

**HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON U.S.  
CENTRAL COMMAND AND U.S. SPECIAL OP-  
ERATIONS COMMAND IN REVIEW OF THE  
DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR  
FISCAL YEAR 2014 AND THE FUTURE YEARS  
DEFENSE PROGRAM**

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**TUESDAY, MARCH 5, 2013**

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:37 in room SH-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Senator Carl Levin (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Levin, Reed, Nelson, McCaskill, Hagan, Manchin, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Donnelly, Hirono, Kaine, King, Inhofe, McCain, Wicker, Ayotte, Fischer, Graham, Blunt, and Lee.

Committee staff members present: Peter K. Levine, staff director; and Leah C. Brewer, nominations and hearings clerk.

Majority staff members present: Richard W. Fieldhouse, professional staff member; Michael J. Kuiken, professional staff member; Jason W. Maroney, counsel; and Michael J. Noblet, professional staff member.

Minority staff members present: John A. Bonsell, minority staff director; Adam J. Barker, professional staff member; and Thomas W. Goffus, professional staff member.

Staff assistants present: Jennifer R. Knowles, Kathleen A. Kulenkampff, and Lauren M. Gillis.

Committee members' assistants present: Carolyn Chuhta, assistant to Senator Reed; Jeff Fatora, assistant to Senator Nelson; Jason Rauch, assistant to Senator McCaskill; Christopher Cannon, assistant to Senator Hagan; Mara Boggs, assistant to Senator Manchin; Chad Kreikemeier, assistant to Senator Shaheen; Elana Broitman, assistant to Senator Gillibrand; Marta McLellan Ross, assistant to Senator Donnelly; Nick Ikeda, assistant to Senator Hirono; Karen Courington, assistant to Senator Kaine; Steve Smith, assistant to Senator King; Christian Brose and Paul C. Hutton IV, assistants to Senator McCain; Lenwood Landrum, assistant to Senator Sessions; Brandon Bell, assistant to Senator Chambliss; Joseph Lai, assistant to Senator Wicker; Brad Bowman, assistant to Senator Ayotte; Peter Schirtzinger, assistant to Senator Fischer;

Craig Abele, assistant to Senator Graham; Charles Prosch, assistant to Senator Blunt; and Peter Blair, assistant to Senator Lee.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARL LEVIN, CHAIRMAN**

Chairman LEVIN. Good morning, everybody. This morning's hearing is the first in our annual series of posture hearings with the combatant commanders to receive testimony on the military strategy and operational requirements in their areas of responsibility. Our witnesses are two extraordinary military leaders: General James Mattis, Commander, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM); and Admiral Bill McRaven, Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM).

On behalf of our members, please pass along to the men and women serving in both CENTCOM and SOCOM for their dedication and their sacrifices; and we also thank their families, whose support is so essential to the wellbeing of their loved ones and to the wellbeing of our Nation.

General Mattis, this is your third and your last posture hearing before this committee and this committee has favorably reported out your successor, General Lloyd Austin, to the full Senate. General, we want to thank you for your more than 40 years of military service and your distinguished leadership of our Armed Forces.

This year's posture hearings with the combatant commanders are being held under the specter of budget sequestration, which threatens to impose arbitrary cuts on our military forces unrelated to our National security requirements. Already, sequestration is having an operational impact in the CENTCOM area, with the Defense Department's postponement of the deployment of the USS *Harry Truman* aircraft carrier to the Persian Gulf. I hope that General Mattis and Admiral McRaven will address the impacts and risks will address the impacts and risks associated with sequestration and with the expiration of the continuing resolution.

Our transition strategy in Afghanistan is entering a critical phase in the coming months. Afghan forces will move into the lead for security throughout Afghanistan beginning this spring. This transition has been under way for some time and Afghan forces are already in charge of security for more than 85 percent of the Afghan people.

This shift to an Afghan security lead is exemplified by the statistic that in 2012 Afghan forces for the first time suffered more casualties than coalition forces. As Afghan security forces are stepping, coalition forces are shifting to a support role, deploying security force assistance teams to advise and assist Afghan units throughout the end of 2014, when the ISAF mission ends. ISAF casualties are down and during a one-month stretch from mid-January to mid-February of this year ISAF forces suffered no fatalities.

But it seems the bad news out of Afghanistan is splashed across the headlines, while good news barely makes a ripple. The press gave wide coverage in December to the Defense Department report that found only 1 of 23 Afghan brigades was rated as independent by ISAF. Yet when Senator Reed and I visited Afghanistan in January and talked to our regional commanders, we learned that Afghan forces in the volatile and critical East Region have been suc-

cessfully conducting over 85 percent of the operations unilaterally, without coalition forces even being present.

Afghans want their own forces providing for their security and they have confidence in those forces. General Mattis, the committee would be interested in your assessment of whether our mission in Afghanistan is succeeding, whether our transition plan is on track, and whether the Afghan forces will be ready this spring to assume the lead for protecting the Afghan people throughout the country.

Last month President Obama announced plans for withdrawing by February of next year 34,000 of the 66,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan. As important as the size of the cuts in U.S. troop levels over the coming year is, the pace of those reductions is also important. The President has previously stated that cuts in U.S. forces would continue at a steady pace after the recovery of the U.S. surge force at the end of last summer. It's now being reported that the bulk of the withdrawal of the 34,000 troops is likely to occur next winter, after the 2013 fighting season. We need to understand what the pace of U.S. troop withdrawal will look like and how it fits with the overall transition strategy.

Looking ahead, significant challenges in Afghanistan remain. Fundamental to the country's stability will be a demonstrated commitment by the United States and the international community to an enduring relationship with Afghanistan. I am encouraged by reports that NATO defense ministers recently reconsidered plans to cut Afghan security forces by a third after 2014 and are now considering maintaining those forces at 352,000 at least through 2018. That sends an important signal of commitment to the Afghan people, to the Taliban, and to Afghanistan's neighbors.

Pakistan needs to recognize that an unstable Afghanistan is not in its interests, and Pakistan's continuing failure to address the safe havens for insurgents conducting cross-border attacks into Afghanistan will make it impossible for the United States to have a normal relationship with Pakistan.

In addition, the government of Afghanistan needs to address its failure to deliver services and also the rampant corruption that undermine the Afghan people's faith in their government's institutions.

The CENTCOM AOR also presents other vexing challenges. Iran's continued pursuit of its nuclear program is one of the most significant national security issues of this day. I believe most of the members of this committee share President Obama's view that all options, including military options, need to remain on the table and that preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon is not only our policy, but that we are determined to achieve that policy goal.

Iran is also actively expanding their threat network that has promoted violence across the region in Yemen, Gaza, Sudan, Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere. Iran continues to provide financial and material support through the Revolutionary Guard and Lebanese Hezbollah to groups seeking to overthrow or undermine governments or terrorize innocent civilians.

General Mattis and Admiral McRaven, you are the two commanders most involved in confronting these current challenges and planning for contingencies involving Iran. We look forward to hearing your views on these matters.

In Syria, the death toll continues to rise daily. The mass atrocities committed by the Assad regime over the past two years have solidified the commitment of all but a few in the international community that the required outcome in Syria is that Assad must go. The United States is the largest contributor of non-lethal and humanitarian aid to the international response efforts, but these contributions have not been enough. General Mattis, the committee looks forward to hearing your views on the situation in Syria and to learn of what our closest allies in the region say about the possibility of extending additional aid to the opposition.

The committee is also interested in our commanders' reactions to recent reports about U.S. counterterrorism operations and whether more of these counterterrorism operations should be conducted under Title 10 authorities. For example, Secretary Panetta said recently, "The advantage to it is that it becomes much more transparent in terms of what we're doing." He's referring, of course, to more counterterrorism operations being conducted under Title 10 authorities rather than Title 50.

John Brennan in his recent confirmation hearing to be Director of the CIA stated that "The CIA should not be doing traditional military activities and operations," and noted that "On the counterterrorism front, there are things the Agency has been involved in since September 11 that in fact have been a bit of an aberration from its traditional role."

Beyond the current conflict in Afghanistan and the fight against al Qaeda and its affiliates elsewhere, Admiral McRaven has spent significant time developing his vision for the future of Special Operations. In light of the continuing high demand for Special Operations throughout the world and the focus of last year's Defense Strategic Guidance on "innovative, low-cost, and small-footprint approaches" to achieve additional—"to achieve national security objectives, Admiral McRaven has rightly focused on the need to develop greater capabilities within our Special Operations Forces to engage with partner nation forces, with the goal of confronting mutual security challenges before they become threats to the United States or our interests overseas, what the Admiral calls "enhancing the global Special Operations network." Admiral McRaven, the committee looks forward to hearing more about any changes to existing authorities that you believe would help you be more effective in these areas.

Our Special Operations personnel and their families continue to face the highest operational tempo in their history. I understand SOCOM has documented the negative impact of these repeated high-stress deployments, including an increase in marital problems, substance abuse, and suicides, and now has a standing task force dedicated to helping special operators and their families deal with these issues.

Admiral, the committee would appreciate your assessment on the state of your forces and the adequacy of the support provided by the military services and SOCOM to address the unique challenges in the Special Operations community.

Senator Inhofe.

**STATEMENT OF SENATOR JAMES M. INHOFE**

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, there are a lot of the things you've covered I was going to, so I'll just paraphrase some of the concerns.

First of all, I appreciated the opportunity to meet with both of you, and also appreciate your long years of service. But I think you'd have to agree, as we discussed, that you probably have not faced the situation that you're facing today. With the cuts that we've already sustained and then with sequestration coming up, with the CR problems that are there, it is in fact unprecedented.

Anticipating that this might be a possibility, about 6 weeks ago we introduced legislation that would allow the Service Chiefs to make determinations, as opposed to just the straight cut that would come with sequestration. I called all five Service Chiefs, including the Guard, and asked them, if we were in a position where, taking the same top line, the cuts that we are mandated for the military, if you could take that and operate within that and make the determinations as to where those cuts would be, would that be less devastating than if you just went ahead and did it with the straight-line cuts? They all said yes.

Then the second question I asked them is: Do you have time to do that between now and the next six weeks, as we approach the 1st of March? And they assured me that they did. So we're kind of looking at that right now. I'm hoping we'll be able to pass this and give that added ability to make determinations within the same amount of money, that would be less devastating.

General Mattis, I think as we look at CENTCOM one of the biggest problems there, as we've talked about, is Iran. The influence continues to spread across the Middle East, into Africa, Europe, and the Pacific. They're developing more complex anti-access and anti-denial weapons than simultaneously before. We all know that our unclassified intelligence said way back in 2007 that they are gaining this capability, nuclear capability, and they should have it, that along with a delivery system, by 2015. They're having a lot of influence over the surrounding areas. Assad in Syria is getting a lot of his stuff from Iran. The flow of Syrian refugees into Jordan and Lebanon will probably exceed more than a million as quickly as June of this year.

So all these problems that are out there, and we've talked about these and we know how serious it is. It is unprecedented.

Admiral McRaven, as commander of SOCOM you play an instrumental role in shaping our global counterterrorism campaign. Despite our successes in the battlefield, al Qaeda and affiliated terrorist organizations remain resilient and have developed sophisticated networks that transcend national borders.

So you've both got your work cut out for you, and I can't think of two better people to take on this huge responsibility right now than the two of you. I appreciate very much your service and what you're going to be rendering that addresses our problems today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you so much, Senator Inhofe.

General Mattis, let's start with you.

**STATEMENT OF GEN. JAMES N. MATTIS, USMC, COMMANDER,  
U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND**

General MATTIS. Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Inhofe, members of the committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I have submitted a written statement and request it be accepted for the record.

Chairman LEVIN. And it will be.

General MATTIS. It's my privilege to appear alongside stalwart shipmate and friend Admiral Bill McRaven. We have worked together for many years and continue to do so.

In the Middle East, we confront what is a significant risk to our interests in the region, specifically a perceived lack of an enduring U.S. commitment. To counter this misperception, we must clearly communicate our intent and demonstrate our support through tangible actions.

In Afghanistan, we are conducting a steady and deliberate transition. U.S. leadership among 50 nations fighting together in the largest wartime coalition in modern history provide continued support of the Afghan security forces as they set conditions for their long-term success.

Iran remains the single most significant regional threat to stability and prosperity. Reckless behavior and bellicose rhetoric characterize a leadership that cannot win the affection of its own people or the respect of any responsible nation in the region. Iran's continued support to the murderous Assad regime in Syria, coupled with its malign activities in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Bahrain, Yemen, and Gaza, and globally in Sudan, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Thailand, India, Georgia, Bulgaria, Nigeria, and even here in Washington, DC, in an attempt to kill the Saudi ambassador, and elsewhere in the world, as well as in the cyber domain, raise the risk of Iranian miscalculation that could spark a disastrous conflict.

As we address the very real challenges we collectively face, I am confident U.S. Central Command will continue working by, with, and through our regional partners to ensure a measure of stability in the region. Our military- to-military engagements, security cooperation efforts, exercise programs, and information operations will continue to need your support, including innovative and flexible authorities and the necessary funds, so we can continue doing what is required to protect U.S. national security interests.

As our Nation confronts a period of fiscal austerity, our ability to adapt our ways and means to continue to meet our operational objectives is impacted by three key factors: first, my need for budget certainty. Right now I do not have any budget certainty. Second, my need for time to adapt to reduced budgets and take the cuts smartly. Specifically, my third request is for flexibility to determine where to shift available funds in a manner that reduces risks and consistent with the intent of Congress, and of course much of that flexibility must be granted to the service chiefs.

With your support and with the continued devotion to duty of our troops and the commitment of our military families, we will stand by our friends to maintain a measure of regional stability in defense of our values and our interests.

I look forward, Mr. Chairman, to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Mattis follows:]  
Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, General.  
Admiral McRaven.

**STATEMENT OF ADM WILLIAM H. McRAVEN, USN,  
COMMANDER, U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND**

Admiral McRAVEN. Good morning. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Inhofe, distinguished members of the committee: I also appreciate the opportunity to address the committee today and talk about the magnificent work being accomplished around the globe by the men and women of the U.S. Special Operations Command. And, sir, I have also submitted a statement for the record.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Admiral McRAVEN. Sir, before I begin, however, I would like to recognize my colleague, my mentor, and my friend, General Jim Mattis. In the coming months, sir, as you know, General Mattis will be completing a 41-year career in the service of our country. During that time he has fought in every major conflict in his era. He has led soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines with a degree of caring, passion, and professionalism that would make every American proud.

General Mattis has always been known for two things, his incredible operational acumen and his candor. I know of no other general who is as well versed in the art of war and no other man who speaks his mind the way Jim Mattis does. Every warrior who has ever served by his side feels honored and privileged to have done so, and I count myself in that group.

Jim, you have been particularly supportive of the men and women of Special Operations and on behalf of all those great warriors and Americans everywhere I salute you for your service and your sacrifice to this Nation. It has been my distinct honor to have served with you.

