

**NOMINATION OF GEN. JOSEPH F. DUNFORD,
JR., USMC, FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE
GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO BE COM-
MANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS.**

THURSDAY, JULY 17, 2014

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:32 a.m. in room SDG-50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Carl Levin (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Levin, Reed, Nelson, Hagan, Manchin, Gillibrand, Donnelly, Hirono, Kaine, King, Inhofe, McCain, Chambliss, Wicker, Ayotte, Fischer, Graham, and Cruz.

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

Majority staff members present: Creighton Greene, professional staff member; Gerald J. Leeling, General Counsel; Mariah K. McNamara, special assistant to the staff director; William G.P. Monahan, counsel; Michael J. Noblet, professional staff member; John H. Quirk V, professional staff member; and William K. Sutey, professional staff member.

Minority staff members present: John A. Bonsell, minority staff director; Steven M. Barney, minority counsel; John D. Cewe, professional staff member; Samantha L. Clark, minority associate counsel; Thomas W. Goffus, professional staff member; Ambrose R. Hock, professional staff member; and Natalie M. Nicolas, minority research assistant.

Staff assistants present: Alexandra M. Hathaway and Robert T. Waisanen.

Committee members' assistants present: Cathy Haverstock, assistant to Senator Nelson; Paul C. Hutton IV, assistant to Senator Manchin; Moran Banai, assistant to Senator Gillibrand; Rachel H. Lipsey and David J. Park, assistants to Senator Donnelly; Christian D. Brose and Jeremy H. Hayes, assistants to Senator McCain; Lenwood A. Landrum, assistant to Senator Sessions; Tyler Stephens, assistant to Senator Chambliss; Joseph G. Lai, assistant to Senator Wicker; Bradley L. Bowman, assistant to Senator Ayotte; Peter W. Schirtzinger, assistant to Senator Fischer; Craig R. Abele, assistant to Senator Graham; and Matthew Shipley, assistant to Senator Cruz.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARL LEVIN, CHAIRMAN

Chairman LEVIN. Good morning, everybody. The committee meets today to consider the nomination of General Joseph Dunford to be the 36th Commandant of the Marine Corps. General Dunford, welcome to the Senate Armed Services Committee. Thank you for the many years of extraordinary service that you have provided to our Nation, also for your willingness to continue to serve. Please also extend our thanks to your family, part of whom is here today, for their dedication and support, which is so critical, as we all know, to your success and the success of all those who serve in important positions and pressured positions for our Nation. Please feel free to introduce any family members or other people who are with you here today.

General Dunford has an exemplary record of service, is highly qualified for the position to which he has been nominated. He has commanded Marines from the platoon level to the Marine Expeditionary Force. He has served as the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps. He is currently the Commander, the International Security Assistance Force, ISAF, and Commander, U.S. Forces Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, General Dunford has commanded U.S. and coalition forces with great distinction. He is the latest in a line of distinguished commanders in that position. He has overseen the critical transition from U.S. and coalition-led combat operations to Afghan-led operations throughout Afghanistan. Under General Dunford's leadership, the drawdown of U.S. forces and a shift to a train, advise, and assist mission is being carried out with considerable effectiveness.

General Dunford has demonstrated remarkable skills as both a military leader and a diplomat in his interactions with the Afghan leadership, which have been essential to keeping the transition in Afghanistan on track.

General Dunford, as Commandant of the Marine Corps you're going to be tasked with recruiting and retaining a quality force and ensuring that force contains the necessary structure and readiness levels to meet our Nation's current challenges and are postured to respond to tomorrow's crises and contingencies. These responsibilities are demanding enough on their own. However, you are also going to be asked to assume control at a time of immense fiscal challenge, particularly because of sequestration.

Thank you and your family again for your service to our Nation. We look forward to your testimony and your swift confirmation. And I know recognize Senator Inhofe.

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, General Dunford, for the great job that you have had during arguably the most consequential periods of the war. With our Afghan partners, we're making important gains against the Taliban, are solidifying our progress in building the capacity of the Afghan Security Forces to defend their country.

Despite this progress, I'm still concerned about the future of Afghanistan. The recent agreement to perform a complete audit of the presidential runoff is encouraging. I hope that works out. You and I talked about this before. That is just really critical. The Af-

ghan people are going to have to believe the results of this thing. So hopefully we can make that happen.

I remain very troubled by the President's plan to draw down our forces based on arbitrary time lines instead of the advice of our commanders and the facts on the ground. The President tried the same policy in Iraq in 2011. We can't afford to repeat that same mistake in Afghanistan.

As Commandant you take command of the Marine Corps as it's being challenged by rising global threats and budgetary crises at home. Budget cuts are degrading readiness and forcing a dangerous drop in the end strength. General Amos has said that these budget cuts mean that—and this is a quote—“We will have fewer forces, arriving less trained, arriving later to the fight. This is a formula for more American casualties.” I think he's probably right and I will ask you some questions on your agreement on that.

So I'm glad you're the man at the helm. I appreciate very much your being here today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

General.

STATEMENT OF GEN. JOSEPH F. DUNFORD, JR., USMC, NOMINATED FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO BE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

General DUNFORD. Chairman Levin, Ranking Member Inhofe, and distinguished members of the committee: Thanks for the opportunity to appear before you today. I'm truly honored to be nominated as the 36th Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps.

Joining me today is my wife Ellen. I'm fortunate to have her love and support. She's been a great mother to our three children, who are now young adults, and she's also served as a tireless advocate for military families. I always refer to her as the most valuable player of the Dunford family and she's certainly earned that title during the last 18 months of my deployment to Afghanistan. I'm also joined by my niece Cara. Our sons Joseph, Patrick, and Kathleen are unable to be with us today, but Ellen and I are proud of all of them.

I'd like to begin by thanking the committee for your support of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines now serving in Afghanistan. Due to your leadership, I have no doubt they are the best trained and equipped force our Nation has ever sent to war. Their performance and the strength of our military families bear testimony to that support.

I'd also like to recognize the 1,817 Americans who have made the ultimate sacrifice in Afghanistan and the nearly 20,000 who have been wounded. Each day the men and women of the United States forces in Afghanistan work to bring meaning to their sacrifice.

I know this committee and the American people have high expectations for the U.S. Marine Corps. You expect your Marine Corps to serve as the naval expeditionary force in readiness, a force that is most ready when the Nation is least ready. You expect your Marine Corps they be forward deployed and forward engaged, responding to crises and enabling our Nation to respond to contingencies. You expect your Marine Corps to fight and win in any climate and

place and under any conditions, and you expect your Marines to be physically and mentally tough. You expect your Marines to demonstrate courage, honor, and commitment. You expect a lot of your Marines and you should.

If confirmed as the Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, I will ensure that marines continue to meet your expectations and the expectations of the American people. I'll also ensure the wellbeing of our marines, sailors, wounded warriors, and their families. Over the past decade-plus of war, they have done all we have asked of them and more. It would be a tremendous honor to lead them.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you this morning. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Dunford follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you so much, General.

We start with a set of standard questions which we ask of all of our nominees. These questions are asked so that this committee can exercise our legislative and our oversight responsibilities. Have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest?

General DUNFORD. I have, Mr. Chairman.

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

General DUNFORD. I do, Mr. Chairman.

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

General DUNFORD. I have not, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Will you ensure that your staff complies with deadlines established for requested communications, including questions for the record at hearings?

General DUNFORD. I will, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Will you cooperate in providing witnesses and briefers in response to congressional requests?

General DUNFORD. I will, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Will these witnesses be protected from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

General DUNFORD. They will.

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

General DUNFORD. I do, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Finally, do you agree to provide documents, including copies of electronic forms of communication, in a timely manner when requested by a duly constituted committee or to consult with the committee regarding the basis for any good faith delay or denial in providing such documents?

General DUNFORD. I do, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

We'll have a 7-minute first round. General, in my view Afghanistan has made remarkable progress over the past decade. It has improved the lives of the Afghan people. This includes increases many times over in the number of schools, the number of students and teachers, including female students and teachers, greater access to health facilities, a leap in Afghan life expectancy, expanded

connections to electricity, water, and cellphones, and growing income.

Can you briefly address the extent of the changes in Afghanistan over the past decade that the United States has been involved there and give us a sense of the significance of those changes to the Afghan people for the future of their country?

General DUNFORD. Chairman, thank you for that question. Probably the first thing I would say is that I think one of the most significant outcomes of our time in Afghanistan has been that we've put pressure on the terrorist networks and al Qaeda and prevented another September 11. We've also developed capable and credible Afghan forces. In 2002 there were no effective Afghan security forces. There's today an army and a police force of over 352,000, as well as another 30,000 Afghan local police, that are capable of providing security to the Afghan people.

We also have enabled, through those Afghan forces, the Afghan people the opportunity to determine their own future with the successful elections of the 5th of April and the 14th of June from a security perspective. While we still have some political issues to work through for those elections, there's no question that the Afghan Security Forces afforded the Afghan people the opportunity to vote.

We have today over eight million children in school, two million of those young girls. In 2001 there were less than a million people in school. Chairman, you mentioned some of the other advances in health care, communications, road networks, and so forth that will set the conditions for a secure, stable Afghanistan in the future.

But I would say that the most profound thing that exists in Afghanistan today that didn't exist in 2001 is hope. The Afghan people actually have hope and confidence in the future that didn't exist under the oppression and the tyranny of the Taliban in 2001.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, General.

Is the Afghan army performing well in your judgment?

General DUNFORD. Mr. Chairman, they are performing well. Since what we described as Milestone 2013 last June, when they assumed responsibility across the country, the only unilateral operations that the coalition forces have conducted are for our own security and retrograde and redeployment operations.

But I would probably just highlight one statistic that is indicative of the Afghans' performance. In 2012 we had over 140,000 coalition forces on the ground. That included 100,000 Americans. Today there are 40,000 coalition forces, of which 30,000 are Americans. In those two years the security environment has actually slightly improved since 2012. The big difference, of course, is that the Afghan Security Forces now are responsible for security.

So I feel very confident about the trajectory that Afghan Security Forces are on at this time.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

General, the President has called for drawing down U.S. forces to 9,800 by the end of this year, reducing that force by approximately half by the end of 2015, and transitioning to an embassy-based military presence by the end of 2016. In your answers to pre-hearing questions you said that you support the President's deci-

sion on the size of the U.S. troop presence in Afghanistan post-2014. Is that correct?

General DUNFORD. Chairman, I do support the numbers of forces that will be on the ground in 2015 to both conduct counterterrorism operations and train, advise, and assist.

Chairman LEVIN. Now, also in your answers to prehearing questions you said that you support the pace of reductions outlined by the President, quote, “with an understanding that we should continue to validate the assumptions and assess the conditions on the ground as the drawdown takes place,” close quote. Now, is one of your assumptions that the full 9,800-personnel force will be available through the entire 2015 fighting season?

General DUNFORD. It is one of the assumptions I made, yes, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Then the reductions under that assumption would occur only at the end of next year?

General DUNFORD. That’s correct, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. All right. Can you share with us any other major assumptions which you made?

General DUNFORD. I can, Mr. Chairman. I think the critical assumptions that have to be continue to be validated as we move forward are: first and foremost, the counterterrorism capability and the will of Afghanistan; the nature of the threat. The counterterrorism capacity and the will of Pakistan also needs to be considered. The quality of political transition that we’re in the midst of has to be considered, and also the international community’s support, both fiscally as well as troops in support of the NATO mission.

I think all of those are variables that would have to be considered when determining the adequacy of our force levels in the future.

Chairman LEVIN. There’s also an assumption in your answers and in your statements that a bilateral security agreement will be signed in a timely manner; is that correct?

General DUNFORD. That’s correct, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Relative to the size of the U.S. counterterrorism mission in Afghanistan after 2014, what is your recommendation about the size of that mission, the counterterrorism mission?

General DUNFORD. Chairman, of the 9,800 U.S. forces—and it’s probably important to highlight that the expectation is that there’d be approximately 4,000 NATO forces in addition to those 9,800. But of the 9,800 U.S. forces, approximately 1,000 would be dedicated solely to the counterterrorism mission. But there would be a total of 2,000 Special Operations Forces that are there, some of those working with the Afghan Special Operations Forces, who would also be participating in counterterrorism operations.

