priorities for the CENTCOM Science and Technology advisor?

Answer. The Science Advisor acts as principle advisor to the commander on matters of science, technology, innovation, and fielding of material and non-material solutions for the command's most pressing capability gaps. If confirmed, I will charge the Science Advisor with the discovery, research, analysis and advocacy of new and emerging technologies and techniques which have the potential to provide solutions to our validated joint needs. I will require the Science Advisor to continue to discover, develop, and advocate for those technologies and techniques that will make our warfighters safer, more efficient, and more effective in the immediate and near-term. I will charge the Science Advisor to engage with partner countries to develop

mutually required technologies that will also keep coalition forces safe, allow them to be more effective through better integration with U.S. Forces, and help build stronger partnerships for the future. I will also charge the Science Advisor with looking beyond the horizon to ensure CENTCOM warriors maintain their battlespace technology superiority during potential future conflicts.

OPERATIONAL ENERGY

Question. Several of your predecessors have established and published policies regarding operational energy and its important role in supporting the mission in Afghanistan. These policies have stressed better management of energy use in the battle space to provide a strategic and tactical advantage while increasing combat effectiveness and operational capability.

Do you plan to establish and publish similar policies regarding operational energy improvements?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to support the CENTCOM established policies and procedures regarding operational energy which are now in the refinement phase. These policies and procedures include a standing policy on Operational Energy which the Command has implemented and Service Components and Joint Task Forces have similarly adopted. I will also assess the Command's Operational Energy initiatives to identify areas where CENTCOM can further enhance combat power and ensure good stewardship of our finite energy resources.

Question. What is your assessment of how better operational energy management translates, if at all, into improving combat effectiveness?

Answer. Better operational energy management translates to fewer fuel convoys, thereby freeing convoy security forces to conduct other operational missions. Decreased energy consumption and spending also creates the potential to reinvest funds towards force protection and other needed capabilities which ultimately increase combat effectiveness.

Question. How do you plan to track fuel consumption at forward-deployed locations in Afghanistan?

Answer. The Afghan Sub-Area Petroleum Office (A-SAPO), an element of USFOR-A Headquarters, receives regular fuel consumption reports from sustainment forces providing fuel distribution services in Afghanistan. A-SAPO reviews these reports and forwards them to the CENTCOM Joint Petroleum Office.

CENTCOM AND DOD GLOBAL POSTURE REVIEW

Question. According to the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review Report, DOD will conduct a global posture review that assesses U.S. strategic relationships and interests to identify where and at what levels the forward stationing of military forces supports those relationships and interests. The new strategic guidance released by the Secretary of Defense in January 2012 stated regarding the Middle East that "the United States will continue to place a premium on U.S. and allied military presence in—and support of—partner nations in and around this region."

What is your assessment of the current and future strategic requirement for basing U.S. military personnel and equipment in the Middle East?

Answer. At present, CENTCOM has sufficient access and basing to execute current operations and continually looks for ways to improve the flexibility and depth in the theater basing network to support potential surge operations if required, and mitigate risk caused by access denial and loss of access should it occur. The Command has been working with the Department on key elements of a posture strategy and is incorporating this in the planning process. CENTCOM has been revising its posture in theater for some time as we continue efforts to reset forces for current and future operational requirements. This process will continue as we work towards the successful completion of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Question. Aside from contingency operations, do you believe the number of U.S. Forces permanently stationed within CENTCOM is sufficient to meet U.S. national security objectives in the region?

Answer. In my current position I am unable to provide an adequate assessment of requirements and requisite forces in the CENTCOM AOR. However, if confirmed, I will work with DOD to define the right mix of capabilities to meet future steady state mission requirements and to provide a rapid response capability in the event of a crisis.

CENTCOM HEADQUARTERS

Question. Based on the drawdown in Afghanistan and completed redeployment out of Iraq, will you conduct a review of the size of the CENTCOM headquarters?

Answer. Yes. CENTCOM headquarters is undergoing a manpower and organization review now, assisted by the Army and Air Force Manpower Agencies. If confirmed, I will assess the study recommendations and shape the headquarters for future operations.

TREATMENT OF DETAINEES

Question. Section 1403 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006 provides that no individual in the custody or under the physical control of the U.S. Government, regardless of nationality or physical location shall be subject to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.

If confirmed, will you take steps to ensure that all relevant DOD directives, regulations, policies, practices, and procedures applicable to U.S. Forces in Afghanistan fully comply with the requirements of section 1403 and with Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will ensure that CENTCOM forces fully comply with all relevant provisions of DOD directives, regulations, policies, practices, and procedures applicable to U.S. Forces in Afghanistan, and that they fully comply with the requirements of section 1403 of the Detainee Treatment Act of 2005 and with Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions.

Question. Do you support the standards for detainee treatment specified in the revised Army Field Manual on Interrogations, FM 2-22.3, issued in September 2006, and in DOD Directive 2310.01E, the DOD Detainee Program, dated September 5, 2006?

Answer. Yes. I understand and support the standards for the treatment of detainees and will adhere to them, if confirmed. All detainees shall be treated humanely, and in accordance with U.S. law, the Law of War, and applicable U.S. policy. Humane treatment entails the following: no violence, no cruelty, no torture, and no humiliating or degrading treatment.

Question. Do you believe it is consistent with effective counterinsurgency operations for U.S. Forces to comply fully with the requirements of Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions?

Answer. Yes. I believe all military operations, to include counterinsurgency operations, must be conducted in accordance with the requirements of Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions.

Question. How would you ensure a climate that not only discourages the abuse of detainees, but that encourages the reporting of abuse?

Answer. If confirmed, I will set forth clear standards and expectations and demonstrate my personal commitment to those standards. I will ensure that guard forces are thoroughly trained in the humane treatment of detainees. Personnel at all levels will be trained on the importance of discouraging abuse and empowered to report any signs of abuse. Where appropriate, we will conduct routine inspections.

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

Question. On June 21, 2010, the Deputy Secretary of Defense issued a DOD-wide policy on the management of mild traumatic brain injury (TBI) in deployed settings.

What is your assessment of the effect of this policy in safeguarding service-members from further traumatic brain injury?

Answer. This has proven to be a very effective policy and I am confident it will contribute immensely in our understanding of mild TBI and how best to prevent, detect and treat these injuries. The current policy is based on the recently published DOD Instruction 6490.11 and ensures that all potentially concussive events (mild TBI) are identified, evaluated, treated and tracked by both the line leadership as well as those in the military medical community. This policy also limits the activity of those individuals identified with multiple concussions and ensures they receive complete and timely follow-up and are protected from the possibility of further brain injuries.

MENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS AND TREATMENT IN THEATER

Question. The Army's Mental Health Advisory Team (MHAT) has made seven separate assessments over the past several years detailing the immediate effects of combat on mental health conditions of U.S. soldiers and marines deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. The most recent study, MHAT VI, found that "soldiers on their third and fourth deployment report lower morale and more mental health problems," and that stigma continues to prevent some soldiers from seeking mental health care. These types of reports lend support to the fact that increasing numbers of troops are returning from duty in Afghanistan with post-traumatic stress, depression, and other mental health problems.

Do you have any views on how to best address the mental health needs of our troops in theater, in terms of both prevention and treatment?

Answer. Ensuring that the behavioral health and counseling services are readily available and accessible for our servicemembers remains a high priority. Services are emphasizing resiliency training for servicemembers with additional screening prior to deployment by qualified mental health providers focused on behavioral health (BH) disorders and wellness. Individuals, who have specific behavioral health conditions that require specific treatments, and have not demonstrated adequate resolution of their behavioral health condition or symptoms, are not permitted to deploy. For those in theater, the availability of Restoration Centers, telebehavioral health (TBH), and an easy-to-use crisis line in conjunction with deployed behavioral health providers have given servicemembers more options to take preventive measures and seek treatment. If confirmed, I will continue to emphasize the importance of mental health prevention and treatment for our servicemembers.

Question. Do you believe that mental health resources in theater are adequate to handle the needs of our deployed servicemembers?

Answer. Yes. To my knowledge the Behavioral Health (BH) resources available to our servicemembers in theater are adequate to handle the needs of our deployed troops. Keeping in mind that as our footprint changes our resources will change and we will have to ensure we maintain an adequate balance between number of servicemembers and mental health care providers.

Question. If confirmed, would you request additional behavioral health resources from the Services, if needed, to meet the needs of units deployed to the CENTCOM AOR?

Answer. Yes. If additional behavioral health resources were deemed necessary, I would not hesitate to request such resources from the Services to fill any identified gaps.

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Question. The number of suicides in each of the Services continues to concern the committee. A number of these military suicides are committed in theater.

What is your assessment of CENTCOM's suicide prevention program?

Answer. The challenge of suicide represents the most difficult one I have faced in my 37-year career in the Army. While I'm not currently in a position to assess CENTCOM's suicide prevention program, I know from experience that an effective suicide prevention program requires involved and engaged leadership at every level. If confirmed, I will ensure suicide prevention receives the appropriate command and leadership emphasis throughout the CENTCOM organization.

Question. In your view, are there any unique stressors in the CENTCOM AOR that contribute to the number of suicides of servicemembers serving in, or who have recently served in, the CENTCOM AOR?

Answer. Certainly there are stressors in the CENTCOM AOR. These include exposure to combat environments, multiple deployments and high operational tempo. That said, the challenge of suicide is incredibly complex. While some of the stressors experienced in the CENTCOM AOR may contribute to acts of suicide or suicidal ideations, generally there is no single causal factor. In most cases, a combination of stressors lead an individual to take his/her own life or attempt to do so. That said, I do recognize that most CENTCOM forces are rotational. They are often required to operate in stressful environments away from their loved ones. If confirmed, as CENTCOM commander I will be mindful of these stressors and associated challenges and I will make sure my subordinate commanders are appropriately focused on them as well.

Question. If confirmed, what resources would you use to help prevent suicides in theater and to prepare redeploying servicemembers for transition to life back at home?

Answer. Prevention of suicide in theater and at home is a vital priority—the safety of all deploying, deployed, and returning servicemembers is always foremost among my priorities.

Confronting the difficult reality of suicide in the force requires regularly exercising a broad complement of health resources within fully supportive command culture. This process begins with recognizing the importance of taking care of people, which will always remain the most important asset in our military. It is imperative that we implement programs and separate suicide prevention initiatives that comprise a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention throughout the life cycle of the training and deployment so that servicemembers can receive appropriate counseling, assistance, respite, and support. Continuing to educate Leaders at all levels regarding behavioral health and its resources, both in theater and out, along with

the installation of resiliency training will assist with identifying servicemembers who may need additional resources while decreasing the stigma associated with behavioral health treatment. All resources available to servicemembers need to be actively engaged to educate and support our servicemembers to ensure a seamless transition during all phases of a deployment.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Question. Sexual assaults continue to be a significant issue in the military. Victims of sexual assault report that they are victimized twice: first by attackers in their own ranks and then by unresponsive or inadequate treatment for the victim and failure of the chain of command to hold assailants accountable. Secretary Panetta has recently announced several new initiatives to address the sexual assault problems in the military, including comprehensive assessments of initial training of enlisted personnel and officers, creation of special victim capabilities, and limiting initial disposition authority to Special Court-Martial Convening Authorities in the grade of O-6 or higher.

What is your assessment of the sexual assault prevention and response program in CENTCOM?

Answer. I am not currently in a position to assess CENTCOM's sexual assault prevention and response program. However, if confirmed, I will make sexual assault prevention a leadership focus throughout the command and ensure that the sexual assault prevention and response programs in CENTCOM subordinate commands and components are effective and vigorously maintained and supported. Training must be high quality and engaging. Commanders and leaders must be present and involved in training. They must also take an active role in selecting unit sexual harassment/assault representatives and victim advocates. It is extremely important that the right individuals be selected for these key positions.

Question. What is your view of the adequacy of the training and resources available in the CENTCOM AOR for providing appropriate support to victims of sexual assault?

Answer. I am not currently in a position to assess the adequacy of the training and resources available in the CENTCOM AOR. However, if confirmed, I will make sure that the appropriate support is provided to victims of sexual assault, both those in the CENTCOM AOR and in CONUS. That said, I believe that sexual assault prevention and response training must begin before leaving home station. Forces who have conducted training prior to deployment are much better equipped to prevent sexual assault in the first place and address reports of sexual assault if/when they do arise.

Question. What is your assessment of the capability in the CENTCOM AOR to investigate allegations of sexual assault and to hold assailants accountable for their acts?

Answer. I believe that CID, AFOSI, and NCIS are capable of investigating any sexual assault that occurs in the CENTCOM AOR. Commanders have the ability to hold servicemembers accountable when they have been accused of sexual assault. Commanders can pursue the same options while deployed as they would in garrison, up to and including a general court-martial, and I will make it a priority to ensure they have the resources in theater to do so.

INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT FOR INDIRECT ACTIVITIES

Question. Some observers contend that the national intelligence agencies focus their assistance to the Defense Department in Afghanistan and Iraq on special operators engaged in direct action operations. As a consequence, it is alleged, general purpose forces and Special Operations Forces engaged in indirect activities, including foreign internal defense and population protection, receive less intelligence support.

If confirmed, how would you ensure that general purpose forces and Special Operations Forces engaged in indirect activities receive adequate intelligence support?

Answer. If confirmed, I would ensure our forces, regardless of whether they are engaged in direct action or indirect activities, receive the intelligence support they need to effectively execute and accomplish their mission. I will clearly state my Priority Intelligence Requirements and allocate Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance support in accordance with prioritized, theater requirements and capabilities.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES IN SUPPORT OF COUNTRY TEAMS

Question. U.S. Special Operations Command deploys personnel to work with country teams in a number of priority countries where the United States is not engaged

in direct action operations, but rather trying to stop the spread of violent extremism. Their mission is to support the priorities of the Ambassador and the geographic combatant commander's theater campaign plan against terrorist networks.

Please describe the potential value of these special operations personnel to CENTCOM and the country teams they are supporting.

Answer. Our Special Operations Forces (SOF) are the best in the world and are a key component in maintaining the U.S. Government's access into a host nation, and advancing interoperability with the host nation's military. These objectives are aligned with the Ambassador's overarching engagement strategy and the activities of the country team. They excel when operating in the strategic environment under austere conditions, and are particularly adept in keeping a small footprint on the ground. These characteristics make them particularly useful and valuable in our Theater engagement strategy, and a given when responding to crisis in the region.

Question. If confirmed, what, if anything, do you intend to do to make sure the goals of special operations personnel deployed to these countries are closely aligned with those of the Ambassadors with whom they are working?

Answer. If confirmed, it would be my responsibility to ensure that our operations and activities are aligned and integrated into the Ambassador's country specific objectives and our national security objectives. I recognize that my relationships with the Chiefs of Mission in the region will be critical to achieving necessary unity of effort. I will charge my subordinate SOF commanders at all levels to keep their lines of communication open with their respective Chiefs of Mission.

INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

Question. The collaboration between U.S. Special Operations Forces, general purpose forces, and other U.S. Government departments and agencies has played a significant role in the success of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations in recent years. However, much of this collaboration has been ad hoc in nature.

What do you believe are the most important lessons learned from the collaborative interagency efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere?

Answer. Our experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan have taught us that to achieve our goals and objectives we must balance all instruments of national power. The complexity of the current operating environment requires a whole-of-government approach that leverages the individual strengths of the Interagency, to include our military and diplomatic partners and others. Unity of effort, based on a 'team of team' concept, is essential. We must identify common goals and objectives early on and work together to achieve them.

Question. How do you believe these efforts can be improved?

Answer. The nature of warfare today requires unity of effort. As such, I believe we should look to expand our collaboration with our interagency partners to include all stages of planning and operations. We must not wait until we are in the midst of crises. By working together on a routine basis, we will effectively align goals and objectives, improve communications and enhance the understanding of one another's methods and perspectives. This will ultimately enhance individual and U.S. Government effectiveness.

Question. How can the lessons learned in recent years be captured in military doctrine and adopted as "best practices" for future contingency operations?

Answer. Lessons learned from combatant command, combined/joint operations area, and unit/tactical level activities should be communicated to the Services for incorporation into professional military education, for civilian-military structural recommendations, and for inclusion in the next revisions of joint and Service-level doctrine.

UNIFIED COMMAND PLAN CHANGES

Question. It has been reported that Admiral McRaven, Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM), is seeking changes to the Unified Command Plan (UCP) and other authorities that he believes would allow SOCOM to better support the requirements of the Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs). Reportedly, such changes would give the Commander of SOCOM combatant command authority over the TSOCs—including responsibilities for resourcing—and provide for more rapid deployment of Special Operations Forces to and between geographic combatant commands without the requirement for approval by the Secretary of Defense in every case. Operational control of deployed special operations forces would reportedly remain with the respective geographic combatant commander. Some have expressed concern that such changes could raise problems related to civilian control of the military, infringe upon the traditional authorities of the geographic combatant commanders, and make it more difficult for ambassadors and geographic com-

batant commanders to know what military personnel are coming into their areas of responsibility and what they are doing while they are there.

Please provide your assessment of whether such UCP changes are appropriate and can be made without conflicting with civilian control of the military, infringing upon authorities provided to the geographic combatant commanders, or raising concerns with the State Department.

Answer. If confirmed, I will review all recommended changes to the UCP. However, it has been my experience that Special Operations Forces are most effectively employed when fully integrated with conventional forces. This integration ensures better coordination, unity of effort and the ability to share critical resources.

Question. In your view, are there any countries that should be added or removed from the CENTCOM AOR as part of the review of the UCP?

Answer. I believe the current area of responsibility effectively and efficiently facilitates accomplishment of the CENTCOM assigned missions. If confirmed, I will continuously assess the CENTCOM missions and AOR and propose realignment if future conditions warrant.

SECTION 1208 OPERATIONS

Question. Section 1208 of the Ronald Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 (Public Law 108-375), as amended by subsequent bills, authorizes the provision of support (including training, funding, and equipment) to regular forces, irregular forces, and individuals supporting or facilitating military operations by U.S. Special Operations Forces to combat terrorism.

What is your assessment of this authority?

Answer. Section 1208 authority provides authority and funds for U.S. SOF to train and equip regular and irregular indigenous forces to conduct counterterrorism operations. This authority is considered a key tool in combating terrorism and is directly responsible for a number of highly successful counter-terror operations. Throughout the CENTCOM AOR 1208 facilitates multiple joint operations between Theater and National SOF partnering with host nation forces. These 1208 funded operations create capable responsive host nation forces closely partnered with U.S. SOF and represent the best opportunity to counterterrorist activities that threaten U.S. interests.

MILITARY INFORMATION SUPPORT OPERATIONS

Question. Al Qaeda and affiliated violent extremist groups work hard to appeal to local populations. In several cases throughout the CENTCOM AOR, most recently in Yemen, these efforts have allowed violent extremists to establish a safe haven, conduct operations, and expand their recruiting base. The composition and size of these groups in comparison to the U.S. Government permits it to make policy decisions very quickly.

Do you believe CENTCOM and other agencies within the U.S. Government are appropriately organized to respond effectively to the messaging and influence efforts of al Qaeda and other affiliated terrorist groups?

Answer. Al Qaeda exploitation of the information environment continues to mature and is a decisive part of the al Qaeda Senior Leader's campaign. While I'm not currently in a position to assess U.S. Government MISO capabilities, I recognize that CENTCOM must be able to dominate the information environment and ensure we do not unwittingly cede the information battle-space to the enemy.

Question. What steps, if any, do you believe CENTCOM should take to counter and delegitimize violent extremist ideologies?

Answer. CENTCOM plays a significant role in countering and delegitimizing violent extremist ideologies by eroding recruitment, reach, fundraising and communication capabilities through military information support and coordinated interagency operations.

CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

Question. In order to exercise its legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this committee and other appropriate committees of Congress are able to receive testimony, briefings, and other communications of information.

Do you agree, if confirmed for this high position, to appear before this committee and other appropriate committees of Congress?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, when asked, to give your personal views, even if those views differ from the administration in power?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear before this committee, or designated members of this committee, and provide information, subject to appropriate and necessary security protection, with respect to your responsibilities as the Commander, CENTCOM?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree to ensure that testimony, briefings, and other communications of information are provided to this committee and its staff and other appropriate committees?

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. Yes.

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR CLAIRE McCASKILL

AFGHANISTAN TRANSITION

1. Senator MCCASKILL. General Austin, I am concerned about what appears to me to be a lack of civilian planning and a lack of coordination for the transition to our post-2014 involvement in Afghanistan. The Government Accountability Office recently released a report that found that the Department of Defense (DOD) is effectively managing on behalf of the Department of State (DOS) 20 assisted interagency acquisitions with an estimated value of almost \$1 billion for basic support goods and services. In these cases, DOD has been involved in every aspect of the acquisition cycle, including planning, award, management, and oversight. I am concerned that DOS is not prepared to manage the contracts it will need in the post-2014 period in Afghanistan when the U.S. military largely leaves Afghanistan. What do you intend to do, if confirmed, to ensure that there is adequate coordination to ensure that DOS is not dependent on DOD to manage contracts in Afghanistan after 2014?

General AUSTIN. Based upon lessons learned from DOD to DOS transition in Iraq, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and DOS created the Afghanistan Contract Transition Working Group in 2012. This group is specifically addressing the transition of contracts from DOD to DOS post-2014. They are examining all contracts currently in place to assist DOS in determining which services need to continue after 2014 and to prepare DOS acquisition management personnel to assume control of contracting operations in Afghanistan. The group reports its progress on contract transition matters to the Afghanistan Executive Steering Group, a forum comprised of senior DOD and DOS leaders. If confirmed, I will continue to facilitate the efforts of this group.

SUSTAINABILITY REQUIREMENTS

2. Senator MCCASKILL. General Austin, Congress has been clear that greater analysis and assurances are needed to ensure that the reconstruction projects the United States is undertaking in Afghanistan are not only needed and wanted by the Afghan Government, but sustainable by the Afghan Government. Congress made this clear in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2013, which stated that funding for reconstruction and development in contingencies will not be available for use until a sustainability assessment is conducted that accounts for the host country's ability to maintain these projects. This applies not only to DOD, but also DOS and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Now that these sustainability requirements for infrastructure projects are law, it is up to these departments, including DOD, to implement the law effectively and aggressively. Should you be confirmed as the Commander of CENTCOM, you will play a key role in implementing the law as it pertains to projects in Afghanistan. What steps will you take to ensure we are funding sustainable projects in Afghanistan?

General AUSTIN. Prior to funding any infrastructure projects in Afghanistan, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A) conducts assessments to ensure we are implementing projects the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) wants, needs and can sustain. Sustainment estimates, which include personnel, training and funding resources, are continually refined throughout the project selection process in consultation with GIROA. USFOR-A also ensures sustainment costs

have been budgeted by GIRoA or other international agencies. In partnership with the USAID and U.S. Embassy Kabul, USFOR-A continues to build GIRoA's capacity to operate and sustain projects which are critical to Afghanistan's stability and economic development. If confirmed, I will ensure CENTCOM continues to aggressively support this oversight process.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

3. Senator MCCASKILL. General Austin and General Rodriguez, it is my understanding that the movie "The Invisible War" is being used to help educate senior leaders in the U.S. Armed Forces about the issue of sexual assault in the military. Have you seen the movie?

General AUSTIN. Yes.