Mr. Chairman, this is my second opportunity to address this committee since I took command in the summer of 2011. Since that time, I'm proud to say we have continued the great work initiated by my predecessor Admiral Eric Olson, and at the same time we have adapted to the changing strategic and fiscal environment to keep SOF relevant now and in the future.

In Afghanistan, we helped establish a new SOF command structure which brought the various NATO and U.S. SOF elements into alignment under a two-star headquarters. This has allowed the Special Operations Forces to have a common view of the enemy and synchronize our SOF to achieve a common end state. It has made SOF even more effective than ever before.

Partnered with our Afghan SOF, we have continued to attrite the enemy leadership, while at the same time building and training Afghan security forces so they can stand on their own against this determined threat.

In addition to Afghanistan, Special Operations Forces are in 78 countries around the world. At the request of those nations, we are helping to build their SOF capacity and strengthen our partnership and allied networks to deal with the unpredictable and complex threat we face today.

In the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance, former Secretary of Defense Panetta wrote: “We are shaping a joint force for the future that will be smaller and leaner, but will be agile, flexible, ready, and technologically advanced. It will have cutting edge capabilities, exploiting our technology, joint and networked advantage. It will be led by the highest quality, battle-tested professionals. It will have a global presence, strengthening alliances and partnerships across all regions.”

I believe the Secretary’s words speak to the core capabilities of SOF and therefore SOCOM is working with the Joint Chiefs and OSD to ensure we are postured now and into the future to meet the objectives of the strategy.

Finally, I have made the caring for our force and their families my top priority. In the past year, my command sergeant major and I have met with the soldiers and their families from around the SOCOM enterprise. We have listened to their concerns and, with the support of the services, we are aggressively implementing programs and plans to help with the physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing of the force. We have a professional and moral obligation to take care of our warriors and their families, and we greatly appreciate the support of this committee and other members on the Hill in our efforts to take care of these men and women.

Thank you again for your commitment to the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines and civilians of the Department of Defense, and specifically those great warriors who make up the Special Operations Command. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Admiral McRaven follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you so much, Admiral.

We’re going to have a 7-minute first round.

Admiral, let me start with you. Relative to Afghanistan, we read frequently that only one of 23 Afghan brigades was rated by ISAF as being at the highest capability level, and that’s independent with advisers. Now, at the same time we also know and have read—Senator Reed and I went to Afghanistan, so we know first-hand—that 70 to 80 percent of the operations that take place in many regions, including the toughest regions of Afghanistan, are taking place with not just the leadership, but with totally Afghan involvement.

Now, those reports seem to be inconsistent. Can you tell us in your judgment whether or not, first of all, is our mission succeeding in Afghanistan, first of all? But second, can you tell us about the capabilities of the Afghan security forces and whether they are on track for where we expected them to be at this point in the campaign plan, with a little over 20 months to go before the end of the ISAF mission?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I’ll defer to General Mattis—

Chairman LEVIN. I thought I would start with General Mattis on this.

Admiral MCRAVEN. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Did I say you, Admiral? I’m sorry.

General MATTIS. Mr. Chairman, our mission is succeeding. The Afghan campaign is on track. It is obviously a combination of progress and violence, but I would say when it comes down to the



ANSF, the Afghan National Security Forces, they are proving themselves capable. Obviously, when we were looking at the draw-down numbers there was a certain amount of forecasting that the Afghan forces would be capable.

Let me just give you some statistics that take this beyond simply my evaluation. Since the 1st of January, we have lost four U.S. troops, four of our wonderful troops killed in action. In the same period, the Afghan security forces have lost 198 killed. There can be no longer any doubt. It's not opinion; it's now a fact: The Afghans are doing the bulk of the fighting, and they are doing it with our support.

As a result, I need to go back and look at these statistics and how we're evaluating forces that are proving themselves in combat, when on the other hand we're saying only one is capable of independent operations with our advisers. I think we may have to relook at how we're measuring them, since obviously in the field they're measuring themselves against the enemy and they are proving themselves there.

As far as the ANSF itself, we are continuing to see them mature and, with our advisers, many of them from the Special Forces, but also from our conventional forces, as confidence builders, as bringing American air power to bear, that sort of enabling function, we are seeing that these lads are willing to take it to the enemy, and I think the Taliban has very little reason for comfort right now.

Chairman LEVIN. General, do you support the decision of the President relative to the reduction plan that he's announced in our troops, as well as the pace of those reductions? Do you support that decision?

General MATTIS. The second part of your question makes it—

Chairman LEVIN. The numbers and pace.

General MATTIS. Yes, sir. The pace is what makes it possible for me to support it fully. The pace, by not bringing the American forces down until after this year's fighting season, and with what we're seeing of the Afghan security forces, gives me a lot of confidence we're on track. I support the pace and I support the number.

Chairman LEVIN. When you say what we're seeing of the Afghan forces, you're talking about a positive trend in the capability of those forces as well as the size?

General MATTIS. Absolutely. They are getting better each day, and with 87 percent of the country now under their lead and them proving themselves in combat, yes, sir, I support it.

Chairman LEVIN. There's been a decision made to reconsider any reduction in the size of the Afghan troops. There was a NATO decision some months ago that the goal was to reduce them by 2015, I believe, by about a third, and now that's going to be reconsidered. Do you agree that we should keep them at their current level, which is much higher than 250,000? It's about 350,000, I believe.

General MATTIS. Yes, Mr. Chairman, it's 352,000, and I completely support that. That's the way to do it as we draw our forces down, to make certain the enemy does not see an opportunity there.

Chairman LEVIN. Now, relative to Iran, I think most of us agree with the position of the President, as I said, that military options

need to be kept on the table if necessary to prevent Iran from moving to nuclear weapons. Are those military option plans being developed? Are they developed now?

General MATTIS. Those plans are fully developed, Mr. Chairman.  
Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Syria. This question relates to arming the opposition in Syria. Should we now provide lethal assistance to the Syrian opposition, and—well, let me start with that. Should we now move to providing lethal assistance?

General MATTIS. Mr. Chairman, the situation is so complex that I have to get some degree of confidence that the weapons that we would be arming them with are not going to people who are our enemies. That would be the one caveat that I would put on any military advice to go forward along those lines. We don't want to inadvertently, with the best of intentions, arm people who are basically sworn enemies.

Chairman LEVIN. You say you would have to get some degree of confidence in order to make that recommendation. As of this time, do you have that level of confidence yet?

General MATTIS. I do not, Mr. Chairman. But I have not been tasked with this mission, so I have not—I have not looked deeply into this yet, either.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

General, there's a real threat of violence to the Christian communities in Iraq. My question to you is whether or not in your judgment the Iraqi security forces are taking the threat of violence against those Christian communities seriously and whether, if not—and I believe that they are not—what can we do to make sure that they do it?

General MATTIS. Mr. Chairman, Iraq itself is in a post-combat but prereconciliation situation, I believe. They are still working out how they settle their differences politically. So far they are imperfectly, imperfectly, working without resorting to violence. Al Qaeda, as you know, is conducting most of the violence.

So long as they continue to try to work these issues out politically, I believe that in the long run it's the rule of law and the political resolution of challenges that provide for all minorities in Iraq the best opportunity to live safely. The military itself, when I see them in action trying to work it out with the Kurdish situation to the north, appear to be willing to negotiate, to talk, not to go to arms. I see them doing the same thing pretty much with the Sunni troubles they're having out west. That's the sort of role I think of a military, to try and buttress law and the rule of law and not to try to provide security as the sole solution to that problem.

Chairman LEVIN. I do hope that you and your successor will look for ways that we can press the Iraqis to do what they committed to do, which is to protect minorities inside of Iraq.

General MATTIS. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Senator Inhofe.

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In my opening statement I talked about what we did in—right now it's Senator Toomey and I kind of headed up the effort to allow more flexibility if the chiefs—and I mentioned to you that I talked

to the chiefs about this and they responded pretty strongly that, yes, in the same top line, operating with the same amount of money, would we be able to get—to reduce the devastation, I guess is the best way to put it.

Would you agree, each one of you, agree with the chiefs' comments? And any comments you'd like to make about what type of thing we could do under that arrangement that we couldn't do with just straight—with the straight cuts?

General MATTIS. Senator, I believe that if we got some degree of budget certainty through an appropriations bill that provides us as much as the continuing resolution does now, so we know for certain what we're dealing with, then, like any household or business in America, we can make some wise choices. And the flexibility you're talking about for the service chiefs would be critical to those choices, obviously consistent with the Congressional intent. But yes, sir, we need that.

Senator INHOFE. Well, I would say this. Written into the draft is the assurance that we're going to follow the legislative intent of this committee. So it has that level of discipline. It also has the level of discipline that they're going to be able to have some type of a Congressional oversight or veto power over decisions that might be made if they were to be influenced in the wrong way.

Do you have any comments about that, Admiral McRaven?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Sir, I absolutely concur with the service chiefs. We at SOCOM have obviously the same dilemma. As you know, I've got a budget—I have kind of service-like responsibilities as well as combatant commander responsibilities. And under that my ability to manage the cuts, the way they are aligned now, is difficult. It's an across-the-board cut, as you mentioned.

So any flexibility in dealing with those cuts would be tremendously helpful to me and my staff.

Senator INHOFE. I appreciate that very much.

Chairman Levin mentioned, General Mattis—well, I guess to both of you—about supporting arming the opposition in Syria. Of course, you gave your answer, but I would like to ask you, closely connected to that, what is your assessment of how long the Assad regime can hold onto the power in at least the sub-region, a sub-region of Syria?

It's my understanding along the coast and then perhaps the hockey stick going up to Damascus might be the area where he would have most control. But the other area, what's your assessment as to how long he'd be able to hold onto power in that area?

General MATTIS. We're dealing with a fundamentally unpredictable situation. However, it is—his power base is eroding. The geographic area he controls is eroding daily. You see him using ballistic missiles in order to try to impact those areas he's lost control on. Notice how the increased use of those missiles over the last month or two has been evident.

So he is losing ground. I really don't have the ability to forecast this well, Senator. I'd hate to give you some kind of certainty that I don't sense right now.

Senator INHOFE. You know, he's losing ground, but at the same time there's more stuff that's coming out of Iran to fortify him. It's a tough area over there, more so than it's ever been before.

Admiral McRaven, as we discussed during our meeting last week, we're seeing that al Qaeda and other terrorist groups are developing operational networks that are increasingly complex. I think you are the one who had stated that we can no longer go after terrorist groups in an ad hoc, country by country basis if we hope to be successful. Yet, I'm very concerned that's exactly what we've been doing.

Do you believe that our current counterterrorism strategy has kept pace with the increasing globalization in the nature of al Qaeda and affiliated terrorist networks?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Senator, I certainly think we understand the complexity of the al Qaeda network. If you look in Africa as an example, you have al Qaeda in the Islamic Lands of the Maghreb, and we know that they are partnered or linked with Boca Haram out of Nigeria. So you certainly cannot isolate a single organization, whether it's al Qaeda in the Islamic Lands of the Maghreb or Boca Haram, and expect to be able to solve the problem either locally by going after that problem in a particular country or by individual entity. If you deal with AQIM, you probably have to deal with Boca Haram.

Senator INHOFE. You mentioned Africa. Most people think the problem is just North Africa or up around the Horn of Africa, when in fact there's now evidence throughout Africa. I know if you talk to General Ham he'll tell you the evidence that he has now of the presence of these terrorist groups in other parts of Africa. So I think it is widespread.

Last question I'd have. In your professional opinion, are the current diplomatic and economic efforts to stop Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons capability, are they working?

General MATTIS. No, sir.

Senator INHOFE. How do you think Iran's behavior would change after it obtains—let's assume that they obtain nuclear weapons and that capability, which our intelligence says they're going to obtain. How do you think their behavior would change after that?

General MATTIS. Senator, you know what our policy is, but I believe the reason for that policy is they would be more emboldened to act more like a revolutionary cause vice a responsible country.

Senator INHOFE. I think so, too. And I think it's important that we understand that this thing that we've talked about since 2007, with their emerging capabilities, nuclear capabilities, delivery systems, it's getting worse all the time. I just think we need to keep talking about that. Do you agree the that, Admiral McRaven?

Admiral MCRAVEN. I do, yes, sir.

Senator INHOFE. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you so much, Senator Inhofe.

Senator Reed.

Senator REED. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to add my commendations, General Mattis, along with your colleague and my colleagues for your extraordinary service to the Nation and to your Marines. Thank you, sir, very much.

Let me begin by asking a question, a specific question about Afghanistan to both of you. Recently President Karzai declared that Special Operations Forces couldn't operate in a certain province

south of Kabul. Does that affect the short or long-run plans to deploy Special Operations as part of our withdrawal? Is it something that you can cope with in one instance, but if it develops to a wider scale it would interfere dramatically with your operations and our withdrawal?

General MATTIS. I just spoke with General Dunford a short time ago. That issue is being worked right now. It is not operant right now, that decision that you've heard about. So we're working this out as we speak.

Obviously, we'd be reluctant to see our forces unable to operate there. But at the same time, I think this is being worked at the appropriate level with the responsible people working with the president.

Senator REED. So you at this juncture feel you can reverse what appeared to be a final decision. And going forward, though, I presume from your answer is that the need to operate rather freely throughout Afghanistan by Special Operations troops is essential to the withdrawal plans?

General MATTIS. Senator Reed, I think the decision was not taken, either—it's not just reversing it; it's crafting how best we operate in Wardak Province, which is a key route into Kabul. So I think it's still in place, sir, and I can get back to you once the decision's made.

Senator REED. Let me just—the larger issue here is, to the extent—implicit in your plans for a phasedown of American forces, I always assumed was a robust Special Operations capacity that could operate throughout the country. Is that still central to your plan? Is that something that's still viable?

General MATTIS. It is, sir. Two purposes. One is counterterrorism; the other is advise, train, and assist the Afghans in their counterterrorism effort. So it's a twofold effort.

Senator REED. Admiral McRaven, do you have any comments?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Sir, the Special Operations forces that we've got in Afghanistan, as you know, are partnered with our Afghan SOF. So as you look at Special Operations Forces, nowadays you can't look independently at U.S. or NATO forces alone. We have Commando Candaks that we have built. We have Afghan Special Forces that are out there. So there is a network of SOF that is being applied across the area of operations that deal with the threat.

Senator REED. Let me ask another question about going forward. There's an issue of size of the force. There's also an issue of the pace of the force. But there's an issue also of the role of the force. There's been some discussion, and I don't know how far along, that these residual forces could be institutional-based trainers only, not embedded with Afghan forces, ANSF.

Is your vision that you will have embedded forces with them or is it simply going to be institutional trainers in bases?

General MATTIS. Senator, we're going to have to watch how the Afghan forces mature. I anticipate there will be some embedding going on, whether it be with their special forces or their conventional forces. But at the current rate of maturation, they are actually becoming quite impressive in their ability to operate against this enemy.

