

**NOMINATIONS OF MR. ROBERT M. SCHER TO
BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
FOR STRATEGY, PLANS, AND CAPABILITIES;
MS. ELISSA SLOTKIN TO BE ASSISTANT SEC-
RETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY AFFAIRS; MR. DAVID J. BERTEAU
TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
FOR LOGISTICS AND MATERIEL READINESS;
MS. ALISSA M. STARZAK TO BE GENERAL
COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE
ARMY; ADMIRAL HARRY B. HARRIS, JR.,
USN, FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE
OF ADMIRAL AND TO BE COMMANDER, U.S.
PACIFIC COMMAND**

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2014

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m. in room SH-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Senator Carl Levin (chairman), presiding.

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

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARL LEVIN, CHAIRMAN

Chairman LEVIN. Good morning, everybody. The committee meets today to consider the nominations of Robert Scher to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities; Elissa Slotkin to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs; David Berteau to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Logistics and Materiel Readiness; Alissa Starzak to be General Counsel of the Department of the Army; and Admiral Harry Harris, Jr., to be Commander, U.S. Pacific Command.

We welcome our witnesses and their families. We extend our gratitude to family members who support our nominees during the long hours and the countless demands on their careers in public service.

To our witnesses, during your opening statements, please feel free to introduce family members and others who are here to support you today.

Each of our nominees has a record of public service. Mr. Scher has served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for South and Southeast Asia, a senior member of the Secretary of State's Policy Planning Staff, and in his current role as both the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Plans and the acting Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Forces.

Ms. Slotkin, we give you and your parents—you are Michiganders—a special welcome here today. You have served in positions of distinction throughout your time in government service, including as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, a senior advisor on Iraq at the Department of State, and Director for Iraq on the National Security Council staff.

Mr. Berteau has held a variety of national security-related positions in government, academia, and in the private sector. He is currently the Senior Vice President and Director of the National Security Program on Industry and Resources at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Prior to that, he has directed the National Security Studies Program at Syracuse University and served as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Production and Logistics.

Ms. Starzak is currently the Deputy General Counsel for Legislation at the Department of Defense. She has also served as Counsel and a professional staff member on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and as Assistant General Counsel at the Central Intelligence Agency.

Admiral Harris has spent 36 years in the Navy and served in every geographic combatant command region. He is currently the Commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. He has worked previously as the assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Deputy Chief Naval Officer for Communication Networks, and the Commander Joint Task Force Guantanamo.

There are going to be four votes, as currently planned, at 10:30 a.m. We are going to work through those votes. If it turns out that we cannot complete the hearing for any one or more of our nominees today, we will continue such hearing either later this week or next week.

We look forward to the testimony of our witnesses, of our nominees, and we also again thank their families for their support.

I turn this over to Senator Inhofe.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JAMES M. INHOFE

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We are getting into the last 2 years of the administration. It's clear, at least in my opinion, that our national security policies have been a disaster and the world becomes more dangerous. The President is focused on dismantling the military, appeasing our adversaries, abandoning our partners, and refusing to implement a new national security strategy.

That's kind of interesting. That's required by law, and I think, Mr. Scher, I'll have some questions for you on that because I think

it's very important. We're supposed to do that every year. It's been 4 years now. So instead of taking responsibility and changing the course, the President is doubling down on the failed policies and blaming the Secretary of Defense.

Six years in, we still have no strategy in the Middle East and no plan to deter Russia, China, Iran and ISIS, and no updated national security strategy. The New York Times reported that when Susan Rice was asked why there hasn't been a new national defense strategy, national security strategy in 4 years, she said, "If we had put one out in February or April or July, it would have been overtaken by events 2 weeks later." So I guess what she's saying is you can't build a strategy that can last more than 2 weeks. So I think perhaps the President should have dealt with her instead of Secretary Hagel.

The problem is, as I see it, the President is relying on his political and his media advisors rather than his military leaders. I talked to a lot of the military leaders, as does everyone on this panel up here, and I've come to the conclusion that they're not really being listened to, and I think that's one of our major problems.

One of the most glaring examples has been the President's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. When asked on August 6th whether the United States should provide lethal assistance to Ukraine, he said no, but then he added—and this is a quote. Now, keep in mind, this is August 6th. He said, "Now, if you start seeing an invasion by Russia, that's obviously a different set of questions. We're not there yet." That was August. He started invading the Ukraine 5 months before that, and that's when he formally annexed Crimea, and that's 5 months before this. So while he's on the sidelines, Putin continues to de-recognize Europe.

I was in the—I probably shouldn't have done it. I was on the ballot myself this year, but for the whole week prior to our elections over here, I was in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine and those areas. They look at Ukraine and say it's not going to stop there. They're all concerned. They're all in that same situation.

So it's clear that Russia, China, Iran, ISIS see weaknesses in the President's rhetoric and it's not going to deter them from taking more aggressive action. It's not just me who thinks that. I hear that constantly all over.

So we're looking forward to the solutions you might suggest. I do think that having five significant nominees all at once during this lame duck session is probably not the best way to have done this. So I'm anxious to get to know all of you better before any final vote for confirmation comes around.

I appreciate it very much, Admiral Harris, the time that you spent with me.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Inhofe.

I'll call first on Mr. Scher for your opening comments.

STATEMENT OF ROBERT M. SCHER, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR STRATEGY, PLANS, AND CAPABILITIES

Mr. SCHER. Thank you, Chairman Levin, and Senator Inhofe, and all the members of the committee. It's a privilege to appear before you this morning, and I appreciate the opportunity to answer any questions you may have regarding my nomination as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities.

I'd like to thank President Obama, Secretary Hagel, and Under Secretary Wormuth for their support of my nomination. I also owe a debt to the many colleagues, mentors and friends with whom I've worked over the years and who have always supported me. Most of all I'd like to thank my family and friends, without whom I certainly would not be here today.

I would be remiss if I did not specifically thank my wife, Danielle Ewen, and my son, Maxwell. Danielle is taking time off from her job today to be here. She is a nationally recognized expert on child care and early education, and I'm very proud of her service. Maxwell, a freshman at Moray, decided that he gets to see me talk enough and really doesn't need to be here, so he'd rather go to school. Present or not, they provide me with my strength, my moral compass, and my motivation to continue to serve this Nation.

It has been my privilege to be able to serve in the Department of Defense as both a political appointee and a career civil servant for over 20 years. I have lived through or participated in four Quadrennial Defense Reviews, countless other strategic reviews, and have had the privilege to represent our Nation at international meetings throughout Asia. In all of these efforts, I have worked with some of the finest public servants and military officers we have as a nation.

Our public servants are hard-working, patriotic individuals who serve this nation with dedication and honor, but I can never forget that what we do in the Pentagon is all about how to better support the men and women that make up our Armed Forces, they who have volunteered to serve in our Nation's military and who continue to sacrifice for the freedoms we enjoy here in the United States. My allegiance to them is unwavering and, if confirmed, I believe it is my most important task to ensure that what we do in the Pentagon continues to best support our forces.

It is because of my past work and my deep respect and admiration for our military that I am so honored to sit here before you today. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with you all in Congress, with this committee in particular, and with others in the executive branch to advance U.S. national security interests in what can only be termed an uncertain and dynamic environment.

My role in this position would be to support the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, the Deputy Secretary, and the Secretary of Defense in formulating the strategic guidance for the Department, and then working within the Department to make sure that the Secretary's guidance is effectively implemented by the services and the combatant commanders, one of whom I am privileged to be here with on this panel, hopefully if confirmed, Harry Harris.