Chairman LEVIN. I want to change the subject slightly to the question of the Russian M-17 military transport helicopters. You recently wrote me, General, regarding a provision in the defense authorization bill which this committee marked up that would prohibit any contracts with the Russian corporation that exports the M-117 military helicopter.

You indicated that this prohibition could be catastrophic. Can you explain why?

General DUNFORD. I can, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for that question. The Afghan Air Force will consist of over 80 Mi-17's. All those aircraft have been purchased. The final delivery will be in September-October of this year. Those aircraft provide the Afghan forces with the operational reach to provide security and stability to the Afghan people, as well as to conduct effective counterterrorism operations.

30 of those 80 Mi-17's are for what we call a Special Mission Wing, which is the Afghan Special Operations Forces' capability to both conduct counterterrorism and counternarcotics operations. Without the operational reach of the Mi-17, the Afghan forces will not be successful in providing security and stability in Afghanistan and will not be an effective counterterrorism partner.

One of the second order effects of that, chairman, which is why I used the word "catastrophic," is that it will also have an adverse impact on our force protection in 2015. Among the assumptions that I make in 2015 is the Afghan Security Forces will contribute to the force protection of coalition forces in 2015, and their ability to do that would be significantly degraded without the Mi-17.

Chairman LEVIN. It is the spare parts, as I understand it, the sustainment that is prohibited by that same language, which is so important.

General DUNFORD. There's two issues, Mr. Chairman. One of them is the ability to have spare parts and to sustain the Mi-17 fleet. The other is that Rosoboron, the Russian company, owns the plans and the blueprints, if you will, of the Mi-17. So there's also safety of flight issues with subsequent modifications and refurbishment of aircraft that would require our dealing either directly with the contractor or the subcontractor, Rosoboron.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Senator Inhofe.

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I was going to bring that up. That probably is the most contentious issue on this up here. I agree with the chairman on this. I have seen some of the pretty extreme and courageous statements made. Whether or not some members up here agree with them is a different matter. But the Special Inspector General for the Afghan Reconstruction, SIGAR, on June 13 reported a thing that was entitled "The Afghan Special Mission Wing, DOD Moving Forward With this \$771 Million Purchase"; that the aircraft—that the Afghans cannot operate and cannot maintain.

Is there any way that this could be changed and moderated a little bit so that you could still use the spare parts of existing vehicles that are there, that are paid for, that are in existence, and still start toward something, another purchase? Have you thought about any kind of a combination that might work out where we could not lose the value of those that are, the 88 as I understand that are there, there are trained fighters to fly them, just as far as spare parts are concerned? Have you thought about that?

General DUNFORD. Senator, we have looked very hard. In fact, we've done a global search to see if it would be possible to sustain the Mi-17 fleet without directly dealing with Rosoboron or one of

its subcontractors. My assessment is that that would not be possible.

Senator INHOFE. All right. There is recently—let me see if I can get this on a Blackberry. I'm quoting now from Tuesday, the speech that was made before the Brookings Institute, when General Amos said, quote, "It breaks our hearts," referring to the fall of the Anbar Province in Iraq, which the Marines won in 2010. He noted that 852 marines were killed and another 8,500 injured in Iraq. I believe that they had made the difference.

I know all the work you did you in Afghanistan and I'm sure you're observant as to what happened in Iraq. I mentioned to you when you were in my office that I have a young man named Brian Hackler who works for me now, but he actually had two deployments. They were in Fallujah. By coincidence, I didn't know who he was at that time, but I was there, as were many of these guys there, when they had the fingerprints and all of that.

I think, looking at it, that probably arguably could be considered to be the most violent, door-to-door, World War II type of activity. When I called up Brian Hackler and told him that we had lost that after they had gained it, he talked about the blood, sweat and tears. He's been called by a lot of people since them. I just look at that taking place.

My concern obviously for bringing this up is that we don't want the same thing to happen in Afghanistan. I know, since you're the Marine and you saw the mission that took place there, you agree with me.

What all has been done in your opinion to make sure that that doesn't—we don't have a repeat of that tragedy that took place in Iraq?

General DUNFORD. Thanks, Senator. I was one of the thousands of Marines that did serve in the Anbar Province and feel the same way that Brian Hackworth did, does. Senator, I think the biggest difference is we have an opportunity to do a transition in Afghanistan, a proper transition that will allow us to achieve our end state. In Iraq we withdrew, with the associated consequences. To me, that's the most significant change.

We knew when we left Iraq that there was work remaining to be done to develop sustainable Iraqi security forces, as well as to ensure that political stability existed in Iraq such that security and stability would continue. In Afghanistan, we have a chance to get that right, and my argument in fact is for us to do a responsible transition from Afghanistan as opposed to a withdrawal.

Senator INHOFE. That's good and I appreciate that. I just think we need to get on record, because a lot of people—it's awful hard to explain to people how that happened, including the Brian Hacklers around who were a part of it.

There's been a lot of discussion on the 38 amphibious ships and dropping that number down to 33. I have a letter, Mr. Chairman, I want to make part of the record right now at this point in the record.

Chairman LEVIN. It will be made part of the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Senator INHOFE. That there are—and it's one that you have read and that each member up here has read, from these 20 generals, signing on saying that they think it's absolutely necessary not to deal with that reduction to 33. Any comments you want to make on that?

General DUNFORD. Senator, what I do know is that on a day to day basis the combatant commanders' requirements for amphibious ships greatly exceed the inventory. In fact, I'm a bit dated, but not too much, and I think there were close to 50 was the requirement on a day to day basis. The Chief of Naval Operations, the Secretary of the Navy, and the Commandant a few years ago concluded that 38 was the requirement, and we're now at the point where we have 33 in a fiscally constrained environment, but actually 31 in the inventory.

So I would support anything that would allow us to maintain an effective amphibious ship inventory.

Senator INHOFE. A lot of good points were brought out in that letter. Do you agree with the letter?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I have not seen the letter.

Senator INHOFE. Oh, okay, that's fine.

Lastly, on the elections, a lot of us I think are partly responsible for the fact that there is going to be an audit and there's going to be a real effort there to make sure that not just justice is done and the right turnout is resulted, but also that the people of Afghanistan will accept this as a fair and honest election.

Do you have any thoughts—I know you're going into a different job now, but—on what needs to be done to make sure that that can happen?

General DUNFORD. I do, Senator, and I expect to still be there throughout the process.

Senator INHOFE. Sure.

General DUNFORD. We did begin yesterday—I'm glad to report that we began yesterday to gather the ballots in accordance with the agreement that was made over the weekend. 100 percent of the ballots will be brought back to Kabul to be audited. There's significant international community oversight, as well as candidate oversight, in the process of counting those ballots. I think that will give both the candidates and the Afghan people high confidence that all that can be done is being done to eliminate the fraudulent ballots and determine a good outcome.

I think the most encouraging thing—and I know some of the members recently spoke to both candidates. The most encouraging thing is both candidates are very responsible. They know the consequences of the political transition process and they have agreed to accept the outcome of the ballot with certain parameters. Those parameters are now in place, and so I'm optimistic that at the end of this process some weeks from now there will be a winner and a loser and the loser will accept, will accept the results of the election, as will the Afghan people.

Senator INHOFE. I appreciate that very much. We all know the significance of that election.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Inhofe.

Senator Reed.

Senator REED. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I want to join my colleagues, General, in commending you for your extraordinary service to the Marine Corps and to the Nation, and to thank your family for serving with you. Knowing you a little bit, I think you would first point to the soldiers, marines, sailors, airmen, and airwomen who serve as the real force of our success, and your predecessors'. But your role has been absolutely critical.

A year ago I don't think anyone would have said we'd have two relatively peaceful elections in that country, monitored principally by the Afghan National Security Forces, not by international personnel. Again, that's one significant aspect and contribution of your individual and personal command. So thank you, sir, for what you've done.

Can you talk as we go forward about the decision points and the flexibility we have to make adjustments with respect to our presence in Afghanistan, assuming of course that the status of forces agreement will be signed and the strategic partnership will be signed?

General DUNFORD. Again, Senator, as we've discussed earlier, there will be 9,800 U.S. forces in Afghanistan. The plan that we have right now would not begin to raw those forces down until the end of the fighting season in 2015. So the first opportunity to change, make adjustments as you describe them would be in the fall of 2015, where you can effect change in the projected numbers in 2016.

Then whatever number you have in 2016, a similar construct would probably be in place for 2016, where the numbers that you would want to have in 2017 could be determined in the summer of 2016 to effect change in the plans for 2017. But it typically will run in a post-fighting season pattern over the next couple of years in terms of effecting change, which is not to say you couldn't add forces, but this is to make adjustments to the forces on the ground.

Senator REED. Not only forces on the ground, but facilities that may be occupied because of conditions in the country?

General DUNFORD. Senator, that's absolutely one of the drivers. What we have tried to do is make sure that the infrastructure doesn't drive our ability to provide train, advise, and assist in 2015. So we've done some things to maintain a flexible posture in 2015. But at the end of the day infrastructure is absolutely one of the drivers to the timeline.

Senator REED. There's two principal missions. One is the train, equip, and advise of the Afghan National Security Forces and the other is the counterterrorism operations. Those will be—you'll view the force structure in terms of both those missions; that's correct?

General DUNFORD. Absolutely, Senator. From my perspective they're inextricably linked.

Senator REED. You're comfortable with this going forward because of the built-in flexibility and you see no arbitrary constraints going forward? The review that will be done at the end of next year will be based upon the conditions on the ground, the two missions that we outlined, and the facts as the commander, presumably General Campbell, sees at that time?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I'm confident that the specific assumptions, the conditions, and the tasks that have to be accom-

plished, that drove our recommendations for 2015, all that's available to my successor and he'll have the opportunity to go back in 2015 and to revalidate those assumptions and to assess the conditions, one of the important conditions of course being the nature of the threat to our Nation after 2015.

Senator REED. Again, invariably parallels are drawn between the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan. But in Iraq, in 2008 President Bush signed a formal agreement with the government of Iraq to withdraw all forces on a fixed date, the end of 2011. That is not going to be the policy in Afghanistan as you understand it? In fact, we would have the flexibility for our own interests to change the mix and change the disposition of forces going forward, and that is, I would assume, a key difference?

General DUNFORD. Senator, it is a key difference. One of the key differences is that, one, the Afghan people want us to be in Afghanistan in overwhelming numbers. I've recently spoken to both presidential candidates and I can assure you that both presidential candidates also support a U.S. presence after 2014.

Senator REED. One of the key factors which you've already acknowledged is the role of Pakistan. One of the interesting developments which I think you appreciate very keenly and I wonder how much our colleagues in Pakistan do is as we draw down our forces and depend less and less on the lines of communication through Pakistan our relative leverage goes up. Is that a fair estimate in terms of getting their cooperation and getting their help?

General DUNFORD. Senator, it does. I think our footprint in Afghanistan has made us reliant on the ground lines of communication, and I think after 2014 we have an opportunity to reframe our relationship with Pakistan.

Senator REED. Right now they're conducting operations much more aggressively, but probably not as effectively as they would even want; is that a fair judgment?

General DUNFORD. Senator, they are conducting operations in North Waziristan, and we've certainly wanted them to do that for some years. They've had some success against the Pakistani Taliban and the IMU in North Waziristan to the best that we can tell, but certainly have not had the effect against the Haqqani Network that we want to have seen, although it certainly has had a disruptive effect on the Haqqani Network in the sense that they have all been forced to move out of their sanctuary in the Miranshah area.

Senator REED. Let me just change quickly, because your new job as the Commandant of the Marine Corps touches upon issues of budget, potential sequestration effects. I'm sure you've thought about them, but not I presume in detail. But going forward, can you just give us your sort of sense of the readiness challenges you will face and other challenges that the Corps faces today?

General DUNFORD. Senator, thank you. I think as I look at the future of the Marine Corps our leadership, the biggest challenge we're going to have is to balance readiness, the crisis response capability that you expect from the U.S. Marine Corps, with the ability to modernize the Marine Corps for tomorrow's fights, to sustain infrastructure, to maintain proper levels of training and so forth for those units at home station.

So balancing all those in a fiscally constrained environment is going to be very difficult. I know that General Amos has prioritized readiness. I also know that he's been forced to make some decisions that create challenges in the future for modernization. I think balancing those things over the next couple of years is going to be difficult.