So we've got some time yet, a year and a half to go, as we get them up on the step for when we will draw down to the enduring force. During this period we'll figure out what level of embedding has to be there and what level NATO forces are willing to commit to.

Senator REED. A final question on this area, Admiral McRaven. You still retain the capability of striking anywhere in that region if there is a high-value target as you go forward in terms of whether or not there's access to certain bases in Afghanistan or other parts of the world? You can do that from aerial platforms, from sea-based platforms, or from alternate land-based platforms. That capacity or capability exists?

Admiral MCRAVEN. It does, Senator.

Senator REED. Thank you.

Let me turn quickly to the issue of Syria. As many people assume, the Assad regime is deteriorating rapidly. So let's just assume at some point it fails. What planning is going on, General Mattis, for any type of stability operations internationally to prevent a descent into anarchy there that would be disruptive for the whole region?

General MATTIS. Senator, we have some quiet planning going on with regional partners and with other partners, to see what level of ambition and what regional leadership could take on this mission. Clearly, it would be something best accomplished with a regional leader, regional organization. After the Russians' regrettable veto in the United Nations, we probably have fewer options in terms of a UN-led effort or -sanctioned effort. But at the same time, there are regional organizations—Arab League, GCC—that may be able to take this on.

We are doing some planning with the regional militaries and getting basically a framework for what this would look like sir.

Senator REED. Let me ask a follow-on question. What do you think the reactions of the Iranians would be to a collapse of the Assad government?

General MATTIS. The collapse of the Assad regime, sir—

Senator REED. Yes, sir.

General MATTIS.—would be the biggest strategic setback for Iran in 25 years. I believe they will arm militias inside the country to try to create a Lebanese Hezbollah-type effect, and they would redouble their efforts vis a vis Iraq, Bahrain, Yemen, and elsewhere. I think that's on a strategic plane what we would see as far as their shift.

Senator REED. And part of our reaction would be to plan for that contingency explicitly?

General MATTIS. And we are, Senator.

Senator REED. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Reed.

Senator Wicker.

Senator WICKER. Thank you very much.

General Mattis, appreciate your service and good luck in your retirement.

I notice the map that you passed around about the area of responsibility for the commander of CENTCOM. It ranges all the way

from Kazakhstan to the north down to Yemen in the south and over to Egypt. About half the Arab world, half the population of the Arab world, lives in Egypt, is that correct, General Mattis?

General MATTIS. I think it's well over a third anyway, yes, sir. Senator WICKER. A good portion.

We just had an amendment a few weeks ago offered to actually a storm relief bill on the floor of the Senate. It would have prohibited our sale of F-16 aircraft from the United States to the Egyptian military. Did you follow that issue, General Mattis?

General MATTIS. Yes, sir, I did.

Senator WICKER. As a matter of fact, Senator McCain took the point on that on the Senate floor and made an impassioned plea for us not to abandon the chance of improved relationships with the Egyptian military. I just wonder, was Senator McCain correct? I voted with him on that, to not abandon our sale of F-16's to Egypt.

What advice would you give us going forward, because we may have to take further votes on that? What advice would you give? What effect would the termination of that sale be on our relationship and our chances of having any kind of meaningful relationship with the Egyptian military?

General MATTIS. Sir, I strongly endorse the administration's position and Senator McCain's position. I will tell you that I was just in Cairo a short time ago and our ambassador, one of the best ambassadors we have in the Foreign Service, Ambassador Anne Patterson, also endorsed it.

The bottom line is, Senator, that the Egyptian military through a very difficult period has maintained and even built trust with the Egyptian people. They have made clear their expectation that Egypt will maintain its international treaties. That includes the one with peace with Israel. They are the people what provide extra security when my ships go through the Suez Canal. The Gaza area has probably not been this quiet in ten years, and in no small part the Egyptian military is doing quiet operations in the Sinai to help keep it that way.

I think anything right now that we do that would undercut the trust between the U.S., the U.S. military, and the Egyptian military would be extremely unhelpful.

Senator WICKER. Now, what do you think the advice of the Israeli government would be to policymakers such as us with regard to that F-16 sale? Because I'll tell you, I've gotten a lot of mail and a lot of emails from people in Mississippi very supportive of the Nation of Israel, and they say, how could you agree to the sale of these F-16's to Egypt when that could be so harmful to Israel? What would your answer be to that?

General MATTIS. Sir, I won't speak for what Israel thinks about this. I can't do that. But I would tell you that the chief of defense of Israel was in my office a week ago and this issue did not come up.

Second, as far as how to respond to your constituents, it is the Egyptian military right now, sir, that is the bulwark in the Sinai against the threats, the extremist threats against Israel, against Egypt, against all of us. So the Egyptian military is the organization committed, alongside as part of their government, but cer-

tainly have been very outspoken about maintaining the peace treaty, the international treaty. So it should not be seen as an enemy. It should be seen as a stabilizing force in the region, unlike, I might add, the military in Libya that fought alongside Qadafi or directed by Qadafi, unlike the military in Syria. We have a military that did not act that way when Egypt went through its transition.

Senator WICKER. Thank you.

General MATTIS. So it's a stabilizing force.

Senator WICKER. That's very helpful information.

Let me just switch to something. I had to step out of the room to go meet with a very distinguished group of four retired admirals and generals representing the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition. Are you at all familiar with this coalition, General Mattis?

General MATTIS. Only very, very little. I've heard about them.

Senator WICKER. Let me tell you. They are a group of more than 120 retired three and four-star generals and admirals, and they are coming on the Hill today to meet with members of Congress, not about the military budget, but about the international affairs budget, in other words what we call in shorthand foreign aid. Their message to me was what to some people might be a surprising message: We need to be very careful about cuts in foreign aid. They view it, General, as working hand in glove with our security operations that you two gentlemen are involved in.

So I just wondered if you would comment on that. Have you observed that the international development budget is helpful to us in providing national defense for our country?

General MATTIS. Yes, sir. I would start with the Department of State budget. Frankly, they need to be as fully funded as Congress believes appropriate, because if you don't fund the State Department fully then I need to buy more ammunition ultimately. So I think it's a cost-benefit ratio. The more that we put into the State Department's diplomacy, hopefully the less we have to put into a military budget as we deal with the outcome of an apparent American withdrawal from the international scene.

Senator WICKER. I see. To both of you: As I say, I had to step out and I understand a question was asked with regard to sequestration and the CR and the advice I think that you have for us is we at least need to go ahead with the full appropriation bill for the entire fiscal year.

But let me just make sure I get this answer. Would flexibility help you two gentlemen in getting through the sequestration issue? In other words, if the Congress gave you, not the meat axe across-the-board arbitrary cuts, but the ability to pick and choose, would you be better off in performing your missions?

General MATTIS. From CENTCOM's point of view, sir, I'd just tell you that the full appropriations bill would give us the predictability, the flexibility you refer to. It would be critical to the service chiefs to carry out their responsibilities and lower the risk of less money available to us.

Admiral MCRAVEN. Sir, I think the flexibility would certainly allow us to manage our money towards those areas that are at most high risk right now. So certainly having the ability to manage our own budget, recognizing the cuts that are coming, would be very beneficial to us.



Senator WICKER. Thank you very much, and thank you both for your service.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Wicker.

Senator Nelson.

Senator NELSON. Thank you, gentlemen, for your service.

Recently the Navy announced that it was going to delay the deployment of an aircraft carrier over into the CENTCOM AOR because of the sequestration threat. Can you speak to that?

General MATTIS. Well, sir, ships are expensive articles to operate. We all know that. She will be maintained at an enhanced readiness level. I was on board USS *Harry Truman* and spoke with Admiral Kevin Sweeney about two weeks ago, and he assures me his air wing and his ship will be ready to deploy on short notice.

I still have one carrier out there, and I would just caution any enemy that might look at it as an opportunity to take advantage of this situation that that would be very ill-advised. If the President orders us into action, I have what it takes to make it the enemy's longest day and their worst day, and we'll get the other carrier out there quickly to reinforce.

Senator NELSON. If the President decided that the second carrier needed to be out there, what is the transit time from the time that he would give the order?

General MATTIS. Sir, the carrier, just knowing the U.S. Navy, would deploy faster than it's required to. Right now it's on 21-day ready to deploy orders. I believe they would be out of port faster than that, and would take probably about 14 days to get her into theater.

Senator NELSON. So even if you cut the 21 days in half, say down to 10 days, plus 14, you're talking a total of 24 days before it could be on station?

General MATTIS. That's correct, Senator. I can buy the time.

Senator NELSON. When was the *Harry Truman* scheduled to depart?

General MATTIS. It was about 2 weeks ago, Senator. I'd have to get you the specific date.

Senator NELSON. Well, I ask the questions for the obvious reasons, that here is a good example of what you had planned in the way of readiness, because of some ridiculous budgetary ultimate decision is causing you not to have that second carrier out there on station.

Would that carrier have the opportunity to be diverted into the Mediterranean instead of going to the Persian Gulf region?

General MATTIS. Sir, that would of course be up to the Secretary of Defense, which combatant commander gets her. But I've always thought most combatant commanders end up just forwarding personnel and ships for my use, so I'm pretty sure I could get her.

Senator NELSON. Coming back to Syria, which is in your AOR, and that's why I ask about sending it to the Mediterranean as opposed to the Persian Gulf. It seems that on the one hand we have a Assad and on the other hand we have a group that's fighting Assad that increasingly al Nasra, which is in bed with al Qaeda, is trying to take over. That doesn't give us much of a choice between those two.

Do you have any reason for optimism that the anti-Assad forces are going to win out that are more amenable to us than al Nasra?

General MATTIS. Senator, the al Nasra, they have a good propaganda campaign. They're using humanitarian aid, they're using their weaponry and their skilled foreign fighters to dig their roots into this. But at the same time, they have a philosophy that is not admired by a lot of the people who are fighting Assad. So there's nothing certain about them coming out on top in this, but it could be very messy.

The regional powers that are supporting the anti-Assad forces obviously have no truck with al Nasra and I think that you'll see more support continued for non-al Nasra elements. But it is the intertwining that concerns me.

Senator NELSON. Admiral, you want to characterize for the committee any effects of sequestration on your ability to deploy Special Operations troops anywhere where there might be a flare-up?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Thank you, Senator. Obviously, we've got kind of the perfect storm here, with the continuing resolution and the sequestration. Right now the CR actually hurts us more than the sequestration does at this point. The CR for me is about \$1.5 billion, but, getting back to Senator Wicker's point, I'm unable to manage some of the issues in terms of the MILCON and new starts and some of the adjustments that need to be made.

So the CR not only precludes me from spending at the fiscal year 2013 level, as you know, pushing me back to fiscal year 2012, but it also kind of limits what I can do there. Then you add on top of that sequestration for me, which is about \$900 million, and again unable to kind of manage that money. It's about a 23 percent cut in SOCOM's available resources.

So what does that equate to? For me it is a function of readiness, but not necessarily readiness forward deployed. We are managing the forward-deployed readiness, but frankly that's coming at the expense of our training base back in CONUS. So my concern, sir, is not for the immediate future.

I think I can manage that with the resources we have. But we are beginning to create a readiness problem if we don't resolve the CR and/or have an opportunity to manage the sequestration money, because I'm already cutting 60 percent of my flying hours back in CONUS. I'm reducing also some of my deployments, about 20 percent of my deployments going forward.

So again, kind of a perfect storm of fiscal problems for us, sir.

Senator NELSON. I want to ask you something down in the weeds. Last year the Defense Department transitioned the Defense HUMINT Service to the Defense Clandestine Service. How do you anticipate that this is going to affect SOCOM's operations?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Sir, we've been working with the Defense Intelligence Agency and the intel community to help support the movement forward of the Defense Clandestine Service. I'd prefer to talk in closed session on some of the details of that, but in total we think it's a very good plan. We like the direction and the initiative of the Defense Clandestine Service. It puts us, U.S. SOCOM, in a position to have more collectors supporting the Defense Intelligence Agency. So I'm very much behind it, sir.

Senator NELSON. Well, as you know, in the past specifically you and the CIA have gotten along so well, and yet there is some concern about the two stepping on each other as you're moving forward with this DCS.

Admiral MCRAVEN. Yes, sir. We're working very closely with the Agency on this and I think we each understand kind of our lanes in the road. The DCS is really about kind of military intelligence and obviously the Agency has a different mandate in that term. So I'm pretty comfortable and I think the senior leadership of the Agency would tell you that they're pretty comfortable with the direction we're heading on Defense Clandestine Service.

Senator NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Nelson.

Senator Ayotte.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank both of our witnesses for their distinguished service to our country. General Mattis, we will certainly miss you, and thank you for everything that you've done for our country.

I wanted to follow up. Senator Inhofe had asked you, General Mattis, about your professional opinion on whether current diplomatic and economic efforts will stop Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons capability, and I believe you said no. So if that is the case, right now as I understand it the economic sanctions that we have imposed on Iran are having a very significant negative impact on their economy and their currency, correct?

General MATTIS. Yes, ma'am, they are.

Senator AYOTTE. So if we don't—if current diplomatic and economic sanctions will not stop us—stop them in your opinion from obtaining nuclear weapons capability, what do you think that they are doing now with negotiations? Are they trying to delay us again and continuing to enrich?

General MATTIS. Ma'am, just to be clear, I fully support the economic sanctions. I fully support the diplomatic isolation and accruing the international community's support to try to stop this. I believe they are trying to buy time with the negotiations, but that should not be in any way construed as we should not try to negotiate. I still support the direction we're taking. I'm paid to take a rather dim view of the Iranians, frankly.

Senator AYOTTE. Well, it's understandable why you would be taking a dim view, how you describe their activities around the world in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen. I dare say that we can't think of another country that is doing more damage in terms of terrorism around the world and hurting our interests and those of our allies. Would you agree?

General MATTIS. I would agree strongly with what you just said, ma'am.

Senator AYOTTE. So if we are in a position where—what is their history, by the way, in terms of using negotiations to delay and continuing to enrich? Do they have a history of doing that?

General MATTIS. They have a history of denial and deceit, ma'am.

Senator AYOTTE. So in the recent P5 Plus 1 negotiations we offered, the group offered, basically that we would back off on some of the sanctions if they agreed to keep enrichment levels at 20 per-

cent. And Iran as I understand it—we were not able to come to an agreement there. Is that right, General Mattis?

General MATTIS. I believe they agreed to meet again, Senator. But again, I think this was negotiations. I mean, there's nothing final about it. This is a give and take.

Senator AYOTTE. Well, here's our problem. If they have a history of using negotiations as a dilatory tactic while they're continuing to enrich and march toward nuclear weapons and we know how dangerous that they are, how do we stop this pattern to make sure that they know that we are serious that we will not accept them having a nuclear weapon?