We must simultaneously be working to address the needs of current operations, planning for potential contingencies, and ensuring

that we build a military that is capable of responding to the threats and opportunities of the future. We do not have the luxury of only looking at today's problems or only looking at the future. We must do both.

In today's world and with the continued uncertainty over the resources that may be available to the Department, this is a difficult task but one that I am committed to getting right. If confirmed, I will make every effort to live up to the confidence that has been placed in me.

I am grateful for your consideration and look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Scher follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Mr. Scher.

Ms. Slotkin?

STATEMENT OF ELISSA SLOTKIN, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

Ms. SLOTKIN. Chairman Levin, Senator Inhofe, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am grateful for the confidence that President Obama has shown in nominating me, and I thank Secretary Hagel and Under Secretary Wormuth personally for their support.

I also want to thank my family, for I would not be here without them. My husband, Colonel David Moore, is here today, having just retired after 30 years as a general officer in the Army; my stepdaughters, who are just beginning their careers of service, Christine, who will soon be a rural doctor, and Jennifer, a West Point Cadet, who is helping to break down gender barriers every day. They are the source of my strength, and I thank them for their unending support.

I'd also like to thank my parents, Curt and Carole Slotkin, in from Michigan, who taught me the meaning of hard work and decency, as well as the legacy of Slotkins, Singers, Moores, and Rosses who have shown unwavering love and understanding.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, the position of Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs spans a huge area of responsibility. It covers Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and the Western Hemisphere. America's national security interests in these parts of the world are as profound as they are vast. From ensuring the Transatlantic Alliance and ensuring that it's prepared to meet the challenge of Russian aggressive behavior, to meeting the threats in the Middle East and the generational change taking place there, to the proliferating extremist groups in Africa, or the instability in Central America, I remain convinced that the United States must play a central role.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with the committee and Congress as a whole to develop the policies, partnerships, and posture the Department needs to address these challenges.

Mr. Chairman, the responsibility of the Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs is profound and a mission I take extremely seriously. I believe my experience in the intelligence community, the Department of State, the National Security staff, and the Department of Defense have prepared me for the complexities

of this account. I have benefitted both in the field and in Washington from close civil-military cooperation, something I believe is critical to countering new threats. I have the benefit of learning from exemplary bosses such as John Negroponte, Jack Lew, and Michele Flournoy, who I believe embody the meaning of committed leadership. If confirmed, I hope to live up to their expectations and those of the committee.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I will make every effort to live up to the confidence placed in me and the excellence demonstrated by our men and women in uniform. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Slotkin follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much.

Mr. Berteau?

STATEMENT OF DAVID J. BERTEAU, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR LOGISTICS AND MATERIEL READINESS

Mr. BERTEAU. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator Inhofe, members of the committee. It's an honor and a privilege for me to appear before you this morning.

I thank also President Obama for nominating me as the next Assistant Secretary of Defense for Logistics and Materiel Readiness, and I'm grateful for the support of Secretary Hagel, Deputy Secretary Wormuth, and Under Secretary Kendall.

I particularly want to express my gratitude to my family, my wife of 41 years, Jane, and my son, Stephen, here with me today, behind me. My daughter Celeste is overseas and is unable to be here in person this morning, but I suspect she's following as best she can.

I also owe a tremendous debt to my parents, Marvin and Patsy Berteau. Neither one lived to see me here this morning, but they instilled in me from an early age a powerful sense of the responsibilities of citizenship in America and of the call to public service that flows from those responsibilities, and I owe them gratitude for that.

Mr. Chairman, for most of my professional life I've been working on and studying and teaching defense and national security, and in that time it's become clear to me that without superior logistics, there is little chance of long-term success. The lessons of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have underscored the importance of logistics not only for the battlefield but also for the capability provided by the organic elements of the military services, as well as the support of a strong industrial base.

I believe that my background both in and out of government has helped prepare me to help support the men and women in uniform as they undertake their varied missions around the world.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Logistics and Materiel Readiness has been providing support in all of these areas for years. If confirmed, I hope to be able to continue and improve on that performance.

I thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I thank my family for their support and encouragement. And if confirmed, I

look forward to working with this committee and the rest of the Congress to ensure excellence in logistics and materiel readiness.

I'm grateful for your consideration, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Berteau follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Mr. Berteau.

Ms. Starzak?

STATEMENT OF ALISSA M. STARZAK, TO BE GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

Ms. STARZAK. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Inhofe, and members of the committee. I am honored to appear before you today.

I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to President Obama for the confidence shown in me by this nomination, Secretary Hagel, Secretary McHugh, and Under Secretary Brad Carson for their support of my nomination.

I recognize that I would not be here today except for the family, friends, and co-workers who have supported me over the years. I want to especially thank my family here with me today: my wonderful, supportive husband, Andrew Ferguson, who is a law professor at the University of the District of Columbia David A. Clark School of Law; my parents, Michael and Andrea Starzak, who taught me the value of public service; and my sister, Jocelyn Starzak, who followed those same values into the non-profit world as an attorney for the Special Olympics.

I also want to thank those, both civilian and military, that I have had the privilege of working with during these past few years serving the Department of Defense Office of General Counsel. Their commitment to protecting America and improving the lives of those dedicated men and women who serve all of us by putting themselves in harm's way is extraordinary.

The General Counsel of the Army advises Army leadership on the legal implications of the many challenges facing the Army. I believe my background and experience in the Department, the Congress, and the private sector have well prepared me to serve in this role.

I am committed to working closely with the Army Judge Advocate leadership and strongly believe in the value of having civilian and military lawyers work together to provide the best possible legal advice to our clients.

If confirmed, I will make every effort to live up to the confidence that has been placed in me. I am grateful for your consideration, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Starzak follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Ms. Starzak.

Admiral Harris?

STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL HARRY B. HARRIS, JR., FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF ADMIRAL AND TO BE COMMANDER, UNITED STATES PACIFIC COMMAND

Admiral HARRIS. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Inhofe, and distinguished committee members, I'm honored to appear before you today as the nominee to lead Pacific Command.

I want to thank President Obama for nominating me. I also want to thank Secretary Hagel, General Dempsey, Secretary Mabus, and Admiral Greenert. I am deeply humbled by their confidence in me.

I'm fortunate to be joined today by my wife, Bernie. I simply wouldn't be here without her love and support. Bernie served in the Navy herself for 25 years after she graduated from Annapolis in 1984. We met in Japan when we were both stationed there. I chased her to Hawaii and thank God she agreed to marry me in 1989. Bernie represents a growing number of military spouses who serve our Nation in uniform.

The All-Volunteer Force is sustained by our families. I'd like to thank this committee for your enduring support of our service members and their families, and I would be remiss in not specifically thanking Chairman Levin, who will retire in 2015. Sir, your four decades on this committee have made all the difference.

If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee as our Nation confronts the complex and compelling challenges in the vibrant Indo-Asia Pacific region. Our most volatile and dangerous threat is North Korea, with its quest for nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them intercontinentally. The dramatic rise of China's military, the uncertainty about how it will use its growing capabilities, and its provocative actions in the region represent our most enduring challenge.

As we continue to defend our national interests abroad, our efforts are bolstered by our teammates in the State Department and across government. Our collective efforts amid the challenges I mentioned underscore the importance of America remaining strong and engaged in the region. American leadership does matter.

Since our strategic rebalance was announced three years ago, we broadened our operations with Japan, deployed marines rotationally to Australia, and improved missile defense in cooperation with South Korea. We have also signed an important security agreement with the Philippines.