4. Senator MCCASKILL. General Austin and General Rodriguez, as a leader in the U.S. Army, what have you learned about the issue of sexual assault facing servicemembers under your command?

General AUSTIN. All individuals deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, and they should be guaranteed living and working environments free of sexual harassment and sexual assault. During my tenure as VCSA, I have conducted a number of sensing sessions with soldiers of all ranks in order to hear their thoughts and concerns on the topic. These sessions have proven to be very informative and helpful to me and other senior leaders and commanders.

We take these issues very seriously and we are actively taking steps to reduce the incidence of sexual harassment and sexual assault in our ranks. Indeed, commanders are now, and must remain, critical players in establishing the right environments, caring for victims and holding offenders accountable within the military justice system. A key component in victim reporting is a command climate that fosters a bond of trust and confidence between Leaders and their subordinates. Culture change is on the horizon; the Army has seen the propensity to report by our female soldiers increase in recent years. This positive trend indicates that our female soldiers do, in fact, trust their chain of command.

We acknowledge that there is more work to be done to continue this upward trend and institutionalize our efforts, and our leaders remains focused and committed to continuing to contribute to this most critical endeavor.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOE MANCHIN III

AFGHANISTAN

5. Senator MANCHIN. General Austin, I am a strong supporter of bringing our troops home from Afghanistan as quickly as possible so we can focus on rebuilding America. The President's recent announcements to bring home 34,000 American soldiers within the next year and to move up the transition to Afghan combat lead by a few months are welcome, but I still believe that we need an even more aggressive timeline for withdrawal. Over the next 2 years, do you think there will be any opportunities for further expediting the timeline for withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan?

General AUSTIN. We are at a vital juncture in this campaign and the pace of the transition and withdrawal must remain consistent with the status of mission and conditions on the ground. However, at this time I cannot predict if there will be opportunities in the coming days to further expedite the withdrawal. If confirmed, I will work closely with General Dunford to continuously assess the situation and provide best military advice to our civilian leadership.

6. Senator MANCHIN. General Austin, our combat mission in Afghanistan is transitioning to one of training, advising, and assisting the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). In light of this change, what are the milestones and measures of effectiveness that DOD is using to track the readiness of ANSF to stand on their own? I would like to see DOD carefully track and report to Congress on progress against these milestones because the sooner these targets have been reached, the sooner we can withdrawal troops dedicated to the training mission.

General AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will focus on several principal strategic level objectives over the next 2 years including: the transition of lead security responsibility to the ANSF; ensuring that we set the conditions for the 2014 Afghan Presidential elections; and, ensuring all necessary actions are taken to successfully achieve the full transition of security responsibility to the democratically elected Government of

Afghanistan. Success in Afghanistan will ultimately hinge, in large measure, on the leadership within Afghanistan.

Having said that, keeping a close eye on milestones and measures of effectiveness to track the readiness of ANSF has been an evolutionary effort over the past several years. We have developed several tools used to assess and track ANSF capabilities and their ability to stand on their own. For example, NTM-A uses the Commander's Unit Assessment Tool to assess the condition of ANSF units in areas that include: leadership, operations, intelligence, logistics, equipping, personnel, maintenance, communications, training and education, and partnering. Capability Milestones are the measures of effectiveness used to track the ANSF readiness and performance at the ministerial level. These assessments are conducted quarterly and allow for advisors to focus efforts with the Afghans to continue improving their readiness and performance. I will work closely with General Dunford to provide DOD with progress reports against these milestones in support of congressional reporting requirements.

7. Senator MANCHIN. General Austin, this question is related to your current position as Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, and impacts your future position as Commander of CENTCOM because, as you aptly state in your advance policy questions, you inherently understand "the importance of taking care of people, which will always remain the most important asset in our military."

It has come to my attention that there are deployed Army battalions in Afghanistan that do not have the appropriate family support at home station. In September 2012, Secretary McHugh assured me that deployed battalions would have Family Readiness Support assistants, but I know of at least a few battalions that do not. Before voting for your confirmation, I would like to bring this matter to your attention. Will you commit that you have reviewed these policies in your current role, and that in your future role, you wholly agree that deployed units must have the appropriate family support?

General AUSTIN. I am grateful for the continued support that you have shown for our servicemembers and families. I absolutely agree that caring for our families is and must remain a top priority. They represent a critical part of our Army Team. They've made countless sacrifices over the years, and certainly we could not have accomplished all that we have over the past decade-plus of conflict without their support. I am aware of the issue that has prompted your concern; the senior Army leadership is currently addressing this matter directly. You have my full assurance that, if confirmed, as CENTCOM Commander I will make sure that the families of all of our deployed servicemembers receive the full support they merit and deserve.

8. Senator MANCHIN. General Austin, what opportunities do you see for encouraging other countries, particularly Afghanistan's neighbors, to do more to build ANSF capacity?

General AUSTIN. Presently, Afghanistan's neighbors are not in an economic position to provide equipment or technical training to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). However, all of Afghanistan's neighbors share a common interest in a stable and secure Afghanistan with an ANSF capable of preventing Violent Extremist Organization (VEO) safe havens and controlling the adverse regional effects of narcotics and criminal patronage networks. Initial ANSF capacity is established through the efforts of the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) Coalition and international donors. The future effectiveness of ANSF will depend on bilateral military engagement with Afghanistan's neighbors. Nowhere will ANSF bilateral engagement be more critical than along the remote and rugged border areas with Pakistan in which extremists and criminals seek sanctuary and who directly threaten both nations.

9. Senator MANCHIN. General Austin, are there things the U.S. military can do to encourage these partnerships to relieve the burden on our forces?

General AUSTIN. There are a number of things that U.S. Forces have done and are continuing to do to facilitate our continued partnerships. First, we are providing first-class training to coalition units deploying into theater. Second, we are working closely with our partners in the region to develop the tactics, techniques and procedures that promote multinational interoperability. Third, we assist countries in developing their own capabilities through training events and foreign military sales. Finally, we are continuing to develop military-to-military relationships at the highest level through strategic engagements that not only promote trust, but also help key leaders to understand our various military and political concerns.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

WITHDRAWAL OF TROOPS FROM AFGHANISTAN

10. Senator SHAHEEN. General Austin, in your testimony, you stated that you felt confident that the ANSF were on track to assume the lead in security this spring. In your examination of the ongoing operations, are you confident that the withdrawal of 34,000 troops this year will allow for adequate force protection of Americans still in theater?

General AUSTIN. The safety and security of our deployed forces remains our foremost priority. The planned withdrawal of 34,000 troops will be phased, as it was with the Surge drawdown, to ensure we are able to successfully conduct the required mission while providing sufficient force protection. Troops will be redeployed incrementally and on pace with base closure and retrograde.

11. Senator SHAHEEN. General Austin, from your experience with the Iraq withdrawal, what do you think that the United States should do differently as we prepare to withdraw from Afghanistan?

General AUSTIN. The Iraq withdrawal experience taught us two things: to begin planning earlier and to consider all possibilities, including not having a status of forces agreement (SOFA) that provides the legal protection for our military forces and civilians to operate in a sovereign nation. Redeployment planning and execution is underway and leaders have incorporated the critical lessons learned from Iraq including the possibility that the United States and Afghanistan may fail to agree to a Bilateral Security Agreement.

12. Senator SHAHEEN. General Austin, what best practices do you think are applicable to this new challenge?

General AUSTIN. Although the challenges in Afghanistan are different in many respects, ISAF is using the lessons learned from the Iraq drawdown to help shape their campaign plan. There are a few best practices that are critical to success: (1) synchronize retrograde operations with operational maneuver to ensure adequate force protection and enabler support as the size of our force decreases; (2) conduct all planning with DOS and other agencies to ensure all interagency missions are synchronized and set up for success through the transition process; (3) prepare for the possibility that no status of forces agreement will be in place for subsequent protection of U.S. troops and contractors; and (4) ensure the training and advising of the ANSF remain the focus, as the ANSF takes the lead for security across Afghanistan and as we redeploy our forces.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR RICHARD BLUMENTHAL

TROOP MORALE IN AFGHANISTAN

13. Senator BLUMENTHAL. General Austin, I have heard from several Connecticut servicemembers and their family members deployed to Afghanistan that when they are not at the base during certain hours, they do not receive breakfast. I have also heard from servicemembers that the free wireless Internet provided in Internet cafes is occasionally too slow for them to communicate with family members back home via Skype. I understand that servicemembers must pay up to \$100 per month if they would like high-speed Internet service in their living quarters. I have every confidence that you will ensure the welfare of all military personnel under your command. If confirmed, how would you address the welfare and morale issues of breakfast and adequate Internet use for our servicemembers deployed in Afghanistan?

General AUSTIN. The care of our deployed servicemembers is critically important and I consider this to be an operational issue. Mission requirements dictate the availability of certain resources and as our footprint gets smaller, we may necessarily see gaps in certain services due to operational requirements. That said, if confirmed, I will ensure that leaders continue to provide proper care and recreational opportunities within mission constraints.

JORDAN

14. Senator BLUMENTHAL. General Austin, the civil war in Syria is causing thousands to flee to the Jordanian Refugee Camp Zaatari where there are press reports of Jordanian outsiders entering the area and that it is not properly secured. If confirmed, would you consider providing specific training and technical assistance to

the Jordanian military to improve security control at the Zaatari refugee camp, where conditions are worsening and the Government of Jordan is bearing the brunt of a crisis that requires a regional response?

General AUSTIN. The U.S. military routinely provides focused and effective training as well as technical assistance to the Jordanian Armed Forces. The majority of the training and assistance we provide increases their capacity and capabilities in order to ensure a secure and stable Jordan. With regards to security at the Zaatri refugee camp, the Jordanian Armed Forces do not provide any internal or perimeter security for the camp. The Government of Jordan relies on their police forces and Gendarme to provide security at Zaatri. The Jordanian Armed Forces provide security for the refugees at the border and while transporting them to Zaatri. Because the security providers at the camp are Ministry of Interior personnel, CENTCOM would need special authorities to provide any training or technical assistance should they ask for it.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR SAXBY CHAMBLISS

TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS

15. Senator CHAMBLISS. General Austin, several nuclear powers reside in the CENTCOM AOR. There is much concern about countries like Pakistan who have unstable governments, discontent populations, and a nuclear weapons capability. According to the Congressional Research Service and the Federation of American Scientists, Pakistan has approximately 90 to 110 warheads, recently passing India's inventory of 80 to 100 weapons. This appears to be a nuclear arms race in South Asia. What are your thoughts on tactical nuclear weapons?

General AUSTIN. The security and accountability of all tactical nuclear weapons in that volatile and beleaguered part of the world is of utmost importance to the United States, especially given our vital national interests located throughout the region. While Pakistan represents the only nuclear power in the CENTCOM AOR, we remain concerned about the persistent risk of proliferation and certainly the potential for an arms race in South Asia. If confirmed, I will also work closely with the Commander of PACOM to ensure that nuclear tensions between Pakistan and India are properly addressed. Meanwhile, our ultimate goal is to help to discourage Pakistan from maintaining tactical nuclear weapons given the inherent threat they pose to security and stability in the region. Larger nuclear weapons are contained on installations with multi-layered security and are more difficult to conceal. In contrast, tactical nuclear weapons are far easier to transport and conceal and thus more difficult to track.

16. Senator CHAMBLISS. General Austin, what is your message to leaders in Pakistan for future involvement?

General AUSTIN. We want to convey to them our belief that the significant risks associated with maintaining tactical nuclear weapons far outweighs any potential benefit. We also want to emphasize the grave need to ensure the proper security and accountability of these weapons. Ultimately, it is in both our countries' best interest to remain engaged at all levels in order to promote Pakistan stability and security and accountability of all nuclear weapons.

17. Senator CHAMBLISS. General Austin, what will be CENTCOM's role in engaging with Pakistani military leaders for responsible accountability and positioning of tactical nuclear weapons?

General AUSTIN. The development of tactical nuclear weapons as a potential counter to larger conventional forces is certainly an area of concern that merits our attention. The United States must continue to employ all elements of national power to aid and assist Pakistan in improving its overall nuclear security and to prevent the proliferation of nuclear material and technology. If confirmed, I will ensure that CENTCOM continues to promote U.S./Pakistan military-to-military engagements at the highest levels to promote the security and accountability of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program.

IRANIAN NUCLEAR WEAPONS CAPABILITY

18. Senator CHAMBLISS. General Austin, while they state otherwise, it appears Iran is actively pursuing a nuclear weapons capability. This is something we cannot allow and there must be a red line drawn prior to Iran acquiring this capability. What are the key indicators on Iran's path to nuclear weapons capability?

General AUSTIN. Key indicators could include: (1) Tehran ceases all cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency, which could result in the lack of verification of Iran's nuclear-related materials and facilities; (2) Uranium enrichment above the 20-percent level is detected; this would exceed Iran's current civilian use requirements and may have military implications; (3) Accumulation of large stockpiles of 20-percent enriched uranium; (4) Confirmation of nuclear weapons-related activities, many of which were outlined in the International Atomic Energy Agency November 2011 report annex; (5) Operation of a plutonium production reactor and establishment of a plutonium reprocessing capability; (6) Continued testing and growth of Tactical Ballistic Missile capabilities in the Iranian military.

19. Senator CHAMBLISS. General Austin, what are the red lines and what actions should we take?

General AUSTIN. The President has stated the United States cannot and will not allow Iran to develop or acquire nuclear weapons and avoiding a regional nuclear arms race is critical to preserving stability in the Middle East. Accordingly, CENTCOM is postured to provide the President of the United States (POTUS) with a range of military options, as required. That said, the best way to accomplish this goal is through diplomacy, both unilateral and with our allies and United Nation partners, and a tough sanctions regime. In parallel, the United States needs to continue to maintain a strong U.S. military presence within the Arabian Gulf region and build our regional partners' military capabilities to defend themselves and the region in the event of a crisis with Iran. If a crisis with Iran does occur, CENTCOM is prepared to defend U.S. interests and our partners' sovereignty and maintain the free flow of international commerce throughout the region.

20. Senator CHAMBLISS. General Austin, do you support the full range of policy options, to include the use of force?

General AUSTIN. Yes. Our Nation has vital national interests throughout the CENTCOM AOR that would be jeopardized by a regionally-hegemonic and aggressive Iran in possession of a nuclear weapon. Therefore, and as POTUS has stated, we will not tolerate a nuclear-armed Iran and stand ready to employ all instruments of national power to ensure Iran does not achieve such a capability. If confirmed, as the CENTCOM Commander, I will be prepared at all times to provide POTUS with a range of options for effective military actions across the spectrum of conflict.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR KELLY AYOTTE

IRAN'S ACTIVITIES

21. Senator AYOTTE. General Austin, what are Iran's activities now in Syria?

General AUSTIN. Over the past 2 years, Iran has focused on keeping the Assad regime in power to maintain the critical gateway to its regional surrogates and proxies. Iran is providing the Syrian regime money, weapons, military advisors, technical support, and is becoming directly involved in operations against opposition forces. Additionally, Iran is increasing support to pro-Assad Shia militants, including establishing, training, and equipping the Jaysh al Sha'bi militia.

22. Senator AYOTTE. General Austin, what are Iran's activities in Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq, and Afghanistan?

General AUSTIN. The Iranian Threat Network (ITN) is a worldwide network consisting of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps-Quds Force (IRGC-QF), Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS), and their surrogates, business and logistics support. ITN actions, lethal or otherwise, are a problem common to nearly every troubled country in the region including Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Iran continues to exploit regional animosity toward Israel to gain influence in the Levant, portraying itself as the sole supporter of Palestinian and Lebanese resistance. Iran continues providing Hezbollah with lethal military support, religious guidance, and funding for numerous outreach programs targeting Shia communities throughout Lebanon and specifically in southern Beirut. Iranian lethal aid includes several advanced weapons systems, such as anti-ship missiles, surface-to-surface missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles, several variants of manportable air defense systems, anti-tank guided missiles and tens of thousands of tactical rockets.

In Yemen, Iran has taken advantage of unrest since early 2011 to grow its influence. They are providing lethal and non-lethal support to segments of the Huthi rebel movement in Yemen, in hopes of building the group into a Lebanese Hizballah like element it can use to pressure the Yemeni Government. Iran is also estab-

lishing an Arabian Peninsula based weapons hub for training and exporting lethal aid to Yemen.

Iran is trying to expand its influence in Iraq by strengthening its political, economic, and military ties with the Iraqi Government and its senior leaders. Influence over Iraqi officials allows Iran to extend hard and soft power influence in key areas of Iraq. Iraqi airspace has been used to ferry lethal aid to Syria, uninhibited by perfunctory Iraqi inspections of aircraft. Tehran is also engaging Iraqi political leaders on all sides to ensure the current Iraqi political crisis does not devolve into conflict. Iran continues to support its Shia militant proxies, even though the groups have assumed a lower profile in Iraq over the past year.

In Afghanistan, Iran through the IRGC-QF, continues equipping and training the Taliban and other insurgents to undermine ISAF efforts to establish security and stability in Afghanistan. Iran's other influential efforts include overt support for the Afghan Government and economic and cultural outreach to the Afghan populace, particularly Shia minority populations. Politically, Iran seeks to maintain positive relations within the highest levels of the Afghan Government while attempting to steer Afghanistan away from a long-term Bilateral Security Agreement with the United States.

ARABIAN GULF

23. Senator AYOTTE. General Austin, are we in a period of heightened risk in the Arabian Gulf region?

General AUSTIN. Yes. Iran's actions in the Arabian Gulf, of late, have been more aggressive as Tehran attempts to assert territorial claims that exceed internationally recognized limits. As Iran continues to actively challenge our presence in international airspace and waters of the Gulf, these events create the potential for miscalculation. Iran also continues improving the lethality and accuracy of its ballistic missiles and conducts military exercises with the stated purpose of closing the Strait of Hormuz, threatening not only its neighbors but also the global economy. Meanwhile, the International Atomic Energy Agency has reported that Iran continues to increase and improve its uranium enrichment activities, causing concerns over the potential military dimensions of its nuclear program.

24. Senator AYOTTE. General Austin, what are the consequences of not having the second aircraft carrier in the Arabian Gulf region?

General AUSTIN. While the presence of a second aircraft carrier significantly enhances the flexibility and number of response options available to POTUS in the midst of a crisis, in its absence the United States still retains a robust response capability for any number of contingencies. That said, the lack of a second carrier would increase response times required to execute some military options in the region.

INTEGRATED AIR AND MISSILE DEFENSE FRAMEWORK

25. Senator AYOTTE. General Austin, given regional threats and a need to balance Iran's nuclear ambitions, will CENTCOM continue to pursue a robust integrated air and missile defense framework with our Gulf Cooperation Council partners?

General AUSTIN. Yes. Developing a robust integrated air and missile defense framework with our Gulf Cooperation Council partners is central to demonstrating the U.S. resolve in the region. Iran possesses extensive ballistic missile capabilities that continue to grow in quantity and technological sophistication. Their disruptive behavior threatens the security interests of our regional partners and the vital interests of the United States and we must emphasize interoperability with our partners as they procure new and upgrade older missile defense systems. Ultimately, a layered U.S. and Gulf Cooperation Council missile defense architecture is necessary to effectively counter the Iranian tactical ballistic missile threat and preserve operational flexibility.

SEQUESTER RISKS

26. Senator AYOTTE. General Austin, how will sequestration increase risk to our interests in the CENTCOM AOR?

General AUSTIN. Sequestration will significantly increase the risk to readiness and ongoing missions in the CENTCOM AOR as Chairman Dempsey and the Service Chiefs have stated. Sequestration will cause the Services to delay required maintenance to ships and other major systems, curtail pilot training hours, stall procure-

ment decisions, and cancel contracts. While such actions may meet short-term sequestration goals, they introduce risk and likely result in greater expenditures later. The effects of sequestration will negatively impact all of the Services, thereby having a significant operational impact on the CENTCOM AOR due to its geography, the pace of ongoing combat operations, and the likelihood of numerous unforeseen contingencies.

SURVEILLANCE IN CENTRAL COMMAND

27. Senator AYOTTE. General Austin, the 2002 \$250 million wargame Millennium Challenge simulated a naval engagement in the Gulf and found that speedboats pose a serious threat to our CENTCOM forces, especially in the Strait of Hormuz. Given that, is persistent ISR that can track these speedboats still required?

General AUSTIN. Yes. The threat tactics employed during Millennium Challenge still pose a significant threat to our forces. Specifically, tactics such as swarming have been practiced and refined by the Iranians over the years. Iranian speed boats, which we categorize as Fast Attack Craft and Fast In-shore Attack Craft, pose a unique and significant threat to U.S. and coalition naval forces, as well as commercial shipping in the Arabian Gulf. These craft are integral to Iran's mine-laying and swarm tactics and thus pose a significant threat to the safety of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz and the shipping lanes of the Arabian Gulf. Given the low observable signatures and dynamic operations of these threats, persistent ISR is still required.

28. Senator AYOTTE. General Austin, given what we know about Iran's missile capabilities, would you consider integration of fire control and persistent ISR valuable to the protection of our forward deployed troops?

General AUSTIN. Yes. CENTCOM forces and coalition partners will have only minimal time to react to missile launches in the Arabian Gulf. Rapid identification, verification, geolocation, and kinetic targeting of such threats is a must (find-fix-finish).

29. Senator AYOTTE. General Austin, the Army recently announced that the Joint Land Attack Cruise Missile Defense Elevated Netted Sensor (JLENS) system would be demonstrated in the National Capital Region to provide exactly that kind of ISR and defense. Would such a system help counter threats such as those posed to U.S. Forces in the Gulf?

General AUSTIN. Persistent ISR systems such as JLENS, specifically designed for missile detection and tracking, would help to counter threats such as those posed to U.S. Forces in the Gulf. However, JLENS is not currently a program of record and is still in testing. If this system does become available for worldwide operational use, JLENS will offer persistent and multi-sensor capabilities optimized for point area defense. The fact that JLENS is tethered will prove a limitation requiring substantial planning and de-confliction to overcome the impact to air navigation, especially in nations who only grant the United States limited use of their airspace.

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE FORCE

30. Senator AYOTTE. General Austin, if General Dunford told you that he believes the pace of the withdrawal is jeopardizing our interests and a positive outcome in Afghanistan, would you support his request to slow the pace of withdrawal?

General AUSTIN. I will remain in close contact with General Dunford to assess the conditions on the ground, consider his best judgment in any major decisions regarding the campaign, including the pace of redeployment of our forces, and provide my best military advice to my chain of command.

31. Senator AYOTTE. General Austin, if General Dunford says he needs more forces than planned after 2014, would you support that request?

General AUSTIN. I will work closely with General Dunford and consider his best judgment in any major decisions regarding the campaign, including the size of the forces required to meet the mission, as directed by the President. I will continue to work with General Dunford and his team, the Joint Staff and DOD, to assess conditions on the ground and provide my best military advice to my chain of command.

32. Senator AYOTTE. General Austin, what will happen in Afghanistan if the United States withdraws too quickly or leaves too few troops in Afghanistan post-2014?

General AUSTIN. Campaign success through 2014 and beyond requires balancing many factors, including mission requirements, availability of resources, and risk to forces. Ultimately, the Afghans are responsible for securing their own country, and we have made a significant investment in training their forces to achieve this goal. That said, while it is hard to predict exactly what would happen if the United States were to withdraw too quickly, such a withdrawal could jeopardize the hard fought gains achieved over the last 12-plus years. Ultimately, withdrawing too quickly could result in increased instability in Afghanistan and throughout the region. If confirmed, I will work closely with General Dunford to ensure a responsible transition and withdrawal of U.S. Forces from Afghanistan.