General MATTIS. Senator, I think that the more that we can accommodate a larger coalition against them—I believe that in some ways we have to recognize Iran's legitimate security interests so they are not put in a position to use illegitimate means such as we're observing to address their legitimate security interests. I think that we continue everything we're doing right now, but, as the President has said, he's taken no option off the table and my role is to provide him military options.

Senator AYOTTE. How important is it that we stop Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon?

General MATTIS. I would just echo the President's words. The Commander in Chief has said it's unacceptable and I believe it's absolutely important.

Senator AYOTTE. In your view, based on your position, on a scale of one to ten in terms of danger to the world and to our country, where would you put them obtaining a nuclear weapon, ten being the highest danger?

General MATTIS. Ma'am, it would be dangerous because it would enable Iran to continue to act like a revolutionary cause vice a responsible country, and they would sense fewer limitations and more invulnerability to conducting the kind of attacks to kill Israeli tourists in Bulgaria, provide MANPAD's to Yemen, which they were just caught at. I believe we would see more of this irresponsible, reckless behavior.

Senator AYOTTE. Given the fact that they use negotiations to delay and continuing to enrich, why wouldn't we consider just cutting off negotiations and saying, here's the bottom line, Iran; otherwise we're going to act, because I fear that if they continue to use negotiations to delay that we will be at a point where they have nuclear weapons capability and then it's too late, is it not, sir?

General MATTIS. Well, it would certainly be too late for our stated policy that they are not to achieve a nuclear weapons capability. But I believe negotiations are critical as we build an international consensus against them and sustain that. I think that at some point they are going to have to confront the unproductive aspects of what they're doing for their own interests.

Senator AYOTTE. But one thing I can't, I just can't get my hands around here. We have pressed their economy. We have pressed them dramatically. We have negotiated with them in good faith. They have continued to enrich. They have used negotiations as a delay tactic. At some point you kind of have to get to a position where you say insanity is the definition of doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result, from a regime

that obviously continues to flout us and our allies and also to be a danger to the world in terms of their terrorism activities.

So that's the thing I worry about, General Mattis. So how do we address that?

General MATTIS. Well, ma'am, as you know, what I do, I provide the Commander in Chief military options, working with some very, very strong friends, partners in the region. They are creating in their minds as a revolutionary cause a resistance economy. They are trying to raise a sense of martyrdom as a nation. That's a very dangerous type of self-view if they were to get a nuclear weapon.

But I don't believe that we should stop negotiations, because they do not prevent us from doing other things at the same time. For example, while negotiating I have requested and received additional forces in the Gulf by the decision of the Secretary of Defense to ensure that we are ready to reassure our friends that we mean business and temper the Iranians' designs.

Senator AYOTTE. Well, I thank you very much, General Mattis. I think we all share the concern, and particularly the Senate. We voted on a resolution saying that containment is not the policy of the United States of America. This is an overwhelming bipartisan issue and Iran needs to understand that we will not accept them having a nuclear weapon. But I worry that they are using negotiations to delay and I hope the administration will make sure that they are not able to use those negotiations to further their aims at getting nuclear weapons capability.

I thank you so much for what you're doing. I want to ask you a brief question on section 841, on another topic, on no contracting with the enemy, that was incorporated in the Defense Authorization on work that Scott Brown and I did together. Richard Blumenthal and I recently visited, along with Senators McCain and Graham, Afghanistan in January, talked to Major General Longo about the impact of those provisions. He indicated that it would be helpful—the provisions have been very helpful in cutting off funds to those, our enemy, when contractors are contracting to those that we don't want taxpayer dollars to go to.

Senator Blumenthal and I are working on an effort to extend those provisions beyond Afghanistan to other combatant commands and also to think about extending it to other agencies, including the State Department and USAID. I wanted to get your opinion on that, General Mattis.

General MATTIS. Very quickly, Senator, I fully support both the letter and the spirit of what was in there. We did have to look more deeply at the subcontractors. That's where we found the problem. It was not with the contractors. But then we followed the money down and we found some things that were disappointing. I can just tell you from CENTCOM's point of view it's been very helpful to focus us in that area.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, General.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Ayotte.

Senator McCaskill.

Senator MCCASKILL. Thank you.

Thank you both for being here today. Following up on my colleague's question, I know that I have some specific questions I probably won't have time for today about Afghanistan Infrastruc-

ture Fund and the notion that it's very, very hard to build infrastructure inside of a contingency by our military without some money getting to the enemy, because of the huge costs of security. One of the reasons the enemy got the money is because we were trying to pay off the enemy to not kill our contractors.

So the problem here is not just contracting with the enemy. As the war contracting provisions that we have now passed into law embrace, it is also about whether or not the COIN strategy should in fact include infrastructure. Should it include major projects? I'm going to have some specific questions about metrics being produced around the COIN strategy to in fact support the notion that it is an effective part of counterinsurgency efforts.

Now, I'm going to talk to you today about something that's not—I want to take advantage of your years of service, General Mattis, and ask you something that is not directly related to CENTCOM. My background includes handling dozens and dozens of jury trials as a prosecutor of very difficult sexual assault and rape cases. I think I have taken an acute interest, along with many of my colleagues, on the pervasive problem of prosecuting sexual assault in the military.

I feel a sense of urgency today because of what happened last week. A colonel, James Wilkerson, was convicted by a jury, a military jury, of sexual assault that occurred at Aviano. He was sentenced to dismissal, forfeiture of pay, and one year in jail. And with a stroke of a pen last week, a general dismissed those charges against him, a general with no legal training, a general that had not sat in the courtroom. And this general did it against the advice of his legal counsel.

Now, my heart is beating fast right now, I am so upset about this. As we are trying to send a signal to women—now, the victim in this case wasn't a member of our military. I question now whether that unit that that man returns to, whether there's any chance a woman who is sexually assaulted in that unit would ever say a word, because what that general just said is that jury's decision didn't matter.

The rules actually say that the convening authority not only has complete discretion as to whether or not a case is brought, without any legal training required; that general, that convening authority, also has the right to either reduce punishment or dismiss the cases for, quote, "any reason or no reason at all."

Now, I ask you, General Mattis, isn't it time, as we understand that the majority of homeless women in this country are veterans and that the majority of them had some form of sexual assault, that we look at the UCMJ and decide that we need to have something other than the arbitrary decision of one general, without any other supervising authority, any other procedure that is necessary, to actually overturn the very difficult decision that the jury came to?

General MATTIS. Senator, I do not know the specifics of this case and I've always been reluctant to comment on something where I don't know it. Some of you are aware of the high-visibility court cases I've superintended. I've read as many as 9,500 pages of investigations before I made certain decisions.

But let me assure you, Senator, that the Supreme Court has upheld what Congress has passed for the UCMJ, recognizing the unique aspects of the military. In this case, there is—there are more rights provided to defendants in the military, because no court system is more subject to being characterized as a kangaroo court than one where military officers who are in command also initiate it.

In this case, I cannot speak to the specifics, but I can assure you that justice is overwhelmingly served by the currently constituted UCMJ. I say that because as a commander I was not just responsible for prosecution, I was also responsible for defense, and commanders must balance both of those if we're to have a fair system.

Senator MCCASKILL. But you understand that—

General MATTIS. I don't know the specifics of this case, so I do not want that to be drawn in as support for something that I really can't, I really can't address. I'm sorry.

Senator MCCASKILL. Let's just set aside the specifics of this case.

General MATTIS. Okay.

Senator MCCASKILL. But do you really think that after a jury has found someone guilty and dismissed someone from the military for sexual assault, that one person, over the advice of their legal counselor, should be able to say, never mind? Don't you think that someone up the chain should have an opportunity to look at that if they're going to dismiss it, a jury conviction?

I mean, I'm not talking about—I understand that the military is not the civilian system. But I'm trying to envision here the ability of a prosecutor or a defense lawyer or the person who they both work for—and that's a weird concept for me to get my arms around, the notion that they could unilaterally, without having to have any justification, for no reason at all, just say, never mind.

I just, I think that is something that most—especially when you realize how serious this problem is. I may not be able to talk you out of the position that you just stated, but I think that the military needs to understand that this is—could be a tipping point, I think, for the American people to rise up, particularly the women, and say: I don't think one general should be able to overturn a jury.

General MATTIS. Well, Senator, the commanders, including women commanders, have this authority for a reason, for a vested reason. And I would just tell you that I would look beyond one case, because I can't—

Senator MCCASKILL. Unfortunately, General, I think I could bring you a lot of cases. I think I could bring you a lot where cases were not brought, where victims were not taken seriously. I think there's a culture issue that's going to have to be addressed here, and what this decision did was, all it did was underline and put an exclamation point behind the notion that if you are sexually assaulted in the military, good luck.

General MATTIS. Well, ma'am, I would just tell you that my troops generally know what I stand for, but they also have no doubt what I won't tolerate. I would just tell you that I'm not unique in this. You show us someone who conducts themselves in a criminal manner along these lines and I am dry-eyed when I put my beloved troops in jail the rest of their life for all I care.

Senator MCCASKILL. And believe me, in some ways I am sad that this occurred right before this hearing and that my time with you today is covering this subject matter, because I have great respect for the leadership of the military and particularly for your service, General Mattis. So please don't misinterpret this as anything other than a high degree of frustration as to a system that appears unaccountable to the thousands of victims who are struggling for a piece of justice under these circumstances.

Thank you very much, General.

General MATTIS. I respect that, Senator, and I just assure you there is accountability for every general under my command.

Senator MCCASKILL. Well, General Welsh is going to be hearing from me about this particular general. I think it's also interesting that both of these people are fighter pilots, they both have served together, and that adds more appearance of impropriety to this particular decision. I'm going to ask General Welsh some very difficult questions.

Thank you very much, General Mattis.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator McCaskill. There's going to be a hearing, a sexual assault hearing that Senator Gillibrand is chairing—

Senator MCCASKILL. March 13th.

Chairman LEVIN.—as the chair of our Personnel Subcommittee. I would think that, even though the issue you raise is broader than sexual assaults—it has to do with the power of the convening authority, period, sexual assault cases and any case—nonetheless that may be an appropriate time to raise it.

I would ask—we will ask the general counsel for the Department of Defense, Bob Taylor, who's acting general counsel, to address this issue, if this is okay and consistent with what you have in mind, Senator McCaskill. I think it's important that we start getting the general counsel of the Department of Defense aware of the issue of the “no reason at all” language which apparently is in the UCMJ, and to give this committee for starters an opinion as to the source of that language and to whether or not it is credible to maintain that kind of authority, that “no reason at all” language in the UCMJ.

So I don't want to in any way move in a different direction than you want to go, but I think that would be helpful, to ask the acting general counsel that question, and we will do that.

Thanks to Senator Fischer, Senator McCain is next.

Senator MCCAIN. I thank Senator Fischer for her indulgence, unlike our colleague from New Hampshire. I appreciate it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Mattis, let's be clear about this cut and the, quote, “flexibility.” We're still looking at \$43 billion in cuts, is that right?

General MATTIS. Yes, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. Still, no matter whether you have the flexibility or not, isn't this, in the words of Secretary Panetta, “we're shooting ourselves in the foot,” in the head and not in the foot?

General MATTIS. Yes, sir. We're going to have to change our strategy. We cannot maintain the same end state—

Senator MCCAIN. The \$43 billion is still a devastating blow whether you have the flexibility or not; is that correct?



General MATTIS. It is, Senator, but I don't want the enemy to feel brave right now. I can still deal with them in my region.

Senator MCCAIN. But to somehow say that this problem goes away because you are given flexibility is not accurate, is that true?

General MATTIS. That's correct, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. First of all, I want to say thank you. Thank you for your service. Thank you for the inspiration you've provided to the men and women who serve under you. I have met so many of them who have the highest admiration for you. Thank you for your service to the country, and you speak truth to power and I wish more of your colleagues did that as well.

On the issue of Syria, we're now over a million refugees. We're now at 70,000 people at least who have been massacred. The risk of spillover into Lebanon and Jordan is obvious. The events of yesterday, 42 Iraqi—excuse me—Syrian soldiers being murdered or killed in Iraq. Everything that we worried about if we intervened has taken place because we didn't intervene. Would you buy that argument?

General MATTIS. Senator McCain, I'm not certain even by intervening into this, this cauldron, we could have prevented all of it.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, have we seen a worst case scenario?

General MATTIS. Not yet.

Senator MCCAIN. Not yet, because that's chemical weapons, right?

General MATTIS. And it's also the further fragmentation of the country into ethnic and sectarian militias.

Senator MCCAIN. I say with respect, that's already happened.

And you're saying you want to make sure that we get the weapons to the right people if you were to support such a move, is that correct, your previous answer?

General MATTIS. Yes, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. So isn't the best way to do that to give them a sanctuary area, a no-fly zone, and let them establish themselves as the Libyans did in Benghazi, so that we can make sure the weapons do get to the right people?

General MATTIS. If I was given that mission, yes, sir, that would be a way to do it.

Senator MCCAIN. And without that, it's pretty obvious that the flow of jihadists into the country continues unabated?

General MATTIS. Yes, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. And the Iranian Revolutionary Guard is on the ground.

General MATTIS. They are both on the ground and bringing in other foreign fighters.

Senator MCCAIN. And the Russians continue to supply weapons to Bashar Assad and veto resolutions in the Security Council.

General MATTIS. Yes, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. Wouldn't you call that an unfair fight?

General MATTIS. I've never been in a fair fight. Always one side has the advantage, and right now Assad has got—

Senator MCCAIN. Yes, but the other side, the other side has the advantage because we refuse to do something which would make it a fair fight.

General MATTIS. There are regional partners that we have that are taking action.

Senator MCCAIN. Many of those weapons are going to the wrong people, as we know, some of our partners that are giving the weapons to the wrong people.

General MATTIS. Yes, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. Let me switch very quickly to Afghanistan if I could. What was your recommendation as to the troop levels that should remain behind in Afghanistan?

General MATTIS. Sir, we initially did not—we did not use numbers. We said we wanted to know what missions are we expected to do. Based on that, we got to the 34,000, which I so support, the reduction by 34,000, so long as the pace left them there through this fighting season as the Afghan Security Forces proved themselves.

Senator MCCAIN. And did that happen?

General MATTIS. It did.

Senator MCCAIN. What about the residual force?

General MATTIS. The post-2014 force, Senator, that decision I know has not been made yet. It's still under consideration. I have made my recommendation.

Senator MCCAIN. Which is?

General MATTIS. That recommendation is for 13,600 U.S. forces, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. And how many NATO?

General MATTIS. Well, not something I control, but—

Senator MCCAIN. Right.

General MATTIS. But I assume it would probably be around 50 percent of what we provide.

Senator MCCAIN. Back to Iraq for a moment, aren't you concerned about the unraveling of Iraq, with the schisms between the Kurds, Barzani, and Maliki, the continued terrorist attacks that take place, and the increasing polarization of the Sunni-Shia situation, particularly in places like Mosul, where you've got Kurds, Shia, you've got everybody, Turkoman, you've got everybody there? In retrospect, do you think that the situation would have been better if we had left a residual force there?