The rebalance is real, and although we all have concerns about the fiscal landscape, I believe that America has the staying power to sustain it.

But there is more work to do, and if confirmed I will remain laser focused on deepening our regional alliances and partnerships to increase our combat agility and readiness. I am fortunate to have had operational and policy experience, command assignments and educational opportunities that align completely with PACOM's mission. I believe they have prepared me well for the challenges ahead.

If confirmed, I will follow the trails blazed by some truly great leaders like Admiral Sam Locklear, Bob Willard and Tim Keating, all of whom mentored me and shaped my understanding of this region. Admiral Locklear's leadership of PACOM for the last three years has been of critical importance, and I am proud to have served as his Navy component in the Pacific Fleet.

I look forward to serving alongside the world's best soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, civilians and their families, as well as working with this committee and the Congress as a whole to address the national security challenges that we have.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished committee members, leading PACOM is a significant responsibility. If confirmed, I pledge to all of you that I will devote all of my energy and focus to the job. I look forward to your questions. Thank you, sirs.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Harris follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Admiral.

Now we have standard questions that we ask of our nominees, so I would ask each of you to respond. In order to exercise our responsibilities, we have got to receive testimony, briefings, and other communications of information. So first, have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest?

Mr. SCHER. Yes.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Yes.

Mr. BERTEAU. Yes.

Ms. STARZAK. Yes.

Admiral HARRIS. Yes.

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

Mr. SCHER. No.

Ms. SLOTKIN. No.

Mr. BERTEAU. No.

Ms. STARZAK. No.

Admiral HARRIS. No.

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

Mr. SCHER. Yes.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Yes.

Mr. BERTEAU. Yes.

Ms. STARZAK. Yes.

Admiral HARRIS. Yes.

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

Mr. SCHER. Yes.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Yes.

Mr. BERTEAU. Yes.

Ms. STARZAK. Yes.

Admiral HARRIS. Yes.

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

Mr. SCHER. Yes.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Yes.

Mr. BERTEAU. Yes.

Ms. STARZAK. Yes.

Admiral HARRIS. Yes.

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

Mr. SCHER. Yes.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Yes.

Mr. BERTEAU. Yes.

Ms. STARZAK. Yes.

Admiral HARRIS. Yes.

Chairman LEVIN. 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?

Mr. SCHER. Yes.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Yes.

Mr. BERTEAU. Yes.

Ms. STARZAK. Yes.

Admiral HARRIS. Yes.

Chairman LEVIN. And now, just for our uniformed military nominee, the question that we ask of our military nominees in uniform, so just to him, do you agree, when asked, to give your personal views even if those views differ from the administration in power?

Admiral HARRIS. Yes, sir, I do.

Chairman LEVIN. Now we will have an 8-minute first round, and I emphasize first round because we will go to a second round. We will work through the four votes at 10:30, and as I said, if necessary, we will have a continuation of this hearing for one or more of these nominees either later this week or next week.

Mr. Scher, Deputy Secretary Wormuth recently was quoted as saying that "we need a strategic modernization infrastructure fund" to recapitalize the nuclear forces already in place. Can you tell us how that would operate? When would this committee first see it in a budget proposal?

Mr. SCHER. Senator, we have spent a lot of time working to ensure we understand the needs of the defense nuclear enterprise and actually are funding it at a rate that we think will make sure that we can preserve the modernization of it and fix some of the problems that were found in the multiple reviews.

I do not know the details of the fund of which the Deputy Secretary speaks, but I do know the commitment of the Department to maintain the funding, to maintain modernization and to, in fact, increase the funding, I think as the Secretary of Defense said, approximately 10 percent over the \$15 to \$16 billion per year for the nuclear enterprise at this moment. I can certainly get back to you with details on the specific fund after the hearing.

Chairman LEVIN. Okay. Mr. Scher, a second question for you. Over the last few years, the Defense Department has been provided a number of authorities to build the defense capabilities of our partners and friendly nations, and these include the global train and equip authority, security assistance funds for a number of specific countries or regions, including Iraq and Afghanistan, the global security contingency fund, and in the bill before us we will have funding to train and equip the non-government forces, irregular forces.

In your view, is the Department properly organized to ensure coordination and deconfliction of these various security assistance authorities? And if confirmed, are there steps that you would take to improve on the oversight and the coordination of the Department's authorities?

Mr. SCHER. Senator, I believe that right now we currently, as a department, do a good job of coordinating the various authorities that we have been given over the course of the past decade plus,

as well as do a pretty good job of coordinating with the State Department, realizing that, in fact, building partner capacity is a job that is shared between the Department of Defense and the Department of State.

However, I do accept that there are a lot of authorities that continue to come; and, in fact, if confirmed, I assure you I will look at this to see if we can do a better job of being sure they are coordinated and deconflicted. In fact, there is an office in the new organization of Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities that has been stood up that, if confirmed for that position, I will oversee their attempts to ensure and their efforts to ensure that we can get greater clarity of each of these authorities and how they will be used together.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Ms. Slotkin, media reports have indicated that the Administration may be considering support for a Turkish request to create a no-fly zone or a buffer zone inside of Syria along the Turkish border. Now, I have long supported this idea, as a number of my colleagues on this committee have. So we would very much welcome consideration of this request.

Can you tell us what is your understanding of the request and what is the view of the Administration on the Turkish request?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Yes, Senator. The idea of a safe zone or a no-fly zone or a buffer zone is something that the Turks have been talking to us about for a couple of years now. They have raised it off and on for at least 2 years that I am aware of, and we are in regular discussion about their proposal. The Vice President was there last week. This is something that was discussed. Those talks are ongoing.

We don't currently think that a no-fly zone fits the bill, but it's something the elements of which we're looking at very closely to see if there is a proposal that advances our combined objectives.

Chairman LEVIN. What is the problem with the proposal?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sir, I think that at this point we're still in conversation to understand exactly the elements that they're talking about. Their proposal has changed over time, and the Vice President had extensive conversations, including private conversations, about the details so that we understand exactly the elements they're proposing.

Chairman LEVIN. Do you know whether the proposal includes the use of Turkish troops on the ground inside Syria? Do you know if that proposal includes that element?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I think the proposal involves a full range of air, land elements, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. And would greater access and use of the Turkish military installations, particularly at Incirlik, be granted as part of the U.S. support for such a zone?

Ms. SLOTKIN. We're in regular conversation not just on this proposal but about our counter-ISIL strategy and how greater access to those bases would provide us additional resources for the counter-ISIL fight.

Chairman LEVIN. And do you know whether or not the use of Incirlik is part of the Turkish proposal?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I don't know that specifically, sir. I know that it's very much part of the conversation.

Chairman LEVIN. Okay. Mr. Berteau, in recent years there's been an increase in the number of Department of Defense weapon system platforms that are contractor supported, particularly in the Air Force and the Navy. What are the most significant areas in which the Department could improve oversight and management to ensure that operating and support costs of a weapons system are reasonable and accurate, particularly given the fact that there is an increase in the number of platforms that are contractor supported?

Mr. BERTEAU. Mr. Chairman, as you know, a huge percentage of life cycle costs of any weapons system is pretty much determined by the time you get to what's known as Milestone B, the engineering and design development stage decision. So the costs that are incurred later in cycle are largely determined up front. So the single greatest challenge is to make a better evaluation at the front end in the design process.

One of the decisions or implementations, if you will, from the Weapons Systems Acquisition Reform Act was a better job of cost estimating and better consideration of cost estimating inside the Department. What I don't know is how much that cost estimation improvement has extended into life cycle cost maintenance.

