

**Opening Statement of U.S. Senator John McCain  
Chairman, Senate Armed Services Committee**

**Room SD-G50  
Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Thursday, January 29, 2015**

**To receive testimony on global challenges and U.S. national security strategy.**

*(As Prepared for Delivery)*

Good morning. I will keep my comments brief in order to leave as much time for questions as possible.

The Senate Armed Services Committee meets today to receive testimony on global challenges and U.S. national security strategy. This is the third hearing in a series designed to examine the strategic context in which we find ourselves – one characterized by multiplying complex threats to our national security – and how that should inform the work of this committee and the Congress.

In testimony from General Brent Scowcroft, Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, General James Mattis, General Jack Keane, and Admiral William Fallon, we have heard consistent themes:

- Our foreign policy is strategically adrift and reactive;
- We must repeal defense budget sequestration because it is devastating our military's ability to keep America safe and defend our national interests around the world;
- We should not withdraw from Afghanistan on an arbitrary, calendar-based timeline, but according to conditions on the ground;
- We need a strategy that matches military means to the President's stated goal of "degrading and destroying" ISIL;
- And we need to give Ukraine the weapons it needs to defend its sovereign territory against Russian aggression.

I'm honored to welcome three former secretaries of state among our nation's most admired diplomats and public servants: Dr. Henry Kissinger, Dr. George Shultz and Dr. Madeleine Albright.

Our nation owes each of these statesmen a debt of gratitude for their years of service advancing our national interest. Secretary Schulz has held nearly every senior position of importance in our Federal Government during his illustrious career. Dr. Albright was an instrumental leader during key points in our nation's history, influencing policies in the Balkans and the Middle East. And finally, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the personal debt of gratitude that I owe to Dr. Kissinger.

When Henry came to Hanoi to conclude the agreement that would end America's war in Vietnam, the Vietnamese told him they would send me home with him. He refused the offer. "Commander McCain will return in the same order as the others," he told them. He knew my early release would be seen as favoritism to my father and a violation of our code of conduct. By rejecting this last attempt to suborn a dereliction of duty, Henry saved my only remaining possessions – my honor and my life. And for that, Henry, I am eternally grateful.

Thank you once again to all of our witnesses for being here today, and I look forward to your testimony.