SYRIA

33. Senator AYOTTE. General Austin, why do you believe that the al Nusrah Front is increasing in capability and influence in Syria?

General AUSTIN. The "al Qaeda in Iraq" Syrian front organization, al-Nusrah Front, has achieved its current level of capability and influence because of two key variables. Al Nusrah has focused on outreach to the Syrian populace, tempering its vision of an Islamic state and building an outreach program that includes basic humanitarian assistance. This has some Syrians looking to al Nusrah as a viable alternative to the current Assad regime. This outreach is powerful when combined with the second key to al Nusrah's success, the experience its forces bring to the fight in Syria. This experience, gained largely in Iraq, includes not only tactics and strategies, but also logistics, organizational skills, and a discriminating use of violence. Al Nusrah Front strives to minimize civilian casualties and applies savvy propaganda when unwanted deaths occur, typically shifting the blame to regime forces or other Syrian opposition groups.

CONTRACTING WITH THE ENEMY

34. Senator AYOTTE. General Austin, are you aware of section 841 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2012, titled "Prohibition on Contracting with the Enemy in the CENTCOM Theater of Operations"?

General AUSTIN. Yes, I am aware of section 841 and the authority granted to the CENTCOM Commander to issue findings against companies and individuals actively supporting the insurgency.

35. Senator AYOTTE. General Austin, if confirmed, do you commit to aggressively implementing these authorities to save taxpayer money and ensure U.S. contracting funds do not end up in the hands of our enemies?

General AUSTIN. Yes, if confirmed, I will aggressively utilize the authority provided under section 841 to issue findings against companies and individuals found to be using proceeds from U.S. contracts to actively support the insurgency.

[The nomination reference of GEN Lloyd J. Austin III, USA, follows:]

NOMINATION REFERENCE AND REPORT

AS IN EXECUTIVE SESSION,
SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,
January 23, 2013.

Ordered, That the following nomination be referred to the Committee on Armed Services:

The following named officer for appointment in the U.S. Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be General.

GEN Lloyd J. Austin III, USA, 5848.

[The biographical sketch of GEN Lloyd J. Austin III, USA, which was transmitted to the committee at the time the nomination was referred, follows:]

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF GEN LLOYD J. AUSTIN III, USA

Source of commissioned service: USMA.

Educational degrees:

U.S. Military Academy - BS - No Major
 Auburn University - ME - Educational Administration
 Webster University - MA - Management

Military schools attended:

Infantry Officer Basic and Advanced Courses
 U.S. Army Command and General Staff College
 U.S. Army War College

Promotions:

Promotions	Dates of appointment
2LT	4 Jun 75
1LT	4 Jun 77
CPT	18 Nov 79
MAJ	1 Jun 86
LTC	1 Jul 92
COL	1 Aug 97
BG	1 Jan 02
MG	1 Jan 05
LTG	8 Dec 06
GEN	1 Sep 10

Major duty assignments:

From	To	Assignment
Feb 12	Present	Vice Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, Washington, DC
Sep 10	Dec 11 ..	Commander, U.S. Forces-Iraq, Operation New Dawn, Iraq
Aug 09	Aug 10	Director, Joint Staff, Washington, DC
Apr 09	Aug 09	Commanding General, XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg, Fort Bragg, NC
Feb 08	Apr 09 ..	Commanding General, XVIII Airborne Corps/Commander, Multi-National Corps-Iraq, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraq
Dec 06	Feb 08 ..	Commanding General, XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg, Fort Bragg, NC
Sep 05	Dec 06 ..	Chief of Staff, U.S. Central Command, MacDill Air Force Base, FL
Sep 03	Aug 05	Commanding General, 10th Mountain Division (Light) and Fort Drum, Fort Drum, NY, to include duty as Commander, Combined Joint Task Force-180, Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan
Jul 01	Jun 03 ..	Assistant Division Commander (Maneuver), 3d Infantry Division (Mechanized), Fort Stewart, GA, and Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraq
Jun 99	Jul 01 ...	Chief, Joint Operations Division, J-3, Joint Staff, Washington, DC
Jun 97	Jun 99 ..	Commander, 3d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC
Aug 96	Jun 97 ..	Student, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA
Mar 95	Jun 96 ..	G-3 (Operations), 82d Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC
May 93	Mar 95	Commander, 2d Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82d Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC, and Operation Safe Haven, Panama
Oct 92	Apr 93 ..	Director, Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization, and Security, U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Drum, NY
Jun 91	Oct 92 ..	Executive Officer, 1st Infantry Brigade, 10th Mountain Division (Light), Fort Drum, NY
Jun 89	May 91	S-3 (Operations), later Executive Officer, 2d Battalion, 22d Infantry, 10th Mountain Division (Light), Fort Drum, NY
Jul 88	Jun 89 ..	Student, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS
Dec 85	Jun 88 ..	Cadet Counselor, later Company Tactical Officer, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, NY
Jan 85	Dec 85 ..	Student, Auburn University, Auburn, AL
Oct 82	Dec 84 ..	Company Commander, U.S. Army Recruiting Battalion, Indianapolis, IN
Oct 81	Oct 82 ..	Operations Officer, U.S. Army Indianapolis District Recruiting Command, Indianapolis, IN
Apr 81	Oct 81 ..	Assistant S-3 (Operations), 1st Brigade, 82d Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC
Oct 79	Apr 81 ..	Commander, Combat Support Company, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 508th Infantry, 82d Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC
Mar 79	Sep 79 ..	Student, Infantry Officer Advanced Course, U.S. Army Infantry School, Fort Benning, GA

From	To	Assignment
Jan 78	Feb 79 ..	Scout Platoon Leader, Combat Support Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Infantry, 3d Infantry Division (Mechanized), U.S. Army Europe and Seventh Army, Germany
May 76	Jan 78 ..	Rifle Platoon Leader, A Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Infantry, 3d Infantry Division (Mechanized), U.S. Army Europe and Seventh Army, Germany

Summary of joint assignments:

	Date	Grade
Commander, U.S. Forces-Iraq, Operation New Dawn, Iraq	Sep. 10–Dec. 11	General
Director, Joint Staff, Washington, DC	Aug. 09–Aug. 10	Lieutenant General
Commanding General, XVIII Airborne Corps/Commander, Multi-National Corps-Iraq, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraq.	Feb. 08–Apr. 09	Lieutenant General
Chief of Staff, U.S. Central Command, MacDill Air Force Base, FL	Sep. 05–Dec. 06	Major General
Commanding General, 10th Mountain Division (Light) with duty as Commander, Combined Joint Task Force-180, Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan (No Joint Credit).	Sep. 03–Apr. 04	Brigadier General/ Major General
Chief, Joint Operations Division, J-3, Joint Staff, Washington, DC	June 99–July 01	Colonel

Summary of operational assignments:

	Date	Grade
Commander, U.S. Forces-Iraq, Operation New Dawn, Iraq	Sep. 10–Dec. 11	General
Commanding General, XVIII Airborne Corps/Commander, Multi-National Corps-Iraq, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraq.	Feb. 08–Apr. 09	Lieutenant General
Commanding General, 10th Mountain Division (Light) with duty as Commander, Combined Joint Task Force-180, Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan (No Joint Credit).	Sep. 03–Apr. 04	Brigadier General/ Major General
Assistant Division Commander (Maneuver), 3d Infantry Division (Mechanized), Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraq.	Mar. 03–Apr. 03	Brigadier General
Commander, 2d Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82d Airborne Division, Operation Safe Haven, Panama.	Nov. 94–Feb. 95	Lieutenant Colonel

U.S. decorations and badges:

Defense Distinguished Service Medal (with three Oak Leaf Clusters)
 Distinguished Service Medal (with Oak Leaf Cluster)
 Silver Star
 Defense Superior Service Medal (with Oak Leaf Cluster)
 Legion of Merit (with Oak Leaf Cluster)
 Defense Meritorious Service Medal
 Meritorious Service Medal (with four Oak Leaf Clusters)
 Joint Service Commendation Medal
 Army Commendation Medal (with seven Oak Leaf Clusters)
 Army Achievement Medal (with Oak Leaf Cluster)
 Combat Action Badge
 Expert Infantryman Badge
 Master Parachutist Badge
 Ranger Tab
 Joint Chiefs of Staff Identification Badge

[The Committee on Armed Services requires certain senior military officers nominated by the President to positions requiring the advice and consent of the Senate to complete a form that details the biographical, financial, and other information of the nominee. The form executed by GEN Lloyd J. Austin III, USA, in connection with his nomination follows:]

UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Room SR-228

Washington, DC 20510-6050

(202) 224-3871

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES FORM

BIOGRAPHICAL AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION REQUESTED OF
NOMINEES

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE NOMINEE: Complete all requested information. If more space is needed use an additional sheet and cite the part of the form and the question number (i.e. A-9, B-4) to which the continuation of your answer applies.

PART A—BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE NOMINEE: Biographical information furnished in this part of the form will be made available in committee offices for public inspection prior to the hearings and will also be published in any hearing record as well as made available to the public.

1. **Name:** (Include any former names used.)
Lloyd J. Austin III.
2. **Position to which nominated:**
Commander, U.S. Central Command, MacDill Air Force Base, FL.
3. **Date of nomination:**
January 23, 2013.
4. **Address:** (List current place of residence and office addresses.)
[Nominee responded and the information is contained in the committee's executive files.]
5. **Date and place of birth:**
August 8, 1953; Mobile, AL.
6. **Marital Status:** (Include maiden name of wife or husband's name.)
Married to Charlene Denise Banner Austin; Maiden Name: Banner.
7. **Names and ages of children:**
Reginald Hill (Stepson); age 44.
Christopher Hill (Stepson); age 40.
8. **Government experience:** List any advisory, consultative, honorary or other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments, other than those listed above.
None.
9. **Business relationships:** List all positions currently held as an officer, director, trustee, partner, proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, company, firm, partnership, or other business enterprise, educational, or other institution.
None.
10. **Memberships:** List all memberships and offices currently held in professional, fraternal, scholarly, civic, business, charitable, and other organizations.
Association of the U.S. Army.
National Infantry Association.
Rocks Incorporated.
555th Parachute Infantry Regiment Association.
11. **Honors and awards:** List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary society memberships, military medals and any other special recognitions for outstanding service or achievements.
Patriot Award: October 2009 (Awarded for exceptional service to country by the Patriot Foundation, Pinehurst, NC).
Lifetime Achievement Award (Awarded by Auburn University).
Pinnacle Award (Awarded by the Chamber of Commerce in Thomasville, GA).
Honorary Doctorate (Awarded by Fayetteville State University).
Lincoln Award (Philadelphia, PA).

12. **Commitment to testify before Senate committees:** Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify upon request before any duly constituted committee of the Senate?

Yes.

13. **Personal views:** Do you agree, when asked before any duly constituted committee of Congress, to give your personal views, even if those views differ from the administration in power?

Yes.

[The nominee responded to the questions in Parts B–E of the committee questionnaire. The text of the questionnaire is set forth in the Appendix to this volume. The nominee’s answers to Parts B–E are contained in the committee’s executive files.]

SIGNATURE AND DATE

I hereby state that I have read and signed the foregoing Statement on Biographical and Financial Information and that the information provided therein is, to the best of my knowledge, current, accurate, and complete.

LLOYD J. AUSTIN III.

This 2nd day of December, 2013.

[The nomination of GEN Lloyd J. Austin III, USA, was reported to the Senate by Chairman Levin on February 26, 2013, with the recommendation that the nomination be confirmed. The nomination was confirmed by the Senate on March 5, 2013.]

[Prepared questions submitted to GEN David M. Rodriguez, USA, by Chairman Levin prior to the hearing with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

DEFENSE REFORMS

Question. The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 and Special Operations reforms have strengthened the warfighting readiness of our Armed Forces. They have enhanced civilian control and the chain of command by clearly delineating the combatant commanders’ responsibilities and authorities and the role of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. These reforms have also improved cooperation between the Services and the combatant commanders, among other things, in joint training and education and in the execution of military operations.

Do you see the need for modifications of any Goldwater-Nichols Act provisions?

Answer. No. At this time I do not believe modifications are necessary. If confirmed, I will continue to be alert to the need for modifications.

Question. If so, what areas do you believe might be appropriate to address in these modifications?

Answer. N/A.

Question. Do you believe that the role of the combatant commanders under the Goldwater-Nichols legislation is appropriate and the policies and processes in existence allow that role to be fulfilled?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you see a need for any change in those roles, with regard to the resource allocation process or otherwise?

Answer. No.

DUTIES

Question. What is your understanding of the duties and functions of the Commander of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM)?

Answer. The Unified Command Plan specifies the responsibilities of AFRICOM. If confirmed as the Commander of AFRICOM, I would ensure the accomplishment of those responsibilities. In my view, the most important requirement is to detect, deter and prevent attacks against the United States, its territories, possessions, and

bases and to employ appropriate force to defend the Nation should deterrence fail. AFRICOM's responsibilities also reflect a new and evolving focus on building partner operational and institutional capacity at the country and regional levels and supporting the efforts of other U.S. Government agencies in the area of responsibility. These activities are consistent with and seek to further the U.S. Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa, as released by the President in June 2012.

Question. What background and experience do you possess that you believe qualifies you to perform these duties?

Answer. In my 36 years of military service, I have served in numerous positions that prepared me for this command. For the greater part of my career, I have focused on the training and readiness of soldiers to build an effective team; preparing and leading soldiers for missions ranging from humanitarian assistance to combat operations. Leading soldiers has prepared me well to do the same for joint, multinational, and coalition forces. As the Commander of the International Security Assistance Force Joint Command in Afghanistan, I came to appreciate the values and challenges of training Afghan forces, working with 50 coalition countries, and numerous interagency, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental organizations. As Commander, Multinational Command Northwest-Iraq, I worked to increase the capacity of Iraqi security forces. At the same time ensuring our efforts were coordinated with numerous partner nations, interagency and intergovernmental agencies and nongovernmental organizations. If confirmed, I will continue this effort of partnership in AFRICOM.

Question. Do you believe that there are actions you need to take to enhance your ability to perform the duties of the Commander of AFRICOM?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will schedule a series of briefings with the AFRICOM staff, Intelligence Community, Department of State, National Security Staff, and other interagency partners to better understand the challenges, expand the breadth and depth of my knowledge, and prepare myself for this position.

Question. If confirmed, what duties and functions do you expect the Secretary of Defense would prescribe for you?

Answer. The specific responsibilities of AFRICOM are defined in the Unified Command Plan which is approved by the Secretary of Defense and the President. If confirmed, I would expect to have discussions with the Secretary of Defense to confirm priorities for the command and to focus my efforts on those areas that require immediate attention.

RELATIONSHIPS

Question. Section 162(b) of title 10, U.S.C., provides that the chain of command runs from the President to the Secretary of Defense and from the Secretary of Defense to the combatant commands. Other sections of law and traditional practice, however, establish important relationships outside the chain of command. Please describe your understanding of the relationship of the Commander, U.S. Africa Command to the following offices:

The Secretary of Defense.

Answer. Subject to direction from the President, the Commander of AFRICOM performs duties under the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense. In addition, the Commander of AFRICOM is responsible to the Secretary of Defense for the readiness of the command to carry out its mission.

Question. The Under Secretaries of Defense.

Answer. A direct command relationship between the Under Secretaries of Defense and the AFRICOM Commander does not exist. However, I anticipate that the AFRICOM Commander will regularly interact, coordinate, and exchange information with the Under Secretaries of Defense on issues relating to AFRICOM affairs. The commander should directly coordinate with the Under Secretaries of Defense on a regular basis.

Question. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs.

Answer. The Commander of AFRICOM coordinates and exchanges information with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs as needed to discuss international security strategy and policy as it relates to African nations. The Commander of AFRICOM also coordinates as required for issues related to security cooperation programs and foreign military sales.

Question. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities.

Answer. The Commander AFRICOM coordinates and exchanges information with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities as needed to discuss matters related to special operations, counterterrorism, civil affairs, and information operations. The AFRICOM

Commander also coordinates as required for capabilities development to support the accomplishment of AFRICOM operations.

Question. The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Answer. There is not a direct command relationship between the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the AFRICOM Commander. The Chairman functions under the authority, direction, and control of the National Command Authority. The Chairman will transmit communications between the National Command Authority and AFRICOM Commander as well as oversee the activities of the commander as directed by the Secretary of Defense. As the principal military advisor to the President, the National Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman is a key conduit between a combatant commander, interagency organizations, and the Service Chiefs.

The Vice Chairman serves on several councils and boards whose decisions affect AFRICOM including the Joint Requirements Oversight Council, the Defense Acquisition Board, the Defense Advisory Working Group, and the Senior Readiness Oversight Council. Interaction between the Commander of AFRICOM and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is important to ensure these boards and councils make informed choices on matters affecting the command.

The AFRICOM Commander will keep the Chairman and Vice Chairman informed on significant issues regarding the AFRICOM area of responsibility. The Commander will directly communicate with the Chairman and Vice Chairman on a regular basis.

Question. The Service Secretaries and Service Chiefs.

Answer. There is no direct command relationship between the Service Secretaries and Service Chiefs and the AFRICOM Commander. The Service Secretaries are responsible for all affairs of their respective Services including functions pertaining to the administration of and support for forces employed by AFRICOM. The Secretaries fulfill their responsibilities by exercising administrative control through the Service Component Commands assigned to AFRICOM. In this manner, the Secretary of the Army is the executive agent for AFRICOM Headquarters.

The Service Chiefs are responsible for ensuring the organization and readiness of each Service branch and for advising the President. The Service Chiefs are also members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and serve as advisers to the President, National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense. For matters affecting AFRICOM, I would anticipate regular communications between the Commander of AFRICOM and the Service Chiefs. The Commander, AFRICOM will rely on the Service Chiefs to provide properly trained and equipped forces to accomplish missions in the AFRICOM AOR.

Question. Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command.

Answer. The AFRICOM commander maintains a close relationship and communicates directly with the Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, on issues of mutual interest. As a subordinate command of AFRICOM, Special Operations Command Africa and its units deploy throughout Africa supporting the AFRICOM commander's theater security cooperation program, deliberate plans, and operational contingencies.

Question. The other combatant commanders.

Answer. Formal relationships between the AFRICOM commander and the other geographic and functional combatant commanders will derive from command authority established by title 10, U.S.C., section 164, and from the Secretary of Defense when such relationships are established by him during operational missions. Combatant commanders closely coordinate as necessary to accomplish all assigned missions. These relationships are critical to the execution of our National Military Strategy, and are characterized by mutual support, frequent contact, and productive exchanges of information on key issues.

Question. The respective U.S. Chiefs of Mission within the AFRICOM area of responsibility (AOR).

Answer. Each Ambassador serves the President directly as his personal representative for each country. If confirmed, I will ensure that all activities of the combatant command in each country are fully coordinated with the Chief of Mission, consistent with U.S. policy.

Question. The respective U.S. Senior Defense Officials/Defense Attachés (SDO/DATT)

Answer. There is a supervisory relationship between the AFRICOM commander and the U.S. Senior Defense Officials/Defense Attachés. The U.S. Senior Defense Officials/Defense Attachés are formally evaluated by the AFRICOM Commander. This relationship ensures the Senior Defense Officials/Defense Attachés maintain close coordination with AFRICOM on all matters involving U.S. military forces in the country. As the AFRICOM commander, I will maintain a close working relationship

with the U.S. Senior Defense Official in each country in order to coordinate activities between the command and the respective country's military.

MAJOR CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Question. If confirmed as the Commander of AFRICOM, you will be responsible for all military operations in that region. In your view, what are the major challenges and opportunities that would confront you if you are confirmed as the next Commander of AFRICOM?

Answer. The security environment of the African continent is dynamic and, if confirmed, I will seek to counter emerging threats while strengthening African nations' capabilities to effectively address their own security challenges. A major challenge is effectively countering violent extremist organizations, especially the growth of Mali as an al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb safe haven, Boko Haram in Nigeria, and al Shabaab in Somalia. In order to effectively do so, AFRICOM relies on current African Partners and seeks the opportunity to develop new partnerships. Currently, there is an opportunity to assist the Nations of Libya, South Sudan and Somalia as they continue to develop their armed forces and develop governmental structures.

Question. If confirmed, what plans do you have for addressing these challenges and opportunities?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support the administration's whole of government approach implementing the U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa. We will continue our commitment to protect our Nation from threats emanating from the African continent and strengthen the defense capabilities of our African partners and seek to develop new partnerships. If confirmed, I will review and assess AFRICOM's programs and strategy before taking any action.

U.S. OBJECTIVES IN AFRICA

Question. In his address in Ghana in July 2009, President Obama reaffirmed Africa's strategic importance to the United States and our national interests. He identified four priorities for the U.S. Government's engagement efforts: (1) supporting strong and sustainable democracies and good governance; (2) fostering sustained economic growth and development; (3) increasing access to quality health and education; and (4) helping to prevent, mitigate, and resolve armed conflict. In June 2012, the administration reaffirmed these priorities in the U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa, emphasizing the increasing capacity of African states to take the lead on security issues on the continent, but also noting the continuing challenges.

In your view, what is AFRICOM currently doing to advance each of these objectives?

Answer. AFRICOM's primary contribution is in the area of helping to prevent, mitigate, and resolve armed conflict. The command works with African partner nation's military forces to strengthen their defense capabilities so that they are better able to address security challenges. AFRICOM's operations, exercises and theater security cooperation engagements focus on advancing this priority. The command's efforts to support military professionalization and security sector reform efforts help to inculcate respect for the rule of law, human rights, and military subordination to civilian authority—all of which reinforce the appropriate role of a military in a democratic society. AFRICOM's efforts play a mostly indirect but important role in supporting democratic consolidation and preventing a return to conflict in fragile, post-conflict states. A stable and secure environment is a precursor to significant advances in the other three areas: supporting strong and sustainable democracies and good governance; fostering sustained economic growth and development; and increasing access to quality health and education.

COUNTERTERRORISM PRIORITIES

Question. Within the AFRICOM AOR, what do you consider the highest counterterrorism priorities?

Answer. I consider the threat from al Qaeda and its affiliates to be the highest counterterrorism priority. The three groups in the AFRICOM area of responsibility—al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, al Shabaab, and Boko Haram—each present a threat to western interests in Africa. While each has not specifically targeted the United States, they have successfully carried out attacks on western interests and engaged in kidnapping. If they deepen their collaboration, they have the potential to be an even larger threat.

Question. Given your current knowledge of AFRICOM programs, do you believe the Command's resources are aligned in a manner consistent with these counterterrorism priorities?

Answer. Yes, countering violent extremist groups is the command's first priority.

AL QAEDA IN THE LANDS OF THE ISLAMIC MAGHREB

Question. What is your assessment of the threat posed by al Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)?

Answer. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb has publicly stated the willingness to attack U.S. and Western interests. The group's ability to conduct large scale terror attacks is restricted by the paucity of U.S. and Western targets in North Africa and successful Algerian security service counterterrorism efforts. Al Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb's greatest threat to U.S. interests is likely a catalyst for instability in North Africa through weapons facilitation and training jihadists in northern Mali.