I think what I would do if confirmed is look most carefully at that question. Historically, that's generally determined through a parametric modeling of what it cost you on the previous weapon system. While that's important, it may not be sufficient to be able to maintain that.

The question of what is done under contract logistic support as opposed to organic support I think depends on each weapon system and the plan that's put into place at the time, and that has to be looked at again as part of the milestone review process in the acquisition. And if confirmed, that's what I would intend to do, and that would be part of my responsibility as the Assistant Secretary.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Finally, Ms. Starzak, what is your view of the need for the Judge Advocate General to provide independent legal advice to the Secretary of the Army, including independent of the General Counsel?

Ms. STARZAK. Senator, I believe that is very important. It's obviously a statutory responsibility of the Judge Advocate General, and I support that.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Senator Inhofe?

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me ask one question of all five of you, and you just answer starting with you, Admiral, since I know what your answer is going to be.

We're all concerned with the sequestration. We've been talking about that a lot, and prior to that we've had other problems with the administration in terms of the support of the military. But do you—and I'll ask each one of you—do you agree that sequestration would significantly increase risk, and that risk is equated to lives?

Admiral?

Admiral HARRIS. Senator, I believe that if there is no relief to the sequester, it will, in fact, increase risk. It will increase the risk to the lives of our service men and women. I believe it will decrease

the size, the reach, the lethality, and the technological edge that we enjoy today over our adversaries and potential adversaries.

Senator INHOFE. All right. A yes or no answer is fine. [Laughter.]

Ms. STARZAK. Senator, I believe that Army leadership and the Secretary of Defense has testified about the problems of sequestration for the Army.

Senator INHOFE. No, no. How do you feel about it?

Ms. STARZAK. I agree with those views. From a legal standpoint, we obviously will look to try to address them.

Senator INHOFE. Military sequestration would increase risk. Risk is lives. Do you agree with that?

Ms. STARZAK. Senator, I do agree with that.

Senator INHOFE. Yes.

Mr. Berteau?

Mr. BERTEAU. Yes, sir, I agree with that.

Senator INHOFE. Ms. Slotkin?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Yes, sir.

Mr. SCHER. I agree. It risks lives and other issues, but certainly lives is part of it.

Senator INHOFE. I think it's important for us to understand that that's what we're talking about. When we get General Odierno and others who come in here and they talk about the problems that we're going to have, what that is going to do, the people need to equate risk and lives. That's what we're talking about here.

Admiral, you and I have talked in my office about what's happening, and with the rebalance to the Pacific that's going to be in your responsibility, are you going to have the—if this should go through, sequestration, would we have enough force structure to carry out that policy that you need to be doing and that you want to do?

Admiral HARRIS. If we get no relief from the sequester, it will affect the strength and the reach of our rebalance to the Pacific, in my opinion.

Senator INHOFE. Okay. The other thing I'm going to ask you because nobody seems to talk about this, when Kim Jong-un took office, I thought no one could be worse than his daddy, but nonetheless we're in a situation right now, and I'd like to know what you—do you think he would be more likely to be aggressive? Let's just put it this way. The carrier gaps that we're faced with right now and the reduced U.S. defense spending, do you think that would make him more militarily aggressive? Or how do you think he'd react to that?

Admiral HARRIS. I'm not sure how he would react to it, Senator, but I believe that he is a very opportunistic and very unpredictable and ruthless leader, and I think therefore that if we face continuing carrier gaps or perhaps the loss of a carrier strike or two, as our CNO has testified, if the sequester continues, then I believe he will take advantage of that.

Senator INHOFE. He is totally unpredictable.

Admiral HARRIS. Yes, sir.

Senator INHOFE. Ms. Slotkin, let me share with you, I was in Kiev. Their election was one week before our election was, and I was there during that timeframe. That was an incredible election that a lot of people are not aware of, and that is that Poroshenko

was so supported in that election, as well as was Yatsenyuk, the Prime Minister.

A lot of people are not aware that if a party doesn't receive 5 percent, then they can't be in the Parliament. This is the first time in—let me make sure I get this right—the first time in 96 years that the Communist Party will not have a seat in Parliament. That's an incredible thing that's going on. We hear the bad news, and that's the good news.

But when the President, as I said in my opening statement, was asked whether the U.S. should provide lethal assistance to Ukraine, he said no but added, "Now, if you start seeing an invasion by Russia, that's obviously a different set of questions. We're not there yet." I think we are there yet. Do you agree?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sir, I think that—

Senator INHOFE. Do you agree that 5 months before that, when they annexed Crimea, that that was an invasion of Ukraine?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I believe it was an illegal occupation and an unlawful annexation of Crimea. Yes, sir.

Senator INHOFE. Was it an invasion?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I can't get—I don't know the actual definition of "invasion."? I know it was an unlawful occupation.

Senator INHOFE. Okay, I get your answer. If the Administration asks whether you recommend that Ukraine be provided lethal assistance, will you answer yes or no, and why?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sir, I think, as you may have heard last week, the option of providing lethal assistance, lethal defensive assistance, is currently being looked at. I support all options being looked at. Those—

Senator INHOFE. But we've been looking at it for quite a while now, and it's lethal assistance. I mean, I was over there and talking to them, and they have come out with incredible support of the West and of us in their elections, and they are begging for it. I mean, what more looking at it do we need to do?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sir, again, from the Defense Department perspective, we've provided some considerations. Those are being looked at now. I think it is important to note that we have provided over \$116 million worth of security assisting the Ukrainians. I know it's not lethal assistance.

Senator INHOFE. It's not—

Ms. SLOTKIN. I understand.

Senator INHOFE. Okay.

Ms. SLOTKIN. I frankly think that much more important even than that is the joint commission we've set up with the Ukrainians, the 25 visits that our generals have made from UCOM to work on the medium and long-term needs of the Ukrainian military to build them into a truly substantial force, more than any one piece of equipment, sir.

Senator INHOFE. Well, the question was if the Administration asked whether you recommend that Ukraine be provided lethal assistance, knowing what you know now, would it be yes or no?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Again, I believe—

Senator INHOFE. Okay, that's fine.

Mr. Scher, in my opening statement I talked about a couple of things that are in the law. One is the QDR. We talk about doing

that—I think that’s title 10—every 4 years. But also it specifically talks about the national security strategy. Now, reading from Title 50 of Section 3043, it says, “The President shall transmit to Congress each year a comprehensive report on the national security strategy of the United States.” I mean, that’s pretty specific, don’t you think?

Mr. SCHER. Yes, sir.

Senator INHOFE. What are your intentions of doing to see that they start following that law?

Mr. SCHER. If confirmed—

Senator INHOFE. It’s been 4 years now.

Mr. SCHER. If confirmed in this position, I look forward to working with the White House to helping them produce a national security strategy. I will say—

Senator INHOFE. Well, you don’t even work with them. I’d like to have a little stronger answer because you’re going to be responsible for this area.

Mr. SCHER. Certainly, Senator, and I will be responsible, if confirmed, for the Quadrennial Defense Review publication and drafting, which obviously gets approved by the Secretary, where we talk about the defense strategy. We make sure that whenever we develop that defense strategy, we do it in consultation with the White House and other interagency players throughout the administration. So that is something I can assure you I will continue to do.

Senator INHOFE. Good, good. That’s good.