Senator REED. Thank you, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Reed.

With thanks to Senators Chambliss and Wicker, Senator McCain.

Senator MCCAIN. Thanks to Senators Chambliss and Wicker. It shows if we live long enough—[Laughter.]

Thank you, General Dunford.

Chairman LEVIN. This is an in joke. I have to explain all this.

Senator MCCAIN. It's the only appropriate mark of respect that I have ever gotten from my two colleagues. Thank you. [Laughter.]

I thank you, General Dunford, for your outstanding service. We've had the opportunity of encountering many times over the past 12, 13, 14 years and I appreciate your service.

I really am reluctant to get back into this, but people keep trying to say that in 2008 we said we'd have everybody out, that we really wanted to stay in Iraq. The fact is that the President of the United States—there was never any public statement that the President made, the United States made, that said that he wanted to stay, have a residual force in Iraq.

The fact is—and Senator Graham and I were there and know full well—that if we had really wanted to we could have kept a residual force there. And we're paying a very heavy price for not doing so. We were on the ground there when Maliki and Barzani and Alawi agreed and, in the words of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it cascaded down to 3,500 troops that they wanted to leave behind, which was absolutely ridiculous.

So we'll be fighting this for years to come, but facts are stubborn things and we could have left a residual force if we had wanted to do so. In fact, today your predecessor said, quote—in the Brookings Institute, General Amos said: "I have a hard time believing that had we been there and worked with the government and worked with the parliament and worked with the minister of defense, the minister of interior, I don't think we'd be in the same shape we're in today." Those are just facts.

General Dunford, did you or any other senior military leader personally recommend the policy of everybody out by 2017 no matter what?

General DUNFORD. No, Senator.

Senator MCCAIN. No military, no ranking military officer that you know, recommended a hard date for everybody out of Afghanistan; is that right?

General DUNFORD. None that I know of, Senator. I think we still plan to have, as you know, some presence after 2017. But no one recommended zero.

Senator MCCAIN. Did anybody recommend that we have a conditions-based decision about what kind of residual force we should leave behind?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think you appreciate that every military leader would want to have the conditions on the ground and the assumptions be revalidated as a transition takes place.

Senator MCCAIN. Isn't it true that right now, the way that the counterterrorism capability of the Afghans are today, that we cannot abandon that? If you had to make the decision today, with the lack of counterterrorism capability the Afghans have, we would have to leave that kind of force behind at least for the counterterrorism mission?

General DUNFORD. Senator, there's no doubt that the Afghan forces today would not be capable of conducting the kind of operations we're conducting to put pressure on the network.

Senator MCCAIN. Nor right now do you envision them having that capability by 2017?

General DUNFORD. Not if you project the threat that exists today.

Senator MCCAIN. Including recent rocket attacks on the airport in Kabul show that the Taliban is still pretty resilient.

And isn't it a fact that as long as the Taliban have basically a sanctuary in Pakistan that this situation will remain extremely complex and dangerous?

General DUNFORD. Senator, absolutely. The resiliency of the Taliban movement is driven by their sanctuary in Pakistan.

Senator MCCAIN. Is there any doubt in your mind that the announcement of a complete withdrawal by 2017 has had effect on the morale of the Afghan army?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think all of us in uniform, to include the Afghans, would have preferred that that be a bit more ambiguous.

Senator MCCAIN. In fact, we were told recently in Kabul by Afghan military officers, they say, quote: "You are abandoning us." That's what they told me and Senator Graham, and I don't think they would have any reason to tell us otherwise.

Very quick, so the fact is that we need a conditions-based decision because we right now are not confident that the Afghans can take up the complete burden of their own security.

Very quickly, sequestration. Right now, as I understand it, Marine captains and Army captains who are in the field fighting right now as we speak are receiving notices that they're going to be involuntarily separated from the United States Army and Marine Corps. Is that true?

General DUNFORD. Senator, my understanding is that that is what the Army has been forced to do as a result of the drawdown. The Marine Corps is not doing that at this time with captains that have forward deployed.

Senator MCCAIN. Obviously, that has to have an effect on morale of our officer corps.

General DUNFORD. It does, Senator.

Senator MCCAIN. A serious blow, I would think.

General DUNFORD. Absolutely. Probably more importantly, Senator, than just the officer corps is the message it sends to the young soldiers whose company commander is forced to redeploy as a result of being reduced in force, a reduction in force.

Senator MCCAIN. Isn't it true from your time in the military and remembering worse times that it takes a long time to restore the

morale of the military when you take out some of the—involuntarily, some of the best and the brightest that we have had. Haven't we seen that movie before in your early part of your career?

General DUNFORD. I have, Senator. In the late 1970s it took us some years, probably into 1983 or 1984, before we recovered from the effects of the post-Vietnam drawdown.

Senator MCCAIN. Would you agree that perhaps one of the greatest responsibilities that Congress and the military has today is to review this sequestration and its effects that it is having long-term on our ability to defend this Nation?

General DUNFORD. I would agree with that, Senator.

Senator MCCAIN. So I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and both sides of this podium, making that one of our highest priorities. Otherwise, I think that it is the unanimous opinion of every military leader that I have met that continued sequestration on the path we're on could have devastating effects on our ability to defend this Nation. Would you agree with that?

General DUNFORD. I would agree with that, Senator.

Senator MCCAIN. I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator McCain.

Senator KING.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

General, the chairman covered the Mi-17 issue, but I just think it's really important to have your unequivocal view that, I think the word you used is, catastrophic if we cut off spare parts. That would in effect ground the Afghan Air Force; is that true?

General DUNFORD. Senator, it is. The reason I used the word "catastrophic," which I don't think is hyperbole, is because the inability for the Afghans to have the operational reach represented by the Mi-17 will seriously deteriorate their ability to take the fight to the enemy. But the more important reason I used the word "catastrophic" is that their inability to take the fight to the enemy actually will put young Americans in harm's way in 2015 and beyond.

Senator KING. Thank you General.

You've discussed this. Looking now at the lessons of Iraq, what do we learn from that that can avoid that future in Afghanistan? As you know, there are those who aren't as optimistic as the military about Iraq's—I mean, Afghanistan's future after our withdrawal. What do we learn from Iraq to avoid that fate?

General DUNFORD. I think the key thing that we have in Afghanistan, we're in the process of right now, is an effective political transition, but also the opportunity to continue to develop the sustainability of Afghan security forces. I'm very confident about the Afghan forces' ability to provide security on a day to day basis. I'm not confident that if we were to leave at the end of 2014 that those forces would be sustainable.

There are some significant capability gaps that have to be addressed in order for the Afghans to be able to do things that we have heretofore been doing for them. There's still a degree of what I describe as capability substitution. Many of those areas are planning, programming, budgeting, execution, things we take for grant-

ed, delivery of spare parts, delivery of fuel, pay systems and those kinds of things that the army would need.

So I think the key lesson is that, after all of the sacrifice and all the accomplishments over the past 13 years, what we need to do is ensure that the transition results in the Afghan forces being sustainable without our presence at some point in the future.

Senator KING. What's the ethnic makeup of the Afghan army? One of the problems in Iraq appears to be the unequal distribution ethnically or sectarianly, I suppose, if that's a word, in Iraq. Is the ethnic, tribal makeup of the Afghanistan security forces representative of the country, so that the security forces will have a broad support within the country?

General DUNFORD. Senator, thanks for that question. It is an important question. The officer corps in the Afghan army is about 40 percent Tajik, 40 percent Pashtun. The NCO corps is about the same. The forces are about the same. That's a slight overrepresentation of Tajiks in the sense that the Pashtun population represents some 40-plus percentage of the population and about 27 percent of the population is Tajik.

I would caveat those statistics by telling you that there hasn't been a census in Afghanistan for a long period of time. So those statistics are the best that we have available to us. But in general terms we have the foundation of a national army in Afghanistan that is in fact representative, not only of the various ethnic groups, but representative geographically.

Senator KING. Is this representation integrated throughout the force? In other words, are individual battalions or units balanced ethnically?

General DUNFORD. Senator, they are. They are balanced. There is a slight overrepresentation of forces from the northern part of the country and the eastern part of the country, slightly less from the southern part of the country. But the demographics in each of the units represents the Nation as a whole, as opposed to specific units being Tajik or Pashtun and so forth.

So the assignment of people inside the Afghan army is not based on their geographic area. In fact, most—all serve away from home.

Senator KING. We tend to focus around here on problems. That's what we talk about. That's our job. But my sense is that Secretary Kerry and what happened last weekend was a big deal, and the avoidance of what could have been a disastrous situation. Could you share some thoughts about the importance of, A, the uniform recount and, B—I understand there's a kind of a power-sharing agreement or a coalition government agreement of whatever the outcome. This could have been a disaster for us if it had gone the wrong way this past week.

General DUNFORD. Senator, thanks. Last week there was a lot of discussion in Afghanistan about one of the candidates establishing a parallel government, with the potential for civil war. I would assess that risk as having been significant. I don't think either one of the candidates wanted to do that, but there was certainly a sentiment, a strong sentiment by large numbers of people, that were so outraged at the fraud that took place in the election that they were willing to take extreme measures.

I think what happened this weekend was very encouraging in that both candidates have agreed to a framework for an audit process that will deliver the cleanest vote possible. But as importantly, the candidates agreed on a political track as well as that technical track, and that political track will be some power-sharing arrangement so there's an inclusive government in Afghanistan. And they believe that that is most suitable for Afghanistan at this particular time.

So while the devil is in the details and much work remains to be done, particularly on the political framework, the discussion in Afghanistan now is not about civil war, it's not about insecurity; it's about a political deal in order to govern effectively in the future. And I think that's fairly significant.

Senator KING. I've always felt that God is in the details, but that's a different topic.

Pakistan. You mentioned Pakistan. You've had to deal with Pakistan. Whose side is Pakistan on? And are they trying to suppress these terrorist organizations or are they working with them? I find Pakistan a puzzling—I was about to say ally, but I don't know how to characterize them.

General DUNFORD. Senator, in my time in Afghanistan I've met generally monthly with our Pakistan counterpart, and also he's now had the opportunity to travel to Afghanistan to meet with both me and our counterpart in the Afghan security forces. Numbers of hours of discussions. I'm convinced of a couple things, both from the intelligence and from my engagements in Pakistan.

First and foremost, I believe that the Pakistani army recognizes that extremism is an existential threat to the state of Pakistan and I think they are determined to do something about that threat. Less confident that they today have the capability to do all that needs to be done to deal with that threat inside of Afghanistan, which is why I think you see them focused narrowly on the most pressing threats to Pakistan, reflecting an inability to deal more broadly with extremism.

This is one of the reasons I think it's so important for us to develop an effective relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and I think the United States can play a unique role in facilitating that relationship, because the way we will get after this problem is by, one, having a common definition of "extremism" in the region; and number two, then having an agreed-upon framework within which both Afghanistan and Pakistan can deal with the threat of extremism, as well as the very real political and economic challenges that exist between the two states.

Senator KING. So as we draw down in Afghanistan, it's more important than ever to establish a good, strong working relationship with Pakistan?

General DUNFORD. Senator, an effective relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan is critical to our long-term success in the region.

Senator KING. Thank you, General, and thank you for your extraordinary service.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator King.

Senator Chambliss.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

General, thanks to you and your family for your continued commitment to America. We're very thankful that you have been where you've been coming out of Afghanistan. You're the next in line of a number of great leaders to serve as Commandants. So we look forward to your continued service there.

Taking up where Senator King left off on Pakistan, there is no long-term solution in Afghanistan without some sort of cooperation out of Pakistan; is that a fair statement?

General DUNFORD. Senator, that's absolutely a fair statement, and one of the critical components of our military campaign is to begin to develop effective military- to-military relationships between the two countries. I couldn't agree more.

Senator CHAMBLISS. I want to ask you about the detainees that were released recently. I understand 12 non- Afghans were released from Parwan. Ten of those were Pakistanis and they were all returned to their home country. I'm concerned because I know the serious nature of the alleged incidents that these prisoners were accused of, and we've got 38 more non-Afghans, I understand. Can you address why these 12 were released and what's our long-term policy with Afghanistan regarding non-Afghan prisoners at Parwan?