Since the group publicly announced merger with al Qaeda on 13 September 2006, al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb has been committed to attacks against Western targets. On 10 December 2006, it attacked a bus carrying expatriate employees of the Algerian-American oil company Brown Root and Condor. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb has continued to conduct bombings in Algeria, predominantly in the coastal region east of Algiers. On 24 January 2012, Algerian security services disrupted an al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb plot to attack U.S. or western ships with a small boat. The attack was disrupted in the early planning stages, highlighting host nation's successful efforts to contain and neutralize the group. On 19 January 2013, Algerian security forces were also successful in defeating the militants holding hostages at the Amenas gas plant facility.

Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb has openly operated in northern Mali since the collapse of government control in mid 2011. Credible reporting indicates al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb is training jihadist from across the region, to include members of other al Qaeda affiliates such as Nigeria's Boko Haram. Coupled with arms flowing from Qadhafi era Libyan stockpiles, al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb activities in northern Mali pose a long term threat to security and stability in the region.

Question. In your view, does AQIM pose a threat to the United States and/or western interests outside of its immediate operational area? What capacity has AQIM demonstrated to plan and carry out actions threatening U.S. interests?

Answer. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb likely does not pose a threat to U.S. and Western interests outside its immediate operating area of Algeria and northern Mali in the near term, but could in the future. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb maintains intent and aspirations and will continue to work on increasing their capability with the help of other al Qaeda affiliates.

Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb leadership has threatened Europe in numerous public statements since 2006, yet continues to focus the majority of its efforts in North Africa. Public statements frequently mention Spain and France, playing on North Africa's colonial history with Europe to garner support from the large North African Diaspora. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb maintains aspirations and intent to attack U.S. and Western interests, and in 2012, al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb leader made a public call to target U.S. Embassies after the attack on the U.S. mission in Benghazi, Libya. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb also poses a threat to Western aircraft flying in Algeria and Mali. The primary threat to westerners in North Africa remains hostage taking.

Question. In your view, what has been the impact of the recent expansion of AQIM's area of operations in northern Mali on the group's capacities and aims?

Answer. Due to the emergent safe haven in Northern Mali, al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb has increased its ability to consolidate its resources. The French-led intervention in Mali and the return of Malian Forces to population centers in northern Mali have impacted al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb's ability to operate unimpeded. However, al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb is able to coordinate training, distribute resources, and conduct attack planning, within its own ranks as well as with other foreign terrorist organizations. With this capability, al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb will, at the very least, aggressively pursue the expansion of its influence to neighboring countries, and might begin planning to conduct attacks against Europe or the homeland in accordance with general al Qaeda doctrine. French-led operations in Mali have disrupted and slowed al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, but there is still much work to be done.

Question. Does AQIM have the capacity to carry out attacks in Europe or on European commercial aircraft flying over Northwest Africa?

Answer. Prior to the start of the French-led intervention in Mali, al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb's growing safe haven and freedom of movement in northern Mali did afford greater opportunity to plan and execute operations. I believe it is criti-

cally important to continue to work with our allies and partners to address this threat.

Question. What is your understanding of the extent to which AQIM has benefitted from the flow of arms from Libyan stockpiles since mid-2011—either in terms of arming itself or profiting from regional arms sales?

Answer. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb took advantage of the readily available stocks of weapons and ammunition accessible in Libya to expand and strengthen its safe-haven in northern Mali and make itself a more formidable military threat, as well as to indirectly benefit financially through long established smuggling networks already under its control.

Almost immediately following the early 2011 outbreak of hostilities in Libya, al Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb began actively working to move weapons from Libya to its secure operating areas in northern Mali.

There is no indication yet that al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb is making significant profits from the sale of Libyan arms to third parties. However, the instability of increasing amounts of weapons available in the Sahel may lead to greater opportunities to conduct kidnaps for ransom, al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb's primary source of revenue in the Sahel.

Question. What is your assessment of the threat posed by the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa, an AQIM splinter faction that has recently emerged in Mali and controls significant territory there?

Answer. The Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa self-identifies as a terrorist organization, and has openly threatened Western interests in the region. It maintains a working relationship with the regional groups Ansar al-Dine and al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. The group has also called for local and foreign fighters to join together in opposing an international military intervention in northern Mali.

Question. If confirmed, what efforts, if any, would you undertake to prevent and/or counter the spread of AQIM operations, fundraising activities, and ideology in North and West Africa?

Answer. Preventing and countering the spread of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb takes a whole-of-government approach. Military efforts alone are only a part of the unified action required to achieve this whole-of-government approach and achieve lasting results. Currently, the Department of Defense (DOD) is executing a Global Campaign Plan for Counterterrorism that supports "... U.S. Government efforts to disrupt, degrade, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda, its Affiliates and Adherents and other terrorist organizations. ..." As part of unified action, and in concert with this global campaign plan, AFRICOM's theater strategy and theater campaign plan, with four subordinate campaign plans, orients on neutralizing al Qaeda networks in Africa. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb is a significant component of that network in North and West Africa and a major focus of AFRICOM's North-West Africa Campaign Plan.

Special Operations Command Africa is responsible for coordinating all activities to neutralize al Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb. Their operations include a counter-ideology component to deny al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb recruitment and retention efforts and interfere with their fundraising. These operations also include working closely with our critical partners to expand their counterterrorism capabilities, enabling them to carry the fight to al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb through "train and equip" missions which provide needed capabilities and tactics, techniques and procedures. AFRICOM is also working with regional organizations like the Economic Community of West African States to increase their capabilities and capacity to thwart al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and their affiliates and adherents.

Integral to all of this is AFRICOM's participation in the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership which is an interagency, Department of State, Department of Defense, and U.S. Agency for International Development, multi-year strategy aimed at defeating terrorist organizations and their ability to gain recruits.

If confirmed, I will assess the current operations and adjust as necessary in order to maintain consistent pressure on al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and affiliated terrorist groups while ensuring appropriate support for our critical partners.

Question. What risks, if any, do you see accompanying greater potential AFRICOM engagement in regional efforts to expand government control and dismantle AQIM?

Answer. With the increasing threat of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, I see a greater risk of regional instability if we do not engage aggressively. Our long-term fight against al Qaeda necessitates persistent engagement with our critical partners.

Strengthening the defense capabilities of African states and regional organizations is an essential element of the AFRICOM strategy and mission, and supports U.S.

foreign policy goals in Africa and the core principles of the U.S. National Strategy for Counterterrorism. Further, building partner capacity is a major component of the strategic and operational approaches within the Africa Command Theater Campaign Plan and subordinate campaign plans.

Recent events in North-West Africa—specifically the coup in Mali and loss of control of territory in the north—increased the threat of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb to our African partners in the region and, ultimately, to the United States. The French-led intervention in Mali and the creation of an African-led International Support Mission (AFISMA) to help restore Mali's territorial integrity are positive steps to restoring stability to Mali. Our current efforts to support the French and AFISMA with planning support, intelligence sharing, aerial refueling, and airlift for French and AFISMA forces which will play a critical role in assisting international efforts to restore stability.

I feel we face an increased threat to the United States if we do not engage with select critical partners.

Question. To what extent does AQIM pose a threat to stability in Morocco and Tunisia?

Answer. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb does not present an immediate threat to Morocco or Tunisia's stability, but that does not mean it or other extremists do not possess some capability or intention to conduct terror attacks in these countries. Within Morocco, the threat of an attack is degraded by the country's multi-dimensional counterterrorism strategy that includes regional and international security cooperation. However, these efforts do not completely negate the threat as evidenced by the 28 April 2011 Marrakesh bombing. Tunisia possesses a modest capacity to counterterrorism, but the concept is limited by perceptions of the former regime's heavy-handed and overly liberal use of previously established anti-terrorism legislation.

Question. Do you believe current legal authorities, including the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF), are sufficient to enable you to carry out counterterrorism operations and activities against AQIM at the level you believe to be necessary?

Answer. The current legal authorities, including the Authorization for Use of Military Force, to conduct counterterrorism operations and activities against al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb appear to be sufficient for operations in the AFRICOM area of responsibility. However, the Authorization for Use of Military Force is now 12 years old; and al Qaeda has dispersed and operates in areas far from the original battlefield. Given these evolutionary changes in the global security landscape, I intend to continuously review the current intelligence on al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and assess whether the existing authorities are sufficient to take all necessary actions.

SOMALIA AND AL SHABAB

Question. What is your assessment of the threat posed by al Shabab?

Answer. Al Shabaab is currently undergoing a significant transition in response to pressure from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), The Federal Government of Somalia, and allied Somali forces, but will remain a threat for the near to mid-term in Somalia and increasingly in East Africa. Unable to effectively combat pro-government forces' superior armor and weaponry, al-Shabaab has withdrawn to rural safe havens where it can evade enemy forces and project a largely asymmetric war, including improved improvised explosive and increased suicide bombings. No longer responsible for administering large population centers, al-Shabaab can refocus its somewhat debilitated revenue streams on more weapons, fighters, and attack planning. External attacks, such as those in Kenya, are likely to be a continued focus as these attacks are a key component to al-Shabaab's strategy to expel regional militaries from Somalia.

Question. In your view, does al Shabab pose a threat to the United States and/or western interests outside of its immediate operational area?

Answer. Al Shabaab is an al Qaeda affiliate and is likely to remain dedicated to the principles of al Qaeda, including executing attacks on the west. Al Shabaab maintains the near-term capability to threaten Western interests in Kenya as some elements in the large Somali populations throughout Kenya support al-Shabaab financially, ideologically, and logistically. As part of a highly mobile population in East Africa, these supporters also maintain the ability to move in and out of regional nations in support of attacks. Al Shabaab's foreign fighters remain the greatest threat to Western interests regionally and internationally.

Question. In the last year, the United Nations-supported African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and its regional partners have made substantial military

progress against al Shabaab. How would you evaluate the success of these efforts and the prospects for longer term stability in Somalia?

Answer. AMISOM has made progress in reducing the territory under al Shabaab control. The capital, Mogadishu and the port of Kismaayo, formerly a key hub for al Shabaab, are now under the Somali Government and African Union Mission in Somalia control. African Union Mission in Somalia successes have provided space for the political process to work. However, the Somali Government is in the earliest stages of development and there is still a long way to go to ensure long-term stability. It will take the combined efforts of the international community to assist the Somali Government and people recover from more than 10 years of conflict.

Question. The State Department has provided security assistance to Somalia's nascent national security forces for several years through the AU peacekeeping mission and through contractors. What role, if any, do you see for AFRICOM in that effort?

Answer. AFRICOM supports Department of State efforts in preparing Africa Union peacekeepers deploying to Somalia as part of African Union Mission in Somalia by providing Global Peace Operations Initiative funding to African Union Mission in Somalia staff, providing secure communications to Africa Union Mission in Somalia contributing nations, and providing logistics training, excess equipment, and mentor support to Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance training in the region. In addition, AFRICOM has supplied niche intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities, and counterterrorism training to deploying African Union Mission in Somalia units, and additional communications via Department of Defense 1206 funding mechanisms. This is a critical effort and AFRICOM will continue to work with Department of State to support African Union Mission in Somalia troop contributing nations. If directed, AFRICOM is prepared to expand support to nascent Somalia security forces.

Question. Do you believe current legal authorities, including the 2001 AUMF are sufficient to enable you to carry out counterterrorism operations and activities against al Shabaab at the level you believe to be necessary?

Answer. The current legal authorities, including the Authorization for Use of Military Force to conduct counterterrorism operations and activities against al Shabaab appear to be sufficient for operations in the AFRICOM area of responsibility. However, the African Union Mission in Somalia is now 12 years old and al Qaeda has dispersed and operates in areas far from the original battlefield. Given these evolutionary changes in the global security landscape, I intend to continuously review the current intelligence on al Shabaab and assess whether the existing authorities are sufficient to take all necessary actions.

Question. What role, if any, do you see for AFRICOM in preventing further deterioration of the humanitarian crisis in Somalia, which according to experts remains among the worst anywhere in the world?

Answer. The primary factor undermining humanitarian support in certain famine and food insecure regions in Somalia is a general lack of security in ungoverned spaces and/or al Shabaab resistance to relief operations. Department of Defense support to regional militaries serves to facilitate and improve aid delivery, preventing a worsening of the humanitarian crisis in Somalia. Regional partners such as Ethiopia and Kenya have demonstrated a commitment to supporting humanitarian assistance operations, which, as a secondary benefit, also enhances Somalia's internal security. AFRICOM is well positioned to support the broader U.S. Government's humanitarian assistance effort, and to assist our regional partners in key areas such as logistics, medical, communications, and planning.

NIGERIA AND BOCO HARAM

Question. In the past year and a half, Boko Haram's attacks in Nigeria have become increasingly sophisticated and deadly. There is concern that the group is expanding ties with other violent Islamist groups on the continent. In a hearing before the committee in March of this year, General Carter Ham, the current Commander of AFRICOM, stated that Boko Haram has emerged "as a threat to Western interests."

Do you agree with General Ham that Boko Haram represents a threat to Western interests?

Answer. Yes. Although Boko Haram's primary target set is largely domestic, the group demonstrated a willingness to specifically target western interests within Nigeria when it launched a car bomb attack against the United Nations' headquarters building in Abuja in August 2011. Additionally, Boko Haram was involved in the abduction and subsequent murders of two western citizens in May 2011 and possibly a German in January 2012. Boko Haram's growing ties to the al Qaeda network,

particularly al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, almost certainly exacerbates the threat Boko Haram poses to western interests.

Question. What is your assessment of Boko Haram's intentions to expand its scope of operations beyond domestic attacks? How do you assess its capability to do so?

Answer. Boko Haram's ties to external al Qaeda affiliates, particularly with al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, along with its larger regional presence and activities, will broaden its intentions to expand its scope of operations beyond domestic attacks. Boko Haram maintains presence beyond Nigeria in the neighboring countries Niger, Cameroon, and Chad. Additionally, there are indications that a sizable contingent of Boko Haram members is located in northern Mali, where they almost certainly augment al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb effort to secure its territorial gains and facilitate the establishment of an Islamic state. The group's demonstrated ability to conduct complex coordinated attacks with multiple vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices indicates Boko Haram already possesses the capability to conduct such an operation beyond domestic Nigerian targets.

Question. To what extent has Boko Haram benefitted from the flow of arms from Libyan stockpiles since mid-2011—either in terms of arming itself or profiting from regional arms sales?

Answer. Boko Haram has benefitted from the proliferation of weapons from Libya. Additionally, the large amount of weaponry al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb acquired from Libyan stockpiles, coupled with the relationship between Boko Haram and al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, almost certainly resulted in additional arms provided to Boko Haram. There has been no indication yet of Boko Haram profiting from the sale of weapons.

Question. What is your assessment of the Nigerian Government's efforts to eliminate Boko Haram?

Answer. Nigeria's security response to Boko Haram has had some isolated successes, and the Nigerian Government almost certainly has the will and means to continue security operations. The Nigerian Government is conducting a three-pronged response to Boko Haram including extensive security and intelligence operations, limited co-option efforts, and a fledgling public relations campaign. However, even if Nigeria manages to destroy all current Boko Haram factions and nodes, long-term stability in northern Nigeria is contingent on the Nigerian Government making a concerted political effort to resolve socio-economic issues like endemic poverty, poor economic prospects, political marginalization, and corruption.

Nigeria deployed a joint task force to counter Boko Haram in June 2011 and has steadily increased the size and scope of operations over the last year. Nigerian counterterrorism and counterinsurgency capabilities are still developing and the army and police often rely on heavy-handed static security operations. The army and police have been widely criticized for the excessive use of force which results in local resentment and undermines Nigeria's modest counterterrorism successes.

Last, while some in the government acknowledge that the use of excessive force by the Nigerian army and the continued socio-economic marginalization of northern Nigeria are alienating the population and helping Boko Haram. There has been little progress made in addressing alleged human rights abuses by the security services or underlying socio-economic issues in northern Nigeria.

The Nigerian Government has also indicated a willingness to pursue negotiations with Boko Haram. Boko Haram leadership has rejected negotiations, but more moderate fringe factions could still be co-opted.

Question. What is your assessment of Boko Haram's relationship with AQIM and Al Shabaab, respectively? Is there any evidence to suggest that Boko Haram and AQIM have developed operational links?

Answer. Boko Haram's connection to the broader al Qaeda movement is primarily through al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. There are few indications that Boko Haram has direct connections to al-Shabaab, and those that exist indicate al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb acts as an intermediary.

Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb appears to provide support to Boko Haram, evidenced especially in the manner of its resurgence after the Nigerian Government crackdown on the organization in 2009. Malian government sources show that for several years Boko Haram has sent operatives to train with al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb elements in the Sahel. Boko Haram has confined the majority of its attacks to northern Nigeria; however, the targeting of Western interests within Nigeria, such as the United Nations' headquarters in Abuja, may indicate al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb influence on Boko Haram's target selection. In addition, specific tactics used, most notably that of the suicide vehicle borne improvised explosive devices is almost certainly the influence of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb on Boko Haram operations.

Question. If confirmed, what role would you recommend for AFRICOM in building the capacity of the Nigerian security forces to respond to the Boko Haram threat?

Answer. Growing and deepening the relationship with the Nigerian Defense Staff is crucial to securing greater partnering opportunities. An approach to strengthen Nigerian security forces hinges on buy-in from senior defense leaders who are willing to address underlying issues to enhance leadership, anti-corruption, and equipment and supply procurement deficiencies. Nigeria is a prime example of where a whole-of-government approach is critical to address the complex Boko Haram threat which is exacerbated by underlying political, economic and social fractures.

Question. What risks, if any, do you see accompanying greater potential AFRICOM engagement in regional efforts to expand government control and dismantle Boko Haram?

Answer. My chief concern would be the risks associated with the performance of U.S. trained or equipped Nigerian defense forces continuing on a path of unprofessional activity—violence against civilians, illegal detainment, and ultimately, ineffective operations against Boko Haram.

Question. Do you believe current legal authorities, including the 2001 AUMF are sufficient to enable you to carry out counterterrorism operations and activities against Boko Haram at the level you believe to be necessary?

Answer. The current legal authorities, including the Authorization for Use of Military Force to conduct counterterrorism operations and activities against Boko Haram appear to be sufficient for operations in the AFRICOM area of responsibility. However, the Authorization for Use of Military Force has been in place for 12 years and al Qaeda has dispersed and operates in areas far from the original battlefield. Given the evolutionary changes in the global security landscape, I intend to continuously review the current intelligence on Boko Haram and assess whether the existing authorities are sufficient to take all necessary actions.

Question. Violent incidents, reportedly including indiscriminate killing of civilians, committed by Nigerian police and military services during operations intended to be against Boko Haram have risen significantly in recent months.

In your view, what measures should the United States incorporate into current and future military-to-military engagements to help stem these incidents?

Answer. Basic military professionalization underlies all engagement with Nigerian Defense Forces. This includes orchestration of a training program by AFRICOM and often delivered by U.S. military judge advocates through the Defense Institute for International Legal Studies. The AFRICOM effort is to advance the rule of law in African militaries, address human rights laws, respect for international law, and the law of armed conflict. Increasing the intensity and depth of this program using Defense Institute for International Legal Studies and similar training resources would be an important step toward stemming indiscriminate violence.

Professionalization of military forces is also a key reason for a preference toward use of U.S. uniformed trainers. The objective is to model the U.S. Army's soldier code of conduct and ethics and also to demonstrate a disciplined Noncommissioned Officer Corps.

MALI

Question. What is AFRICOM currently doing to respond to the situation in northern Mali, including the significant expansion of AQIM's operational presence there?

Answer. It is my understanding that AFRICOM is accelerating its cooperation with Mali's neighbors and continuing to explore ways to counter the threat posed by al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and its sympathizers while at the same time supporting international intervention efforts.

The situation in Mali's north is complicated by al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb's growing entrenchment into political and religious institutions, unaddressed grievances, vast ungoverned expanses, porous borders, and continuing spillover from the instability in Libya. A successful solution will require working closely with the international community—in particular Mali's neighbors and the Economic Community of West African States—to fully restore credible, elected political leadership in Mali while addressing the growing humanitarian crisis and strengthening the Malian security forces, ultimately restoring governance and security for the whole of Mali's territory.

Question. What is your understanding of the impact of the suspension of U.S. security assistance programs in Mali on AFRICOM's activities in Mali and the region?

Answer. Following the March coup, and pursuant to section 7008 of the Department of State Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriation Act, the United States suspended all security assistance to the Government of Mali on 19 April 2012. As a result, there currently is very little U.S. military engagement with

Mali. U.S. law dictates that U.S. security assistance to Mali remains on hold until elections are held and a democratically-elected government takes office. Once legal and policy requirements are met, military engagements can resume, AFRICOM would then consider growing military professionals through the International Military Education and Training program, Counterterrorism Fellowship Program and the Department of Defense Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome Prevention Program.

AFRICOM and its components currently maintain border-security, peacekeeping, and counter-terrorism training with most of Mali's neighbors until a direct solution in Mali becomes possible.

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you propose to reshape the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) and the Defense Department's complementary Operation Juniper Shield (formerly Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans Sahara) in light of regional security and governance setbacks stemming from the crisis in Mali?

Answer. The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership continues to be the U.S. Government's regional construct for counterterrorism partnership in the Trans-Sahel and we will continue to work closely with our interagency and regional partners to further the Partnership's objectives.

LIBYA

Question. The recent attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi which resulted in the death of four American citizens, including the American Ambassador, Christopher Stevens, demonstrated that post-conflict Libya is wrought with security challenges that have implications for the future of Libya and the region as a whole. Conversely, as Libya transitions to a representative government, the United States is presented with a historic opportunity to redefine U.S.-Libyan relations.

What role, if any, do you envision the United States playing in helping Libya build capable security institutions?

Answer. Department of Defense should have a supporting role to the broader U.S. Government and international community effort to establish security institutions in Libya. The Department of Defense sponsored Defense Institution Reform Initiative and Minister of Defense Advisor programs are approved for Libya. The Defense Institution Reform Initiative team made three visits to Libya. All support to the government of Libya will remain difficult until the security situation improves, and the U.S. Embassy, Tripoli can support temporary personnel.

Question. What is your assessment of the risks associated with the paramilitary forces that continue to have control of large swaths of Libya?

Answer. The hundreds of disparate militias still operating in Libya a year after the revolution represent a significant threat to the future stability of Libya. Their continued presence undermines the authority of the government and creates the potential for continued armed conflicts over territory, ethnic ideology, and revenge killings, as well as creating a more permissive environment for al Qaeda and other violent extremist organizations to operate. The post-Revolutionary Libyan Governments have attempted several programs to disarm, demobilize, and integrate these militias into military and security services, but the pace for progress remains slow. It is too early to tell if current Prime Minister Ali Zeidan's Government will continue to rely on loosely affiliated militias to provide security throughout Libya.

Question. What is your assessment of the impact of the proliferation of weaponry from Libyan military stockpiles into neighboring countries?

Answer. The availability of weapons from depots in Libya has invigorated illicit arms smuggling across Africa, particularly in the northwest. The Sahel ranks among the world's principal smuggling routes and is maintained by militants from local Tuareg tribes who assist in trafficking arms. After the collapse of the Qadhafi Government in Libya, hundreds of looted missiles, Kalashnikov rifles, rocket propelled grenades, and small weapons were sold throughout the Sahel. Additionally, experts estimate Libya had as many as 20,000 first-generation manportable air defense systems before the uprising, at least some of which are likely in the hands of terrorist organizations and militias seeking to incite further instability in Africa and the Middle East. Armed Tuaregs fighting for Qadhafi returned to homelands in Mali and Niger and smuggled weapons that fueled the Mali rebellion, further destabilizing the region and reinforcing a safe haven for al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.