I’m out of time now, but I want to get an answer for the record on this, Mr. Berteau. It seems on acquisition reform I can remember 28 years ago, the 8 years I spent in the House and then the last 20 years in the Senate, we talked about that acquisition reform. We’ve done a lot of talking about it, and every time we come up with something, they want more regulations and this type of thing. I’m beginning to think that maybe you might be particularly suited for this in that you had this in your background but you left this area in government in 1993. Is that correct? And now you’re coming back. Does that give you a fresher look at this? And for the record, if you could kind of give me a report on what you might be able to do differently because of your unique background. Okay?

Mr. BERTEAU. Yes, sir. I would also refer you to my testimony before this committee back on April 30th, which already included some of that.

Senator INHOFE. Good.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Inhofe.

Senator Reed?

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman; and thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

Admiral Harris, just for the record, I think my understanding is that United States forces is a sub-command under PACOM?

Admiral HARRIS. Yes, sir. It’s a sub-unified command under PACOM.

Senator REED. And so you were, in fact, in charge of our military response to the Koreans, the North Koreans.

Admiral HARRIS. In the U.S. forces Korea had. But General Scaparrotti is also the command forces commander and the United Nations commander for Korea independent of PACOM.

Senator REED. But you have this complementary relationship, and my sense is you're working very closely together, both individually but also organizationally, so that you have a consistent view of the situation in Korea and you feel comfortable going forward with that arrangement.

Admiral HARRIS. Yes, sir. I have a very comfortable relationship with Scaparrotti and with Admiral Locklear in my present hat as Pacific Fleet. And if confirmed, I will continue that relationship with USFK. I believe that Pacific Command's primary responsibility is to support USFK on the Peninsula in the case of a Korean contingency, and that translates to all the components, to Pacific Fleet as well, that our mission has to be ready to fight tonight. We take that seriously in our preparations.

Senator REED. Can you comment on the cyber activity that may be emanating from North Korea? It's a new dimension, it's a new threat, relatively new, and it would be something I think in your command will be increasingly more persistent and troubling as you go forward.

Admiral HARRIS. Yes, sir. I believe that North Korea is seeking asymmetric advantages over us and our allies in the Pacific, and cyber is just one of those methods by which they're seeking to get that advantage.

Senator REED. Thank you, sir.

Turning to China now, they are increasing their budget militarily. They are increasing their actions in adjacent waters. Their strategy seems to be access denial, which raises, particularly for PACOM, the issue of how do you structure your fleets to respond to that, what weapons systems do you emphasize, particularly as the Chinese seem to be deploying more and more long-range precision missile systems that can effectively, very effectively attack surface ships. Can you comment on your ideas going forward about these issues?

Admiral HARRIS. Yes, sir. I believe that China's access area denial strategies are worthy of our taking a hard look at it. In the Navy perspective, I believe our fighter aircraft are key to us being able to get in there to do the missions that will be assigned by PACOM. I think the joint strike fighter is key to that. Our carrier strike groups form the heart of that. And our submarines, which are inherently stealthy, provide a measure of advantage today and into the foreseeable future over China and any other adversary in the Pacific, sir.

Senator REED. So you would say that, again, the critical ability of aircraft to penetrate is going to be important, but the submarines provide, at least at this point, the biggest sort of leverage we have in the Pacific?

Admiral HARRIS. I believe today the submarine force is our indisputable leverage over any potential adversary in the Pacific.

Senator REED. Let me ask you another question, too, and that's about the amphibious capabilities of PACOM. Because of the conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq, our Marines have been there almost continuously. Now they're starting to reorient, regroup, and begin to practice amphibious operations. Can you give us sort of your sense right now of what our capabilities are for amphibious assault?

Admiral HARRIS. Yes, sir. Today we have five amphibious ready groups in the Pacific, one forward deployed, the Sasebo in Japan, to support the Marine Expeditionary Unit in Okinawa. We have four amphibious ready groups in San Diego, and we'll be building a fifth by 2018. We welcome the return of the Marine Corps to its amphibious routes, and we're working very closely, I am working very closely with MARFORPAC, Lieutenant General Toolan, ensuring that us and the Marines, us the Navy, the Pacific Fleet and the Marines are marching side by side, if you will, in lockstep on the need for amphibiosity in our naval services.

Senator REED. Do you have a plan for increased amphibious training exercises in the Pacific going forward?

Admiral HARRIS. Yes, sir.

Senator REED. Thank you very much.

Ms. Slotkin, you just spent a great deal of time in Iraq, two years as an intelligence officer early in the conflict, State Department work. Can you talk about the situation, the political situation now with Abadi versus the Maliki Government?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Of course. I think the good news is that Prime Minister Abadi is saying the right things and starting to do the right things on the critical issues of reform and reconciliation in Iraq. This is different from what Prime Minister Maliki did, particularly after 2011. And, in fact, Prime Minister Abadi has been deconstructing some of the things that Maliki did during his time.

We saw, again, he just removed another 20-plus Ministry of Interior officials today for corruption and mismanagement. That's on top of 36 general officers I think about a week ago. He's identified and made a big speech in front of his Parliament yesterday about the 50,000 ghost soldiers that were on the books. So he's attacking corruption, and he's attempting to reach out particularly to the Sunni community.

This is a critical piece of any work we do and they do in Iraq against ISIL. Again, the countervailing winds in Iraq are strong, but he's doing and saying the right things.

Senator REED. And our troop presence today, what justification and what sort of precedent are we using as we're building up our forces? This is to protect our—at the invitation, obviously, of the government, but also to protect our own resources?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sure. Sir, are you referring to the missions that they're performing?

Senator REED. Not so much the missions, but we have forces there, and they are protected by the—let me ask, do we have a Status of Forces agreement in place?

Ms. SLOTKIN. We currently have an exchange of notes with the Government of Iraq that provides us privileges and immunities.

Senator REED. We feel with this government it's much more reliable than with the Maliki Government?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Yes. There's a much wider range of Iraqis who have invited us in on an emergency basis to come and help them take back part of their country. So it's a wide range of Iraqis that support us and our interactions there.

Senator REED. Is it your view that without this political progress in Iraq, that military efforts would be very difficult to succeed?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I think the political piece, which is where the Iraqis really must lead, is critical, sir, to the success of the mission.

Senator REED. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Senator Fischer?

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman; and thank all of you for being here today. I appreciate your willingness to step forward.

I would like to begin with a discussion on the bilateral security assistance as a policy tool. Ms. Slotkin, if I could begin with you, please.

It appears that bilateral security assistance is occupying a greater role as we move forward with U.S. policy. Earlier this year General Dempsey spoke of doubling or even tripling our effort to build credible partners around the globe. How do you see this developing in the next few years, and do you think there's a ceiling on how much we can accomplish?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Ma'am, thank you for that. I think it's a critical question. We've all talked about the complexities of the world's problems, the unpredictability of the world, and there's nothing more important than the capacity and capability of partners in addressing those common threats. We are big believers in security assistance and building partner capacity. It's a cornerstone of the QDR and a cornerstone of almost everything we do around the world.

I don't know if there's a ceiling on what it can do because I think if the model is Europe, where we have our most capable partners working with us, that's what we'd like to see in every region of the world, truly capable partners working with us side by side.

Senator FISCHER. As we look at the program, though, we all realize it's an indirect way for the United States to accomplish its policy goals, and we look around the world and we see other countries that are more directly involved in many areas such as the Ukraine. Do you think there's a limit to what we can do with the bilateral security assistance in areas like that, where maybe we should be stepping forward in a more forceful and direct manner?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Again, I think in the places where our allies and partners are most capable, you see that as part of deterrence against these kinds of destabilizing behaviors. So I don't think there's a ceiling. Whether the United States should get involved, I think it's always critical whether it threatens U.S. national interests directly, and I think in those places where it affects our homeland, U.S. persons and interests abroad, we should act decisively, and I think we have.