General DUNFORD. Thanks, Senator. I can. First with regard to the ten that were sent to Pakistan, we didn't release those individuals; we turned them over to Pakistan after the U.S. State Department got assurances from Pakistan that they would be properly handled in accordance with the nature of the crimes that they committed.

We have 38 third country nationals right now and a similar process takes place, where the State Department deals with the Nation from which these individuals come, gains assurances, and then the Deputy Secretary of Defense will sign an authorization for them to be released after notifying Congress.

The challenge with this issue, Senator, is that our authority to hold these individuals will expire on the 31st of December 2014. So we're working very hard now to ensure that we properly transition these individuals to a place where they can be held accountable for, again, the acts that they've committed.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Do you have confidence that the Afghans are going to treat them in the way that they should be treated because of the acts they've committed?

General DUNFORD. Senator, we're not planning at this time to turn them over to Afghanistan. We plan to turn them over to the countries from which they originated. My sense is that if we were to turn them over to Afghanistan today I couldn't guarantee you that they would be properly handled.

Senator CHAMBLISS. I want to again take off on something Senator McCain asked you about. We had General Campbell in the other day to talk about continuing operations in Afghanistan, and with the drawdown to the 9,800 this year, drawing down again next year, give me your view as to the long-term situation as you understand it right now as we head into the end of 2014, through 2015 and, more importantly, into 2016? What's your understanding of how this is going to work?

General DUNFORD. Senator, with regard to developing sustainable Afghan security forces, I think the pace of withdrawal right now could result in Afghan forces being sustainable. I'm comfortable that a regional approach to train, advise, and assist in 2015, where we help mature the institutions, the processes and systems that allow the ministerial-level organization to support tactical-level organizations, the work that needs to be done can be done in 2015.

I'm also confident that there's some work that will require a longer period of time, but much of that work can be done in Kabul inside the ministries. The issue that I really can't talk to you about with any degree of confidence is what the threat to the homeland might be after 2016. That's certainly an area where I think the assumptions and the conditions that informed our current decision would have to be evaluated over time.

Senator CHAMBLISS. In that respect, if you had to rate the possibility of either al Qaeda or al Qaeda-affiliated operators inside of Afghanistan or migrating to Afghanistan as we draw down and resuming training operations, much like we saw before 9-11, what degree would you rate the possibility of that taking place?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I can assure you, from what we see on a day to day basis and from the intelligence, that there are individuals in both Afghanistan and Pakistan who are determined to attack the homeland. They're determined to replicate acts like 9-11. The pressure that we have placed on those networks over the past decade is the reason they haven't had to have—haven't been able to execute a 9-11.

So I would say that the risk, without continued pressure on those networks, of them regenerating and attacking the homeland would be significant.

General DUNFORD. Is the Haqqani Network still enemy number one?

General DUNFORD. Well, Senator, I would view al Qaeda as enemy number one. Haqqani is certainly the most virulent strain of the insurgency in Afghanistan and presents the greatest risk to the force because of their emphasis on high-profile attacks. The other thing that's significant about the Haqqani Network is they actually provide the network that allows al Qaeda in the region to have sanctuary and continue to resource itself. They're certainly, if not the most important group to the sustainability of al Qaeda, they are certainly one of the most significant groups that allows al Qaeda to sustain itself in the South Asia region.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Talk for a minute about the morale of American soldiers in Afghanistan now? What's your thought?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I am—and I mean this sincerely—extraordinarily honored to have the opportunity to lead the men and women that are in Afghanistan today. Their morale after 13 years of war has met or exceeded anybody's expectations over time. They're focused on what they're doing. They believe in what they're doing. They trust themselves. They know they're well trained and they're well equipped and they trust their leadership.

So I would assess the morale of the forces in Afghanistan today and, frankly, in the force as a whole as something we can all be very proud of.

Senator CHAMBLISS. The 48th Brigade of the Georgia National Guard is charged with basically tearing down Camp Phoenix. I visited them when they got there and they were fired up about the job that you had given to them to do that, and I trust they're doing well.

General DUNFORD. Senator, they are. As you know, the job we gave them to do is one of the more difficult jobs that needs to be done over this next year. It's a piece of infrastructure, Camp Phoenix, that they're down at, that we want to close. Closing a base is a challenging task, but they have taken that on with enthusiasm and they're doing a superb job.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks for your leadership, General.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Chambliss.

Senator Hagan.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Dunford, welcome. I also know that your wife has played a very big role in your success, so we welcome Ellen and your niece.

I am the daughter-in-law of a former major general in the Marine Corps Reserve and just know that so many people hold the Marine Corps in the highest, highest regard. So we thank you for doing that. You've got some big shoes to fill from Commandant Amos, who has certainly led the Marine Corps I think in a very good leadership.

I did want to talk a little bit more about the Afghan National Security Force. As we wind down—as you wind down your tenure as head of ISAF, where you have seen the withdrawing of 20,000 troops in an environment with an unsigned bilateral security agreement and an election riddled by fraud that you've spoken about, tell me how prepared the Afghanistan National Security Forces to take over, especially in light of what we have seen, the incapability of what's taking place in Iraq?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I would, and thanks for that question. I think, rather than just give you my personal assessment, maybe I'll just outline what the Afghan forces have done over the past few months, which in my mind is indicative of their current capability. First, we had over 300 campaign events involving thousands of people, some as large as 20,000. The Afghan forces secured all of those campaign events.

There was a Nowruz, or Persian New Year Festival, in the northern part of the country back in March. 100,000 people came. They secured that event. There was another event in the country that involved people from all over the region to attend, a number of significant threat streams. Those threat streams were disrupted and the Afghan forces were able to provide security.

Probably most significantly, what took place on the 5th of April and the 14th of June is indicative of the capabilities of the Afghan security forces. On both of those occasions, millions of people, despite being threatened by the Taliban, had the courage to go out and vote. That courage was drawn in my assessment from the confidence that the Afghan people and the sense of ownership that the Afghan people have for the Afghan security forces.

So while I'm very aware of the challenges that must be addressed to have sustainable Afghan forces and the capability gaps that continue to remain, I'm equally confident that the Afghan forces today are capable of providing security to the Afghan people. They have done that for the past year since they assumed lead responsibility.

They're in a tough fight this summer. Our forces when I arrived, we had over 100,000 forces on the ground. We have 40,000 right now. We're providing very little support on a day to day basis to the Afghan security forces. And they are yet still able to be successful against the enemy.

Senator HAGAN. Can you talk about the participation of women in the Afghani forces?

General DUNFORD. I can, Senator. It's not a particularly good news story. There's a goal in the Afghan army and the police forces for 10 percent women. We have about one percent in both the army and the police force right now. There are some bright spots. We have the first female police chief in Kabul. We've got a couple other senior-level officers. And both the minister of defense and minister of interior have taken this on as an area of personal interest, and they have a very aggressive recruiting plan.

Within ISAF, we recently received from Croatia a brigadier general whose singular responsibility will be to assist us with gender integration in the Afghan security forces. So from a leadership perspective, I think there's an emphasis by the leadership in Afghanistan to make this better.

But I wouldn't for a minute understate, Senator, the very real cultural challenges that are going to make the progress for women in Afghanistan very slow and very deliberate and, quite frankly, contingent upon our continued presence after 2014, as well as some of the support that we provide being conditional in order for them to make progress in this particular area.

Senator HAGAN. How many women in the Marine Corps are serving in Afghanistan?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I don't know. That may be something good that I don't know, because we actually don't keep track of things like that.

Senator HAGAN. I want to move to the Camp Lejeune water contamination issue. One of my top priorities has been to get help and answers for those individuals in the Marines that have been affected by this water contamination at Camp Lejeune. As many as a million marines, family members, and civilians that were stationed at the base from 1950s until the 80s were exposed to some harmful chemicals that have certainly led to the development of cancer and other diseases.

It's been a long quest to get answers and we are finally beginning to get results of studies that have shed light on this tragedy. As someone—I know that you too have served at Camp Lejeune during this time. I hope you make this issue a personal priority. When you are confirmed, will you work with Congress to overcome any of these bureaucratic hurdles that we have had in the past—I feel good from the Marine Corps's perspective we're still working with ATSDR in some other areas—to overcome any of these hur-

dles that may halt or delay the pursuit of answers for the affected Marines and their families?

General DUNFORD. Absolutely, Senator. We'll do all we can to be transparent with Marine families and, frankly, at the end of the day to do the right thing.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you.

Then tuition assistance. I think that is a powerful program that allows our servicemembers to pursue education in their off time, and I think it enhances the professionalism when serving and certainly helps to prepare them for the civilian workforce when they transition out.

Congress has sent a very clear message about the importance of this benefit by restoring it in fiscal year 2013 and then by restricting the reprogramming of that in fiscal year 2014. In the Marine Corps' 2015 budget the request originally included a proposal to cut this tuition assistance by close to two-thirds and also included a 25 percent cost share by the individual marine.

It's a program that I support and I've defended it. I was pleased to see that the Marine Corps quickly changed course and then fully funded this tuition assistance for fiscal year 2015.

If confirmed, will you continue to show strong support for the tuition assistance benefit?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I have taken a look at the guidance that General Amos provided for the tuition assistance program and, if confirmed, the guidance that I would provide would be consistent with what General Amos has provided.

Senator HAGAN. Because this is a benefit that these men and women I think have really deserved and it has certainly helped from an educational standpoint for those individuals and, as I said, when they transition out. So thank you. I will look forward to working with you on that.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Hagan.

Senator WICKER.

Senator WICKER. Thank you.

General Dunford, thank you for your testimony and for your service. Let me just try to follow up on a few things that have been mentioned.

Senator Inhofe mentioned our amphibious fleet. It's clear that we're not anywhere near our requirements there. Let me ask specifically about the LPD-17 program. It was originally planned for 12 warships. It was reduced to 11 vessels. This committee restored that twelfth LPD. It's my understanding that the Senate Appropriations Committee has found the funds for that twelfth LPD and that it's authorized in the House version of the National Defense Authorization Act.

Do we need that twelfth LPD?

General DUNFORD. We do, Senator.

Senator WICKER. What's your risk—what's your assessment of the risk to the Marine Corps and our troops' ability to execute objectives around the world, and particularly the Asia Pacific, if we do not get that number right?

General DUNFORD. Senator, we're both short of the numbers of ships required to meet the combatant commanders' day to day requirements, as well as to aggregate Marines to conduct an amphib-

ious assault. So I believe that that twelfth LPD will help mitigate the risk, not completely close the gap, but it will help mitigate the risk that we have right now in both of those areas.

Senator WICKER. Would it help you as the next Commandant if we would go ahead and get these bills on the President's desk for his signature before the end of the fiscal year? What problems does it cause when we let the fiscal year expire and we haven't given you a National Defense Authorization Act and we don't have our Defense Department funded with an actual appropriation bill, but rather a continuing resolution?

General DUNFORD. Thanks, Senator. I know from my previous experience as Assistant Commandant what that frequently requires us to do is break programs. It's actually a very inefficient way to do business if you don't have a bill passed by the end of the fiscal year.

Senator WICKER. Well, you know, we have reported out of this committee the Carl Levin Defense Authorization Act and I know that he would like nothing better than to get it on the floor this month. I would join my colleagues in that.

Let me also follow up—

Chairman LEVIN. If I could just correct that, I really wanted to get this on the floor last month.

Senator WICKER. But that was yesterday and yesterday's gone.

We need to get it done. I think you and the members of this committee are on the same page. I just implore the leadership of this Congress to do whatever's necessary to get these bills on the President's desk in a timely manner.

Let me follow up then on the question of the pace of our drawdown. Right now we have 30,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan, is that correct?

General DUNFORD. That's correct, Senator.

Senator WICKER. And another 10,000 from various coalition allies, for a total of 40,000.

General DUNFORD. That's correct, Senator.

Senator WICKER. Now, at what pace are we going to get to 9800? What will it look like at the end of this calendar year?

General DUNFORD. It will be at 9800 by the end of this calendar year, Senator.

Senator WICKER. So it's going to be a pretty rapid drawdown.

General DUNFORD. It is, and this is the way it was planned, so that we could keep the maximum number of forces on the ground throughout the election period, as well as through the fighting season in the summer. But as we discussed a while ago, the infrastructure piece is one of the key drivers, and we've been simultaneously working the infrastructure reduction and transition plan throughout the last year. So I'm not at all concerned about the pace of drawdown to get to 9800. We have a good plan in place and we'll get there.