Question. In your view, what role, if any, should AFRICOM play in assisting the Libyans with addressing the threat to stability posed by paramilitary forces?

Answer. AFRICOM should have a complimentary role in assisting Libya with their militia threat, supporting USAID as the lead U.S. agency for Disarmament,

Demobilization, and Reintegration. AFRICOM should support proposals for 1206 (counterterrorism) and 1207a (border security) to develop a core capacity for the Libyan military with personnel that have come under the government's control. AFRICOM should also support Foreign Military Sales cases using Libyan national funds to strengthen the military infrastructure.

Question. What do you view as the most significant challenges to the Libyan Government in building capable and sustainable security institutions?

Answer. The Libyan Government's most significant challenge is its lack of control of the militias operating in Libya. This condition is exacerbated by the proliferation of conventional weapons and unsecured borders. Together, this is leading to a rise of terrorist activity, particularly in Eastern Libya.

Question. In what ways can the United States be most effective in assisting the Libyan Government in building capable and sustainable security institutions?

Answer. The United States can be most effective by assisting the Libyan efforts at disarmament and working with the individual services in Libya to assist them with their development. AFRICOM has organized visits by the Libyan Air Force and Navy Chiefs of Staff. Increasing the International Military Education and Training to better facilitate Libyan participation in U.S. senior service schools, English language training, and other training in the United States will also be beneficial.

Question. With the experience of Benghazi as context, do you feel that the mechanisms for rapidly moving forces from EUCOM to respond to crises in AFRICOM are adequate? Are there improvements to this process that you recommend?

Answer. The newly assigned Commander's In-extremis Force, Army allocated Regionally Aligned Force, and the Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task postures AFRICOM to better plan for and respond to contingencies. We recommend the Commander's In-extremis Force be placed in Europe for a shorter response time to the continent. We will continue to closely coordinate with the Department of State and country Ambassadors to ensure an accurate understanding of U.S. Africa Command's response times and capabilities as we support activities on the African continent. Additionally, with tighter budgets and declining resources, we must look at more agile ways to share resources between forces assigned to Europe and Africa.

ALGERIA

Question. In your view, what is the appropriate role for Algeria to play in addressing transnational security threats in the Sahel, including AQIM? If confirmed, what steps would you take to encourage Algeria to play a more active and constructive role in addressing security threats emanating from northern Mali?

Answer. Algeria's military is the most capable of any country in north Africa. As such, I view Algeria as a regional leader, capable of coordinating the efforts of the Sahelian countries to address transnational security threats. Algeria shares our concerns with the situation in northern Mali. Their knowledge of conditions on the ground in northern Mali is invaluable to the United States. To ensure continued Algerian cooperation on northern Mali, any military solution must be United Nations authorized, internationally supported, and use African forces. If confirmed, I would continue to encourage Algerian regional leadership through regional exercise and conference participation, senior leadership engagement and high-level bilateral dialogues.

Question. What is your assessment of the operational and logistical capacities of the Algerian-led joint operational command structure for the Sahel, known as the CEMOC?

Answer. The Algeria-based Combined Operational General Staff Committee plays no significant role in regional counterterrorism activity and is unlikely to carry out counterterrorism military operations for the foreseeable future. Contributing Combined Operational General Staff Committee members possess varied operational and logistical capabilities, but the Combined Operational General Staff Committee organization lacks operational experience and has not demonstrated any logistical capacity since its 2010 inception. The Combined Operational General Staff Committee's one major accomplishment has been the creation of the Unity Fusion Liaison, located in Algiers, Algeria, which is a mechanism for sharing operational intelligence between the four member nations (Algeria, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger) as well as Burkina Faso, Libya, and Chad. Bilaterally, however, participating Combined Operational General Staff Committee countries have conducted joint training and localized operations.

Question. What is your assessment of the threat to regional stability posed by the ongoing military mutiny, known as the M23, in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)?

Answer. The March 23 mutiny—the armed group known as M23—in eastern DRC is destabilizing the entire Great Lakes region. Over the course of this crisis, we have been concerned by reports of enhanced external support to M23. We have strongly urged all neighboring governments to take all necessary measures to halt and prevent any and all support to M23 from their territory and we have underscored to Rwanda that any support to M23 must permanently end. Furthermore, the security forces focus on the March 23 Movement has allowed other armed groups in the region to expand, resulting in increased ethnic violence and attacks on civilians across eastern DRC. The humanitarian situation in eastern DRC has deteriorated, and we remain gravely concerned about the hundreds of thousands of people displaced by insecurity and violence in Kivus. Additionally, numerous medical aid organizations have removed most staff from the area due to unacceptable security risks. While the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo have been unable to end the M23 rebellion militarily, the Democratic Republic of Congo has engaged with M23 in discussions in Kampala, and we continue to urge the presidents and leadership of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda to continue their direct dialogue to address the root causes of instability. We support the United Nation's efforts to establish a Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework among the governments in the region.

Question. In your view, in what ways (if at all) have U.S. security sector reform efforts in DRC had a measurable impact on the operational and logistical capacity, degree of command and control, and transparent civilian oversight of the Congolese military?

Answer. Assisting DRC military has been a challenge. The desired end-state is for a disciplined, professional military that respects human rights, rule of law, and civilian authority. The United States provides DRC officers with training and assistance in leadership development, military justice, civil-military relations, and respect for human rights. The challenge is translating these efforts into long-term institutional capacity. Although progress is slow, there have been some improvements. Logistical capacity is one example: the U.S.-led Defense Institutional Reform Initiative complements European Union efforts to develop logistics doctrine by helping DRC military translate their doctrine into strategic and operational guidance.

True security sector reform in DRC will require full commitment by the government and a unified multilateral effort among the international community. A memorandum of understanding between the U.S. Government and the Government of the DRC on security force assistance is forthcoming. This document will establish ground rules for security assistance and provide a path for improved cooperation with measurable conditions.

Question. What is your assessment of the performance of the U.S.-trained Light Infantry Battalion (LIB, known as the 391st) in its two deployments to date (first in Dungu, for operations to counter the Lord's Resistance Army, and currently in Goma, for operations to counter the ongoing M23 rebellion)? What has been the impact of the LIB training program—which was carried out in 2010 and supported by AFRICOM advisors—on the overall capacity, control, and oversight of the Congolese forces? If confirmed, would you support additional U.S. operational and logistical training for the Congolese military?

Answer. The 391st Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) has been scrutinized because of its standing as a U.S. trained unit. There are, however, limited metrics to measure the battalion's combat effectiveness and performance in protecting civilians. During a 2012 assessment, AFRICOM's Counter-Lord's Resistance Army Control Element found that morale was high and the officers and enlisted soldiers appear motivated, organized and trained in small unit maneuver and tactics. While the unit appears tactically proficient, they have had limited engagements against Lord's Resistance Army and March 23 Movement targets. This prevents a full understanding of the combat effectiveness of the 391st LIB. It can be noted, however, that during a minor firefight with March 23 Movement, the 391st stood its ground.

The 391st LIB illustrates the larger institutional challenges within DRC's military and broader defense sector reform. While this unit is highly respected by senior military and government leaders within the DRC, it has not had a significant impact on the overall capacity, control and oversight of Congolese forces. The rebellion by the March 23 Movement underscores that the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo remains a fractured military with a profound need for national-level security sector reform. Broad security sector reform will require full commit-

ment by the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and a unified multilateral effort among the international community—a single U.S. trained battalion will not change the core institutional challenges within the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Question. If confirmed, what changes (if any) would you propose to U.S. security assistance for Rwanda in light of the Rwandan military's alleged role in supporting the M23 in contravention of United Nations sanctions?

Answer. Ensuring peace and security in Darfur, Sudan is a key U.S. policy priority. Rwanda supports this policy priority by providing 3,200 peacekeepers to the United Nations—African Union Mission in Darfur, and 850 peacekeepers to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. While we continue to support Rwanda's participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions in Africa, we recognize that the March 23 Movement would not be the threat it is today without external support including evidence of support from the Rwandan Government. As the United States has made very clear, Rwanda must permanently end all forms of support to Congolese armed groups. For these reasons, we also cut approximately \$200,000 of fiscal year 2012 Foreign Military Financing (FMF) to Rwanda, as required by law. The Department continues to closely monitor reports of external support and we will continue to respond appropriately.

Question. What is your assessment of the current operational capacity of Burundian troops serving in the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)? In your view, what has been the impact of U.S. military training for Burundian troops deploying under AMISOM on Burundi's internal stability and on regional stability in the Great Lakes?

Answer. The Burundian National Defense Forces operating as part of AMISOM are very good tactically at the lower level (squad-company) and have interacted well with the Uganda People's Defence Force in shared sectors. However, they lack staff planning ability at battalion and higher levels.

The training the United States has provided to the Burundians has helped to integrate their forces at the lower levels and unified their armed forces, which, as recently as 5 years ago, were still fighting remnants of a civil war. Burundi works with neighboring countries to improve security in border areas. They are increasingly concerned with instability in the Kivu area of Democratic Republic of the Congo and the resulting refugee flows. Their focus, however, remains on African Union Mission in Somalia and internal stability.

BUILDING PARTNER CAPACITY AND SECURITY ASSISTANCE

Question. In the past few years, Congress has provided DOD a number of temporary authorities to provide security assistance to partner nations, including the global train and equip authority ("section 1206"), Global Security Contingency Fund (GSCF), and the associated transitional authorities for East Africa within the GSCF statute.

What is your understanding of the purpose of the section 1206 global train and equip authority and GSCF?

Answer. Section 1206 since its inclusion in the 2006 National Defense Authorization Act has allowed AFRICOM to increase capability of our partners to conduct counterterrorism activities. AFRICOM has concentrated its efforts in the east and northwest areas where the greatest threat exists. The 1206 authority is more responsive than other security cooperation methods such as Foreign Military Financing and is a critical tool. All combatant commands must compete annually for funds under this program. This annual competition challenges a longer-term approach to program development for partner nations. While AFRICOM does not have U.S. Forces employed in stability operations, the counterterrorism aspects of 1206 have been heavily used in support of partner nations requirements against al Shabaab and al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb or to provide security in countries that may be threatened by them. Section 1206 is a particularly valued tool since it allows AFRICOM to select programs that best meet partners' needs. The dual-key nature of 1206, requiring Department of State and Department of Defense secretary approval, effectively supports interagency efforts to strengthen capacity building programs. However, there are inherent limitations of 1206 in terms of 1 year funding which makes it difficult to put together complex or sustained projects that are required for sustained engagement.

While 1206 specifically addresses counterterrorism, the GSCF is intended as an interagency approach to address broader issues. The GSCF is in its early stages of development, but should bring a responsive ability to address a broad range of security issues not limited just to counterterrorism. Funds to implement the authority must come from both Department of Defense (80 percent) and Department of State

(20 percent). Under the current authority which expires in 2015, once funds are placed in the Security Contingency Fund, they are available until expended. This enables planning a bit farther into the future. To date, however, it is authority without a corresponding appropriation. As the Security Contingency Fund process matures, I believe we will see a more coordinated effort between Department of Defense and Department of State in key partner nations.

Question. In your view, what should be our strategic objectives in building the capacities of partner nations in the AFRICOM AOR?

Answer. AFRICOM's capacity building efforts seek to provide partner nations with the capability to solve their own problems and directly further the U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa. When African nations work together to defeat terrorists like al Shabaab, threats to our homeland are decreased. When the United States is perceived as a positive influence in other regions, it assists our efforts across the board.

Building Partnership Capacity is the baseline to all of AFRICOM's strategic lines of effort in Africa. The intent is to enable African partners to develop the defense capabilities necessary for the command to achieve its objectives. It is preferable to avoid crises that may demand the introduction of U.S. Forces, therefore the Command strives to enable African partners to build stability, control borders and ungoverned terrain, defeat terrorist groups, and develop militaries that are professional and obey the rule of law.

An example of AFRICOM's partnership building engagement is the ongoing efforts with African partners that are deploying troops to various peacekeeping missions throughout the continent, including to the African Union Mission in Somalia. The Command has provided training and equipment that have proved to be instrumental in the success these forces have made in both maintaining stability and combating terrorist groups. The Command has also assisted Africans in developing rotary wing medical evacuation capabilities to be used in peacekeeping operations.

Other areas of focus are providing training and equipment for partners for the purpose of developing strong border controls to prevent trafficking of weapons and narcotics which can destabilize a country.

In the maritime domain, the Command has assisted regional organizations in developing agreements, operations, and training for maritime security, as well as developing courses for peacekeepers at select African Union regional peacekeeping training centers.

All of these efforts combine to develop capacities among African partners that allow Africans to solve many of their own security problems. This is cost effective, does not require U.S. Forces, and prevents conflict.

Question. The funding pool available for security assistance and other military-to-military engagement activities devoted to the AFRICOM AOR is extremely small and tends to be allocated to specific countries.

What is your understanding of the role AFRICOM plays in developing U.S. security assistance (e.g., section 1206, Foreign Military Financing, International Military Education and Training assistance, Combatant Commander Initiative Fund, et cetera. . .)?

Answer. AFRICOM provides input to all of the security assistance processes annually, based on Department of Defense guidance, AFRICOM strategy and theater campaign plan prioritization. The command submits proposals to take advantage of authorities such as 1206 and has successfully utilized the Combatant Commander Initiative Fund—specifically this year the Command was able to fund attendance of Libyan officers to U.S. schools. AFRICOM depends on its input to these programs to get its mission accomplished. Security Cooperation is the primary means to affect conditions on the continent.

DEFENSE STRATEGIC GUIDANCE

Question. The Defense Strategic Guidance, "Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for the 21st Century Defense", announced by President Obama on January 5, 2012, includes, among other things, the intention of the administration and the Pentagon to "rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region." In his associated remarks, Secretary Panetta explained that the "U.S. military will increase its institutional weight and focus on enhanced presence, power projection, and deterrence in Asia-Pacific."

What do you anticipate will be the impact on the operations and activities of AFRICOM?

Answer. The impact on the operations and activities of AFRICOM will be minimal. In fact, based on the interconnectivity between Africa and the Asia-Pacific region, AFRICOM's activities may become more important. The eastern portion of

AFRICOM's area of responsibility abuts the Indian Ocean, a centrally important component of the global commons, reflecting historic trade ties and encompassing sea lanes of communication that link Africa to the Middle East, Europe, and the rising powers of India and China in the Asia-Pacific region.

Several key strategic geographic points exist around the African continent that are essential to the flow of commerce. For example, Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti sits on the western side of the Bab el-Mandeb waterway from Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula. The waterway is only 20 miles across and must remain open to ensure the health of the global economic system. Other important choke points include the Mozambique Channel and the Cape of Good Hope.

Africa is a pivotal point to the Middle East and Asia-Pacific providing critical access to the Indian Ocean region and an overwatch position for Iran. It also serves as an essential platform supporting U.S. Central Command Counter-Violent Extremist Organization operations.

AFRICOM will continue to counter piracy threats emanating from Somalia in support of international efforts to promote a lawful maritime environment and global trade in the Indian Ocean region. The command will continue to strengthen the defense capabilities of African partners to solidify security gains in Somalia that underpin the development of effective governance, economic growth, and development.

DOD COUNTER-NARCOTICS ACTIVITIES

Question. DOD serves as the single lead agency for the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime foreign shipments of drugs flowing toward the United States. On an annual basis, DOD's counter-narcotics (CN) program expends approximately \$1.5 billion to support the Department's CN operations, including to build the capacity of U.S. Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies, and certain foreign governments, and provide intelligence support on CN-related matters and a variety of other unique enabling capabilities.

In your view, what is the appropriate role of DOD—and by extension AFRICOM—in counterdrug efforts?

Answer. In my opinion, AFRICOM's role in support of broader Department of Defense counternarcotics efforts should focus on three primary areas. First, capacity building efforts with partner nations on the African continent are critical to helping civilian law enforcement agencies, Gendarmes, and military organizations combat the growing menace of narcotics trafficking. Working hand in hand with partners in the Drug Enforcement Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, among others, the command is able to bring the full weight of U.S. experience from the decades-long domestic fight against narcotics to bear in helping to solve this problem in Africa through training, equipping and information sharing initiatives. Second, through Counterthreat Finance efforts, the command works with U.S. interagency partners to track down and ultimately seize illicit proceeds that go directly to Drug Trafficking Organizations. Third, statutory requirement to serve as the lead U.S. agency for Detection and Monitoring allow the command to bring our tremendous technology assets to bear, and a robust cadre of intelligence analysts can lend great value to the International Community in analyzing and dismantling drug trafficking organizations.

Question. In your view, what should be the role of the United States in countering the flow of narcotics to nations other than the United States?

Answer. The United States has tremendous equities in helping to stem the worldwide manufacturing and distribution of illicit drugs, regardless of whether these drugs end up in the United States. In places like West Africa, drug trafficking and manufacturing is having a tremendous destabilizing effect through corruption of often senior government officials, increased rates of drug usage (and corresponding increases to rates of Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome among Africans, and proceeds of illicit trafficking going towards organizations operating on the continent and internationally. Working with international partners through such organizations as the European Union and the Economic Community of West Africa States, AFRICOM seeks to integrate their capacity building efforts with those who share common interests in seeing African partners increase their ability to effectively address this problem. These integration efforts will also allow all international parties to better utilize funding for counter-narcotic efforts.

Question. Given that the vast majority of illegal drugs arriving in Africa are not destined for the United States, should DOD invest resources in countering the flow of illegal drugs to or through Africa?

Answer. It is my opinion that current Department of Defense resources being invested in counternarcotics efforts are funds well spent in spite of the fact that many of the drugs are not intended for the United States. The destabilizing influence of narcotics trafficking, coupled with the financial benefits realized by terrorist organizations operating in Africa, make a compelling case for overall U.S. Government involvement in solving this problem. The cost funding an effective counternarcotics program in an African partner nation is far less than the cost of dealing with the consequences of not addressing this problem which could result in increased regional instability. Additionally, the capacity building and resources provided to African partners under the counternarcotics program are also effective in helping to improve border control and reduce the trafficking of other illicit goods like weapons and persons.

Question. Illicit trafficking is a growing concern in Africa. West Africa is a node for Latin American drugs transiting to their primary destination in European markets. In addition, drugs and their precursors originating on other continents are transshipped through Africa. Despite the increase in illicit trafficking across the African continent, AFRICOM has secured a limited amount of funding for its counternarcotics efforts.

What is your assessment of the current AFRICOM counternarcotics program?

Answer. It is my understanding that the AFRICOM counternarcotics program has improved the capacity of African nations to more effectively address their challenges in this area. To date, the program's efforts have primarily been focused in West Africa, working with countries such as Ghana, Senegal, and Cape Verde. The command's capacity building efforts have had a direct, positive impact on these countries' capabilities, as evidenced by the October 2011 seizure in Cape Verde of 1.5 tons of cocaine, which was directly supported by the Counter Narcotics-funded Cape Verde Maritime Operations Center. Additionally, the Counter Narcotics program has taken the lead in coordination with the Department of State in developing the West African Cooperative Security Initiative, a whole-of-government approach that better integrates all U.S. Government counternarcotics efforts in this important region.

Question. Based on your review of the current program, if confirmed, what changes, if any, are you interested in exploring?

Answer. If confirmed, I will assess the current program before recommending changes. The Counter Narcotics program has been effective in establishing a presence and making a difference in West Africa, however, this is not the only region of Africa with a narcotics trafficking problem. East Africa, particularly Kenya and Tanzania, is experiencing an increase in heroin trafficking across the Indian Ocean from Afghanistan and Pakistan destined for U.S. and European markets. Additionally, in the Sahel region of North Africa, cocaine and hashish trafficking is being facilitated by, and directly benefitting, organizations like al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb leading to increased regional instability.

LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY

Question. Despite pressure by the Ugandan People's Defense Forces (UPDF) and efforts by U.S. Special Operations personnel to support them, elements of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)—including Joseph Kony—continue to operate and commit atrocities against civilian populations in the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan. Some observers have identified operational concerns with this mission, including that: (1) supported forces are trying to find an elusive foe in an area roughly the size of California, much of which is covered in thick jungle; (2) technical support to U.S. Forces and their UPDF partners from the defense and intelligence community continues to be inadequate; and (3) limitations continue to be placed on the ability of U.S. Special Operations personnel to accompany UPDF partners outside of main basing locations, thereby limiting the level of direct support they can provide.

In your view, what is the objective of Operation Observant Compass?

Answer. The Governments of Uganda, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Republic of South Sudan, in collaboration with the African Union, continue to dedicate material and human resources to bring an end to the threat posed by the LRA. They are leading this effort, and the United States is committed to supporting this regional effort. Through our engagement, we are strengthening partnerships and regional cooperation.

The United States is providing cross-cutting support to advance four objectives: (1) the increased protection of civilians; (2) the apprehension or removal from the battlefield of Joseph Kony and senior LRA commanders; (3) the promotion of defec-

tions and support for the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of LRA fighters; and (4) the continued humanitarian relief of affected communities.

Question. In your view, what is the appropriate level of priority to be accorded to AFRICOM's efforts to counter the Lord's Resistance Army in central Africa, compared to other AFRICOM objectives?

Answer. The command's number one priority is East Africa with particular focus on al Shabaab and al Qaeda networks. This is followed by violent extremist and al Qaeda in North and West Africa and the Islamic Maghreb. AFRICOM's third priority is counter-LRA operations.

Question. If confirmed, will you promptly review and report back to the committee on your assessment of this mission?

Answer. This deployment is not open-ended and we will continue to regularly assess and review whether we are making sufficient progress. I commit to reporting to the Committee on this deployment at any time you request.

Question. Each of the countries currently affected by the LRA face other security threats viewed by their governments as more serious to their national well-being and, as a result, these countries place a lower priority on addressing the LRA problem.

If confirmed, how would you seek to strengthen the impact of Operation Observant Compass while recognizing those competing national priorities of our partners in the counter-LRA fight?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to work to maximize the success of Operation Observant Compass by seeking, within the parameters of the current mission, to deepen cooperation with Ugandan and other regional forces and increase intelligence that is appropriate to the operating environment.

SUPPORT TO UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS IN AFRICA

Question. In testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on July 29, 2009, Ambassador Susan Rice, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations (U.N.), stated that the United States "is willing to consider directly contributing more military observers, military staff officers, civilian police, and other civilian personnel—including more women I should note—to U.N. peacekeeping operations." Admiral Mullen has said he views "U.N. peacekeeping operations to be extremely important and cost effective in comparison to unilateral operations" and that "the success of these operations is very much in our national interest."

In your view, should the United States increase the number of personnel it contributes in the form of staff positions and military observers to U.N. peacekeeping missions and other international peace operations?

Answer. I agree with Ambassador Rice and Admiral Mullen and support an increase in contributions to U.N. peacekeeping operations. United Nations peacekeeping operations play a vital role in advancing the goal of improved peace, stability and security throughout Africa. Peacekeeping operations support United Nations objectives, while they also help to advance U.S. security interests. The U.S. role in United Nations peacekeeping operations, whether in the form of civilian police, staff officers, or military observers, may offer the United States a cost-effective way to continue to advance our mission and interests.