Senator FISCHER. So you feel our actions in Ukraine are appropriate at this time?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I think that we are doing quite a bit to support the Ukrainians. I know there's a debate about whether we should be doing more, but I think the work in particular that we're doing with advising and training the Ukrainian military is significant, and I think that it's showing effect.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you.

Mr. Scher, do you have anything to add on how you see this assistance developing in the future?

Mr. SCHER. Thank you, Senator. I believe it's a very important tool that we have to try to advance U.S. interests and take advantage of opportunities and protect ourselves against threats by working closely with countries around the world at different levels, depending on what that country is capable of doing, either helping themselves, helping them to help themselves, or helping them so that they can help in global priorities.

It is one tool. It's an important tool. It is not the only tool.

Senator FISCHER. And do you see a ceiling on when it should be used and when we may possibly have to move on to more direct assistance?

Mr. SCHER. I think it's a situation, Senator, that depends on each case, that in some cases we will have provided enough. But it's rare that we get to the point, that I have seen, where we have spent enough time on building partner capacity. But certainly you have to weigh that against the other tools that are appropriate given the situation at the time.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you.

And, Admiral Harris, can you speak to those programs in your area of operations on the bilateral security assistance programs?

Admiral HARRIS. Yes, ma'am. We have a lot of bilateral security arrangements in the Pacific. We have five, all of our Nation's five treaty allies, bilateral treaty allies are in the Pacific, and we work closely with them and our partners and friends.

I would add to what my colleagues at the table have said in that the United States is constrained—and I use “constrained” as a positive verb—we're constrained by law, regulation and policy in what we can do. Other countries are not so constrained, and so they are doing things that may be more direct, and I would view some of their actions as illegal.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, sir.

If I could continue with you, Admiral, with nuclear deterrence. As you know, China is continuing to modernize and also to expand its nuclear forces, and your predecessor often talked about the Chinese advancements in the submarine capabilities and the new submarines that they're putting online.

Are you concerned about the Chinese investments in those nuclear forces? Do you believe that more than reinforces our need to modernize our nuclear capabilities?

Admiral HARRIS. Yes, ma'am, I am concerned, and it reinforces my belief that we must continue to modernize our nuclear capabilities.

Senator FISCHER. Do you see that part as your mission to try to get that message out there, that the nuclear deterrence is still, I believe, one reason that we have remained safe in this country for over 60 years?

Admiral HARRIS. Yes, ma'am. It is my mission as the commander of the Pacific Fleet, and if confirmed I will continue to make that my mission as Pacific Command commander.

Senator FISCHER. I would hope you would be forthright and honest with this committee when you're questioned in regard to that.

Admiral HARRIS. Yes, ma'am.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, sir.

And, Ms. Slotkin, can you speak to the importance of our deterrent in respect to our security commitments that we have?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sure. Senator, I think the deterrence is a fundamental concept that we think about and work on every day in the Department, most recently with the reassurance initiatives that we have been partaking with the NATO alliance, our strongest allies. We have come to the Congress and asked for additional support for the European Reassurance Initiative so that we can do just that, we can absolutely back up this critical deterrent threat against Russian aggressive behavior and anyone else who seeks to violate the Article 5 commitments of NATO.

So I think it's a cornerstone of the Transatlantic Alliance. It's something we work on every day and we look forward to doing more of in light of Russian aggressive behavior.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator REED [presiding]. Thank you, Senator Fischer.

Senator Udall?

Senator UDALL. Good morning to all of you. Let me pick up where Senator Fischer just left off and, Mr. Scher, direct a question your way.

You did in your advance policy questions discuss the challenge of modernizing our nuclear forces in a cost-effective manner. There are a lot of varying estimates of the price involved, the cost involved, but it's clear we're going to have to make a significant investment.

Can you talk about why this is a necessary investment and what you think can be done to implement nuclear policy and strategies in a cost-effective manner? Because this is a very expensive undertaking, as you know.

Mr. SCHER. Yes, Senator. It is an expensive undertaking. In the broad scheme of the Department of Defense budget, it is not a huge percentage. And importantly—and the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary have been very clear—this is the number-one priority for them. The nuclear enterprise, as we have seen with the reviews that were conducted, both the internal and the external review, we clearly see that we have underperformed in the nuclear enterprise. It remains safe, secure and effective. But in order to continue that, we need to make sure that we invest in the DOD nuclear enterprise, as well as modernization.

The Secretary has stated when those reports were rolled out, we spend approximately \$15 to \$16 billion per year on the nuclear enterprise in the Department of Defense, and we are looking to plus that number up in the billions, not tens of billions but in the billions, and we're still making final decisions on the additional money that we put to that.

But importantly, I would note, it is money that is not coming out of future modernization but is coming out from other parts of the Department of Defense budget because we recognize the importance of continuing to modernize the nuclear enterprise in DOD.

Senator UDALL. Let me follow up specifically in regards to your support for the “fly-before-you-buy” policy for the ground-based interceptors. We have in some cases rushed untested systems into

production, and that's a costly decision. Can you talk specifically about how you're going to proceed in that context, particularly if we can't deal with the pitfalls that surround sequestration?

Mr. SCHER. Certainly. First of all, Senator, as I think we were asked and I would like to emphasize, sequestration throws all of this into question, and it is something the Department feels very strongly about broadly.

In terms of the "fly before buy," that is part of our stated policy in the Ballistic Missile Defense Review. I, if confirmed, will continue to support that. Certainly we need a robust testing program, but we do not want to be testing things that we are not comfortable will succeed, although obviously testing means that sometimes we'll fail. But "fly before buy" is stated policy and, if confirmed, I will continue that.

Senator UDALL. We have an objective through the President's leadership of reducing the total number of deployed nuclear weapons. We're working on bilateral negotiations with Russia. Can you elaborate on why it's possible to reduce the total number of deployed strategic weapons without jeopardizing our security or weakening the deterrent effect of our nuclear enterprise?

Mr. SCHER. Senator, right now we are looking to get down to the new START Treaty levels, which we look to get to in the early part of 2018. The President has said that he believes that we could reduce that further, but he also made clear during that, that that was part of a negotiated process with the Russians, that we wouldn't seek to do that without that bilateral work with the Russians. And right now, it's hard to imagine that we are in that situation where we could talk to the Russians about that kind of work.

Senator UDALL. Thank you for that set of insights.

Before turning to Ms. Slotkin, I want to acknowledge Ms. Starzak. You did great work on the Senate Intelligence Committee. I've been proud to serve on that committee for 4 years, and I want to thank you for your work and for the work you're going to do in the future. You have certainly earned my respect and support for your efforts there.

Ms. STARZAK. Thank you, Senator.

Senator UDALL. So I look forward to working with you when you are confirmed, shall we say.

Ms. Slotkin, you have an enormous portfolio which you've come to, I think, well prepared to handle. Would you talk a bit about the Sahel and the sub-Sahara and what's happening there and what we need to do to have an effective presence?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sure. The Sahel and, in general, North and West Africa are an area where we're seeing the proliferation of extremist groups, some of them small, some of them medium sized, and it's something that we keep a very close eye on, particularly in Mali and the countries surrounding Mali.

I think, first and foremost, we direct our attention in our intelligence community on those changing threats. Second of all, we work closely with partners in the region, improving our relationships, improving our cooperation so that we can face the common threats. They are under most direct threat from these groups.