General MATTIS. Hard to say if it would have been better, Senator McCain. I share the concerns about the Kurdish schism with the country, with the Sunni-Shia situation. Al Qaeda is continuing its campaign. I would add one more point: The Iranian-backed militia shelling the capital city, the MEK camp, shows that the Iranians are not even now above going back and to work their own way.

However, Senator, imperfectly as it is, they are still—the various parts of the body politic there in Iraq are talking with each other. So it has still probably got a level of violence, Senator, that is slightly below what it was when we were there overall. Not a good answer.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, let me just say, let me just say with respect, Barzani told me he had not spoken to Maliki in over a year, and to my knowledge they're still not. But that's beside the point.

Back to Syria a second. We could take—could we take out the air assets of Bashar Assad with cruise missiles, take them out on the ground?

General MATTIS. Not all of them, Senator, because they have a number of mobile systems. I'd have to do a pretty—

Senator MCCAIN. Well, we can take out a fair amount?

General MATTIS. Oh, we could take out a fair amount, yes, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. And the Patriots could defend a no-fly zone?

General MATTIS. They could—they're a point defense weapon. They could certainly help put together a no-fly zone.

Senator MCCAIN. And you would agree that in a topography and a situation like that air power is a really decisive and important factor in Bashar Assad's being able to hang?

And finally, I'm concerned about this withdrawal to the coast, the Alawite enclave, and I wonder what you think of the likelihood of that might be?

General MATTIS. Sir, it is an economically unsustainable enclave if they go there. So it's not going to be a long-term thing. But it could certainly create a longevity for the regime if they were to lose Damascus, that right now I think is something we have to consider. In other words, you'll see kind of a two-step. As Damascus starts to fall, they'll try to get over. I believe the Iranians are helping them to get established there.

Senator MCCAIN. Again, General Mattis, I've had the great honor of being associated with some outstanding military leaders and I know you will continue to contribute to our Nation's security, and I thank you.

General MATTIS. Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator McCain.

Here's the order of battle for us now. On the Democratic side it's Hagan, Manchin, Shaheen, Blumenthal. On the Republican side it's Lee, Fischer, Blunt, Graham.

Senator MCCASKILL. Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Yes?

Senator MCCASKILL. I notice that our colleagues Senator Kaine and Senator Donnelly, while they are new here, they're upset that they were not mentioned. They're afraid that you've forgotten they're there.

Chairman LEVIN. I have not. I should have said the next four.

Senator MCCASKILL. Oh, okay. All right. They looked panicked for a minute, and I used to sit way down there at the end, so I'm feeling for them.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Number five and six and seven and eight on the Democratic side are Donnelly, Hirono, Kaine, and King. I should have said the next four.

Since Senator Hagan is not here, it is Senator Manchin.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

To General Mattis and Admiral McRaven, thank you for being here. Congratulations on your retirement. I'm sure you're going to enjoy it.

With that being said, General Mattis, if you would have had the flexibility—I know there's been a lot going back and forth—if you'd have had the flexibility, knowing from the get-go that you'd have

had flexibility, but had to do the cuts, the \$42.5 billion cut, would you have been able to deploy the *Harry S. Truman* on time?

General MATTIS. Sir, I'd have to know better what the Navy confronts, but I suspect that we could have, yes, sir.

Senator MANCHIN. So much said about the amount of money that we spend in the Department of Defense versus other countries. Do you have, either one of you, would have just a quick scenario, an oversight, on the difference of our cost versus—they tell me the next 10 or 15 developing nations of the world combined doesn't spend as much as we do. What is the high cost of ours so much differently?

General MATTIS. Senator, I think part of it is we're the gold standard. We set the standard, from weaponry and technology to the training and certainly to the coherence of our force, the cohesion of our force, that also believes that they're the best in the world because of the support of the Hill.

We also have global responsibilities, and those—I was born into this time. Others made those decisions. But I am often impressed when I walk into offices where even at this rank overseas I say “Sir” or “Your Highness” or “Mr. President” or “Mr. Prime Minister” or “Sultan,” at just how much other nations look to us to reassure them that they can follow their better instincts and not have to accommodate some pretty ugly situations in their region.

Senator MANCHIN. Admiral McRaven, I find it troubling that the military losses—are losing many of its talented people to private contractors. I talk to an awful lot of your people, a lot of the Special Forces, and they're being lured away by the higher salaries. Is that not troubling to you, sir?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Sir, statistically that was true back at the beginning of the war, I think, when we saw, certainly around 2001 as the wars began to ramp up and the contract base began to build, we were losing a number of our senior NCO's. Sir, that has tapered off considerably and right now, frankly, our accessions rate into our training pipelines are as good or better than they've ever been and our retention is equally high.

Senator MANCHIN. Are we reducing our amount of dependency on contractors, then? Is that what you're saying?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Sir, we are, yes, sir.

Senator MANCHIN. Okay. Either one of you could speak to this one, but compare Pakistan's actions—if you compare Pakistan's actions by them having the nuclear weapon and how we are working with them as supposedly an ally—I can only imagine what your thoughts may be if Iran is able to achieve the same status of nuclear weapons. I'm sure if you had it to do over again, we'd probably look at that differently with Pakistan. But your greatest fear is Iran, I would assume, having this nuclear arsenal, right?

General MATTIS. I think that would be the most destabilizing event that we could imagine for the Middle East, sir.

Senator MANCHIN. Another question I have is one that—I came out of the Vietnam era, so I remember that war came to a close much quicker than this war. Here we are 2013. In 2001 if anyone would have, I think, anticipated that we'd still be going at this 13 years, the amount of money and time—so I think it brings up the question just for discussion: Have you thought about, with all the

budget cuts and different things that we can do and staffing and all that, of the draft, a combined hybrid of the draft with the professional services that we have now? I know from a fact that we would not be in a war 13 years if moms and dads had the input that they had back then.

General MATTIS. Senator, I won't take issue with what you just said. We in the military are concerned that the all volunteer force has drawn us a little apart from our body politic. But, that said, this threat is real. I've dealt with it since 1979. The Shia side declared war on us in the 1980s, blew up our peacekeeper barracks in Beirut. They continue with Lebanese Hezbollah today. The Sunni side of the extremists—al Qaeda is how you know them—they tried to take down the Trade Towers once in the 90s. They took it down the second time.

It's a real threat. And one thing about America: It's been willing to meet real threats when the political leadership explains it to the American people. I think we would still be here, sir, because I think the enemy would force the issue.

Senator MANCHIN. I agree that we're going to have to be fighting the war on terror for many generations to come. I think that most Americans accept that. But when you look at how we got into Afghanistan and then we moved to Iraq and now we're back in nation-building, I think there's an awful lot—I'd rather us get out quicker and come home and rebuild America.

When you look at the Kajaki Dam, when you look at the Kajaki Dam that we built in the 1950s, right, and now in disrepair. We went back and rebuilt it again, and we've spent I think \$70 million to finish the project. The Inspector General of Afghanistan Reconstruction doubts that they have the capability of doing that if we gave them the \$70 million. That's what I think that we're as Americans upset about, the money we're putting into an infrastructure which is incapable of them to maintain.

Are we moving away from that strategy? Admiral, would you say we are?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Sir, I'll allow General Mattis to address the Kajaki Dam issue, but I think in general as we in the Special Operations community work with our partners abroad—as I mentioned in my opening statement, we're partnered with about 78 nations on any day in the calendar. In a lot of those cases, we are doing minor construction, so obviously nothing like Kajaki Dam, but being able to build schools and boreholes and wells and help with small infrastructure projects that absolutely I think are critical to building our credibility with the host nation, both with the military and the civilian sectors.

Senator MANCHIN. Sir, I'm understanding in that situation there we're not even allowed to brand it as made by the U.S. because of the drawback. I mean, so we're not even getting credit for that as we do that infrastructure repair and building.

Admiral MCRAVEN. Sir, you're referring to the Kajaki Dam, sir?

Senator MANCHIN. I'm saying all the other things, whether it be schools or whether it be the water supplies and things of that sort, when I was there that we were afraid or they were afraid to put our name on and give us credit, the U.S. Government, for doing it.

Admiral MCRAVEN. Sir, I would tell you I think it's on a case by case basis. We work with USAID. They're one of my closest partners, and in fact I've got a great relationship with AID. Every time we go downrange we work with the U.S. embassy team. We kind of take our lead from the U.S. ambassador there. We get together with their foreign assistance folks and we collectively build a plan that makes sense.

Where it is important for us to articulate that the U.S. has built this particular piece of infrastructure, we absolutely do that. Where, frankly, we think it's more culturally sensitive to allow the locals to receive credit, then there's an appropriate way to do that as well. But certainly it's not one size fits all, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Manchin.

Senator Lee is next under our order that we operate here. Again I want to thank Senator Fischer. She may not have known what she got into, but her generosity is noted. We appreciate it. Senator Lee.

Senator BLUNT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thanks to both of you for joining us today. Thank you especially for all you do and have done throughout your distinguished careers to keep us safe.

General Mattis, I wanted to start up by talking to you a little bit about Syria. Your written testimony mentions the dire situation in Syria and it also refers to the fact that there is a certain amount of disunity among the opposition groups and there may be some influence from Al-Qaeda-related groups. I'd like to get your assessment on Syria and your answers to a couple of questions.

First, what can you tell us about the composition and the objectives of the opposition forces in Syria? In particular, what can you tell me about the extent to which they have a vision for a future of a post-Assad Syria?

General MATTIS. Senator, the opposition is not completely unified, as you know. It's becoming more unified day by day. The one thing I think all of them agree on is Assad has got to go, on the opposition side. But after that it breaks out pretty broadly, to include some what I would call populist extremist views, as well as the ones that we would find more along the lines of how we would like to see Syria come out of this civil war.

The vision that some of them have is clearly inconsistent with what we would like to see. These are the jihadist elements that are there, the extremist elements, the foreign fighters who've come in, who simply want to create another chaotic background where they can put in their roots and have a new place to operate from.

Senator LEE. What's your sense as to where the center of gravity is? I mean, obviously there are some that are like those that you've just described, sort of jihadist elements, as you put it. Is that where the center of gravity is? Is that where the heartland of the opposition forces are?

General MATTIS. Well, sir, I think when you look at the Syrian National Coalition or what you read as the SNC—and I have to refer to my notes here in order to keep accurate—and then you've got the Syrian Opposition Council, the SOC, those are one and the same thing. So where you see them gaining traction and coherence,

that's carrying a message to the Assad regime that there is an opposition that's increasingly unified against them.

At the same time, there's a military council below that and that military council is what actually carries out the operations there inside the country.

Senator LEE. But you can't give me a thumbnail sketch of whether this is a minority faction within, whether it's a fringe faction, a minority faction, a solid plurality, or a majority faction that takes sort of a jihadist approach?

General MATTIS. I would say that that is a significant minority that takes a jihadist, extremist approach, with the idea of, for example, the al Nasra front gaining traction, those kinds of organizations.

Senator LEE. It's those organizations that are a significant minority, not amounting to a majority, but a significant minority, that have either links to al Qaeda or to some other terrorist group or some other group that might be related to or similar to al Qaeda?

General MATTIS. I believe that's correct, sir. They do have a powerful propaganda arm. They do use humanitarian efforts in addition to their well-armed, well-trained fighters to try to build a broader reach among the opposition.

Senator LEE. Okay. Then I assume that their respective visions for a post-Assad Syria would break down according to what's motivating them now; would that be correct?

General MATTIS. I believe so, yes, sir.

Senator LEE. In the time I've got remaining, I'd like to talk to you just a little bit about the threats that we face elsewhere in the region. I certainly agree with our President, who said in his State of the Union Address a couple of weeks ago "We will do what's necessary to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon." I strongly support that and I suspect nearly all my colleagues do as well.

But the decision to decrease the size of our carrier presence in the Persian Gulf worries me because it seems that it could be sending a different message. The budget uncertainty surrounding sequestration is forcing the Department of Defense to take a number of difficult steps. But I remain concerned about where the administration's priorities are when we weaken our presence in a region of such huge strategic importance to our national security.

So let me ask you, will our removal of an aircraft carrier from the Persian Gulf affect our ability to deter Iranian action in the Gulf or elsewhere in the region?

General MATTIS. Obviously, it is more difficult for me to reassure our friends and to deter our Iran, but I believe that a strong statement of political will and the forces I have there right now would cause Iran to take pause before they decide to try to take advantage of what is not really an opportunity. I can buy the time to get the second carrier out there with the combat power I have right now in the Gulf.

Senator LEE. You think we'll be okay with the time you can buy in order to get that out there?

General MATTIS. Yes, sir, I do.

Senator LEE. Thank you very much, General.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Lee.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Mattis and Admiral McRaven, thank you both for your service and thank you for being here this morning. General Mattis, as all of my colleagues have said, we will certainly miss you and very much appreciate your years of service to this country.

I want to start by following up on some of the Syrian issues that Senator Lee was raising. When you were here for your posture hearing last year, General Mattis, one of the things that we discussed was the chemical weapons in Syria. Secretary Panetta was quoted as saying that the situation in Syria is 100 times worse than what we saw in Libya with the proliferation of weapons. It's been described as a nightmare scenario by a number of officials.

I assume that it's safe to say that your concerns since that hearing last year have not diminished and you continue to be very concerned about the presence of the stockpiles of chemical weapons in Syria?

General MATTIS. Yes, Senator, absolutely.

Senator SHAHEEN. There's been discussion about the red line that has been drawn should Syria attempt to use those chemical weapons either on their own people or on others in the region, and a suggestion that the international community is also concerned, equally concerned about that. But what happens should they transfer, try to transfer those weapons to Hezbollah and they then get transferred throughout the region? Has there been planning for how to address that and how to prevent that from happening?

General MATTIS. Yes, ma'am. That would be a policy decision by the President. I have military options if he wants to prevent—if he wants to disrupt that. It would be very difficult to prevent it at the beginning, either use or transfer. But as fast as we picked it up, we could disrupt it and we may be able to prevent further transfer or use.

Senator SHAHEEN. Has NATO and other countries that are concerned about what's happening in the region, have they also been involved in those contingency plans?

General MATTIS. Yes, ma'am.

Senator SHAHEEN. Is there any—is there any reason that we should have less concern about what's happening there, rather than more concern? How can we affect what happens with those chemical weapons? What can you share with us about the contingency planning that should either make us be more concerned or less about what's happening there?

General MATTIS. Senator, in the chaos of what Assad has created with his handling of his people's dissatisfaction and the civil war that's grown out of it, I believe we have increasingly vulnerable chemical sites there as this fighting swings back and forth, as weapons get transferred from one vulnerable site to one they believe is more secure, as certainly the mercurial aspects of their leadership could cause them to do things that cause us to keep a very, very close eye on them.