Question. In your view, what are the advantages and disadvantages of contributing additional military personnel to U.N. operations in the form of staff positions and military observers' positions?

Answer. In considering increasing U.S. personnel contributions to U.N. peacekeeping operations, it is important to balance the advantages and disadvantages that accompany any decision to deploy American military personnel. As Admiral Mullen described, United Nations-led peacekeeping operations can be cost effective, especially in comparison to unilateral operations. For the majority of these operations, sharing the manpower and financial burden among donor organizations and countries allows the international community to do more with less. U.S. personnel support to U.N. operations offers the United States the unique opportunity to build relationships and trust that could be of future benefit. When U.S. military personnel work in partnership with other U.N. members' military personnel, they build long-lasting relationships centered on trust and a sense of shared purpose, while gaining invaluable cultural, regional, and international experience which helps to further our national interests.

Careful thought and planning must accompany any decision to establish or increase the U.S. participation in U.N. peacekeeping operations. It is vital that we understand the security risks to our troops and personnel, while we also have a complete understanding of how U.S. personnel will operate within the U.N. mission. The posting of U.S. personnel to U.N. missions and operations always require a

clearly defined chain of command in order to mitigate any potential problems or concerns. Any increase in U.S. support for U.N. operations will necessarily incur a personnel cost and commitment that must be understood, accepted, planned for, and managed. Finally, and most importantly, significantly increasing the U.S. presence, or in some cases even creating a U.S. presence for small U.N. operations, carries the risk of overshadowing other participating nations.

NATIONAL STRATEGY TO COMBAT TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

Question. Criminal networks are not only expanding their operations, but they are also diversifying their activities, resulting in a convergence of transnational threats that has evolved to become more complex, volatile, and destabilizing. The Director of National Intelligence recently described transnational organized crime as “an abiding threat to U.S. economic and national security interests,” and stated that “rising drug violence and corruption are undermining stability and the rule of law in some countries” in the Western Hemisphere. In July 2011, the President released his Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime: Addressing Converging Threats to National Security. One of the priority action areas designated in the strategy is “enhancing Department of Defense support to U.S. law enforcement.”

What is your understanding of the President’s strategy to combat transnational criminal organizations?

Answer. The Department of Defense plays an important supporting role in the implementation of the President’s strategy, which declares that transnational organized crime is a threat to national and international security. The strategy provides a valuable framework from which AFRICOM can address this complex problem set, in partnership with other U.S. Government agencies and foreign partners. Illicit drug trafficking is but one facet of an interconnected transnational threat that is directly destabilizing many countries in Africa. As part of a whole-of-government approach to combating transnational organized crime, the Department of Defense can bring to bear unique authorities and capabilities to augment those of our law enforcement, intelligence, and foreign partners so we address the threats transnational organized crime pose in a coordinated manner.

Question. What is your assessment of the threat to the United States posed by transnational organized crime operating in the AFRICOM AOR?

Answer. Transnational organized crime in the AFRICOM area of operations threatens U.S. interests by taking advantage of failed states and contested spaces, forging alliances with corrupt government officials and some foreign intelligence services, destabilizing political, financial, and security institutions in fragile states, undermining competition in world strategic markets, using cyber technologies and other methods to perpetrate sophisticated frauds, creating the potential for the transfer of weapons of mass destruction to terrorists, and expanding narcotics, weapons, and human trafficking networks. Terrorists and insurgents are increasingly turning to criminal networks to generate funding and acquire logistical support, amplifying the threat to U.S. interests.

Question. What role does AFRICOM play in combating transnational organized crime and in training and equipping partner security forces that have been tasked with combating it?

Answer. AFRICOM conducts a number of programs that directly support the President’s transnational organized crime strategy and Department of Defense guidance that addresses transnational organized crime. In addition to the command’s Counternarcotics and Law Enforcement Assistance program, there are a variety of security cooperation programs that fund military-to-military capacity building and operations that enable partner nations to more effectively deal with security threats directly relating to transnational organized crime within their borders. The Command’s newly-established Counterthreat Finance program is another important tool that allows the command to go after financial proceeds from these illicit activities.

COUNTERTHREAT FINANCE

Question. A number of officials in DOD and the Intelligence Community have called for investing additional resources in identifying and tracking the flow of money associated with terrorist networks and illicit trafficking.

What are your views on the role of DOD in counterthreat finance activities?

Answer. The Department of Defense is not and should not be the lead in this effort. Department of Defense does have unique capabilities and capacities that can be brought to bear to augment the efforts of the broader interagency community.

Question. What do you believe is the appropriate role, if any, of AFRICOM in supporting counterthreat finance activities?

Answer. The Department of Defense in general, and AFRICOM specifically, routinely contribute to threat finance activities with intelligence analysis to identify critical network vulnerabilities, providing strategic and operational planning expertise and organizing and executing engagement activities to help shape the environment. Countering threat finance activities supports efforts to counter violent extremists, drug traffickers and other illicit and destabilizing activities. Additionally, the Kingpin Act has proven to be an effective tool for the command to use to go after the highest-level drug traffickers through direct financial sanctions.

AFRICOM'S MILITARY SERVICE COMPONENT COMMANDS

Question. AFRICOM does not have any assigned forces and—as a result—is required to compete for forces within the global request for forces process. Given the Department's focus on the greater Middle East and Asia-Pacific, do you believe the AFRICOM Commander will be able to secure the necessary personnel to accomplish its partnering and engagement mission within its AOR? If not, how would you assess the risk to U.S. strategic interests in the region?

Answer. If confirmed, I plan to assess the requirements AFRICOM currently fulfills regarding partnering and engagement missions and report those findings back to this committee in a timely manner.

However, to my understanding, the command has adequate access to resources to accomplish its partnering and engagement missions. AFRICOM's access to rotationally allocated resources has increased over the past 2 years through efforts such as the allocation of a Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force in fiscal year 2012 and the allocation of a U.S. Army Regionally Aligned Force in fiscal year 2013. These assets provide much needed flexibility to respond to opportunities for engagement that arise on the continent. For example, the Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force has filled a key role in our support to the African Union Mission in Somalia by providing a 10-week training course for deploying African troops. This engineering focused course teaches deploying troops valuable route clearing techniques against Improvised Explosive Devices, increasing survivability of deployed troops and reducing the threat to civilian populations. The efforts of the Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force, coupled with a wide variety of other U.S. Government programs, are helping Africa Union Mission in Somalia forces to make a positive difference.

The threat to U.S. strategic interests including the global economic system and American citizens at home and abroad will continue to increase if the partnership and engagement missions are curtailed or reduced. There are many opportunities to partner with stable African partners and to develop partnerships with newly emerging governments. As opportunities arise, other entities see opportunities to capitalize on ungoverned and ungoverned spaces on the continent. The attack on the U.S. Embassy in Benghazi and the subsequent unrest in many areas across the continent in the days that followed are illustrative of the impact these threats can have if partners are not capable of establishing and maintaining a secure environment for their citizens.

REGIONAL ALIGNMENT AND ROTATIONAL DEPLOYMENTS OF ARMY BRIGADES

Question. The Army plans to align general purpose combat brigades with regional combatant commands, including AFRICOM, to support theater engagement and security force assistance missions and to make those forces, and other supporting units, available on a rotational basis for deployment to those regions for training and exercises.

What is your understanding and assessment of the Army's capability and capacity to align combat brigades or other units with regional combatant commands?

Answer. The Army is in the process of developing its Regionally Aligned Force concept and is conducting a "proof of principle" with a brigade combat team aligned to AFRICOM in fiscal year 2013. The Army's objective is to enhance its support of combatant commanders. Regionally Aligned Force brigades receive training in culture, geography, language, and gain an understanding of the militaries they will engage during their mission alignment.

Question. What are your views, if any, on the use of general purpose forces for missions providing security force assistance to other nations' militaries?

Answer. Iraq and Afghanistan have proven that general purpose forces are fully capable of providing significant security force assistance to partner nations. As we reduce the rotational requirement to combat areas we can use these forces to great effect in Africa. General Purpose Forces will have to be fully flexible to do their primary mission and to work in the area of security cooperation and security force assistance.

Question. In your view, how should, if at all, a unit's regional alignment determine the assignment of personnel, selection of unit commanders, priority for cultural and language training compared to core combat training, and identification and acquisition of special equipment?

Answer. Regionally aligned forces units will be trained to conduct the full range of military operations, but will also receive training in culture, geography, language, and gain an understanding of the militaries they will engage during their mission alignment. The current Army Brigade Combat Team structure will contain most of the skill sets required for training and equipping missions on the African continent. Regionally aligned forces units will be able to "reach-back" into Division and Corps assets in the United States for more specialized skills.

Question. If confirmed, how would you propose to implement the use of regionally aligned forces in support of your theater assistance and engagement strategies?

Answer. The Department of the Army has significant authorities in which they can employ regionally aligned forces in support of geographic combatant commanders. Regionally aligned forces can be employed for Theater Security Cooperation activities, operational planning, inspections, coordination visits, and the conduct of exercises. If confirmed, I would find opportunities across the continent and within planning efforts to incorporate the expanded capabilities and capacity of the regionally aligned forces within these authorities.

Question. In your view, how should funding responsibility be consolidated or distributed between the Military Departments and the combatant commands for training and employment of regionally aligned forces?

Answer. Exercise and security cooperation activities funding is separate from service funds. Services exist to provide trained and ready forces. The regionally aligned forces should be no different. For the combatant commands, it will be necessary to include costs of using the regionally aligned force units in security cooperation proposals utilizing authorities like 1206 (Counterterrorism) and 1207 (Security and Stabilization).

Question. In your view, is it feasible and suitable to satisfy theater engagement and assistance strategies completely with rotational forces? If not, why not?

Answer. AFRICOM has successfully conducted operations, exercises and activities since its inception without permanently assigned forces. Like other commands, it plans and requests forces through the Global Force Management process.

Question. What is your understanding and assessment of the performance criteria and metrics that are or will be used to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of combatant command theater engagement strategies and, if confirmed, how will you integrate the use of regionally aligned Army brigades or other units into the evaluation system?

Answer. Over the last 4 years, AFRICOM has developed a comprehensive integrated assessment process linking all theater, regional and contingency plans—including all operations, exercises and security cooperation activities. The Command measures progress in achieving objectives and effects using a combination of indicators from multiple sources: the Department of Defense, other U.S. Government agencies, and numerous open-source international agencies—such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the African Union. The Command also relies on the Department of State to provide polling data from African citizens to add depth and breadth to the results. The Command uses correlation analysis of U.S. activities and resources with progress in the overall environment to shape and influence the planning and scheduling of future engagement activities. I look forward to continuing the best assessment practices at AFRICOM, and ensuring that future Command-wide assessments support decisionmaking both at the Command and throughout the Department of Defense.

GLOBAL PEACE OPERATION INITIATIVE

Question. In 2005, the United States along with our partners in the G-8 launched the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) to train peacekeepers. This program is run by the Department of State's Bureau of African Affairs. DOD has provided varying degrees of personnel support since the program's inception. A number of national militaries in the AFRICOM AOR have benefitted from this program and have provided peacekeeping troops to multilateral peacekeeping operations around the globe.

What is your understanding of the GPOI program?

Answer. Global Peace Operations Initiative is intended to address capacity gaps in forces supporting peacekeeping operations. Since its inception in 2004, the program's goal is primarily to train and deploy peacekeepers. The program has shifted focus to help peacekeeping contributing countries train and deploy themselves. The

program focuses its effort in Africa, as it is the stage for several of the largest peacekeeping operations.

Question. Would you support or oppose AFRICOM's continued involvement in the program?

Answer. Based on my current understanding, I would support increased involvement in the Global Peace Operations Initiative. AFRICOM provides resources to Global Peace Operations Initiative to develop human capital and critical enablers to support United Nations/African Union peacekeeping. In the future, with additional funding, AFRICOM could increase support to build, planning capability, intelligence support, logistics capacity, skills training, peacekeeping staffs, and other efforts critical to the success of peacekeeping operations.

Question. If confirmed, will you advocate for AFRICOM to play a more direct role in providing U.S. military personnel (vice private contractors) for the training missions conducted under GPOI?

Answer. Yes. To the extent military personnel are available. Integrating uniformed trainers provides a significant cost savings and improvement to the Global Peace Operations Initiative program while supporting Department of Defense and Department of State objectives to build the capacity of our partners. Initially I would support a hybrid contractor-military peacekeeping training model led by the State Department, coordinated with our country teams, and supported with military trainers, and transition to full uniformed support of Global Peace Operations Initiative in the future.

MASS ATROCITIES PREVENTION

Question. President Obama identified the prevention of mass atrocities and genocide as a core U.S. national security interest, as well as a core moral interest, in August 2011 under Presidential Study Directive 10.

Among interagency partners, what is AFRICOM's role in addressing atrocity threats, and what tools does AFRICOM have for preventing or responding to atrocities in its AOR?

Answer. AFRICOM is committed to preventing mass atrocities. General Ham highlighted the importance of this to the command by including building the capacity of African partners to prevent and protect their populations from mass atrocities in his Commander's Intent. AFRICOM participates in and is a leader within the Mass Atrocities Prevention Response Options development construct within Department of Defense. The staff includes Mass Atrocity Prevention and Response planning into planning activities and includes such items as respect for the rule of law, submission to civil authority, and adherence to human rights norms into military-to-military engagements. This ultimately addresses the root causes of mass atrocities.

Question. Has AFRICOM developed planning processes toward this effort so that it will be able to respond quickly in emergency situations? In your assessment, what country or countries are the most at risk for mass atrocities in Africa?

Answer. AFRICOM plans for a range of contingencies in support of U.S. national security policy and to prepare for possible crisis response scenarios. AFRICOM also pursues ongoing efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, South Sudan, and Central African Republic to prevent Mass Atrocities. In Liberia, the command is committed to building the Liberia Security Sector to prevent a repeat of their disastrous recent history.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS AUTHORITIES

Question. It has been reported that Admiral McRaven, Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, is seeking changes to the Unified Command Plan (UCP) that he believes would allow SOCOM to better support the requirements of the Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOC). Reportedly, such changes would give the Commander of SOCOM combatant command authority over the TSOCs—including responsibilities for resourcing—and provide for more rapid deployment of Special Operations Forces to and between geographic combatant commands without the requirement for approval by the Secretary of Defense in every case. Operational control of deployed Special Operations Forces would reportedly remain with the respective geographic combatant commander.

Some have expressed concern that such changes could raise problems related to civilian control of the military, infringe upon the traditional authorities of the geographic combatant commanders, and make it more difficult for ambassadors and geographic combatant commanders to know what military personnel are coming into their areas of responsibility and what they are doing while they are there.

Please provide your assessment of whether such UCP changes would be appropriate and can be made without conflicting with civilian control of the military, infringing upon authorities provided to the geographic combatant commanders, or raising concerns with the Department of State.

Answer. This is a topic which will require further study. If confirmed, I will review Admiral McRaven's recommended changes to the Unified Command Plan and provide an assessment back to this committee in a timely manner.

However, from my experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq, it is critical that Special Operations Forces are fully integrated with conventional forces. This integration provides the commanders and forces a common operational picture, allows for a more proactive and responsive decisionmaking process, and access to shared resources.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

Question. As forces have been reduced in Iraq and Afghanistan, there is an expectation that additional Special Operations Forces may be available for missions in other combatant commands, including AFRICOM, which have had only a small presence of such forces in recent years.

What special operations capabilities are in highest demand by AFRICOM?

Answer. Given the complex strategic environment in Africa and the need for persistent, distributed, low visibility and small footprint operations, additional Special Operation Forces specifically organized, trained, and equipped to operate in sensitive environments are required. Special Operations Forces capabilities in highest demand include the following: (1) experienced special operations forces ground operators to build and maintain partner force counterterrorism capacity and enable their operations; (2) Special Operations Forces focused on enhancing partner nation non-lethal capabilities (e.g., Civil Affairs, Military Information Support Operation) to shape the information environment and create good will; (3) Special Operations Forces intelligence personnel and equipment (e.g., analysts, collectors, associated enablers) to better illuminate the threat; and (4) Special Operations Forces non-standard, medium and vertical airlift (i.e., low signature, non-standard aviation, MC-130H, and MC-130P) to provide low signature movement across the continent, transport and resupply a crisis response force and extend the range of vertical lift platforms. Non Special Operations Forces assets required includes Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance and Personnel Recovery/Casualty Evacuation rotary wing with associated enablers.

Question. Which countries in the AFRICOM AOR do you believe have the greatest need for increased engagement with U.S. Special Operations Forces?

Answer. To achieve a Global Special Operations Forces Network, Special Operations Command AFRICA requires greater access and engagements throughout Africa. In order to optimize effectiveness and strengthen our African partners' counterterrorism/counter Violent Extremist Organization capabilities necessitates greater engagements with the following key countries: Libya, Niger, Tunisia, Algeria, Mauritania, Nigeria, Mali, Cameroon, South Sudan, and Kenya. Greater collaboration and engagements within the aforementioned countries greatly furthers the U.S. Government counterterrorism/counterviolent extremist organizations efforts against the growing and interconnected al Qaeda threat throughout Northwest Africa and collaborative actions against al Shabaab within East Africa.

In support of ongoing regional Counter-Lord's Resistance Army operations, U.S. Special Operations Forces are advising and assisting partner nation forces from Uganda, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Republic of South Sudan, in addition to a number of United Nations missions in the region, to find and remove Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army as a destabilizing force in the region.

While U.S. Special Operations Forces continues to build capacity in Counter-Lord's Resistance Army partner nation forces and has begun to assist the nascent African Union Regional Task Force, longer-term development of these forces may require an integrated Special Operations and Conventional Forces approach to mature the Africa Union Regional Task Forces as an institution and increase capacity of individual partner nation forces.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS PERSONNEL IN EMBASSIES

Question. U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) deploys personnel to work with country teams in a number of high priority countries where the United States is not engaged in direct action operations, but rather trying to train host nation security forces. Their mission is to support the priorities of the Ambassador and the combatant commander's theater campaign plan. At times, Ambassadors have com-

plained that they have not been adequately informed of activities by special operations forces in their country.

If confirmed, what do you intend to do to make sure the goals of special operations personnel deployed to these countries are aligned closely to those of the Ambassadors with whom they are working?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure the activities of special operations personnel, as well as all personnel, are coordinated with the embassy Chief of Mission. AFRICOM currently conducts this coordination by requiring Chief of Mission concurrence on operations, exercises and engagement activities.

MARINE SECURITY GUARDS IN EMBASSIES

Question. Due to the attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya, which resulted in the death of a U.S. ambassador and three other Americans, many are conveying concern about the safety of U.S. diplomatic personnel around the world.

Do you share this concern?

Answer. Yes. The Marine Corps has a longstanding relationship with the Department of State to provide internal security at diplomatic posts. The Marine Security Guard Detachment Commander, acting under operational supervision of the Regional Security Officer, is tasked with providing internal security functions to prevent the compromise of classified information and equipment vital to the national security of the United States. A secondary mission of Marine Security Guard is to provide protection for U.S. citizens and U.S. Government property located within diplomatic premises. Under certain emergency situations they will provide special protective services to the Chief of Mission or Principal Officer. These protocols have proven successful for the past several decades, and provide flexibility to Regional Security Officers for the employment of Marine Security Guards upon diplomatic posts.

Question. The Marine Security Guard Program was established in 1946, and its mission, to provide internal security at designated embassies of classified information and equipment, remains unchanged to this day.

In light of increasing threats to U.S. diplomatic personnel by terrorists throughout the world, do you believe it is time to re-examine the Program's mission and protocols?

Answer. I believe the Marine Security Guard Program, as defined under existing protocols between the Marine Corps and Department of State, functions well and meets the needs of our diplomatic missions around the world. However, based on changing security dynamics we are in the process of taking a look at what changes to the program might be necessary. I fully appreciate the importance of this mission and understand it is important to work closely with the Department of State to ensure our Marine Security Guard organization, mission and security protocols are responsive to their needs.

Question. If so, should it be broadened to provide additional protection to U.S. diplomatic personnel?

Answer. At this time, I don't believe the program should be broadened to provide additional protection to U.S. diplomatic personnel. However, the Marine Corps has a long history of working with the State Department, and should adjustments be required, will work eagerly to ensure the internal security functions aboard diplomatic premises meet the standards required.

Question. In your opinion, what additional steps, if any, should be taken to reduce the risk of attacks on U.S. embassies and consulates and diplomatic personnel by terrorist organizations within Afghanistan and throughout the region?

Answer. We must continue to monitor threats to our diplomatic posts in Afghanistan and around the region, and adjust our security posture based on the threats and changing conditions on the ground. External security at our embassies and consulates is, first, the responsibility of the host nation and must remain so. In Afghanistan, we maintain a heightened security posture, and will continue to do so, in order to reduce risks commensurate with local threats and to advance the important work of our diplomatic personnel.

INTELLIGENCE, SURVEILLANCE, AND RECONNAISSANCE CAPABILITIES

Question. Demand for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities of every kind has grown exponentially in recent years largely due to the enhanced situational awareness and targeting capabilities they bring to our commanders. Almost all of the geographic combatant commands have validated ISR requirements that are not being met.

What is your understanding of the support AFRICOM is currently receiving to respond to its ISR requirements?

Answer. ISR assets are a scarce resource and should be allocated based on threat. My understanding is AFRICOM does not receive intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets to meet its requirement. However, Department of Defense has provided additional assets to meet specific needs for operations such as in response to recent attacks in North Africa. This year, AFRICOM will receive additional intelligence capabilities to include multi-intelligence Global Hawks, foliage penetration, and counter-improvised explosive device technologies.

AFRICOM receives only about 7 percent of its total intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance requirements. However, in response to the recent attack in North Africa, AFRICOM is currently getting about 50 percent of its stated need for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance in North Africa. AFRICOM's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance requirements are supported by the Air Force, the Navy, and the National Intelligence Community. The Services provide AFRICOM with a wide variety of intelligence capability. Predator, Pilatus fixed wing aircraft, and Scan Eagle provide full motion video. EP-3 Orion and other maritime assets provide signals intelligence. Seaborne assets provide tactical intelligence capability as well as a forward staging area for MQ-8 unmanned helicopter, and Scan Eagle. Joint Surveillance and Target Attack aircraft provide ground moving target indicator capability. Global Hawk provides long-dwell, long-range imagery.

While AFRICOM is allocated a wide variety of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, current allocation does not provide sufficient quantity or sensor mix to achieve the objectives which the Joint Staff directed to AFRICOM.

Question. Do you believe the threat emanating from AFRICOM's AOR should garner additional resources from within DOD? If so, how do you intend to advocate for additional ISR assets?

Answer. Yes, I believe additional intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities are necessary to protect American interest and assist our close allies and partners. The recent crises in North Africa demonstrate the volatility of the African security environment. As the United States makes significant progress against al Qaeda on many fronts, huge pockets of ungoverned spaces and unstable security situations have provided a safe haven for al Qaeda, its allies and affiliates. Al Qaeda has taken advantage of the poor security situation in Libya, easy access to weapons, and the rebellion in Mali to establish deep roots throughout North and West Africa. While significant progress has been made in Somalia, an increasingly desperate al Shabaab has turned to improvised explosive device attacks against our African partners. Additionally, Boko Haram carried out hundreds of improvised explosive device attacks in Nigeria. Finally, kidnapping for ransom continues to be a significant concern in Somalia and Mali.