Senator WICKER. Are we going to be at 9800 through most of calendar year 2015?

General DUNFORD. That is the plan, Senator.

Senator WICKER. Okay, so like November, for example, of 2015?

General DUNFORD. We will have begun the drawdown by November 2015.

Senator WICKER. And at that point how many of our coalition allies will have troops—how many coalition ally troops will be with us there?

General DUNFORD. We'll have 4,000, plus or minus, that'll be with us in 2015. As we collapse back to a Kabul-centric approach in 2016, I'd expect we'd have at least half of that number in 2016.

Senator WICKER. So we'll have about 5,000 troops during 2016?

General DUNFORD. The guidance the President said was we would have about half in 2016 and the number 5500 is out there, but the President's guidance has been about half.

Senator WICKER. Your testimony before the committee today, your best judgment to the Congress, is that the numbers that we project for 2015 will be adequate to provide security during that calendar year; is that correct?

General DUNFORD. Senator, that is correct. The numbers in 2015 are consistent with the recommendation that I made to the President.

Senator WICKER. Okay. And you Reserve the right, as I understand it, to look at conditions on the ground and change that recommendation as it goes forward beyond calendar year 2015. Is that what I understand you to have told me yesterday?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think any commander—and I certainly believe I have this responsibility. Any commander has the responsibility to provide the President with best military advice, which includes a continual reassessment of the assumptions and the conditions that were behind any recommendation that was made.

Senator WICKER. Well, I hope you will. I tell you this, General. I think we're all impressed. We're impressed with your record, we're impressed with the answers that you've given us. And we think the President's got the right man here.

I just have to say, I implore you and I charge you with speaking truth to power. If it looks like, as Senator Inhofe said, if it looks like we're not getting it right, as we didn't get it right in Iraq, I hope you will come back to us and tell us we're not getting it right and that something needs to be done. We need to know that.

We didn't get the right advice, frankly, we got surprised, in Iraq. I have here a news item, which I think I'll ask to be inserted in the record, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. It will be.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Senator WICKER. It's a statement by General Amos, your predecessor. I'm going to do you the favor of not asking you if you subscribe to his views, because I don't think that would get us anywhere. But basically, if I could just read a sentence or two:

"Stepping into an intensifying political debate, the head of the Marine Corps said the United States doesn't have the luxury of isolationism and said Iraq's deterioration may have been prevented if Washington had maintained a larger U.S. presence there. General James Amos, who is scheduled to retire this fall, offered strong views on both debates.

"On Iraq, Amos said he believes that the ISIS takeover of central Iraq and the growing political fissures between Maliki and the

country's embattled Sunni minority may have been avoided if the United States hadn't completely withdrawn from the country in 2011. 'I have a hard time believing that, had we been there and worked with the government and worked with the parliament and worked with the minister of defense, the minister of interior, I don't think we'd be in the same shape today,' Amos said during an event at the Brookings Institute."

I agree with this distinguished military leader, and it breaks my heart, as it breaks the heart of General Amos and other Marines and other troops, to see what has happened after all of the blood and sacrifice and treasure the United States has spent. If we had gotten the correct advice and we had been given a more realistic something, this disaster could have been avoided. It's up to people like you to help us understand the ways and means to prevent this type of disaster from happening in Afghanistan.

I believe you're the man to do it. But we look to you to come back to us and tell us the truth and give us your best guidance as a military expert on what we need to do to make the situation work in Afghanistan.

Thank you, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Wicker, and I join you in feeling a level, a very strong level of confidence that that's exactly what General Dunford would do and, as he has testified this morning, has the obligation to do if the assumptions which have been made don't turn out to be correct. So I join you in that feeling of necessity that we can count on our top military leaders to do just that. I talked to General Dunford about the same thing in my office and I thank you for your commentary here today.

Senator KAINE.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Dunford, congratulations on the appointment and thank you for your service. You have a lot to be proud of in the work that you've done together with American military and our coalition partners to enhance the capacity of the ANSF.

I had a hearing recently in the Foreign Relations subcommittee that I chair about Afghan civil life post-2014. And your predecessor General Allen said something that kind of made us all sit back in our chairs. After talking about continuing security challenges, General Allen said, but corruption is a bigger threat, existential threat, to Afghan society than security challenges are. And he wasn't minimizing security challenges. He was elevating corruption challenges.

We all were struck by that. But when I've watched the playout of the elections in Afghanistan, the Taliban threatened them from a security standpoint, but, as you pointed out, the ANSF did a superb job in blocking the Taliban from being able to disrupt the elections. But the challenge with the elections were allegations of corruption. The corruption threat proved to be more real or to be more impactful on this election process than the security challenge.

I think that is proof of the adage that General Allen made, but it's also proof of the good work that you've done, and I applaud you for it.

Questions about your role as Commandant should you be confirmed, and I have confidence you will be. You have to balance a lot of tough priorities: security priorities, personnel priorities, budg-

etary priorities. The needs of today are usually kind of readiness challenges and the needs of tomorrow modernization. Let me ask you about both of those.

What are your greatest concerns regarding readiness today in the Corp?

General DUNFORD. Thanks, Senator. General Amos has ensured that all Marines who are deployed in harm's way, forward deployed, forward engaged, deploy at the highest state of readiness. So those forces are absolutely well equipped and well trained.

Having said that, we've paid the cost over the years for making sure that those Marines that are forward deployed, forward engaged, have the wherewithal to accomplish the mission, and that cost has been borne at home station. Today approximately 50 percent of our units at home station are in a degraded state of readiness. That's largely an equipment readiness issue today as a result of the years of war and wear and tear on our equipment.

So certainly one of the key things would be to ensure that we have the resources necessary to reset that equipment that'll be coming out of Afghanistan. As you may know, Senator, we've identified a minimum of two years as the window of time where we continue to need OCO funding for that very reason, to reset that force and to restore the Marine Corps to be the force that you expect it to be, which is not half ready, but completely ready to do whatever the Nation asks it to do.

Senator KAINE. What are your top priorities on the other side of the ledger, for force modernization, as you come into the role of Commandant?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think, broadly speaking, the critical thing is that you expect us to be a naval expeditionary force in readiness. You expect us to be able to come from the sea in a wide range of conditions, again in every clime and place. I think today there's a number of areas where we're going to have to focus to ensure that we do have the amphibious and the expeditionary capabilities necessary to fight tomorrow's war as well as today.

I think balancing those requirements for modernization with today's readiness is going to be a significant challenge, and I know you'll help us with that, Senator.

Senator KAINE. Indeed, one of the challenges you have in the modernization side is acquisition programs. You inherit some acquisition programs, some that are working very successfully, some not as successful. What will be your philosophy as Commandant in the acquisition area to make sure that the investments in technology and equipment that we make are well spent?

General DUNFORD. Senator, where I have seen acquisition programs work is where leadership is personally and decisively engaged in the acquisition program. If confirmed, I can assure you, particularly on the major defense acquisition programs, that the program manager, if not in fact, but certainly in practice, will be me.

Senator KAINE. Talk a little bit about the progress the Marine Corps has made in opening up combat-based MOS's to women since Secretary Panetta's announcement in early 2013?

General DUNFORD. It's clear to me that the Marine Corps understands the direction set by Secretary Panetta, and by January 2016

we'll be prepared to make recommendations as to exceptions to policy. I think the approach the Marine Corps has taken now, a deliberate and measured and responsible approach, is exactly the one that I would take were I to continue to be—were I to be confirmed. Certainly, at the end of the day you can be sure that the recommendations that I would make would be based on the impact to the combat effectiveness of the Marine Corps in order to meet the standards that you expect the Corps to meet.

Senator KAINE. Finally, General, just a compliment. Often as I travel I'm traveling in a Foreign Relations capacity, not Armed Services capacity, and I interact with the Marine security guard at the various embassies we have around the world. That is a critical program that has been enhanced in the aftermath of the Accountability Review Board's recommendations following the tragedy in Benghazi.

But I've just been enormously impressed with this program and with the Marines' ability to scale it up to meet the ARB recommendation. I don't know; it may be one of the few billets in the Marines where you get to serve without a commissioned officer telling you what to do. It's I think all NCO's and enlisted personnel. But they do a superb job, and we just need to make sure we continue to pay attention to that program, help the Marine Corps as it needs budgetary resources to staff it up.

But I just want to tell you that the appreciation of the State Department for the great work the Marine security guard folks does is very, very high and I share that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Kaine.

Senator Ayotte.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank you, General Dunford, for your incredible leadership in Afghanistan. I can't think of a better man to serve as Commandant. I also want to thank your wife Ellen for everything that she's done for our country and the Marine Corps.

I wanted to ask you, General, if we follow the course of action that's been announced by the administration in Afghanistan without any changes in the reduction of forces—in other words, 9,800 to half at the beginning of 2016, to about 1,000 embassy presence in the beginning of January 2017—what's the best case scenario for what happens in Afghanistan? Then I would also like you to answer: With no changes to the pace withdrawal, what's the worst case scenario, so we can understand what the two possibilities are.

General DUNFORD. Thanks, Senator. The best case scenario for the next couple years would be that, first, we have a successful political transition this year. The Afghan forces continue to be successful coming out of the fighting season. They have increased confidence and capability in the fall of 2014. The international community meets their Tokyo and Chicago commitments, so we have the resources necessary to sustain the force and to continue the development efforts that are critical to Afghanistan's future; that the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan improves such that they have a cooperative relationship in dealing with extremism; and that we minimize the risk of malign actors being involved inside of Afghanistan as they grow and develop.

The Afghan security forces in the best case scenario would be sustainable by 2017, such that a very small presence inside the U.S. embassy, in what we describe as a Security Cooperation Office that would manage foreign military sales, engagements, and so forth, with some amount of ministerial capacity advising as well, would be there.

But in effect, by 2017 we would have addressed those gaps that have identified for the Afghan forces, they would be sustainable, and again we would have stability as a result of political transition.

The worst case scenario over the next—over the next 2 or 3 years would be, first, it starts with the political transition and we don't have successful political transition. I think that's a foundational element to any success that we're going to have.

We also begin to lose international community support over time. The Af-Pak relationship doesn't go in a direction that we want it to and both states fall short of where we would want them to be in terms of being effective counterterrorism partners, both from a capacity perspective and from a will perspective.

And if we then found ourselves in 2017 without a decisive presence in the region and without effective CT partners in the form of Afghanistan and Pakistan and those two nations cooperating with each other, I think what you would see in 2017 in a worst case scenario would be the space that al Qaeda would need to grow stronger and to plan and conduct operations against the West, something that they haven't been able to do over the last several years because of a combination of the pressure, largely the pressure that our U.S. Government interagency partners and our special operations have placed, but also contributed to by the support that we've had from Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Senator AYOTTE. Let me follow up on that. So with the announcement by the administration, you talked about the 9,800 troops, our contribution, in 2015 you're satisfied with. And the administration has announced that that would be cut in half in 2016. If that is followed through in terms of cut in half, one of the things you said in answer to Senator Chambliss is an important mission that we've had in Afghanistan is actually ensuring that al Qaeda could not replicate September 11, and the way we have done that is keeping up pressure, continued pressure, not only on those who would want to threaten us in Afghanistan, but for example their counterparts in the Haqqani Network in Pakistan.

So if we go down to half at the beginning of 2016—the CT presence has been beyond Kabul, correct?

General DUNFORD. It has, Senator.

Senator AYOTTE. Absolutely, and it would be in 2015. What happens in the beginning of 2016 if we cut them in half? Where are we located?

General DUNFORD. In 2016, Senator, in accordance with the plan right now, we would have fundamentally a Kabul-centric approach. So the bases that are outside of Kabul would be closed or transferred to the Afghan forces or the Afghan government by 2016.

Senator AYOTTE. So if we do that, that's pretty soon actually, if you think about it. That would be the beginning of 2016 we would go to a Kabul-based presence. What does that do overall to our ability to keep pressure on those networks on the CT mission, as-

suming something doesn't dramatically change with regard to those who would want to threaten us from Pakistan and Afghanistan?

General DUNFORD. Senator, that would reduce our collections capability, our signals intelligence, our human intelligence, and our strike capability. So it would be a significant reduction in our overall counterterrorism capability.