Our planning is taking this into account to the degree that it can. I'll just tell you that we have options prepared.



Senator SHAHEEN. Have any of the opposition groups that we're talking to been involved in any of those discussions or any of those plans?

General MATTIS. No, ma'am.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

General MATTIS. I should say not to my—not by U.S. Central Command. We have not engaged with the opposition groups on this.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

I want to switch from Syria to Pakistan because obviously that's one of the other parts of the Central Command where there are serious concerns about the impact on our actions in Afghanistan. I wonder if you could talk about what the current status is of our relationship with the military in Pakistan and how the trilateral engagement on the border there between Afghanistan, between ISAF and Pakistan is working or is not working today?

General MATTIS. Senator, I don't want to overstate it, but our military to military relationship with Pakistan has been improving, and this is not recent. This goes back over the last year, even in the aftermath of the Salala incident where we accidentally killed 24 of their Frontier Corps troops.

The border itself, the collaboration along the border, the trilateral cooperation, is actually much improved over a year ago or two years ago. It's not everything we need it to be, but it is improving, and we have got other efforts going on, including track two efforts under former Dr. Perry, Secretary of Defense Dr. Perry, and former Secretary of State Schultz out of Palo Alto. That will shift to Islamabad coming up here in May, where we have retired officers working to find ways to continue this improved collaboration and help set the conditions for longer term prosperity and peace in that region.

Senator SHAHEEN. So how will that work once ISAF pulls out with the Afghan and Pakistani forces there along the border? Do you expect that collaboration to continue? Senator Levin and I had the opportunity a year and a half ago, well, two years ago this summer, to see firsthand the attempted collaboration at a time when it had really broken down. They were talking about the potential effectiveness of that. Obviously, that's going to be critical as we withdraw in terms of maintaining some stability in the region.

So what kinds of plans are in place to help address that once ISAF withdraws?

General MATTIS. It's a great question, Senator, because we actually identified this as a key part of our transition a year ago. Since then we have now—we no longer meet as NATO ISAF with the Pakistan military. It's always NATO-ISAF and the ANSF, the Afghan security forces, and we meet in these trilaterals, as you referenced them. We are going to have to continue to mature it.

But right now, Senator, it's at least going in the right direction, and day by day we build a little bit more trust, a little more cooperation, a little more collaboration along that contentious border.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much. My time has expired.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Senator FISCHER.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, General and Admiral, for your service and for the service of those that you represent as well.

Admiral, earlier I believe you stated that with the sequester and the CR we were looking at creating a readiness problem. What are you doing now that is absolutely essential and that we need to keep on doing with special ops?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Yes, ma'am, thank you. Our first and foremost mission is to take care of the warfighting requirements downrange. So my support to General Mattis and to the other combatant commanders to me is my number one warfighting priority, operational priority.

The problem with the CR and the sequestration is it is beginning to affect my readiness back at the CONUS-based forces. So as I have to kind of prioritize the training, I'm prioritizing it forward, but that will come at the expense of the next generation of forces that begins to deploy downrange. Now, my ability to manage that budget and continue to provide the very best Special Operations Forces forward is exactly what I intend to do.

Having said that, if you take a look at our flying hours, as an example, as I said, we've got about 60 percent of our CONUS-based training flying hours. Now, that bathtub, if you will, will continue from this fiscal year to the next fiscal year. It will get smaller, but it will continue. It just takes time to catch up once you kind of stand down training.

So when you take a look at the flying hours, and then I am cutting some of my recruiting base, I'm cutting some of my other training, that bathtub, as we refer to it, will move throughout until we eventually hopefully catch back up several years from now to stem the lack of readiness. But we take care of our operational priorities first, but we are mortgaging a little bit of our readiness and the future.

Senator FISCHER. The troops that you represent, do you believe that you're putting them at risk, where they're going to have to be in rotation longer since the readiness is not there, the training's not there, so that they can benefit from some rest when they're off duty? Do you see that as a major risk? If so, I'd like to hear why. If not, what do you see as the major risks that you are facing due to these cuts that we're looking at?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Yes, ma'am. We've worked very hard with—I've got subordinate service components that work for me, and one of my biggest concerns has been the pressure on the force and making sure that the personnel tempo and the operational tempo of the force is appropriate to meet the demands of the combatant commanders.

We've taken a number of pretty dramatic and important steps to ensure that those forces have the rest they need when they are back in the continental United States before we cycle them forward again. But I don't want to mislead you. There are certain kind of high demand, low density military operational specialty codes, some of the intelligence requirements we have, some of the information officers; those sorts of high demand, but are in low density, require them to rotate a little bit more quickly forward.

So again, I'm working hard as they come back to the continental United States not to impress upon them additional training and give them a little bit more time in the rear.

Senator FISCHER. Under the current command structures that you face, do you see any limitations being imposed on our special ops forces?

Admiral MCRAVEN. No, ma'am. I'm very pleased with the kind of command relationships I have and the command authorities that I have. So right now I am a support team commander to the combatant commanders like General Mattis and General Ham and others, and that is a great relationship. I provide them the forces; they, if you will, fight the forces or have the operational command and control; and I'm perfectly comfortable with that.

Senator FISCHER. You don't think any changes need to be made with regards to that?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Not in regards to the command relationships with the combatant commanders in terms of the forces that are under their operational control, no, ma'am, I do not.

Senator FISCHER. Do you think there needs to be any additional legal authority for soldiers in order for them to train with our partners?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Well, that's certainly an area that we're taking a look at. Right now one of the—one of the amendments that presents some problems for us is the Leahy amendment, is we have to vet not only the individual now but the units to make sure that there are no human rights violations. We are absolutely in favor and we understand the value and the importance of making sure we've got good clean human rights. Unfortunately, at a time sometimes when those units need to have our partnership and our relationship so they understand what right looks like, that's a time in which we find ourselves more constrained than ever. If there is a human rights violation, frankly, I would offer that then more than ever we need to get engaged and make sure that they do what is right.

So that's an area that we're exploring both with the CJCS and with the OSD and with the Hill.

Senator FISCHER. And you've discussed that with the regional commanders, I would assume?

Admiral MCRAVEN. I have, yes, ma'am.

Senator FISCHER. And their reactions?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Well, I think they all have similar issues. The Special Operations Forces that I provide them find themselves constrained in certain circumstances, not in all circumstances, but in certain circumstances in the units that we're dealing with. So yes, ma'am, it's a concern. Again, I think we're working through the appropriate processes now.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you very much.

Admiral MCRAVEN. Yes, ma'am.

Senator FISCHER. General, do you think that it's working well together? Do you have any concerns on decisions being made?

General MATTIS. Ma'am, we have got the best working relationship between conventional and Special Forces that I have enjoyed in 40 years of service. There is no longer any lines between us. The collaboration is intense. It's been learned the hard way, frankly, in

the toughest school we could have had, and right now the degree of confidence in each other and the use of each other's capabilities I think is really at the top of its game. But we're not complacent. We don't want to lose this as the war's drawing down. So we're going to have to work hard to maintain it.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, sir, and thank you for your many, many years of service. You have a sterling reputation. Thank you. Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Fischer.

Senator Hagan.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I too want to echo everybody's thoughts to both of you, who you've given so many years of service to our country and we admire, we respect, and we really do appreciate all of your commitment to our military and to the national security of our country. So thank you very much.

Admiral McRaven, I wanted to ask a question on the women in combat now that former Secretary Panetta and General Dempsey announced the end of the direct ground combat exclusion rule for female servicemembers. I know that you've publicly highlighted the contributions that women have made to our Special Operations missions, including the cultural support teams, the military information support teams, the civil-military support elements, and other roles.

I understand, obviously, the Department's recent decision for women. This is going to open up thousands of new positions for women, and including many in the Special Operations, too.

I wanted just to get your overall thoughts on how this is going to be carried out under SOCOM. How have women contributed to our Special Operations missions in recent years and then what contributions, additional contributions, do you see that will be possible given this policy change, and how is SOCOM going to respond to this, and how will you address the need to maintain strict standards for assessment and selection for the male and female special operators, and will there be exceptions so that, exceptions or waivers, to keep any of the units all male? Just sort of a series of thoughts.

Admiral MCRAVEN. Yes, ma'am. Thank you. First, as you mentioned, the women that have served in Special Operations have done an absolutely magnificent and heroic job. We have them with our cultural support teams and for the broader forum here, they are partnered with our Rangers and our SEAL's and our Special Forces elements downrange. They go on target in very hostile environments and they have proven themselves again and again and again. Those are in small numbers, but have been very valuable.

The policy right now from the Secretary of Defense, we are required to provide him a brief back on the 15th of May that will tell how we are going to implement the new policy. What it will require me to do is over the course of—well, I'm going to build the plan before 15th of May to brief the Secretary on exactly how we're going to get there.

It will take us some time to do the assessments to determine whether or not we need to adjust the standards, whether we're going to do that, how they will fit into the training pipelines, the critical mass of female trainees and students we might need in

order to create the appropriate pipelines with the various military operational specialties.

So we will go through all of that analysis here in the next year or so. Then if we find that there are areas where we just cannot meet the requirements without lowering the standards, without unduly affecting the cohesion of the small units, then we will come forward to the Secretary for an exception to policy.

Having said that, my going-in position is we are going to find a way to make this work. So my staff and we are working very closely with the services. As you know, the services all have equities in this in terms of the Special Operations MOS's that we have. But I have an agreement with the service chiefs. I will be looking at those special operations-unique MOSs, so the Special Forces, the 18 series, the Green Berets, if you will, the Navy SEAL's, the Rangers, etcetera. I'm going to have an opportunity to provide my input directly to the service chiefs.

Senator HAGAN. I think one of the key points was not to lower the standards. So when you said assess the standards, I don't think anybody's saying lower the standards.

Admiral MCRAVEN. No, ma'am, absolutely not. In fact, I was asked at a press conference a couple of weeks back about the concept of the gender-neutral standards and I said, well, we've never had gender standards because we haven't had to have other genders, so we have a standard. That is the standard. It's been a standard that we have had around for a very long time. It's an important standard. That doesn't mean we don't need to assess that standard to make sure that it is in fact appropriate.

But there is absolutely positively no intent to lower the standard. We want to provide the Nation the very finest Special Operations Forces we can irrespective of gender.

Senator HAGAN. I think that's good, and I also think that so many of the women that I have talked to, they have been attached to a number of units, but they haven't been assigned, so they didn't get the credit for their career ladder. That certainly has harmed many, many individuals, women, and I think many of them saw the writing on the wall and then decided not to make this a continued career.

So I think this is really, it's a good step, and I think it's a very beneficial step for our military, too.

Admiral MCRAVEN. Yes, ma'am.

Senator HAGAN. General Mattis, I know that Senator McCaskill asked questions on the sexual assault, but I wanted to follow up on one area, too. I know that some research that I have seen says that, from the Department of Veterans Affairs, suggests that about half of the women who deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan reported being sexually harassed and almost 25 percent say they were sexually assaulted.

I've been to Afghanistan three times, Iraq, Pakistan, traveled, and women do tend to talk to other women. I was really shocked at one of the FOB's and some of the other bases where—in an instance where individuals shared with me that they literally were concerned, not then but earlier, about the amount of fluid that they would drink in the afternoon because they found it dangerous to go to the latrine at night. When I think about an issue, how that

would impact somebody who's fighting for our country, to be concerned about their safety, it makes you wonder. We've got to take this seriously and do something about it.

So my question is, what's the current state of this problem within the CENTCOM area of responsibility, what's specifically being done to address the issue of sexual assault while on deployment, and will the drawdown in Afghanistan present any unique challenges?

General MATTIS. Senator, I don't believe the drawdown will present unique challenges. The environment in the unit is the environment, whether they're in buildup, drawdown, combat, FOB. It really comes down to the alertness of the chain of command. It comes down to the command climate. It comes down to the commander's intent and his ability or her ability to articulate clearly what is acceptable behavior. And the authority of commanders to deal with unacceptable behavior thanks to the UCMJ that is given them by the U.S. Congress is more than sufficient to maintain the discipline.

But I can assure you that we take this seriously. We took it seriously a long time ago. It's not new. I'm very much—I'm keenly aware of the disappointing statistics and some of the anecdotal word that we get, and we take that for action, is what I will tell you. Again, we have the authority to deal with people who think that it's an option. It's not an option to act like a jerk or in a criminal manner.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Once again, thanks to both of you for what you do for our country.

Senator KAINE [presiding]. Thank you, Senator.

Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you both. General, what are you going to do when you retire?

General MATTIS. I have no idea right now, Senator, but it's going to be a lot of fun.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, I would hire you, but we don't have any money up here. Sorry about that.

Syria. Do both of you agree or disagree with the statement that we should be arming at least a portion of the rebels in Syria to bring this thing to an end sooner rather than later?

General MATTIS. Senator, we as the military, I do not believe that I have the situational awareness to do it. If given the mission, could I do it? Absolutely.

Admiral MCRAVEN. Sir, we could absolutely do it. But again, I think it's, as General Mattis has mentioned a couple of times, a very confusing situation and I'm not sure we're in a position to do that right now.

Senator GRAHAM. So are you against arming the rebels or you just don't have enough information?

General MATTIS. In my case, Senator, they are being armed right now by—

Senator GRAHAM. But not by us.

General MATTIS. That's correct, yes, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you have enough information to give us advice as to whether or not we should as Americans arm a portion of the rebels?

General MATTIS. It's a policy decision, sir. I think that if we know who the weapons are going to it's certainly an option that would complicate Assad's stay in power.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. Iran. Do you believe that 2013 is a year of reckoning when it comes to Iran?

General MATTIS. Senator, every year I seem to have a year of reckoning. Again, I'm paid to be a sentinel for this country, so I consider 2013 a year of reckoning.

Senator GRAHAM. Now, when it comes to Iran you said that the sanctions you believe were not working in their ultimate goal of deterring them from acquiring a new capability; is that correct?

General MATTIS. That's correct, sir. Their nuclear industry continues.

Senator GRAHAM. Now, what is the likelihood that they would work in the future in your view?

General MATTIS. I believe this regime, knowing it can't win the affections of its own people, I think they are very concerned that the economic sanctions could turn the people against them, in which case I think they'd cost-benefit. They could be willing to give up even the nuclear effort to stay in power.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you think that's the most likely scenario if we continue sanctions?

General MATTIS. I think we have to continue sanctions, but have other options ready.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you believe that the Israelis would attack Iran if they believed they had reached a critical point in terms of nuclear capability?

General MATTIS. The Israelis have said so, Senator. I take them at their word.

Senator GRAHAM. If they did attack Iran, would they need our help militarily?

General MATTIS. They could conduct a strike without our help.

Senator GRAHAM. Would it be in our interest to help them, in your view?

General MATTIS. That would depend on what the objective of the strike is. Is it to stop them? Is it to delay them? How long do you want to delay them? Is there a broader effort?