If confirmed, I will request additional assets through the global force management process to take advantage of ISR resources as we draw down in Afghanistan. Until Global Force Management allocation meets requirements, I will continue to leverage contract and experimental intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance and look to the broader Research and Development community for innovative solutions to unique AFRICOM requirements.

COMBINED JOINT TASK FORCE-HORN OF AFRICA

Question. What is your understanding of the mission of Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) and its command relationship to AFRICOM?

Answer. CJTF-HOA is a subordinate command of AFRICOM. Its mission is to protect, defend, and promote the national security interests of the United States by conducting military operations to prevail in our current and future operations against violent extremist organizations and other transnational threats, and strengthens the capabilities of our East African Partner Nation militaries and regional security organizations in order to assist East African Nations to create security environments that promote security and stability within their country borders and throughout the region.

Question. How do its roles and responsibilities compare with AFRICOM's service component commands?

Answer. Unlike the service specific and functional commands, CJTF-HOA is focused on a specific geographic area of operation—the East Africa Combined-Joint Operations Area. CJTF-HOA is directed by AFRICOM to plan, coordinate, synchronize, direct and assess operations, exercises, security cooperation activities and engagements with AFRICOM components and Special Operations Command Africa along six lines of effort: Counter Violent Extremist Organizations; Strengthen Defense Capabilities; Prepare and Respond to Crisis; Counter-Piracy; Counter Illicit Trafficking; and Maintain Strategic Posture.

Question. How does AFRICOM ensure that CJTF-HOA activities complement rather than conflict with activities being conducted by AFRICOM's service components?

Answer. AFRICOM has published an East Africa campaign plan with CJTF-HOA designated as the supported command.

Question. What are the most effective metrics to measure the impact of CJTF-HOA's efforts to date?

Answer. CJTF-HOA is currently developing a formal set of assessment criteria to measure the impact of their efforts.

Currently, the metrics used to measure the impact of CJTF-HOA effort includes the diminished effectiveness and ability of extremist organizations to operate in East Africa, the increased capability, willingness, and partnership of East African nations to eliminate extremist organizations, and the ability and capability of East African nations to respond to crisis, protecting U.S. interests in the region.

MARITIME SECURITY

Question. Maritime security has proven to be a significant issue on the coasts of West and East Africa.

What is your assessment of AFRICOM's ongoing maritime security initiatives?

Answer. My understanding is AFRICOM has seen some success in maritime security initiatives. There have been several recent, positive developments in this area as a result of AFRICOM's initiatives, especially in the Gulf of Guinea. These initiatives are also U.S. interagency efforts, especially in conjunction with the Department of State. In particular, the command's effort to assist the Economic Community of Central African States and the Economic Community of West African States in developing a legal and operational framework for regional cooperation was a positive development. This assistance, requested by Economic Community of Central African States and Economic Community of West African States, will improve the ability of these states to meet the significant challenges of illicit maritime activity, including piracy, drug, arms, and human trafficking, and threats to energy and port security which potentially have a negative impact on economic development. These transnational threats directly impact the quality of life of the population and affect U.S. national interests. These regional problems are best addressed with regional solutions. If confirmed, I will continue to assess these programs and seek opportunities to build upon these positive steps with our African partners.

Question. Very few African countries have the capacity to project naval forces beyond their coastal waters; as a result, the economic exclusion zones of many coastal African countries are exploited by a variety of international actors.

What opportunities, if any, do you see for expanded U.S. engagement on maritime security in the AFRICOM AOR?

Answer. There are many opportunities to expand AFRICOM's maritime engagement. AFRICOM is seeking to include more partners in these maritime security efforts to include the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization nations; International Organizations such as the United Nations and African Union; and Regional Organizations such as Economic Community of Central African States and Economic Community of West African States. There is also an opportunity to expand beyond the shores of Africa to include developing closer coordination and cooperation on activities and events that have transatlantic impact from South America and the Caribbean, through Africa and into Europe. Illicit maritime trafficking has global reach and impact which can be addressed by closer cooperation between hemispheres (north, south, east, and west).

This multinational approach is already happening in the Navy's Africa Partnership Station, AFRICOM teams with our African and other enduring partners to conduct training, exercises and operations like African Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership. For example, Naval Forces Africa has completed five deployments by U.S. ships along with deployments of ships from several European nations. My current understanding is that on the whole, our African partners are very satisfied and have requested more support.

For the past 2 years AFRICOM, in conjunction with the Department of State and the African Center for Strategic Studies, has been working to enable countries to develop national maritime strategies that foster rule of law, emphasize good governance and support economic development. In addition several countries, such as Ghana and Mozambique have requested AFRICOM support to develop plans to respond to threats to security of offshore oil production facilities and transport vessels.

These challenges present opportunities to enable African countries to guard their own waters and manage their valuable offshore resources. The freedom of commerce along the strategically important maritime transportation corridors is an African,

United States, and global shared interest. If confirmed, I plan to continue the process of cooperation with U.S. Government agencies and international partners, and seek to enhance and continue the programs and activities that build partner maritime security capacity.

CHINA

Question. In your view, do China and the United States share common security objectives in the AFRICOM AOR?

Answer. In my opinion, China and the United States should cooperate on issues of mutual interest, such as counterterrorism, and on other projects that satisfy both countries' objectives.

Question. In your opinion, what effect has China's engagement with African militaries had on those militaries and on U.S. security interests?

Answer. My understanding is China offers military equipment to African countries at prices that each country can afford, and training at Chinese military schools is often completely subsidized. While in many cases the equipment available from China may be older and less technologically advanced than what other countries can offer, this equipment provides African militaries with more "bang for the buck" than they might be able to afford from any other source, while having the added perceived benefit of coming without ties, such as Western concern about human rights and democracy. Chinese equipment and training has been known to complement U.S. activities, however, for example by providing a baseline for militaries that move on to Africa Contingency Operations Training & Assistance peacekeeping training and participate in U.N. peacekeeping operations.

Question. To what extent do you view China's activities on the continent as a threat/challenge to U.S. national security interests?

Answer. In my opinion, we should seek to cooperate with China where we have mutual interests. China acts on the basis of "non-interference in internal affairs," which means the country does not restrict its arms sales as a result of concerns about how the purchasing country behaves internationally or with respect to its own citizens. As a result, China does not discriminate against countries on the edge of instability or those with poor human rights records against their own people. However, China is not actively targeting U.S. interests, activities, or personnel so it is not a direct threat.

Question. Are U.S. policies in Africa sufficient to counter China's influence when that is appropriate, or are there additional measures we should be considering? What role should AFRICOM play in this regard?

Answer. In my opinion, current U.S. policies are sufficient to address the influence of China in Africa. It is important to look for and capitalize on areas of mutual national interest between our two countries. For example, solid opportunities exist for cooperation with counter-piracy operations in the Indian Ocean and Gulf of Guinea. Additionally, the Chinese conduct training and have programs that are similar in nature to ours, but there is very limited coordination or cooperation on these efforts. If and when our national interests align, AFRICOM should work to coordinate these efforts if possible in order to better develop our African partners and increase the security on the continent.

Question. Do you foresee China's growing energy and resource demands affecting security developments in Africa?

Answer. China gets significant energy and natural resources from Africa and would be reluctant to allow those levels to decline. As a result of China's interest in gaining international respect and support, it is more inclined to use diplomacy and negotiation to maintain this desired level of resources. In one recent example with Sudan and South Sudan, China attempted to mediate between the two countries when oil production was shut down over a dispute regarding past and future dispensation of oil revenues.

SECTION 1208 FUNDING

Question. Section 1208 of the Ronald Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 (Public Law 108-375), as amended, gave U.S. Special Operations Command the authority to provide support (including training, funding, and equipment) to regular forces, irregular forces, and individuals supporting or facilitating military operations by U.S. Special Operations Forces to combat terrorism. What is your assessment of this authority?

Answer. Section 1208, within the context of its authority, has proved to be one of the most responsive and flexible tools to meet AFRICOM security challenges. This authority allows AFRICOM to enable partner nations who share the common goal of countering the violent extremist organizations threat in the region. AFRICOM is

responsible to identify and engage the “right” partner unit which is capable and willing to conduct counterterrorism operations against violent extremist organizations threats. To do this requires close coordination with both the regional country teams as well as the legitimate government officials, both civilian and military. It is essential that all parties understand and agree to the common threat picture and have a displayed willingness to act against those threats.

Section 1208 is not a capacity building authority. The purpose of the funding is to better enable those units that are legitimate representatives of our partner nation. In some cases, such as Libya, those units may be “deputized” militias.

Question. Do you believe this authority has been appropriately utilized in Africa?

Answer. Yes. It has been used appropriately in Africa. The successes in east Africa, specifically the visible improvements made against al Shabaab in Somalia, is a reflection of using this line of funding. All activities were conducted with complete transparency and in full coordination with our Interagency Partners in the region. Additional details require a higher classification.

However, there is room to expand this authority to achieve focused effects against the threat. As Special Operations Command continues to resource and enable the Theater Special Operations Command and those enhanced capabilities come available, expansion of the 1208 authority against al Qaeda will provide opportunistic, disciplined, small footprint, high-impact special operations forces the ability to maximize the use of this authority.

Question. If confirmed, how would you seek to have this authority used in Africa?

Answer. I will continue to identify those partner nations who are actively pursuing operations to counter the violent extremist organizations threat stream in Northwest Africa. The countries of Libya, Niger, and Mauritania are actively countering the threat stream emanating out of northern Mali. Ideally, AFRICOM would partner with those units who are actively conducting counterterrorism/counter-violent extremist organizations operations to better enable their efforts.

Within the capabilities of the Theater Special Operations Command, I would seek to expand the use of the 1208 authority by continuing to develop and socialize concepts of operation focused on isolating and degrading the threat network across the continent to achieve U.S. counterterrorism objectives.

AFRICA HEALTH RELATED ISSUES

Question. Health issues are a significant concern in many African nations and in their militaries and the U.S. Government’s engagement strategy in Africa includes an emphasis on health-related issues.

To what extent should AFRICOM be involved in broader U.S. Government “health diplomacy” efforts in Africa?

Answer. First, AFRICOM should continue to synchronize Department of Defense health engagement on the continent to achieve optimum results. Simultaneously, AFRICOM should coordinate its health engagement with other parts of the U.S. Government to ensure maximum impact.

AFRICOM is already doing that in a number of areas. Programs like the Partner Military Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome Prevention Program and our Pandemic Response Program are good examples. Partner Military Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome Prevention Program, implemented by the Department of Defense Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome Prevention Program’s office is primarily funded by the President’s Emergency Plan for Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome Relief and executed in collaboration with agencies like Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Commerce, Department of Labor, and Peace Corps in 41 African countries.

AFRICOM’s Pandemic Response Program, currently being implemented in 17 African countries, was funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development from 2008 to 2012. The program is now funded by Department of Defense but is still implemented in collaboration with Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development and Center for Disease Control. Similarly, the AFRICOM’s malaria initiative with partner militaries in East Africa (and soon in West Africa) is coordinated with the President’s Malaria Initiative in target countries (same partners as above). Additionally, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency’s bio surveillance program, working with AFRICOM, is coordinating with U.S. Department of Agriculture, Department of State, and U.S. Agency for International Development.

Question. In your view, should AFRICOM’s engagement strategy, perhaps more than other combatant command engagement strategies, include an emphasis on military health engagement?

Answer. Comparisons across combatant command geographical areas of operation are difficult due to the number of cultures and economies being engaged. But, the conditions of many partner nation militaries in Africa are such that without improved health intervention (improved nutrition, better disease prevention, care and treatment) these militaries will be less able to deploy in their own countries, much less in peacekeeping operations. As a result, AFRICOM has included health and medical engagement in our strategies with many partners in Africa.

Question. How much success has DOD had in efforts to support prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS in African militaries?

Answer. Africa Command's military Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome program is aimed at mitigating the impacts of the disease on African military readiness. The program includes activities that help prevent the escalation of Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome infection rates within African security forces, and provide care and treatment for the servicemembers and families infected or affected by the disease. DOD activities that support African militaries' fight against Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome now reach 41 African countries.

During fiscal year 2011, the command's programs reached 508,000 African troops and family members with prevention messages, and provided counseling and testing services for 412,000 servicemembers and their families. Almost 4,000 health care workers have received Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome training. Approximately 43,000 individuals are on antiretroviral treatment as a result of these collaborative efforts. The fight against Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome in Africa is having an impact. A leader of a southern African country remarked that, 3 years ago, he was conducting burials every day for a Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection related death; however, today he conducts one burial every 8 to 10 days.

Other indicators of success include; 17,923 males were circumcised as part of Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection prevention efforts; 96,558 eligible adults and children were provided with a minimum of one care service; 68,237 Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection positive adults and children received a minimum of one clinical service; 29,856 HIV-positive persons received cotrimoxazole prophylaxis.

Question. If confirmed, how, if at all, would you like to see such efforts increased or programmatically altered?

Answer. If confirmed, I would assess the programs before recommending changes. Current programs are effective and favor greater efforts in Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection prevention and treatment.

Question. In your view, what should DOD's role be in the program relative to other elements of the U.S. Government?

Answer. Health and Humanitarian Assistance efforts require a "whole-of-government" approach. Department of Defense and its organizations bring a wide range of capabilities to the table and when properly coordinated the U.S. Government efforts are greatly enhanced without expense to national security. It is important that the balance be maintained. In AFRICOM's case these efforts provide it with additional access to partner nations and enhance positive perceptions of our military.

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE IN AFRICOM

Question. The Department of Defense has developed comprehensive policies and procedures to improve the prevention and response to incidents of sexual assault. However, new allegations of sexual assault continue to be reported, and many question the adequacy of the chain of command's response to these allegations.

Answer. A frequent complaint of victims of sexual assault and their advocates is that military commanders frequently fail to hold assailants accountable for their criminal acts. Some in Congress have proposed that commanders' authority to address sexual assaults be removed and given to an independent entity.

Question. What is your view of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program in AFRICOM?

Answer. It is my understanding that the program is effective in AFRICOM. The program addresses the needs of the combatant command staff by providing trained, in-house Victim Advocates that work hand-in-hand with the garrison Sexual Harassment/Assault Response & Prevention coordinator. The Stuttgart garrison support agencies provide training, guidance and support the Victim Advocates efforts and directly address the needs of victims. Supporting agencies also include Family Advocacy, the Provost Marshalls Office, Army Criminal Investigation Division, medical

personnel, and others as required to ensure program compliance and the needs of the victim are met.

Question. What is your view of the adequacy of the training and resources in AFRICOM to investigate and respond to allegations of sexual assault?

Answer. Although the command's primary support is garrison based, all indications are the training and resources are adequate to respond appropriately to allegations of sexual assault.

Question. What is your view of the proposal to give the authority to an independent agency, not part of the chain of command, to address allegations of sexual assault, including the authority to hold assailants accountable for criminal acts?

Answer. The Services recently changed the level of commander with Uniform Code of Military Justice authority over these types of cases and this change should be assessed before making further changes.

Giving authority to an independent agency could undermine command authority by sending the message the commander cannot be trusted to make a fair and impartial assessment.

Question. What is your understanding of the adequacy of the resources and programs in place in AFRICOM to offer victims of sexual assault the medical, psychological, and legal help that they need?

Answer. U.S. Army Garrison Stuttgart is the lead agent to provide these services to the staff and they have the core functions in place to support AFRICOM members. They have shown a sincere spirit of teaming with the command to take care of our personnel.

Question. Do you consider the current sexual assault policies and procedures, particularly those on confidential reporting, to be effective?

Answer. Yes. The policies and procedures seem effective. Confidential reporting provides an option for those who wish to seek assistance while maintaining confidentiality.

Question. What is your view of steps taken to prevent sexual assaults in AFRICOM?

Answer. AFRICOM works in synchronization with the victim advocates. Training is highlighted and conducted by senior leaders in small groups to discuss troops' responsibility to stop activities that lead to heightened possibility of sexual assaults. Additionally, the garrison is examining the infrastructure and facilities to identify mitigation measures in the barracks and other areas.

QUALITY-OF-LIFE CHALLENGES IN AFRICOM

Question. What quality-of-life challenges are unique for personnel and their families assigned to the AFRICOM area of responsibility?

Answer. The lack of reliable infrastructure on the African continent presents unique quality-of-life challenges for our personnel and their families. Among these challenges are unreliable broadband internet, sporadic postal service access, shortages of essential goods, varying degrees of host nation medical care and schooling capabilities. There is a relatively small AFRICOM personnel footprint in our African embassies—of the 36 staffed, there are fewer than 200 personnel in both accompanied and unaccompanied tours.

Additionally, there are approximately 5,000 unaccompanied personnel on the continent at any given time, and the command conducts a variety of outreach and educational activities such as travel clinics to impart proper respect for, and adherence to, the unique medical and safety requirements of our area of responsibility.

Question. If confirmed, how would you address these theater-wide challenges to help improve the quality of life for these personnel and their families?

Answer. The Command invests in productive partnerships with Service components and supporting nongovernmental agencies. Army morale, welfare, and recreation activities are proactive—providing large mobile support kits containing exercise and recreation equipment, games, lounge items, and electronic equipment to support our servicemembers. As always, AFRICOM also receives superb support from the Red Cross, the United Services Organization, and other organizations with the mission of supporting America's uniform personnel. I will continue to invest in, and encourage these relationships. For school issues, we work closely with the Department of Defense Education Activity to ensure military dependents get quality education on the continent. U.S. Transportation Command facilitates medical evacuation service capability for military personnel and their families on the continent.

MENTAL HEALTH OF SERVICEMEMBERS AND STRESS ON THE FORCE

Question. The committee is concerned about the stress on military personnel resulting from lengthy and repeated deployments and their access to mental health

care to deal with this increased stress. The suicide rates in each of the Services are clear reminders that servicemembers, particularly those who have been deployed multiple times, are under tremendous stress and need access to mental health care.

In your view, are there sufficient mental health assets in AFRICOM to address the mental health needs of the military personnel and their families?

Answer. Yes. I believe there are adequate Mental Health resources in the Stuttgart Army Garrison Community to appropriately address the needs of the headquarters staff and their family members. For example, AFRICOM is particularly pleased with the response to Department of Defense Military and Family Life Consultant Program. Through the Military and Family Life Consultant Program, licensed clinical providers assist servicemembers, civilians, and their families by providing brief, solution-focused problem solving support. They work in support of and in conjunction with existing military entities/services. There are no records kept and contact with Military and Family Life Consultant Program is anonymous with the exceptions of allegations made of harm to self, others, allegations of domestic abuse, sexual assault and child abuse. The role of the consultant is unique—they are not traditional therapists. The primary Military and Family Life Consultant Program role is to assess needs, provide support, or refer as necessary. Among the service they provide is assistance to servicemembers, civilians, and families with development of an action plans. For example, in Djibouti, usage statistics indicate eight contacts are made on an average day, and the program there will gain a second consultant to serve that population. The command is also pleased with the services provided by our local Army health care providers and the medical services in the local community, as well as Military OneSource.

Question. If confirmed, what actions will you take to address the mental health needs of military personnel and their families in AFRICOM?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to place an emphasis in ensuring that behavioral health services are available to our servicemembers and their families. I recognize that we must foster a culture that facilitates an awareness of the impact of behavioral health issues on individual servicemembers, families, units, and our military communities.

This awareness starts from the top leadership and extends down to each individual assigned to the command. I will continue to engage to ensure we maintain an interdisciplinary approach to addressing the behavioral health needs of the force. This includes increasing the effectiveness of health surveillance, detection, and response efforts to identify, refer, and treat servicemembers and families at risk; reducing cultural stigma associated with seeking behavioral healthcare and developing resiliency and coping skills that foster help-seeking behavior among our servicemembers and their families.

I will leverage policies and programs that assist servicemembers suffering from physical and behavioral health conditions. The starting point at every level is education and training. I will also empower all soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen, and civilian personnel to act as sensors for leadership by noticing small changes in behavior and taking action early. These efforts encourage unit strength, resilience, and readiness. I will encourage that service and family members seek mental health assistance when needed.

Question. Do you have any views on how to reduce the stigma, real or perceived, for seeking mental health care?

Answer. We have taken conscious steps to adjust policy to reduce stigma by facilitating culture change within our force through continued education and by continuing to enhance the support network for servicemembers who may be at risk. I will continue to emphasize the importance of assessing the need for behavioral health services at key transition points to include redeployment, reintegration, and servicemembers to civilian transition. I will also continue to emphasize the need for behavioral health screening during routine periodic health and wellness exams. I will encourage social support and awareness of behavioral health programs which, through buddy or peer-to-peer involvement, has been successful in increasing behavioral health treatment-seeking among veterans. Additionally, increased social support may also lead to stigma reduction.

CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

Question. In order to exercise its legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this committee and other appropriate committees of Congress are able to receive testimony, briefings, and other communications of information.

Do you agree, if confirmed for this high position, to appear before this committee and other appropriate committees of Congress?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, when asked, to give your personal views, even if those views differ from the administration in power?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear before this committee, or designated members of this committee, and provide information, subject to appropriate and necessary security protection, with respect to your responsibilities as the Commander, AFRICOM?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree to ensure that testimony, briefings, and other communications of information are provided to this committee and its staff and other appropriate committees?

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. Yes.

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR CLAIRE McCASKILL

SEXUAL ASSAULT

1. Senator McCASKILL. General Rodriguez, it is my understanding that the movie “The Invisible War” is being used to help educate senior leaders in the U.S. Armed Forces about the issue of sexual assault in the military. Have you seen the movie? General RODRIGUEZ. Yes, I have seen “The Invisible War”.

2. Senator McCASKILL. General Rodriguez, as a leader in the U.S. Army, what have you learned about the issue of sexual assault facing servicemembers under your command?

General RODRIGUEZ. Sexual assault is contrary to Army values, degrades mission readiness, and will be prosecuted. With continued leadership and chain of command involvement, the Army can reduce the incidents of sexual assault and provide the training and guidance to prevent these incidents from occurring, prosecute those responsible for sexual assault, and provide the best support to the victims.

The Army Sexual Harassment and Assault Reporting Program is effective in addressing the needs of the Army by providing trained, in-house Victim Advocates that work hand-in-hand with the garrison Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention coordinator. The garrison command support agencies on Army installations provide training, guidance and support the Victim Advocates efforts and directly address the needs of victims. Supporting agencies also include Family Advocacy, the Provost Marshalls Office, Army Criminal Investigation Division, medical personnel, and others as required to ensure program compliance and the needs of the victim are met.

BUILDING SECURITY CAPACITY

3. Senator McCASKILL. General Rodriguez, one of U.S. Africa Command’s (AFRICOM) central missions is to strengthen the defense capabilities of African states. In January 2013, an International Security Advisory Board report on “Security Capacity Building” found that the United States annually spends more than \$25 billion on what is broadly classified as security capacity of the recipient states. The report found that we have a multiplicity of programs spread across different departments and agencies where there may or may not be coordination in resourcing and execution. A lack of coordination could easily lead to duplication of effort and waste of resources that would be better spent elsewhere. As the combatant commander, what would you do to coordinate efforts with our diplomatic missions and other Federal agencies to ensure duplication is not occurring?