Senator AYOTTE. If we have that significant reduction in our overall counterterrorism capability beginning in 2016, what does that do in terms of threats that we could potentially face to our homeland?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think the equation, you have to look at it in the perspective of what is Afghanistan's CT capacity and will, what's Afghanistan's CT capacity and will, and what's the nature of the threat. From my perspective, we would have to be in a position to close the gap between the Pakistani and the Afghan CT capacity and will versus the threat in 2016.

While I don't know what the threat will be in 2016, my sense is we'll still need an effective counterterrorism capability based on my projection of the threat and based on the growth of Afghan and Pakistani CT capacity and will.

Senator AYOTTE. So just to be clear, an effective CT strategy really has to go—unless the conditions dramatically change between now and the beginning of 2016, really has to be beyond Kabul for us to ensure that we can keep that pressure to protect our homeland; is that true?

General DUNFORD. Senator, the only way that it will be successful for us to be in Kabul—probably a different way to say it—would be if Afghanistan and Pakistan are capable of dealing with the threat in 2016.

Senator AYOTTE. So let me just ask one final question, which is: If we think about the presence in Kabul and what's happening with regard to the counterterrorism strategy, what is it that they would have to accomplish between now and then? It seems like it would be quite a bit. And if we wanted to change course, when would we have to make that decision, because if we're—obviously we have presence outside of Kabul and we're pulling into, if we cut the troops in half in 2016, back into Kabul. So that takes some time.

When would you or General Campbell, who will be the new commander on the ground, have to come to us and the administration and say, we really shouldn't pull all back into Kabul, we're going to have to keep a greater presence? What's our time frame for that so we understand?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I'll answer that and then go back to the first part of your question. The time frame from my assessment—and again, it's based on closing of infrastructure—would be in the September time frame, October time frame of next year, would be the latest time when you could actually effect the change, because what will happen subsequent to that is you'll begin to draw down the infrastructure, close or transfer those facilities that currently house our forces outside of Kabul. So about a year from now would be when that discussion would probably have to take place.

With regard to what the Afghans would have to do to be successful in the counterterrorism fight in 2016, there's really two critical

gaps that affect their CT capacity. One is their aviation capability and then the other is the intelligence enterprise as a whole. While those are developing, we still expect that the aviation enterprise will still have some capability gaps in 2016, as well as the intel enterprise. Those are longer-term challenges that we're addressing.

Senator AYOTTE. I thank you, General. I also would point out, I think you've said that some of our CT missions we conduct independently because our interests in protecting the homeland—while the Afghans, we have a great partnership with them, ultimately it is our interest, and those need to be focused on as well. So their CT mission may not be as focused as we would be on that particular mission. Would you agree with that?

General DUNFORD. Senator, there are operations we conduct in the region unilaterally, yes.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, General.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Ayotte. Thank you also for pointing out that it'll be General Campbell who will be responsible for giving us his best military advice next year. Both Senator Wicker and I got commitments from General Dunford that he'll make those honest assessments, but it really will be General Campbell in terms of Afghanistan—who we got the same assurance from, by the way, as we did from General Dunford. But thank you for pointing that out.

Senator AYOTTE. Well, thank you. One thing I do know is, we know that General Campbell hopefully will call on General Dunford for his advice.

Chairman LEVIN. We do.

Senator AYOTTE. That would be appreciated. Thanks.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you for smoothing over that little omission.

General Hirono—I mean, Senator Hirono. I made a General out of Senator Hirono.

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

General Dunford, I join my colleagues in thanking you for your decades of distinguished service and now taking on this new challenge. I'd like to also take this opportunity to thank the folks at Hawaii's Kaneohe Bay. There are 10,000 marines, 2,000 sailors, 4,000 family members, 1,400 civilian employees at Marine Corps Base Hawaii Kaneohe Bay. So I certainly want to give a shout-out to them.

You have been asked a question about, earlier, about the January 1, 2016, date to provide standards for the occupations within the Marine Corps for which all personnel, including women, will have the opportunity to compete. I just wanted to ask you, who in the Marine Corps is the lead person or persons coming up with these standards and where are you in this process?

General DUNFORD. Senator, the lead person who approves those standards is General Amos, our Commandant. I know from my previous experience as the Assistant Commandant that he's been personally and decisively engaged in approving those standards. So there's certainly a staff down at Quantico that works this for him. Our Training Command is involved, our Combat Development Integration Command is involved, but at the end of the day in our service the Commandant is the one who approves the standards.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you.

I think you also mentioned during your responses that training is very important, of course, to all of our services, but to the Marine Corps. I understand that the availability of training ranges—and we have a big one on the Big Island called PTA, Pahakuloa. Could you share your thoughts on the importance of training ranges, especially as we rebalance to the Asia Pacific?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I can, and thanks for that question. In two previous assignments I was involved in what we describe broadly as the Pacific laydown. One of the critical elements as we reviewed the laydown was to ensure that we had sufficient ranges where we can do the kind of combined arms integrated training that allows our Marine air-ground task force that are forward deployed to be successful in combat.

So it would not be an overstatement to say that training ranges, the opportunity to actually develop the skills of integrating combined arms, are inextricably linked to our success on the battlefield.

Senator HIRONO. We were told that the Marine Corps spends 63 cents on the dollar to pay for benefits, health care, and other personnel costs. So there is a challenge to balance readiness and personnel costs. If confirmed, how would you come up with this balance of personnel costs with readiness while meeting the mission requirements of the Marine Corps? What would be the questions you would ask to come up with this balance?

General DUNFORD. Senator, first, I view all the money that we spend in the Marine Corps as going towards Marines. Some of it is in the form of compensation. Some of it is in the form of ensuring that they have good equipment. Some is in the form of good training. Some goes to ensuring that the infrastructure that supports Marines and their families is in good shape and provides the services necessary.

So I think your question is how would I balance it. I would consider each of those variables to deliver an effect, and that effect is that we would have the force in readiness that you expect your Marine Corps to be.

Senator HIRONO. I think the sense is that 63 cents of every dollar going to personnel costs is not necessarily the kind of balance that you would want to have in order to make sure that your readiness needs are met.

General DUNFORD. Senator, there's no question. In fact, our procurement account, to put it in some context, is about 8 percent in the current fiscal year environment. So clearly in a perfect world we'd have more money going towards modernization and we'd have more money going towards infrastructure. Those are the two bill-payers right now as we focus on assuring that our Marines that are in the fight today and forward deployed have good equipment, have good training. The bill-payers have been our modernization account as well as our infrastructure account.

Senator HIRONO. My best to you in achieving the balance and meeting the needs of the Marines.

I want to turn to our force structure, because there are going to be a lot of questions asked about what is the appropriate mix for the active and Reserve units in the Marine Corps. Other services

are having to ask those questions themselves. So with the challenges to personnel drawdowns in the Marine Corps in the future, what do you believe will be the best approach, best approach to achieve a balanced force in both the active and Reserve components of the Marine Corps?

General DUNFORD. Senator, thanks for that question. I actually believe that over the past decade we've validated both the size, the organizational construct, as well as the method of employment of our chairman Reserve Force. So I wouldn't see any significant changes. I do know that the Commandant now has chartered a group to review the capabilities and capacities inside our Marine forces Reserve to make sure that we've properly incorporated the lessons learned, to make sure that we have the right mix of forces inside the Marine Forces Reserve.

But we feel pretty comfortable that the overall size of the Marine forces Reserve right now is just about right.

Senator HIRONO. This committee spent a lot of time on the issue of sexual assault in the military. You responded to a series of questions that have been put to you regarding the Marine Corps's efforts in combating sexual assault in the military and you noted that, while you're satisfied that you're proceeding ahead, but there is much more work to do.

I wanted to ask you, based on the changes that we've made to the statutes that apply and the Marine Corps's own efforts, how would you determine the success or the effectiveness of what the Marine Corps is doing to, one, prevent sexual assaults and, two, when they occur to take appropriate action and prosecute?

General DUNFORD. Thanks, Senator. I think the areas where I'm encouraged even from the outside looking at the Marine Corps and what they're doing is the changes in the command climate as it pertains to sexual assault. Both the surveys that have been conducted have indicated increased trust and confidence in marines in reporting sexual assault, confidence in the chain of command that proper action would be taken. The other statistic that is encouraging to me is the numbers of reported sexual assault, which, while it's increased, I think we all recognize that historically it has been underreported and so increased reporting over the last couple years is a positive step in the right direction.

But with regard to your question, when will I be satisfied, I'll be satisfied when there's no sexual assaults. So the effect that we're trying to achieve in establishing the command climate, the effect we're trying to achieve in ensuring that we have bystander training and bystander intervention, the effect we're trying to achieve to ensure that all marines are treated with dignity and respect, the results that we expect out of all of that and the results we expect from decisive leadership is that we won't have sexual assaults in the U.S. Marine Corps, and I think that's when we'd be satisfied.

Senator HIRONO. My question—that's very commendable. My question had to do with, of course, as you go toward that goal of zero sexual assaults how are going to make sure that that is happening and that you will continue to have a commitment to see those changes come about? And I assume your answer is yes, that you will have a continuing commitment.

General DUNFORD. Senator, I will. I think probably the key piece from my perspective is that it's all about commanders, it's all about leaders, it's all about standards, and it's all about holding people accountable to those standards.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Hirono.

Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Dunford, to you and your family, you've done an extraordinary job in Afghanistan and every other assignment that you've taken on. The President chose wisely to make you the next Commandant of the Marine Corps and I think you will get an overwhelming vote in a bipartisan fashion because you've deserved it and you've earned it.

To your family: Thank you for your service to our country.

As to Afghanistan: Do you agree with me if there is a failure to get this election closed out in an acceptable fashion, where somebody acknowledges defeat, and there's a failure to form a unity government thereafter, no amount of American troops is going to make Afghanistan successful?

General DUNFORD. I agree with that, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. As a matter of fact, if that doesn't happen I'd be the first one to say to get the hell out of there. So to the Afghans, in case you're listening, that's my view.

Now, let's assume for a moment that that can all be accomplished, and I think it will. Two lanes: CT, train, advise, and assist, numbers. You're okay with the numbers in 2015, is that correct?

General DUNFORD. I am, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. You're okay with the regional approach being in place in 2015?

General DUNFORD. I am, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Let's talk about what we lose over time. We have about 7,000 Special Forces types in the mix right now on the ground today?

General DUNFORD. We do, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. By January 2015 it will be 3,000?

General DUNFORD. Approximately, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. By January 2017 it will be basically zero.

General DUNFORD. It isn't determined at this time, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Yes, it is. It is determined at this time. The President has announced he will go to a security cooperation force in 2017, or did I miss—

General DUNFORD. No. Roger, Senator. If you're talking the—

Senator GRAHAM. I'm talking about the plan in place. I'm not talking about changing the plan. I'm talking about the plan the President has adopted.

General DUNFORD. No, I understand.

Senator GRAHAM. You agree it will be virtually zero?

General DUNFORD. Certainly close to that, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. Now let's look at the threats we face. Do you see by the end of 2016 any reasonable possibility that the al Qaeda types—al Qaeda core, al Qaeda-affiliated groups, other groups that live and thrive on the Afghan-Pakistan border—will be

contained in such a fashion as to not represent a threat to the homeland? Is that remotely possible?

General DUNFORD. I don't see it at this time, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. So your view is that the threat by the end of 2016 that we face to the homeland is going to be extinguished—I could not agree with you more—but our CT forces will be, unless somebody changes this. Do you agree that's a high-risk strategy, given the likelihood of the threat?

General DUNFORD. Unless it's mitigated by Afghan or Pakistan—

Senator GRAHAM. On paper it's a high-risk strategy?

General DUNFORD. From a CT perspective.

Senator GRAHAM. Yes. Now let's talk about the delta to be filled in from 7,000 to zero. If you had to grade the Afghan-Pakistan working relationship on anything, particularly counterterrorism, what grade would you give it?

General DUNFORD. Today a D.

Senator GRAHAM. D. The difference between our counterterrorism capability and the Afghans', how would you rate that difference?

General DUNFORD. Significant.

Senator GRAHAM. Yes. Okay.

Now let's talk about the other aspect, train, advise, and assist. You were asked to evaluate the plan on paper and you said if everything works out well that by 2017 on the train, advise, and assist lane we might be okay?

General DUNFORD. It would be possible to develop sustainability by that time.