Senator GRAHAM. If we had to use military force against the Iranian nuclear program, would you recommend a limited strike or should we go after their navy, their air force, and the Revolutionary Guard?

General MATTIS. Senator, I think that is advice that I owe confidentiality to the President on. But I could meet you separately and answer that question fully.

Senator GRAHAM. If the Iranians develop a nuclear capability, how certain are you that other nations in the region would acquire an equal capability?

General MATTIS. At least one other nation has told me they would do that. At a leadership level, they have assured me they would not stay without a nuclear weapon if Iran—

Senator GRAHAM. Was that a Sunni Arab state?

General MATTIS. Yes, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. So likelihood of Sunni Arab states acquiring nuclear capability to counter the Shia Persians is great; would you not agree with that?

General MATTIS. I agree, and also other, non-Sunni Arab states in the general region.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. Let's talk about the budget. Admiral McRaven, you say that your budget is being reduced by 23 percent when you look at the CR as well as sequestration. Over a ten-year window, if sequestration is fully implemented, what does it do to your command?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Sir, over a 10-year window it'll cut is by about \$10 billion. Sequestration right now, sequestration alone is \$900 million, so thereabouts over a ten-year period.

Senator GRAHAM. What does that mean to your ability to help defend this Nation?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Sir, sequestration alone then is about a 10 percent cut to my budget. So I could get into eches, but essentially you think about a 10 percent reduction in readiness and in capability.

Senator GRAHAM. Would we have a hollow force if we implemented sequestration?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Sir, I think I can manage—I'm confident I can manage the Special Operations community so that we would not have a hollow Special Operations Force as a result of sequestration alone.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. What about you, General Mattis? What about the Marine Corps?

General MATTIS. Well, I can't speak for the Marine Corps. I'm a little outside it right now, sir, since I run Central Command. I will tell you with sequestration, bottom line, we will do less with the military in the future. Our goal is to not do it less well, in other words keep the sense of purpose, keep them at the top of their game with training and good equipment. It would be a smaller force. We would do less with it.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, when people like myself go around the country and say that if you implement sequestration the way it's designed, where two-thirds of the budget's not affected, only one-third, and 50 percent of that, of what's left, comes out of DOD on top of what we've done, and personnel is exempt, that we would be doing great damage to our National security, am I overstating that?

Admiral MCRAVEN. No, sir, you are not overstating that. I would, if I can, kind of continue on with the SOF side of this, because what is unappreciated sometimes is, while I will take about \$900 million a year in cuts, I get a lot of my support from the services. So the service cuts that they take compound the problem of Special Operations support.

So to clarify my earlier comments, I can manage the Special Operations Force, those that are badged Special Operations officers and NCOs. But I get a tremendous amount of my support from the various services and that will absolutely affect the Special Operations capability of this Nation.



Senator GRAHAM. Am I correct in my statements to my fellow constituents, my constituents back home and my colleagues, that sequestration would do a lot of damage to our military, General Mattis?

General MATTIS. Yes, sir, it would.

Senator GRAHAM. Maybe we'll have a second round. Very quickly, at the end of the ten-year sequestration we'll be at 2.41 percent of GDP in terms of military spending. In 1940 we were at 1.6. On 9-11 we were at 3. I just want the committee to understand we'll be at an incredibly low number. And in 1962 49 percent of spending was on the military, 30 percent on entitlements. Today 61.9 percent of the Federal budget is spent on entitlements, 18.7 on the military. If we don't deal with entitlements, we're just going to become Greece. I think that's the challenge of the Congress.

So I have a couple other questions, but I'll wait for a second round if that's possible.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator.

Senator Blumenthal.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you both for your service to our Nation. We thank every member of the armed services who comes before us and many who do not when we encounter them. But you both really exemplify the strength and courage that we see from our military and your records of service I think are simply extraordinary. So a special thanks to each of you and to your staffs for the great work that you have done for our country.

I want to follow some of the questions that Senator Graham has been asking because I think the American people should be really deeply troubled that our Special Operations Forces are going to be cut, not increased. After all, the President's strategy, his vision for the future of our military readiness, is for Special Operations to play a greater role and to be supported more, not less, in resources and budget. I personally feel that approach is critical to our Nation's security.

So my question, Admiral McRaven, is how do you make these kinds of cuts consistent with that approach that emphasizes Special Operations as the centerpiece, as the tip of the spear of our Nation's readiness going forward? I don't know how I can go back to the people of Connecticut and say everything's fine, but we're cutting Special Operations by 10 percent. So I put that question to you. I think it's a difficult question for us as elected officials and I'm hoping that now and going into the future you will have an answer.

Admiral MCRAVEN. Sir, make no mistake about it, the sequestration and then on top of that the continuing resolution will have a dramatic impact on Special Operations now and into the future. The President and the Secretary charged me to manage the best force I can to provide combat-capable Special Operations troops forward to the combatant commanders. I will do absolutely the best I can to ensure that I am providing those forces forward.

However, having said that, as I said, we tend to have to mortgage a little bit of the future. So it will not be apparent, I don't think, to the combatant commanders or to the American people the effect that these cuts are having on Special Operations for several

years as we begin to cut back on our flying programs, as we begin to cut back on our recruiting base, as we begin to cut back on some of the modifications we're going to do on our helicopters, as we begin to cut back on the deployments. Before long, there is an effect, a global effect, frankly, with the reduction in capability of the Special Operations Forces.

Now, I can't tell you when that line is going to come, when we're going to hit that mark where now the forces I'm deploying are not the quality forces that I think the American people expect. But make no mistake about it, as we move forward with these sequestration cuts and if the CR stays in effect we will hit that line sooner than later.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. So we have some time, but—and I'm not going to ask you how much—but the sooner the better that we reverse these cuts so as to avoid the lasting damage to our National security.

Admiral MCRAVEN. Sir, the problems are current, so I don't want to lead you to believe that the cuts that were incurred now, or that we're accepting now, are not affecting the force now. They are. I've cut some of my deployments by about 20 percent in some cases, in some cases 60 percent of my deployments for some of my less forward units.

So the effect is—it is having an effect now, but that effect will be magnified as we go forward into the future.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you.

Do either of you differ with the statement, which I happen to think is true, that Iran continues to be determined to develop a nuclear capability?

General MATTIS. Senator, they are enriching uranium beyond any plausible peaceful purpose.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Do you share that view, Admiral McRaven?

Admiral MCRAVEN. I do, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. So whether there has been a slowdown, a pause, however the intelligence community may refer to it, that basic ambition is still there; you would agree with that?

General MATTIS. I would, sir. And by their own public announcements, they've brought advanced centrifuges on line. They are refusing the IAEA access to Parchin site. They are continuing their program.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you.

I'm going to jump to another topic and I apologize that there seems to be little continuity between the subjects, but that's the nature of this questioning process, as I'm sure you know. On sexual assault, an area that has concerned me, as a prosecutor for a good part of my professional career, as well as now a member of this committee, one of the current weaknesses in our system of deterring as well as punishing sexual assault in the military seems to me the nature of the reporting of complaints, but also the prosecutorial decisions as to whether someone is held criminally responsible. In other words the decision within the command structure is in fact within that command made by generally someone to whom both the complainant and the potential defendant report. That sys-

tem is somewhat unique because of the nature of the military. There has to be a command structure.

I am posing to you the question whether if that decisionmaking function, whether to prosecute, whether to hold a predator criminally responsible, were taken away from the commander, whether that would severely undermine the capability of that commander to effectively command, whether it's at the regiment or whatever level the decision is made?

General MATTIS. It would severely undermine his command authority. Any time a commander is no longer responsible for some aspect of good order and discipline, you have set the groundwork, perhaps for the best of reasons or best of intentions, to leave the commander in a more circumscribed situation, and that is not something that's good and something a force that's put together for the use of violent action. He must be seen, she must be seen, as the ultimate arbiter of good order and discipline in that unit, or you're solving—perhaps addressing one issue and creating a Pandora's box of other issues that history will tell you will not work out well.

General MATTIS. Would you agree, Admiral McRaven?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Sir, I would. Also, while I don't want to get too far astray from my expertise here, I will tell you that in cases where there are felony charges against an individual, those felony charges are generally resolved by a courtmartial, as opposed to an individual commander. They're taken out of the commander's hands if there are felony charges in some cases, and in some cases they're actually prosecuted in a civilian court.

So the characterization that a commanding officer at a battalion level can come to his own decision on a felony charge of rape I think is a mischaracterization of the UCMJ. Again, I will defer to the military lawyers who have that expertise, but in my many years of exercising the UCMJ I've found one. As General Mattis said, it is absolutely positively critical to maintaining good order and discipline in a unit.

Those cases that are beyond the commander's purview by law are referred to a professional lawyer, a judge, a military judge, and a courtmartial, much like we have in the civilian system. So the earlier characterization of the UCMJ as an arbitrary decision by a commander to take care of one of his buddies I think is a mischaracterization of the UCMJ.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you.

My time has expired. I really want to thank you for your very helpful and forthright responses and again for your service. Thank you very much.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator.

Senator DONNELLY.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

To General Mattis and Admiral McRaven, thank you for your service to the Nation. To General Mattis, thank you so much for an extraordinary career devoted to the men and women of our services and to our country. Thank you so very, very much.

General Mattis, in regards to Pakistan, what would you say is the state of where our relationship is right now compared to some

of the peaks and valleys that we have had in the past and where we are at the present time as you see it?

General MATTIS. Senator, we're on an improving trajectory. It's been improving for probably the last year, maybe eight months, and we have some valid reasons, I think, to see it continue to improve into the near future as we try to get our two countries to find common ground wherever possible.

Senator DONNELLY. What do you see—as we come home from Afghanistan, how do you see Pakistan's reaction in relationship to Afghanistan regarding that?

General MATTIS. Well, in Pakistan as well as Central Asia, Senator Donnelly, there's a lot of concern about what's going to be there after the NATO forces come out. I think that the Afghan security forces, which are performing better, will give a certain amount of credence to the idea that the success we've achieved to date is not transient. In fact, it can be sustained, and I think the more we can get the current trilateral effort of NATO, Afghan, and Pakistanis to work together, the more we'll build confidence for the Afghans and Pakistanis to take control of that border region at a higher level than they've enjoyed before.

Senator DONNELLY. As a big part of this also as we move forward is the Afghan-Pakistan relationship. What is your best estimate of that relationship right now and where that seems to be heading?

General MATTIS. Sir, Pakistan, as you know, has lost more troops in this fight than NATO combined. As they go through this fight in an area of their country where they have never had a lot of control, they're going to have to exercise a degree of control they have not exercised, been able to exercise always in the past. There are a number of areas where they're actually improving their control right now, but it is militarily the most difficult terrain I've ever operated in along that border region.

So this is not easy. The enemy is well dug in. They're hard to get at. But the Pakistan military is moving against them, and we'll just have to try and keep the collaboration along the border continuing on the trajectory it's on now if we're going to have success.

Senator DONNELLY. Are the Afghans and Pakistanis, are they cooperating more, or is it still a trust but verify type relationship? Or both?

General MATTIS. Right. There's dissatisfaction that has been articulated by the Afghans about the havens on the Pakistan side of the border. Of course, there are some of these terrorists who use the Afghan side of the border to attack Pakistan. So they both recognize they have to work together. It's imperfect right now. There are concerns that I don't want to wish away or dismiss. But at least it's going in the right direction, and I think NATO is a big facilitator to why it's going in the right direction right now, getting the Pakistani and Afghan officers to talk together, to work together.

Senator DONNELLY. There's a report this morning, and I know it is not in your particular area, but in some ways it may come back to that, that North Korea is again ratcheting up and has said that on March 11th they are looking at possible surgical strike actions. What do you see as the relationship between Iran and North Korea, and how much of the technology that Iran is developing is

coming from that direction? And is that going to be a substantial force for Iran's information in further developing what they have? That would be for either of you.

General MATTIS. It's a great question, Senator Donnelly. I would like to get back to you with a more complete answer, but your instincts, your thoughts, are on target. There is a connection and the degree to which that connection provides real progress for Iran I cannot say in open hearing. But I will get back to you, Senator.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you, General.

Admiral, one of the strongest parts of our State's, my State's, Indiana's, assistance to the United States armed forces is Crane Naval Warfare. I know one of the areas they work on—and this is without getting into too much technical detail—is developing technology for Special Operations Forces. I want you to know we consider that a privilege.

But then also, in terms of our special ops, is there going to be a continuing emphasis on the technical improvements as we move forward?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Sir, there absolutely will, and Crane, Indiana, is one of our key depots for supporting Special Operations, sir, as you know. I've visited Crane a number of times—magnificent DOD civilians there and contractors and military officers and enlisted that are supporting our efforts. And, sir, that will continue.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you.

General, one of the areas in regards to the Syrian conflict that we hear is, what will happen if the rebels are successful to non-Muslim faith communities? Will there be a cleansing? Will there be a purging? I was just wondering if there have been any discussions in regards to those forces as to their intentions in that area?

General MATTIS. Sir, the kind of extremists we're most concerned about there are not the opposition, not the people that are trying to unseat Assad, and we understand where they're coming from and where they want to take their country, but these extremists who are taking advantage of the current situation and the Iranian-inspired and supported what I would call militias that they're going to have ready in the event Assad falls so they've still got some influence.

They have a pretty medieval philosophy and I would anticipate the worst from them. But they don't represent the opposition, either.

Senator DONNELLY. Do you know if there are any plans being made by either ourselves or the rebels, who in some cases you see the rebels that these extremist groups are working right next door to them? Are the rebels aware of the potential of this danger?

General MATTIS. I believe in many cases they are and they're uncomfortable with those folks working next door to them. At the same time, they're locked in a pretty rough fight and I think they're willing to let bygones be bygones at this time in order to try to win this fight, and then deal with that issue once they've gotten rid of Assad. But of course, that always brings its own danger, Senator.

Senator DONNELLY. Well, General Mattis, thank you again for everything you've done; Admiral McRaven, for your continued service.

Mr. Chairman.

Senator KAINE. Thank you.

Senator HIRONO.

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

I would like to join my colleagues in thanking General Mattis and Admiral McRaven for your service to our country, and also thank the men and women in your respective commands for the hard work that they do on behalf of all of us. And of course, General Mattis, with 41 years of service, my congratulations to you upon your retirement. My very best wishes go with you.

I know that some of my colleagues have focused on sexual assault prevention in the military, so I share their concerns and I am looking forward to the Personnel Subcommittee's hearing that will focus on these issues. I won't go into that, but I just want to let you know that I share those concerns.

General Mattis, in your testimony you talked about the most serious strategic risk to the U.S. national security in the Central Region. One of these areas was, and you said, "Perhaps the greatest risk to U.S. interests in this area is the perceived lack of U.S. commitment, particularly with regard to what happens in Afghanistan, Middle East peace, Syria." Then you note that "If we seek to influence events, we must listen to partner concerns and continue to demonstrate our support through tangible actions."