General RODRIGUEZ. Cross agency communication is key and may identify duplication of programs. Communication between agencies can be difficult at times, but it is a challenge that is solvable by understanding the cultures of the different U.S. agencies and by demonstrating our willingness to share relevant information between the African Union and other entities with equities on the continent. Being a good steward of resources, particularly in our fiscally uncertain environment, is

essential. To accomplish this goal requires close coordination and that will be one of my priorities as Commander, AFRICOM.

4. Senator MCCASKILL. General Rodriguez, in your response to the advance policy questions, you said: “AFRICOM’s responsibilities reflect a new and evolving focus on building partner operational and institutional capacity at the country and regional levels and supporting the efforts of other U.S. Government agencies in the area of responsibility (AOR).” While many at the Department of State (DOS) and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) welcome the ability of DOD to leverage resources and to organize complex operations, there also is concern that the military may overestimate its capabilities as well as its diplomatic role, or pursue activities that are not a core part of its mandate. The highly unequal allocation of resources between DOD, DOS, and USAID could hinder their ability to act as equal partners and could lead to the militarization of development and diplomacy. Do you believe there is a danger in over-emphasizing the U.S. military presence in Africa?

General RODRIGUEZ. Since inception of AFRICOM in October 2008, all agencies of the U.S. Government have remained sensitive to this concern and have operated with a light footprint on the continent. Regarding Department of Defense (DOD) operations with other U.S. Government agencies, I believe DOD and the AFRICOM component commands must thoroughly understand the culture of those agencies—particularly DOS and USAID—and employ that understanding during planning sessions and during execution of programs and theater security cooperation events. It is very important not to militarize development activity or diplomacy.

5. Senator MCCASKILL. General Rodriguez, how will you balance our military presence in Africa with the diplomatic and development responsibilities of DOS and USAID?

General RODRIGUEZ. The U.S. Ambassadors are the lead for U.S. diplomatic, informational, military, and economic development in each African nation. AFRICOM fully supports the Ambassadors and DOS to ensure a balanced and synchronized effort between diplomatic, development, and military presence in African nations. It is imperative that we work together as a whole-of-government team as we engage African nations. Messaging to the governments and people of the continent will continue to emphasize our support to African nations. Traditional U.S. military engagement strategy has been grounded in threat-based analysis. To meet its growing responsibilities in the even more complex African context, the Command will complement this traditional analytic framework with a partnership-based approach. To do this, we should use our military capabilities in a supporting role with the inter-agency team to find ways to help our partners build resilient, democratic security institutions.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOE MANCHIN III

MALI

6. Senator MANCHIN. General Rodriguez, the AFRICOM AOR has become a front line in the fight against al Qaeda and other terrorist groups. I am particularly concerned the emergence of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Mali. French and Malian forces have made great strides over the past month in driving AQIM out of areas they held in northern Mali, but the French have announced they are leaving soon. How can the United States best support preserving these gains without investing troops or considerable resources?

General RODRIGUEZ. The most effective way to preserve the gains in Mali is through a strong, functional Mali Government. We should continue to support African nations, the Africa Union, African regional organizations, the European Union, and the United Nations where we have common objectives. Building the capacity and supporting these organizations provide African and international solutions to Africa’s problems.

SOUTH SUDAN

7. Senator MANCHIN. General Rodriguez, South Sudan is the world’s newest country and faces a number of internal and external security challenges. Can you describe the status of our military-to-military relationship with South Sudan?

General RODRIGUEZ. The U.S. Ambassador to South Sudan has called for a limited introduction of our Security Force Assistance (SFA) program pending improvement in certain issue areas, including: (1) concern over the government of South Sudan’s

progress on advancing democratic principles; (2) concern about the Government of South Sudan's ability to absorb our assistance while key border security issues remain unresolved with the north; and, (3) Embassy Juba's limited capacity to support U.S. servicemembers in the austere Juba environment.

Our military-to-military relationship with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) is in the initial stage. Through effective use of the International Military Education and Training (IMET) Program, dozens of SPLA students have attended DOD schools in the United States ranging from infantry officer basic training to engineer, medical, and judge advocate general courses. An SPLA brigadier general is scheduled to attend the U.S. Army War College this year. These alumni will form the basis of our engagement activities within the framework of our comprehensive Security Force Assistance (SFA) Program. This SFA Program emphasizes development of the defense sector at the institutional level for enduring effects. Additionally, AFRICOM is planning to conduct limited medical and engineering civic action projects in the next few months with the SPLA.

8. Senator MANCHIN. General Rodriguez, as this relationship evolves, how you will ensure that human rights are an important part of any military-to-military engagement with South Sudan?

General RODRIGUEZ. Human rights related content—including the rule of law, civilian control of the military, and code of conduct—are key ingredients infused into every engagement with the Sudan People's Liberation Army. Our Security Force Assistance (SFA) Program includes a priority package of education and mentorship aimed at assisting in the development of defense sector institutions that will establish, foster, and enforce laws, codes, and principles related to discipline of the force, hierarchy of command, and rules of engagement. Our SFA package also includes ways and means to professionalize and establish capability and capacity of key functions within the military such as a judge advocate general corps, military police and inspector general.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

U.S. AFRICA COMMAND GOALS

9. Senator SHAHEEN. General Rodriguez, Dr. Cynthia Watson, a professor at the National War College, stated, "Africa Command hopes to avoid that traditional combatant command goals of warfighting in favor of war prevention, making its orientation quite different from other parallel organizations." Do you agree with this assessment?

General RODRIGUEZ. I believe prevention of war is the foremost goal of all combatant commands. The strategic environment will dictate the amount of emphasis placed on war prevention versus warfighting. AFRICOM protects and defends the national security interests of the United States by strengthening the defense capabilities of African states and regional organizations and, when directed, conducts military operations, in order to deter and defeat transnational threats and to provide a security environment conducive to good governance and development. We need to be ready to do both.

10. Senator SHAHEEN. General Rodriguez, do you think that this mission focus prohibited AFRICOM from being able to respond to the Benghazi incident?

General RODRIGUEZ. There are a number of lessons learned from Benghazi that must be considered. We should continue to conduct close coordination with DOS and our other interagency partners on the African continent to ensure a common understanding of the risk associated with the complex threat environment such as that in Libya. We should continue to work as a team to refine intelligence, reduce the intelligence gap through better collaboration, prioritizing threats, and allocating resources to collect on those threats.

Also, we should review the interagency process between the DOD and DOS to identify security risks and understand DOD response options to inform DOS security planning and decisionmaking. Regional response forces like the Commanders In-extremis Force, Army Regionally Aligned Forces, and the Special Marines Air-Ground Task Force are also part of the solution in some areas.

I understand AFRICOM is reviewing security assistance and military-to-military programs to ensure they are best tailored to build host nation capacity where required. Collaborative efforts to improve Embassy security are ongoing.

11. Senator SHAHEEN. General Rodriguez, do you think that AFRICOM's emphasis on building partnerships will shift as the emerging terrorist threat increases?

General RODRIGUEZ. Traditional U.S. military engagement strategy has been grounded in threat-based analysis. To meet its growing responsibilities in the increasingly complex African context, AFRICOM will compliment this traditional analytic framework with a partnership-based approach. To do this, we will use our military capabilities in a supporting role with our interagency team to find ways to help our partners build resilient security institutions that are committed to democratic ideals.

INTELLIGENCE, SURVEILLANCE, AND RECONNAISSANCE CAPABILITY

12. Senator SHAHEEN. General Rodriguez, the current AFRICOM Commander has previously testified that intelligence and surveillance continue to be a challenge and that more assets are needed. If confirmed, what do you intend to do to ensure that AFRICOM has the appropriate intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capability?

General RODRIGUEZ. I will advocate for prioritization of AFRICOM ISR requirements to support current operations and likely future mission areas. With potential for receiving additional ISR assets, I will engage African partner nations for overflight, refueling and temporary operating location options. It is also important to invest in enhancing African nations ISR capabilities as well as information and intelligence sharing to improve overall understanding of the environment.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR RICHARD BLUMENTHAL

MARINE CORPS IN U.S. AFRICA COMMAND

13. Senator BLUMENTHAL. General Rodriguez, last week we heard from General Dempsey of the challenges posed by improving our response capabilities in Africa, where there are limited base rights and access. It is my understanding that the United States no longer maintains an amphibious ready group in the Mediterranean Sea, and this is before sequestration. If confirmed, will you look at making better use of the Marine Corps' ability to respond to crises in North Africa, conduct non-combatant evacuations, and maintain a rapid response capability with forward deployed forces?

General RODRIGUEZ. I will continue to refine the posture of our U.S. Marine Corps Special Purpose Marine Air and Ground Task Force and other Marine assets as required to respond to crises in North Africa, conduct non-combatant evacuations, and maintain a rapid response capability with forward deployed forces. I would add that it is important for any combatant commander to consider the full range of Department of Defense and other agency capabilities available for operational support missions.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR SAXBY CHAMBLISS

SURVEILLANCE IN AFRICA COMMAND

14. Senator CHAMBLISS. General Rodriguez, AFRICOM receives only about 7 percent of its total ISR requirements. However, in response to the recent attack in North Africa, AFRICOM is currently getting about 50 percent of its stated need for ISR in North Africa. With the downsizing of military forces and assets, AFRICOM is sure to not get this percentage of ISR in the future. How will you, as a commander, ensure that AFRICOM will accomplish its mission without a robust ISR capability in the near future?

General RODRIGUEZ. I will evaluate current operational requirements, along with possible risk, and prioritize remaining ISR capabilities to optimize support to mission execution. In addition, with the downsizing of military forces and assets we can expect a reprioritization of ISR assets by the U.S. Government and I will work to ensure that AFRICOM's requirements are addressed by Department of Defense and the U.S. Intelligence Community. It is also important to invest in enhancing African nations ISR capabilities as well as information and intelligence sharing to improve overall understanding of the environment.

15. Senator CHAMBLISS. General Rodriguez, with so much territory uncovered with ISR, what other actions will you take to ensure a presence throughout the region?

General RODRIGUEZ. I will pursue additional presence and optimization of current presence across the continent by engaging African partner nations for key temporary stationing locations that provide increased flexibility for ISR asset tasking, maximizing potential support to missions. It is also important to invest in enhancing African nations ISR capabilities as well as information and intelligence sharing to improve overall understanding of the environment.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR KELLY AYOTTE

SURVEILLANCE IN AFRICA COMMAND

16. Senator AYOTTE. General Rodriguez, in your advance policy questions, you mentioned that AFRICOM only received about 7 percent of its total ISR requirements. That number has increased to 50 percent now. Based on all of the previous attacks on U.S. and other western targets in Benghazi in the months preceding the September 11, 2012, attack that left four Americans dead, do you believe more than 7 percent of AFRICOM's ISR requirements should have been met?

General RODRIGUEZ. I believe the ISR requirements for Africa are high and increasing at a very fast rate. I will ensure AFRICOM's requirements compete for ISR assets with the other combatant commands. ISR assets are low density, high demand capabilities, and are allocated based on national priorities.

17. Senator AYOTTE. General Rodriguez, while the increase for 50 percent is a positive step, do you have concerns that half of our ISR requirements are not being met?

General RODRIGUEZ. The demand for ISR capabilities has increased significantly over the past decade. It is rare that ISR supply meets the demand. Thus, I will continue to address AFRICOM's requirements for ISR capabilities through the Joint Staff's request for forces and capabilities system and prioritize the employment of ISR assets AFRICOM receives. It is also important to invest in enhancing African nations ISR capabilities as well as information and intelligence sharing to improve overall understanding of the environment.

18. Senator AYOTTE. General Rodriguez, do you believe that DOD is providing AFRICOM sufficient ISR assets to meet the objectives that the Joint Staff has given AFRICOM?

General RODRIGUEZ. AFRICOM must compete with other combatant commands for America's relatively scarce ISR assets. While not unique to AFRICOM, infrastructure for supporting ISR operations and over-flight rights of African nations are also considerations. Upon assuming command of AFRICOM, I will closely review AFRICOM's ISR requirements and shortfalls in order to prioritize employment and mitigate risk as best we can.

BOCO HARAM

19. Senator AYOTTE. General Rodriguez, do you believe Boco Haram is a terrorist organization?

General RODRIGUEZ. Boco Haram has committed some acts that can be associated with terrorism. Designating Boco Haram as a terrorist organization is a policy decision. I will study this issue and make my recommendation on whether Boco Haram should be classified as a terrorist organization.

[The nomination reference of GEN David M. Rodriguez, USA, follows:]

NOMINATION REFERENCE AND REPORT

AS IN EXECUTIVE SESSION,
SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,
February 7, 2013.

Ordered, That the following nomination be referred to the Committee on Armed Services:

The following named officer for appointment in the U.S. Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be General.

GEN David M. Rodriguez, 1850.

[The biographical sketch of GEN David M. Rodriguez, USA, which was transmitted to the committee at the time the nomination was referred, follows:]

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF GEN DAVID M. RODRIGUEZ, USA

Source of commissioned service: USMA.

Educational degrees:

U.S. Military Academy - BS - No Major

U.S. Army Command and General Staff College - MMAS - Military Art and Science

U.S. Naval War College - MA - National Security and Strategic Studies

Military schools attended:

Infantry Officer Basic Course

Armor Officer Advanced Course

U.S. Army Command and General Staff College

School of Advanced Military Studies

U.S. Naval War College

Foreign language(s): None recorded.

Promotions:

Promotions	Date of Appointment
2LT	2 Jun. 76
1LT	2 Jun. 78
CPT	1 Aug. 80
MAJ	1 Sep. 87
LTC	1 Apr. 93
COL	1 Aug. 97
BG	1 Mar. 02
MG	15 Jul. 05
LTG	29 Jul. 08
GEN	15 Aug. 11

Major duty assignments:

From	To	Assignment
Aug. 11 .. Mar. 10 ..	Present Jul. 11	Commanding General, U.S. Army Forces Command, Fort Bragg, NC
Oct. 09 ...	Mar. 10	Commander, International Security Assistance Force Joint Command/Deputy Commander, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan
Jun. 09 ... Jul. 08	Oct. 09 Jun. 09	Commander, International Security Assistance Force Joint Command, Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan
Apr. 08 ... Feb. 07 ...	Oct. 09 Apr. 08	Deputy Commander, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan
Apr. 06 ... Jan. 06 ...	Jul. 08 Feb. 06	Senior Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Washington, DC
Apr. 05 ... Jun. 03 ... Jun. 02 ...	Jul. 08 Apr. 08 Feb. 07	Commanding General, 82d Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC
Oct. 00 ...	Jun. 02	Commanding General, 82d Airborne Division/Commanding General, Combined Joint Task Force-76, Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan
Jul. 99 Aug. 97 .. Jul. 96	Sep. 00 Jul. 99 Jun. 97	Commanding General, 82d Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC
		Special Assistant to the Commander, Multi-National Corps-Iraq, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraq (No Joint Credit)
		Commander, Multi-National Division-Northwest, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraq
		Deputy Director, Regional Operations, J-3, Joint Staff, Washington, DC
		Assistant Division Commander (Maneuver), 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized), Fort Hood, TX, and Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraq
		Deputy Commanding General/Assistant Commandant, U.S. Army Infantry Center and School, Fort Benning, GA
		Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, XVIII Airborne Corps, Fort Bragg, NC
		Commander, 2d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC
		Student, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI

From	To	Assignment
Apr. 94 ...	Apr. 96	Commander, 2d Battalion, 502d Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, KY
Mar. 92 ..	Feb. 94	Joint Exercise Officer, later Executive Officer, Exercise Division, C-3/J-3/G-3, United Nations Command/Combined Forces Command/U.S. Forces-Korea, Korea
Apr. 90 ...	Mar. 92	S-3 (Operations), later Executive Officer, 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Fort Bragg, NC, and Operations Desert Shield/Storm, Saudi Arabia
Jun. 89 ...	Apr. 90	Chief, Doctrine Development, G-3 (Plans), XVIII Airborne Corps, Fort Bragg, NC
Aug. 87 ..	May 89	Student, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS
Jul. 86	Jun. 87	Commander, B Company, 3d Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, Fort Benning, GA
Aug. 85 ..	Jun. 86	Liaison Officer, 3d Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, Fort Benning, GA
Jul. 84	Aug. 85	Assistant S-3 (Operations), 75th Ranger Regiment, Fort Benning, GA
Jun. 83 ...	Apr. 84	S-3 (Operations), 1st Battalion, 52d Infantry, 1st Armored Division, U.S. Army Europe and Seventh Army, Germany
Feb. 83 ...	Jun. 83	Assistant S-3 (Air), 3d Brigade, 1st Armored Division, U.S. Army Europe and Seventh Army, Germany
Jul. 81	Feb. 83	Commander, B Company, 1st Battalion, 52d Infantry, 1st Armored Division, U.S. Army Europe and Seventh Army, Germany
May 80 ...	Dec. 80	Student, Armor Officer Advanced Course, U.S. Army Armor School, Fort Knox, KY
Jun. 79 ...	May 80	Executive Officer, Combat Support Company, 1st Battalion, 61st Infantry, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized), Fort Polk, LA
Jan. 79 ...	Jun. 79	Motor Officer, 1st Battalion, 61st Infantry, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized), Fort Polk, LA
Jun. 78 ...	Jan. 79	Scout Platoon Leader, Combat Support Company, 1st Battalion, 61st Infantry, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized), Fort Polk, LA
Jul. 77	Jun. 78	Rifle Platoon Leader, A Company, 1st Battalion, 61st Infantry, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized), Fort Polk, LA

Summary of joint assignments:

Assignments	Date	Grade
Commander, International Security Assistance Force Joint Command/Deputy Commander, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan	Mar. 10-Jul. 11	Lieutenant General
Commander, International Security Assistance Force Joint Command, Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan	Oct. 09-Mar. 10	Lieutenant General
Deputy Commander, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan	Jun. 09-Oct. 09	Lieutenant General
Senior Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Washington, DC	Jul. 08-Jun. 09	Lieutenant General
Commanding General, 82d Airborne Division/Commanding General, Combined Joint Task Force-76, Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan	Feb. 07-Apr. 08	Major General
Commander, Multi-National Division-Northwest, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraq (No Joint Credit)	Apr. 05-Jan. 06	Major General
Deputy Director, Regional Operations, J-3, Joint Staff, Washington, DC	Jun. 03-Mar. 05	Brigadier General
Joint Exercise Officer, later Executive Officer, Exercise Division, C-3/J-3/G-3, United Nations Command/Combined Forces Command/U.S. Forces-Korea, Korea	Mar. 92-Feb. 94	Major/Lieutenant Colonel

Summary of operational assignments:

Assignments	Date	Grade
Commander, International Security Assistance Force Joint Command/Deputy Commander, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan	Mar. 10-Jul. 11	Lieutenant General
Commander, International Security Assistance Force Joint Command, Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan	Oct. 09-Mar. 10	Lieutenant General
Deputy Commander, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan	Jun. 09-Oct. 09	Lieutenant General
Commanding General, 82d Airborne Division/Commanding General, Combined Joint Task Force-76, Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan	Feb. 07-Apr. 08	Major General
Special Assistant to the Commander, Multi-National Corps-Iraq, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraq (No Joint Credit)	Jan. 06-Feb. 06	Major General
Commander, Multi-National Division-Northwest, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraq	Apr. 05-Jan. 06	Major General
Assistant Division Commander (Maneuver), 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized), Fort Hood, TX, and Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraq	Jun. 02-Jun. 03	Brigadier General
S-3 (Operations), later Executive Officer, 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Fort Bragg, NC, and Operations Desert Shield/Storm, Saudi Arabia ..	Apr. 90-Mar. 92	Major

U.S. decorations and badges:

Defense Distinguished Service Medal (with Oak Leaf Cluster)
 Distinguished Service Medal
 Defense Superior Service Medal
 Legion of Merit (with four Oak Leaf Clusters)
 Bronze Star Medal (with Oak Leaf Cluster)
 Defense Meritorious Service Medal
 Meritorious Service Medal (with four Oak Leaf Clusters)
 Joint Service Commendation Medal
 Army Commendation Medal (with two Oak Leaf Clusters)
 Joint Service Achievement Medal
 Combat Infantryman Badge
 Expert Infantryman Badge
 Master Parachutist Badge
 Air Assault Badge
 Ranger Tab
 Joint Chiefs of Staff Identification Badge

[The Committee on Armed Services requires certain senior military officers nominated by the President to positions requiring the advice and consent of the Senate to complete a form that details the biographical, financial and other information of the nominee. The form executed by GEN David M. Rodriguez, USA, in connection with his nomination follows:]

UNITED STATES SENATE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Room SR-228

Washington, DC 20510-6050

(202) 224-3871

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES FORM

BIOGRAPHICAL AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION REQUESTED OF
NOMINEES

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE NOMINEE: Complete all requested information. If more space is needed use an additional sheet and cite the part of the form and the question number (i.e. A-9, B-4) to which the continuation of your answer applies.

PART A—BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE NOMINEE: Biographical information furnished in this part of the form will be made available in committee offices for public inspection prior to the hearings and will also be published in any hearing record as well as made available to the public.

1. **Name:** (Include any former names used.)

David M. Rodriguez.

2. **Position to which nominated:**

Commander, U.S. Africa Command, Germany.

3. **Date of nomination:**

February 7, 2013.

4. **Address:** (List current place of residence and office addresses.)

[Nominee responded and the information is contained in the committee's executive files.]

5. **Date and place of birth:**

May 23, 1954; Overbrook, PA.

6. **Marital Status:** (Include maiden name of wife or husband's name.)

Married to Virginia E. Rodriguez; Maiden name: Flaherty.

7. **Names and ages of children:**

Amy Marie Rodriguez, age 28.
 Melissa Rose Royer, age 26.
 David Francis Rodriguez, age 23.
 Andrew Scott Rodriguez, age 21.

8. **Government experience:** List any advisory, consultative, honorary or other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments, other than those listed in the service record extract provided to the committee by the executive branch.

None.

9. **Business relationships:** List all positions currently held as an officer, director, trustee, partner, proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, firm, partnership, or other business enterprise, educational or other institution.

None.

12. **Memberships:** List all memberships and offices held in professional, fraternal, scholarly, civic, business, charitable, and other organizations.

Association of the U.S. Army (member).

Veterans of Foreign Wars (member).

82nd Airborne Association (member).

11. **Honors and awards:** List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary society memberships, and any other special recognitions for outstanding service or achievements other than those listed on the service record extract provided to the committee by the executive branch.

None.

12. **Commitment to testify before Senate committees:** Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify upon request before any duly constituted committee of the Senate?

Yes.

13. **Personal views:** Do you agree, when asked before any duly constituted committee of Congress, to give your personal views, even if those views differ from the administration in power?

Yes.

[The nominee responded to Parts B–E of the committee questionnaire. The text of the questionnaire is set forth in the Appendix to this volume. The nominee’s answers to Parts B–E are contained in the committee’s executive files.]

SIGNATURE AND DATE

I hereby state that I have read and signed the foregoing Statement on Biographical and Financial Information and that the information provided therein is, to the best of my knowledge, current, accurate, and complete.

DAVID M. RODRIGUEZ.

This 24th day of August, 2012.

[The nomination of GEN David M. Rodriguez, USA, was reported to the Senate by Chairman Levin on February 26, 2013, with the recommendation that the nomination be confirmed. The nomination was confirmed by the Senate on March 5, 2013.]