And then additionally, as you've seen in Mali, we work very closely with our allies, particularly our European allies, in actually combatting the threat.

So the Department of Defense is very engaged in supporting a French effort and a U.N. effort to try to bring stability back to Mali where we had real problems with extremists in the past year-and-a-half.

Senator UDALL. I believe Senator Fischer and others on the panel have already asked you about how we encourage our allies, shall we say, to do more. I think the NATO countries are well aware of the threats, and we need to see them make a greater investment in their military capabilities.

Talk about our Arab allies and what it will take for them to realize they cannot continue to play both arsonist and fireman when it comes to the threat of Islamic fundamentalism and the terrorism that follows.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sure. Well, as you know, we have robust relationships with our Arab allies, particularly the Gulf states. And I think what we're seeing right now in operations in both Iraq and Syria is a real proof of concept of the work that we've done with the Gulf states in particular to build up their capabilities.

We now have a number of Arab states who are flying combat missions over Syria and Iraq. They're performing targeting. They're performing a number of activities that we do and that they're doing in our stead, and I think that that's critically important and different than the last time we were engaged in Iraq. So I think we've made some progress on that score.

I do think that the states of the region see a real threat from ISIL and the extremists. They see a real threat from the instability emanating out of Syria, and we work very closely with those states to try and counter it in their neighborhoods and get them engaged to do more, both in Iraq and Syria.

Senator UDALL. I've got a minute left. I know you're a student of history. I know you also have, as Senator Reed pointed out, experience on the ground in Iraq. Could you tell us what historical lessons that you believe we have either ignored or we've over-emphasized in the past several years, particularly in regards to the Middle East?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sure. I think that the greatest lesson that I've learned over the past 11 years in government is that military success must be complemented with political reconciliation and reform, or it certainly isn't lasting. I think we learned that before we decided to surge in Iraq. I think we learned the positive lessons during the surge and just after, and I think we saw that demonstrated when Prime Minister Maliki squandered the opportunities that we had provided him. I think that would be, sir, my bumper sticker lesson, political reform to complement military success.

Senator UDALL. Thank you for that insight.

Thank you all for your service.

Chairman LEVIN [presiding]. We have how long left on the vote? We have 3½ minutes plus 5 for the vote. So if you want to start—

Senator MANCHIN. I can start very quickly.

Chairman LEVIN. If there's nobody here, then just adjourn, if you would, until one of us comes back.

Senator MANCHIN. Yes.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN [presiding]. I'll start for a few minutes, and then we'll adjourn.

First of all, I want to thank all of you and recognize your outstanding service to the Nation. I want to thank you for accepting the nomination and thus shoulder the task to help ensure that our Nation's military remains the greatest in the world.

With that being said, Mr. Scher, if I may, I'll start with you. Having watched this year's Iraqi security forces fail to stop the invasion of ISIS, I remain concerned as we draw down forces in Afghanistan. I want to be clear that I do not support keeping a large American force in Afghanistan indefinitely. It seems likely that we will need a counter-insurgency force, special forces if you will, there for some time.

How can we prevent Afghanistan ending the way Iraq did, sir?

Mr. SCHER. Senator, I believe that one of the important things is our continued commitment to Afghanistan and working very closely with the country and the leadership there. I have great faith and confidence in John Campbell, who is the ISAF commander, and I think he has a great vision and working relationship with the Afghanistan leadership, and I expect that he will continue to provide advice and counsel to the Department and to the President about what the relationship should be and what military forces and military missions should be there for the President to make a final decision.

I also think that we will benefit from looking at the lessons of our engagement in Iraq and hopefully be able to apply them appropriately in Afghanistan.

Senator MANCHIN. Let me ask you about the Afghan security forces and securing their own territory, especially given the recent voluntary departure of the Kabul police chief.

Mr. SCHER. Senator, I don't have a direct view of how capable the Afghan forces, security forces are. I know we've been working closely with them. There are certainly some forces that are quite capable and other forces that are probably still engaged in learning. I wouldn't have an assessment but would rely on the assessment of General Campbell about how effective they will be as we draw down our forces.

Senator MANCHIN. Concerning Ukraine, what more can be done there for us to help Ukraine, other than just the little bit of token help that we're giving right now and the supplies they've asked for and the type of armament?

Mr. SCHER. Senator, I think that, as Ms. Slotkin has said, we are providing a good amount of support to the Ukrainian forces. This is not solely a military condition that we are facing. This has to be addressed both by the military and political and diplomatic. There's a range of things from the perspective of the Department of Defense that could be brought forward, but certainly we'd have to do that in the context of the whole of government approach.

Senator MANCHIN. At this time we're going to go ahead and adjourn, and I'm going to go vote, and we'll come right back, and everyone should be back here in a few minutes, okay? Thank you.

Meeting adjourned.

[Recess.]

Senator SHAHEEN [presiding]. If I can call the hearing back to order. Since I'm the only one here and I'm up next, we'll get started until someone else comes.

Senator NELSON. I'm here.

Senator SHAHEEN. I know, but they told me I was ahead of you, Senator Nelson. [Laughter.]

So they said I could go anyway.

Senator NELSON. We have another vote coming.

Senator SHAHEEN. Yes.

So, thank you all very much both for your willingness to continue to serve our country and also for being here today.

I would like to start, Admiral Harris, with you, and thank you for taking the time to come in and meet with me. I very much appreciate that.

One of the things that we discussed in our meeting was the potential for Compass Call, which is the military's only standoff electronic weapons program, to be looked at as potentially coming back and providing for important electronic attack aircraft support in the Pacific generally. So I wonder, I ask this because this is a program that some of our businesses in New Hampshire are very involved in, and I just wonder if you could talk a little bit about the potential for this system and how it could be used in the Pacific.

Admiral HARRIS. Yes, ma'am. I have used or been associated with Compass Call in the past in some of my previous assignments. It's a fantastic platform and there's nothing like it for what it does. If confirmed, I believe that there's a real need for that capability, that electronic attack capability in the Pacific. And if confirmed, I'll be asking for all that I can get for all the things that are out there in the electronic attack arena.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you very much. Anything that we can do to support that I certainly am interested in doing.

I want to follow up next on a question that Senator Inhofe asked and that a number of you have referred to around sequestration because obviously it's something that all of us on the committee are also very concerned about, and you all acknowledged the potential impact of sequestration. I wonder if you could define how long we have to solve this problem before it becomes long-term irreversible, or at least has a dramatic impact in the long term before we can address reversing the impacts of sequestration.

Admiral Harris, do you have any sense of how soon it becomes an increasing burden?

Admiral HARRIS. Senator, it's already a burden. We were sequestered in 2013, and we're still coming out of the burden to the maintenance of our ships and aircraft and our training of personnel, particularly our pilots. I believe that the sooner we can get the sequester reversed, the better off we are. If we wait until 2016, that will just be so much the more that we'll have to come out of the valley that we find ourselves in. If we wait until 2020 or 2021, I

think it will be too late. I believe by then we'll be down to maybe 250 ships.

You know, China is going to have 350 ships by 2020, and we're going to be down to 250 to 255. I believe that's dramatic, and that's globally. China is going to have them all there in the Pacific, and we're going to have 250 to 255 to meet all the demands of all the commands and commanders in the whole world. So I think the sooner that the sequester can be reversed, the better off we will be.

Senator SHAHEEN. Would anyone else like to add to that?