Senator GRAHAM. Right. And there's a lot of assumptions that have to be made and met; is that correct?

General DUNFORD. There are, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Some of these assumptions are pretty enormous, right?

General DUNFORD. There are significant assumptions.

Senator GRAHAM. To hit all the gates, would it be akin to kicking a 65-yard field goal?

General DUNFORD. Senator, it would be difficult to hit all the gates exactly as we've outlined.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, I think it would be kicking a 65-yard field goal into the wind. But that's just my two cents' worth.

Now, this is on paper. So my statement to the committee is that on paper there's a disaster in the making, to our homeland and to losing all the gains we've fought for inside of Afghanistan, by drawing down too quick and not being able to help the Afghans in a reasonable fashion. If it does change, I will be the first to applaud the changes. But if it doesn't change, it is a complete absolute disaster in the making.

As to political reconciliation between the two candidates, are you optimistic that this will work out?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I am.

Senator GRAHAM. Are you optimistic that the Afghan people will continue to want us around?

General DUNFORD. I'm absolutely optimistic about that.

Senator GRAHAM. So there is absolutely no reason for any American politician to believe that we're not welcome to stay in Afghanistan?

General DUNFORD. Senator, both presidential candidates, as well as the vast majority of the Afghan people, support the bilateral security agreement and a continued U.S. presence.

Senator GRAHAM. If al Qaeda is able to regenerate in this region and our CT presence goes down to virtually zero, would you expect an attack on our homeland in the next five years?

General DUNFORD. Certainly based on the intent of the enemy, I would, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. A lot's at stake, right?

General DUNFORD. There is, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Now, as we go into evaluating our force structure, what have we done to the Marine Corps in your opinion if we get back on the road to sequestration?

General DUNFORD. Senator, as I've looked at what sequestration does to the U.S. Marine Corps, at a force level of 175,000 it really gets to the issues that we've talked a little bit about here this morning. It's an inability to balance the need to be ready for today's crises with the requirement to meet at least a minimum threshold of investigation for modernization, infrastructure, and other programs that support Marines.

I think you're really on a path, without overstatement, to use General Meyer's comment from the 1980s, you're really on a path to a hollow force. If you have sequestration and you maintain a Corps of 175,000 marines, I don't think there's any question about that.

Senator GRAHAM. Would you agree with me that Congress will have done more damage to the Marine Corps than any enemy that you could face on the battlefield?

General DUNFORD. Senator, there isn't an enemy that has had much success against marines, so I would agree with that.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you for your great service. I look forward to seeing you in the future.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Graham.

Senator Donnelly.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, thank you very much for your service. You've done extraordinary work. I've had the privilege of being with you in Afghanistan and have seen first-hand what you've done.

To your family: The time he spent there helped change the world for us. We know you missed him, but we were very grateful to have him there with us.

Sir, as commander of the Marine Corps, this past year—you know, we are so impressed by what you've done and you're going to get an overwhelming vote. As you walk in, in the last year 45 marines we lost to suicide. I think this is a critical issue. I hope you do. I was wondering your intention to work with your team to try to make a difference here.

General DUNFORD. Senator, thanks for that question. And I will be personally engaged in it, as I was as the Assistant Commandant for 2 years. I think it's fair to say that at the beginning of the war our understanding of mental health was rudimentary at best, and

over the past decade we've learned quite a bit. I think one of the more encouraging things is the National Intrepid Center of Excellence that's been established up at Walter Reed to do really some great research into both traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury. So in terms of mental health, we'll certainly be engaged in that.

With regard to suicide, of course, there's other factors, because most of those suicides aren't related to the combat experience. But we'll do all we can to ensure that we have leadership that recognizes the warning signs of suicide. We'll make sure that we have proper medical care available when those warning signs are identified, that the leadership gets Marines to proper help. And we'll continue to work at what is in effect a scourge.

Senator DONNELLY. One of the most disheartening things we saw in Iraq was that a lot of the generals who we had worked with, helped train, were replaced by, in effect, pals of the people in charge. And as we look at Afghanistan, we're trying to learn from the lessons that we've seen in Iraq. We have Abdullah Abdullah, Ashraf Ghani. Obviously, President Karzai still has a great amount of influence.

Do you feel confident—obviously we think we have the right generals in place in the Afghan army now. Do you feel confident they can avoid that same type of situation, where talent and ability is taken out so they can have friends, in effect, come in?

General DUNFORD. Senator, thanks. Confident, but not complacent, in that particular area. Both candidates have made a commitment to pick the right people in the security ministries. I thought one of the more encouraging things that came out of this weekend's discussion is that, of the many areas they talked about in terms of the political track and the accommodation they would make, one of them was to stabilize the leadership inside the ministry of defense and ministry of interior during the transition. So they both recognized the importance.

I know from Dr. Ghani, he was my counterpart during transition last year, and he certainly recognizes the importance of selecting the right leadership inside the security ministries. I've had enough conversations with Dr. Abdullah's people where I think he recognizes the same.

It won't be that we won't have a patronage network that has an effect on appointments inside of Afghanistan. That will be the case for some time to come. But what we have today in the form of the corps commanders, brigade commanders, and other key leaders and also inside the ministry of interior with our police leadership is a recognition by senior leadership that, while they may have some other factors besides merit that would cause people to be selected for senior leadership positions, there has to be a foundation of merit for each of the appointments that are being made.

So I'm encouraged by that, but that's certainly something that the next government of Afghanistan is going to have to continue to emphasize and focus on.

Senator DONNELLY. You had a very specific assignment with Afghanistan, and now as Commandant of the Marine Corps, obviously all over the world. As you look at this, through your experience, where do you see the biggest threat to our country right now,

the greatest source of potential danger to an attack here and where it would be coming from?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think the greatest challenge today is the numbers of failed and failing states that provide sanctuary for extremists who create a threat to this country. Of course, it's not any longer geographically focused. It's focused in all those areas where the enemy has the space within which to plan and conduct operations against the West. I think that's certainly at this point the most critical near-term threat to our security.

Senator DONNELLY. Have you seen any indication—for instance a group like ISIS, they're involved in Iraq. But is it, from everything you've seen, do they still cast an eye toward over here, toward coming after us as well?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think the very change that they made to their name indicates the risk that's greater than Iraq. They've changed their name to the "Islamic State" and declared a caliphate inside of Iraq, which clearly reflects aspirations for operations globally.

Senator DONNELLY. When you—to go back to Afghanistan for a second, we've seen Pakistan pushing harder in the tribal areas, trying to go after a lot of the Pakistan Taliban. How has the effect of that been on Afghanistan? Has it pushed more over into the region that you've been in charge of or that you've been working with the Afghans on? Or how do you see that long-term having an effect?

General DUNFORD. Near-term, Senator, we have seen a large number of refugees. The estimates are probably between 70,000 and 100,000 refugees. We're also certainly aware of enemy forces moving from Pakistan into Afghanistan. And we've had a disruptive effect on the extremists that were in North Waziristan. So there's a positive effect as well as those challenges of the enemy moving to Afghanistan.

I think what remains to be seen and what we're watching very closely is, what will Pakistan do as these groups start to move back towards North Waziristan. We have a commitment from our Pakistani counterparts right now that they will not allow groups like Haqqani to come back, and they've taken visible measures to destroy the infrastructure of Haqqani in Miranshah and North Waziristan as a whole. But frankly, that's something that I think is to be determined, and we're watching that very closely. I think it's going to require that we stay engaged with our Pakistani counterparts to ensure that that does not happen again.

Senator DONNELLY. One final question is, as you look what do you think will be your greatest challenge in inheriting this position as you move forward?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think the greatest challenge is going to be to continue to provide a ready force of Marines to the country today and at the same time make the kinds of decisions and the kinds of investments that ensure that we have a ready Marine Corps tomorrow.

Senator DONNELLY. Well, thanks again. You've been an inspiration to not only marines, but to our servicemembers all over the country, and to us as well. We're very, very proud of your work.

General DUNFORD. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Donnelly.
Senator Cruz.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, thank you for being here, thank you for your testimony, and thank you for your service to our country.

I'd like to ask you questions about several national security threats across the globe, starting with what you and Senator Donnelly were just discussing, which is the situation with ISIS. Right now in Iraq, roughly how many Americans are on the ground in Iraq, both civilian and military?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I'm not sure how many exactly. I think it's somewhere short of a thousand.

Senator CRUZ. How would you characterize our ability right now to ensure the safety of those Americans?

General DUNFORD. I'm confident that General Austin, the commander of the United States Central Command, who I speak to several times a week, has taken proper measures to provide force protection for those forces and in the environment that he's put them in he's made sure that there's measures to mitigate the risk to the force. Certainly a dangerous combat environment, always a risk. But I'm also confident in General Austin's leadership that he's done all he can to mitigate that risk.

Senator CRUZ. What about the American civilians who are in Iraq? What is our ability to ensure their safety?

General DUNFORD. Senator, at this time I'm not aware of our capacity to actually provide security for the civilians that are in Iraq, unless you're talking about U.S. Government civilians, in which case they're certainly part of the whole comprehensive force protection plan on the ground for both our diplomatic personnel as well as our uniformed personnel.

If you're talking about people that are there in a private capacity, then I think our ability to provide security to them on a day to day basis is fairly limited.

Senator CRUZ. To what extent is our ability to maintain security both for civilian and military personnel dependent upon the Shia militia that are there?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think the security conditions in Iraq as a whole are absolutely linked to the political process and the viability of the government. That's I think how we get in the situation we're in. It's a manifestation of a lack of inclusive government and political challenges that spilled over into security. I think it shows the inextricable link between stability and security as well as viable governance.

Senator CRUZ. General, I will share with you I am deeply concerned about our ability to protect the Americans who are there, particularly as the situation seems to be deteriorating and we find ourselves between two implacable foes: ISIS, who are so extreme that they were thrown out of al Qaeda, which is a pretty remarkable feat, and who have expressed an open desire to attack and kill Americans; and on the other side the Islamic Republic of Iran, who likewise are rabidly anti-American and have the same desire.

What nobody wants to see is a reprise of what we saw in the late 1970s, another hostage situation of Americans who find themselves in an incredibly hostile situation where enemy forces capture

Americans and hold them hostage. So, number one, I would certainly urge you and urge your colleagues in the military to continue doing—and I know you're endeavoring to do this—but to continue doing everything humanly possible to prevent against such a situation and to do everything we can to mitigate the risks of it spiraling out of control so that American citizens are not caught between two warring factions and trapped in a place from which we have no ready exit.

General DUNFORD. I'll do that, Senator.

Senator CRUZ. Let's shift to a neighboring country which is very much involved right now in what's happening in Iraq, and that is Iran. In your military judgment, how significant of a threat would you characterize the possibility of Iran acquiring nuclear weapon capability?

General DUNFORD. I think that would be extraordinarily significant, Senator.

Senator CRUZ. In your judgment, what would happen if Iran were to acquire nuclear weapons capability?

General DUNFORD. I think they would use the leverage of nuclear weapons to meet their expansionist objectives and destabilize the region.

Senator CRUZ. If, God forbid, Iran were to acquire nuclear weapons and if, God forbid, they were to make the second decision of being willing to use those weapons, based on the radical religious extremism that motivates so-called Supreme Leader Khamenei and the mullahs in Iran, in your view how much damage could Iran do to America or her allies if Iran was willing to use nuclear weapons to maximize the damage?

General DUNFORD. Senator, it would be hard for me to envision how they may use those or what might happen. But I can say that clearly that would be a threat to our vital national interest, which is the protection of the homeland and the people of the United States.

Senator CRUZ. If Iran, say, were able to use a nuclear weapon launched from a ship offshore of the United States into the atmosphere to create an EMP on the eastern seaboard, what would the impact be to this country?

General DUNFORD. Any nuclear weapon that would go off in the United States would have a horrific effect on people.

Senator CRUZ. And an EMP in particular, how would that impact the civilian population if an EMP were detonated in the atmosphere above the eastern seaboard?

General DUNFORD. An EMP would essentially shut down our communications network, would be one of the more significant outcomes of EMP.

Senator CRUZ. Would there be additional impacts in terms of transportation, in terms of distribution of food, in terms of distribution of basic means for survival?

General DUNFORD. All those things, Senator, are impacted by our ability to communicate. So my expectation is that all of them would be adversely affected.