Can you give me examples of what you would define as "tangible actions" to make sure that people in this region understand we have a continuing commitment?

General MATTIS. Yes, ma'am. On the military side, I provide options to the President, and that manifests itself as U.S. forces that work within the framework of U.S. foreign policy to reassure our friends and make certain our enemies know that we're there, we're going to stand by our friends and work with them. It involves bringing officers from various militaries overseas to our schools here in the United States so that we create relationships with them and create a degree of interoperability. It means that we have our Special Operations and conventional forces training alongside their forces. Nothing builds those personal relationships faster than probably the education and training effort.

It also means that we're going to be selling equipment, high tech American equipment, to countries that share our security interests as we make certain that we can operate alongside them and they'll be equipped with some of the best equipment in the world should we have to fight together. Taken together, that serves as a deterrent so hopefully we never have to go into that fight.

But those would be some of the tangible things that we can do, ma'am.

Senator HIRONO. Obviously, we need to continue those efforts. It's a long-term kind of a relationship-building that we're going to need to engage in in this highly volatile, unstable area of the world.

General MATTIS. Absolutely, Senator.

Senator HIRONO. When Senator Hagel's confirmation hearing occurred, and now he is the Secretary of Defense, I asked him some questions about the rebalance to the Pacific. So that is not your command, but I'm just wondering, do you support the rebalance to

the Pacific in light of the realities that we are facing in that area of the world?

General MATTIS. Senator Hirono, I completely support it. We do have three anchors in the Middle East. One of them is our friends and partners there that must not face the future alone without the reassurance that we're with them. One is, of course, oil that fuels the global economy, a global economy that we're intimately connected to with the American economy. The third are the violent extremists that come out of this region threatening civilization everywhere, whether it be India or Indonesia, United Kingdom or North Africa. This is a problem that we all have to work with.

So we have three anchors that will keep us firmly committed in the Middle East. But I completely support the President's declared shift to the Pacific.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you.

Admiral McRaven, following our move out of Iraq and leaving Afghanistan also on the horizon, as you look forward do you see the roles of our special operators changing or moving to a different primary mission, and what would be the factors that you would consider in making any kind of a change for our special ops program?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Thank you, Senator. As we draw down in Afghanistan, that will certainly provide me more capacity and Special Operations Forces that I can then provide to the combatant commanders. You talk about the rebalancing to the Pacific. I was out with Admiral Locklear a little over a month ago. I had an opportunity to spend a fair amount of time in the Pacific. In my Navy SEAL career I kind of grew up in the Pacific, if you will. As you know, ma'am, we have had, we the Special Operations community, have had wonderful relationships in the Pacific for many, many, many decades, from Korea down to Australia and every country in between.

So we very much value our relationship in the Pacific. I will tell you that I think as we look at Special Operations moving forward, we always need to maintain our ability to rescue Americans and to capture or eliminate the terrorist threats. So that kind of kinetic, that direct action approach, is an important part of what we in Special Operations do.

But I would tell you, the current and future aspect of Special Operations that I think is equally, if not more, important is how we go about building our partners' capacity, how we allow them to deal with their own security problems. So part of the strategy of U.S. Special Operations Command, building off the Defense Strategic Guidance put in place in 2012 by Secretary Panetta, is the work with the combatant commanders, work with the chiefs of missions, work with the host nations, and figure out where can we apply our Special Operations resources to best help the Nations that are inclined to help themselves and deal with these problems.

Senator HIRONO. I don't know if this is a setting in which you can mention some of those countries in which you are working very closely to enable them to enhance their own capacity to engage in Special Operations?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Yes, ma'am. One of the great success stories we've had is working with our Filipino partners. Of course, we've been, we Special Operations and I can tell you in my time as a

SEAL, we have been in the Philippines, as I said, for decades and had a great relationship with the Philippine armed forces. But really since September 11, as the Filipinos aggressively, Filipino government, aggressively went after the Abu Sayyaf and the Jemaah Islamiyah down in Basilan and Mindanao, they requested and we supported them in building their special operations capability and capacity.

I had an opportunity again in my trip out to PACCOM a little over a month ago to visit Mindanao and Basilan, and I will tell you the success is remarkable, the degree of stability. The people see the Filipino army as a credible, reliable, important partner. The Abu Sayyaf is maybe not completely gone, but they are on the ropes, and I give tremendous credit to the government of the Philippines and our support to the government of the Philippines in dealing with that problem.

But the Philippines is one example. We have been partnered with our South Korean brothers for a long time, and I can go from South Korea to Singapore to Australia—

Senator HIRONO. Any country in the Middle East?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Just about every country in the Pacific, yes, ma'am.

Senator HIRONO. Any country in the Central Command?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Oh, yes, ma'am. We are partnered with General Mattis and most of our allies in the Central Command as well.

Senator HIRONO. So, General Mattis, what he's doing very much is in line with our showing the continuing commitment that we have; that addresses your perception issue that you talked about?

General MATTIS. Yes, ma'am. As we draw down in Afghanistan, as we draw down on some of our forces—you saw that the *Harry S. Truman* battle group will not deploy right now—we just have to make certain that's not misinterpreted as a pullback, that we stay fully engaged. There's a number of ways to do so, not just military. That's the area that I am concerned with and Admiral McRaven's concerned with, but there's a number of ways to do it. Not all of them cost a lot of money, but it's critical that we do it.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator Hirono.

Thank you for the testimony today and for your service, to each of you.

I had intended to make my questions heavily focused on budget, but I think you've done a very good job of covering the sequester-CR effects. I went to the Pentagon yesterday on my way into town, to stop and visit with Secretary Hagel, Deputy Secretary Carter, and General Odierno. Then I went to the lunch room and talked to Active, vet, Guard, Reserve, and DOD civilians and contractors who were there.

The message I came away with loud and clear is certainly something that you've underlined today, the need for us to provide some certainty so that you can do the best with the resources you have. I think the optimal situation would be for our National security strategy to drive our budget. A distant second would be for our budget strategy to drive our National security. But we're sort of in the far distant third, which is budgetary indecision driving national



security decisions, and that's very dangerous. I think your testimony encourages us to try to do some of our best work.

You are risk tolerators. You run the risk. The risk that you shouldn't have to tolerate is a wavering political commitment or political indecision in terms of providing you the backup that you need.

Let me just talk for a second about Iran. Good discussion today. One of the questions that I have is, as we are evaluating what are the right options for our country to make sure that Iran does not obtain nuclear capacity or nuclear weapons, one of the keys to that is the confidence level that we have about our own intelligence regarding Iranian activity. That intelligence is both our own, but also credible intelligence that we're able to receive from allies.

Without going into classified material, I'd be kind of curious as to each of your confidence level in our intel surrounding the current status of Iranian activities regarding their nuclear plans.

General MATTIS. Senator, first I'll just tell you that in 40-odd years in the U.S. military I have never enjoyed the level of intelligence and the anticipation I'm able to achieve as I do today in this job. It is phenomenal and it allows me insights that I know that nobody else has in terms of outside the U.S. Government.

Senator KAINE. General, is that both the intelligence that we generate, but also the credible intelligence that we are able to share appropriately with allies?

General MATTIS. Absolutely, sir, and that they share with us, I might add, which is invaluable.

But I would also tell you that this program inside a closed country that's virtually a police state, its ability to conduct denial and deception operations means that I stay in a very watchful mode, as does our intelligence community. I think we have to assume that in some cases we would not know something, a decision made in a very small cohort of people, and perhaps other hidden sites like the one revealed by our President a couple years ago, Fordow. I have to assume they have other hidden sites where certain activities could be going on.

So the decision itself and what's going on at those hidden sites, Senator Kaine, could—it could take a while for us to find something like that. It's just the normal give and take of the intel world.

Senator KAINE. Admiral McRaven, any additional comments on that?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Sir, nothing, but to add to what General Mattis said, as the Special Operations commander I see virtually everything General Mattis sees in terms of the intelligence products and I would echo his sentiments that the intelligence community both within the U.S. and the external communities that provide us that insight is truly incredible.

Senator KAINE. Admiral McRaven, we have such a Special Forces footprint in the Commonwealth. In Senator Kevin's opening comments he referred to the work that you've done in stress on force studies and then recommendations to follow. I would just like you to talk a bit about that. What are some of the things that you're doing within Special Forces to deal with this uptempo operation, the effect upon our warriors and their families?

Admiral MCRAVEN. Thank you, Senator. I appreciate the question. My predecessor Admiral Eric Olson did a wonderful job of identifying the problem early on, and he put together a Pressure on the Force Task Force. We called it the POTF at the time. They went out and interviewed about 7,000 servicemembers, about 1,000 spouses. They had 440 different meetings. It was about a 10-month assessment to determine the pressure on the Special Operations Force.

About the time that I took command back in the summer of 2011, that report just a couple days after I took command landed on my desk. It was very apparent that, as Admiral Olson had said, the force was frayed at the time. Candidly, in the last 18 months the force has continued to fray, and I'm committed to making sure that the force that I leave my successor and his successor is healthy and capable of doing the mission the Nation expects us to do.

As a result of that, I took the "Pressure On The Force" and we've kind of changed the name a little bit and the focus, and it is now Preserving the Force and the Families. We have spent time working with Capitol Hill, working with the services who provide us a lot of our support, to make sure we have the right programs in place for not only our members, which we do pretty well, but also for their families. I have made a point of stating that the readiness of the member is directly related to the readiness of the family.

So there are a lot of programs out there that allow us to take good care of our members, but not such good care of our families in some areas. So we're working, again, with Capitol Hill and with OSD and others to figure out how can we find the programs, the appropriate programs where we can take care of our families so that, frankly, the servicemembers will be ready to do the job. And frankly, it is absolutely the right thing to do, is to take care of those families that have been supporting this Nation along with their servicemember for so very long.

So I'm pleased we have a full-time task force that does nothing but work with my component commanders and their service components to make sure that we're taking care of the tactical and the headquarters elements as well. So it's pretty aggressive, but, as I said, I want to make sure the force is healthy for years to come, sir.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Admiral. I appreciate hearing that status report.

One last question, General Mattis, for you, kind of a big picture question to take advantage of your lengthy experience. When I was elected lieutenant governor of Virginia we had a Virginia Guard, as all States did, that was a Reserve Force. 12 years later, as I am now a junior Senator, we have a Virginia Guard that has had significant operational experience, scar tissue, training, wisdom, lives lost, folks injured in battle. But it's a very different kind of a Guard force than it was 10 or 11 years ago.

I'd like for you just to talk about in your experience since 2001 the changing nature of the Guard and how critical the Guard and Reserve have been to your activities in CENTCOM or, more broadly, other activities during the war on terror.

General MATTIS. Thanks, Senator Kaine. I appreciate the opportunity to recognize that here in a public hearing. They have been magnificent in serving as an operational and even strategic shock absorber for us so that we could conduct this war and not lose the all-volunteer force, which I think would have been the cost had we not had the ability to bring these ready forces full of patriots who look past any hot political rhetoric swirling around this war and answer their country's call, come in, and deploy, not once, not twice, but in many cases multiple times.

I bring this up because we did have a contract with the Guard and Reserve that said you would come in to take some pressure off the others. They've become more of an operational force now, and we have to make sure we don't break that fundamental contract that allows them to be citizen-soldiers, in other words continue with their civilian career and still give us the Reserve, the shock absorber we need. There comes a point where they're Reserve only in name; they're in fact becoming regulars.

I think we have to look at the kind of force we compose at this point and make sure we keep faith with the Reserves and the Guard, but at the same time not dismiss the very real capability they give this country when the call comes.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, General.

We'll have a second round, a second round of questions for 3 minutes, and I'll go to Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you both.

Afghanistan, General Mattis. The last card to play really is the residual force in 2014; do you agree with that?

General MATTIS. I do, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. We could have a very good outcome in Afghanistan if we play that card well. Do you agree with that?

General MATTIS. It will be critical to the good outcome.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. 13.6 was the recommendation in terms of U.S. force presence, 352 in terms of Afghan security forces, and some NATO. That's the configuration, right?

General MATTIS. 13.6 was my personal—

Senator GRAHAM. Right.

General MATTIS.—recommendation, yes, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, let's say that, you know, the President, he's the Commander in Chief—we all respect that. My concern is that at the end here we're going to drop the ball and I don't want to do that. Let's say you announce 10,000 U.S. forces, not 13.6, and you said publicly we will reduce that force 2,000 a year until we get down to 2,000 4 years later. What kind of effect would a statement like that have on our success or potential success in Afghanistan?

General MATTIS. Senator Graham, I think we have to send a message of commitment. We work with a lot of unpredictability, Senator, and if the Afghan security forces continue to mature the way they have been and we hold them at that full strength into 2018, there may be more reductions we can take.

Senator GRAHAM. But you wouldn't announce on day one we're going to withdraw 2,000 a year no matter what?

General MATTIS. I think a military perspective, Senator, because of the unpredictable nature of war, we'd never reveal—

Senator GRAHAM. The enemy would look at the last number, not the first number.

General MATTIS. They will, yes, sir, that's fair.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. One last thing, about Iran. We've got two choices here: bring them to their senses, which is to stop developing a nuclear weapon capability; or bring them to their knees so they can't develop a nuclear weapon capability. Aren't those our two options?

General MATTIS. Yes, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. As to the second option, do we have the capability to bring them to their knees?

General MATTIS. Well, absolutely, Senator. I would still say, on "bring to their senses," between economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and encouragement of behavior that does not cost them such a degree of political support that they end up losing power, there may yet be a way to bring them to their senses on a purely cost-benefit ratio.

Senator GRAHAM. And I hope you're right. But if that doesn't work, the only option left is to bring them to their knees. Do you agree?

General MATTIS. Yes, sir. The means—there are a number of means to do that, perhaps even short of open conflict. But certainly that's one of the options that I have to have prepared for the President.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator Graham.

General Mattis, one more follow-up on this Guard and Reserve question. So if they were sort of a traditional Reserve and then we built the Guard and Reserve up to have this operational capacity and strategic shock absorber, as you indicate, and now we're wrestling with not wanting them to be frayed, you don't recommend that we take them back to a pure—the old Reserve model? There's training and expertise that we ought to now be taking advantage of, so some scale-back to not wear them out and maintain them is appropriate, but wouldn't you suggest that a future role for the Guard and Reserve going forward should try to take advantage of this operational and strategic shock absorber capacity that they've developed over the last ten years?

General MATTIS. I believe it would be wise to, Senator Kaine. Also, I think that we have to in light of the situation we face fiscally in the Department right now.

Senator KAINE. Let me thank each of you very much. As you've noticed, people have been departing because there's a vote on right now. I'm going to depart stage right very promptly, but thank you so much for your service and your testimony today.

[Whereupon, at 12:32 p.m., the committee adjourned.]