Senator CRUZ. Let me finally shift to Afghanistan. How significant would you characterize the threat right now of radical Islamic terrorism both in Afghanistan and in neighboring Pakistan?

General DUNFORD. We are managing the threat to the homeland now as a result of the pressure that we're putting on the networks, so I believe we are at moderate risk as a result of the extremists in the region. But again, that risk is assessed in the context of the force that we have on the ground inside of Afghanistan and our efforts with Pakistan.

Senator CRUZ. So the final question on exactly that point: If we proceed with the plan that the President has laid out in 2016 to drop our forces to roughly a thousand in and 2017 to drop it to zero, what will be our capacity to engage in counterterrorism to limit the threat from the radical Islamic terrorists in that region?

Senator CRUZ. The tools that we'll have available to deal with or to conduct counterterrorism in 2017 in the scenario that you've outlined is the willing and capacity of Pakistan and the will and capacity of Afghanistan.

Senator CRUZ. So we would be dependent on their forces and unable on our own to defend ourselves from terrorist threats emanating from that region?

General DUNFORD. Again, Senator, if you're projecting a threat and you're projecting that we would not have any forces there, then we would be dependent on Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Senator CRUZ. Well, that is a deeply troubling scenario.

Thank you, General.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Cruz.

Senator Gillibrand.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, General. I want to talk a little bit about gender integration. If confirmed, what is your goal with regard to combat integration into the Marine Corps?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I'm aware of the direction that Secretary Panetta put forth in February 2013. Since that time General Amos has outlined a deliberate, a responsible, and a measured approach. There's analysis ongoing right now that would inform any recommendations for an exception to the direction that Secretary Panetta outlined in February 2013. And I'm aware that that recommendation would have to be made by January 2016, and any recommendation that I make would be informed by the research that's being done and by the impact on the combat effectiveness of the Marine Corps.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Is the research that you're referring to the review of creating gender-neutral standards that reflect the physical needs of the task?

General DUNFORD. That is a piece of the research that's being done, Senator.

Senator GILLIBRAND. If confirmed, do I have your commitment to keep my office apprised of how that review is going and what the time line for integration is and whether there will be any exceptions?

General DUNFORD. You do, Senator.

Senator GILLIBRAND. What phase of implementation is the Marine Corps in now? What is your expected time line?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I would have to get back to you. I know that we're prepared to make a recommendation by the deadline of January 2016. I know the Marine Corps has just initiated

an integrated task force that will in part inform any recommendation for exceptions to policy. So I believe we're on path to make a recommendation by the deadline, but I'm not sure——

Senator GILLIBRAND. I thought the deadline was to actually have integration completed by January 2016.

General DUNFORD. Senator, my understanding was that the recommendation was due by January 2016. But I'd ask to take that for the record and get back to you.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Okay, that would be helpful.

Turning to Afghanistan, we've seen a few difficulties with regard to the Afghanistan presidential election. Do you believe that's going to have an impact in our post-2014 planning, and if so how?

General DUNFORD. Senator, if we did not have successful political transition, an effective political transition, it would have a significant impact on our post-2014 presence. But I would quickly add that right now, in the wake of the agreement made over the weekend and where we are in fact, I'm happy to report that we started collecting ballots yesterday and our forces are currently supporting the auditing of all the ballots, that we're on a path to have effective political transition and, frankly, in a positive sense, effective political transition I think will increase the prospects of our success in a post-2014 environment.

Senator GILLIBRAND. What do you think the major challenges will be for the next commander of the ISAF?

General DUNFORD. The major challenges, Senator, will be to address the capability gaps that the Afghan security forces have right now. First is what I broadly describe as ministerial capacity. That's the ability for the ministries to do the planning, the programming, the budgeting, the acquisition necessary to support tactical-level organizations, so that they have the spare parts and the ammunition and the pay and those things that will allow them to be sustainable.

The second capability gap that exists is in the aviation enterprise, and we still have a couple years to go before we complete the aviation enterprise. We have a number of pilots now that have been trained, a number of aircraft that have been delivered, but the overall enterprise requires additional work.

The third capability gap is the intelligence enterprise. Much of the intelligence that the Afghans have had available to them over the last few years has been a result of the coalition providing them with that intelligence, and so their organic capability to produce and have intelligence drive operations is another capability gap area.

Then the fourth area that I think my successor would have to focus on would be their special operations capability, which obviously are inextricably linked as well to that aviation and intelligence capability.

So those four areas are the areas I think of primary focus for a post-2014 presence.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Do you think there's any lessons we could learn from Iraq in terms of our withdrawal there that we could apply to Afghanistan? Is there any lessons learned that we should be mindful of?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I do. I think there's a significant lesson learned, and that is the need to do a transition to develop sustainable Afghan forces and to oversee the establishment of effective governance, as opposed to withdrawal. I think our withdrawal in Iraq did not allow us the time to develop sustainable Iraqi forces and to provide the environment within which effective governance would develop.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Now, in terms of our drawdown in Afghanistan, what do you think the impact will be on the region? Do you think it will undermine our ability to do antiterrorism work? Will it undermine any other broader security interests?

General DUNFORD. Senator, in 2015 the force that we have envisioned that will conduct both train, advise, and assist for the Afghans as well as counterterrorism operations, I think actually will have a stabilizing effect on the region. Most of the regional actors, probably less Iran have encouraged the United States to maintain a presence in 2015, and I think the size force that we have in 2015 will allow us to accomplish those two tasks that I just outlined. But they will also contribute to a positive psychology in the region and a confidence that Afghanistan will not deteriorate.

Senator GILLIBRAND. What are your largest concerns in the region right now?

General DUNFORD. The single biggest concern I have right now is probably the sanctuary that al Qaeda has in—

Senator GILLIBRAND. In Iraq?

General DUNFORD.—in Pakistan.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Oh, in Pakistan.

General DUNFORD. When you talk the region writ large—I of course, Senator, was focused strictly on Afghanistan and Pakistan. But clearly, if you look at the region as a whole you'd have to be concerned with what's going on in Iraq today as well as what's going on in Iran.

Senator GILLIBRAND. With regard to Pakistan, what would your recommendations be? Pakistan has been so difficult to work with. They really have been reluctant to do missions we've asked them to do, to crack down on terrorist networks when we find them. They're very unwilling partners. What would your recommendation be to the President on how best to address the terrorism concerns in Pakistan?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I don't think any of us have an easy answer to Pakistan other than continued engagement and engagement based on support that we would provide with regard to specific conditions that have to be met. I do believe that Pakistan recognizes that extremism is an existential threat to Pakistan. I think they lack the capacity to deal with that threat completely. I don't personally see any alternative other than continued engagement with Pakistan to assist them in dealing with those problems inside of Pakistan, as well as to contribute to regional stability.

I think we've seen what we did in the 1990s when we isolated Pakistan in the wake of the Pressler amendment, which is the other alternative we could take at this particular time, and I don't think the results of our disengagement in the 1990s would cause us to want to go back to that. So I think continued engagement

would be what I'd recommend to the President, with a very clear framework within which we would have a partnership.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Thank you, General.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Just a couple questions for me. In terms of the counterterrorism after 2016, you indicated we would be dependent upon Afghanistan and Pakistan in that area. Does that answer not assume that none of the thousand or so people that we would have at the embassy would have a counterterrorism mission? And does it not also assume something else, which is that we would not have a CIA capability in that area?

General DUNFORD. Mr. Chairman, thanks for the opportunity to clarify on the 1,000. As I made an effort to say earlier, unsuccessfully, some number of those would be involved in counterterrorism, I would assume. But more importantly, those thousand that might be envisioned in the embassy in 2017 would also be contributing to Afghan security force counterterrorism capacity. One of the key tasks after 2017 would be continued development of those key elements of their special operations capability, the aviation and intelligence being two of the more important.

Chairman LEVIN. In terms of the possibility of CIA capability in that area?

General DUNFORD. Mr. Chairman, I don't know what the CIA would envision. We certainly know that unless there was a different laydown of forces in Afghanistan in 2017, they wouldn't have any significant bases in Afghanistan in 2017, I think is the President's plan right now.

Chairman LEVIN. But some of the thousand could be assisting them in a counterterrorism effort if they so decide?

General DUNFORD. If we have joint special operations capability there, I'd assume, chairman, that they'd be operating in a collaborative manner with other elements of the government.

Chairman LEVIN. And that could be part of the thousand as well?

General DUNFORD. Part of the thousand could be in support of the other elements of the U.S. Government, yes, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. In terms of—there was a statement Senator McCain heard from some Afghan military leaders that they feel abandoned by us. That's not the sense I got from military leaders, Afghan military leaders. I got the sense that, obviously, they'd like us to stay for a much longer period of time, but they are very grateful, number one; and that they feel that they have a capability going forward. I sense some sense of disappointment, obviously. We're their brothers in a lot of ways, but that they also feel a strong and capable as well.

How would you describe the Afghan military leaders in terms of their feelings towards us?

General DUNFORD. Mr. Chairman, in the wake of the announcement some were obviously disappointed that it was not longer. But the truth of the matter is that on a day to day basis right now the Afghan leadership is a lot more focused on the security challenges in 2014 and working with us to develop sustainable forces in 2015. But it's not a topic of routine conversation with our Afghan counterparts right now.

Chairman LEVIN. You're talking about the military counterparts?

General DUNFORD. I'm talking about the military counterparts specifically, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Yes, Senator King.

Senator KING. A quick question and an observation, Mr. Chairman.

The question is: General, how long were you in Afghanistan? How long was your assignment?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I'm still there. I've been there 18 months.

Senator KING. And when would you, if confirmed, when would you make the transition to Commandant?

General DUNFORD. Mr. Chairman, I think probably sometime this fall—Senator, sometime this fall.

Senator KING. Mr. Chairman, this is a thought that's crossed my mind several times during these hearings, but it's really come into focus today. This man is one of the most capable, intelligent, proven successful commanders that I've ever worked with or seen. And more importantly, he has tremendous experience in Afghanistan. Any management system that arbitrarily moves somebody out of a job after 19 months, given what he knows and experience—and I'm sorry to his good wife; don't worry, I'm going to vote to confirm him—that's nuts. That's a crazy management system.

This is one of the most important jobs in our country right now and we're taking a guy who really knows how to do it and has learned how to do it and the experience goes away. I just think this is something the committee ought to talk about. I understand the goal of the military of turning over assignments and not having people get stale and those kinds of things. But to get to the level that he's gotten to and with his leadership, I just think it's a management mistake to arbitrarily say, okay, no matter how well you're doing, no matter what your experience is, we're going to move you on. I just want to make that observation.

Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Well, thank you. I think that's intended to be and is, obviously, a huge compliment to you, General Dunford. While probably your predecessor, we could have said the same for him because he also had that huge experience which we didn't want to lose, nonetheless you came and provided amazing capability and competence. And your successor will as well in Afghanistan. We have confidence in General Campbell.

General Amos has been a fabulous Commandant and his successor, who I'm looking at right now, will add another extraordinary chapter to Marine history.

What you're raising, Senator, is a fascinating issue. I don't have an easy answer to it other than so far we've seen a succession of amazing commanders in Afghanistan. I won't say we've lucked out because I think the system has produced those. It's not a matter of luck; it's a matter of real, intense effort to have a system which produces great leaders, and we've done that.

It's sort of ironic, however, to be looking at a General who has done an amazing job—and you and I have seen that first-hand—in Afghanistan. But on the other hand, I've got at least the next

set both in Afghanistan and as the Commandant. I think this amazing capability, competence, loyalty, patriotism to our country will continue. I know your experience in Afghanistan is not going to be lost in any event. It's going to be very much available.

What Senator King is raising is a very interesting issue, which perhaps in other circumstances we would have to say, well, whoops, is this really what we want? I think in the current circumstance at least, as Senator King says, he's going to be voting very affirmatively for you, for your confirmation, as I think every member of this committee will. The compliment, though, which he just paid to you is intended to be exactly that, which I think all of us feel about you. What he just said is a huge compliment to you and to the Marines, and also to the system which produces leaders such as yourself.

We thank you, your family. We look forward to a confirmation which is timely so that General Amos, who deserves a great successor, will have one quickly and General Campbell can take his job, his responsibility, over.

We will stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:46 a.m., the committee adjourned.]