Mr. SCHER. Senator, if I could, in addition to supporting everything that Admiral Harris has said, I think the other big piece is predictability, the fact that we go year to year not knowing exactly what we can plan for. It's very hard to do long-term strategic planning with short-term budgeting. So in addition to sequester and the effects we are seeing right now and still trying to climb out of, getting some level of predictability and avoiding CRs is very important to the Defense budget.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Ms. Slotkin?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I'd just echo those comments as someone who, if confirmed, would be responsible for a pretty fractious part of the world. The predictability is critical to making sure that we have the flexible, agile posture, presence, capabilities that we need to handle these threats. So I'd just echo what Bob Scher has just said.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Anyone else want to add to that? Mr. Berteau?

Mr. BERTEAU. Senator, thank you. I think one of the lessons we see from history from previous drawdowns is that each year you delay adding back, the more it costs. It's not a one-for-one tradeoff. So I think that's part of the calculation that you have to bring into it there.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Ms. Starzak, I'm not going to overlook you, but since you're part of the legal system, I'm going to go on to my next question, and this is for Ms. Slotkin.

You talked about lethal weapons as one of the options that was being considered in Ukraine. Deputy National Security Advisor Tony Blinken also talked about lethal assistance remaining an option that's under consideration.

The question that I have for you is under what circumstances would the Administration consider that option and actually taking it off the table and actually providing lethal assistance?

Ms. SLOTKIN. ma'am, I think that that conversation is going on now. Frankly, the failure of Russia to live up to the Minsk agreement, the agreement that they signed and then almost immediately started to violate, has just added urgency to the conversation, and those considerations are going on right now.

Senator SHAHEEN. Have you been part of those conversations?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I have, among a number of others in the building and throughout the interagency.

Senator SHAHEEN. So it's still not clear to me what you're saying about what circumstances would suggest that lethal assistance is the best course of action.

Ms. SLOTKIN. ma'am, I think there's quite a number of factors that need to be considered when we think about moving to providing—

Senator SHAHEEN. Yes, like what?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I think the reaction of the Russians is important, what we would do with other states around Russia. I think that there are larger policy implications that are being discussed, and those are important factors.

Senator SHAHEEN. One of the comments you made was about Prime Minister Abadi and efforts that he was making in Iraq to reach out to the Sunnis. What has been the response of Sunnis to those efforts?

Ms. SLOTKIN. So I think the response has been mixed. In some cases it's been very positive. He named a Sunni minister of defense who is very capable and who spent quite a bit of time out in Anbar Province. He's committed to bringing in members of the tribes out in Anbar into the security forces. But I think, as you can imagine, some of those tribal elements are concerned. They want to know what is truly in it for them, whether the government will follow through, because they've seen it go a different way in the recent past.

So I think he's saying and doing the right things. The Sunnis are starting to get engaged, but they are skeptical.

Senator SHAHEEN. So are there any other measures that we think he could take in the short term or that he has suggested that might be helpful in reassuring the Sunnis that he's serious about trying to include them in the government?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sure. I think actions speak louder than words. He has been very public about his intent to bring some of the—a large number of Sunni fighters into the Iraqi security forces. Given the losses that they've had in the Iraqi security forces, when he starts bringing folks in and actually paying them, putting them on the payroll, providing them with uniforms, which he is I think trying very hard to do, that to me is going to be something that will demonstrate to folks out there that this is someone who is serious—actions more than words.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Senator KAINE?

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator Shaheen and members of the committee, and thank you all for your service and willingness to continue service in these important positions.

I'd like to ask some questions about the war against ISIL that's underway right now. Let me read a statement from the President from November 5th. "I'm going to begin engaging Congress over a new authorization to use military force against ISIL. With respect to the AUMF, we've already had conversations with members of both parties in Congress, and the idea is to right-size and update whatever authorization Congress provides to suit the current fight rather than the previous fights. We now have a different type of enemy. The strategy is different. So it makes sense for us to make sure that the authorization from Congress reflects what we perceive to be not just our strategy over the next two or three months but our strategy going forward."

Do any of you disagree with that statement by the President?
[No response.]

I'll take that as a no.

I assert that there would be some wisdom in Congress debating and coming up with an authorization for the war against ISIL based upon the magnitude of the operation, the expected operations. Do any of you disagree with that point? [No response.]

No?

Do any of you disagree that a debate and a congressional vote about the war against ISIL would educate the American public about the threat that ISIL poses to the Nation and our allies? [No response.]

None disagree on that point.

Do any of you disagree that a debate and a congressional vote about the war against ISIL would actually offer some support to our troops that we're asking them to fight by suggesting that the political leadership of the country is behind their mission? Do any of you disagree with that assertion? [No response.]

Senator Kaine. I have looked to see whether a president has suggested and actually engaged in the initiation of military action and said I want to have an authorization from Congress but has not sent a proposed authorization to Congress, and I can't find another example of that other than in this circumstance. Do any of you know of a circumstance where a president has said to Congress I want you to authorize this, but the White House has not offered a draft authorization? Are any of you aware of another instance prior to this? [No response.]

No?

Would you all agree with the assertion that the wording of an authorization against ISIL is something that's not only important for a Congress that passes it but it should be of critical importance to the administration? Would you agree with that assertion? [No response.]

Would you agree with the assertion that if it's important to the administration what the authorization contains, you're more likely to get what you think is right if you propose your draft version of it rather than just if you rely on a fairly dysfunctional bunch of Members of Congress of both parties to come up with a version? Would you agree that you'd be more likely to get your version if you offered a proposal? Does anyone disagree with that assertion? [No response.]

Do any of you know of any reason why the White House has not forwarded to Congress a draft authorization for a war against ISIL that commenced on August 8th and that is now nearly 4 months down the road? Do any of you know of any reason why the White House has not forwarded to Congress a draft authorization? [No response.]

No?

Admiral Harris, let me ask you a question about an aspect of your PACOM responsibility, which is the military-to-military relationship with India. As we've discussed, I recently returned with Senator McCain from a visit to India, and I was really struck for a variety of reasons with real opportunities we have to build a strong—well, to build a continuous strong relationship with the

military in India in a very strategic part of the world. Could you offer your thoughts on that?

Admiral HARRIS. Yes, sir. I believe that India is a key nation in the region. I refer to my responsibilities as the Pacific Fleet commander as covering the Indo-Asia Pacific. I use that term intentionally because I believe in the strategic balance that's offered by India. It's a critical country, and it's an important country and, I believe, an important friend of the United States. I'll plan to visit India in January as the Pacific Fleet commander, and I'll look forward to that visit. I visited there before in the past, and I look forward to returning there. And if confirmed as Pacific commander, my intention is to continue those relationships with my counterparts in India.

Senator KAINE. I think Senator King and I were both surprised when we were told in India that India does more joint military exercises with the United States than with any other nation. We viewed that as a positive sign, and I'd like to encourage you to continue that and accelerate that trend.

Admiral HARRIS. It is a positive sign. This past summer, India was involved in a trilateral exercise with us and Japan called Malabar. They did it in the Western Pacific, which I believe is significant. India sent a ship to RIMPAC for a Pacific exercise in Hawaii this year, and we welcome their presence there, their leaders there, and they have a terrific Navy. I look forward to continuing my relationships with the Navy and expanding those relationships with all of the Indian joint forces if confirmed as PACOM.

Senator KAINE. Thank you.

Ms. Starzak, I'm interested in the integration of women into all the MOS's, and especially combat MOS's that have previously been closed to women in service. Could you offer your perspective about the progress the Army has made on this integration of women into combat-related MOS's and what you see sort of future developments pertaining to this important topic?

Ms. STARZAK. Absolutely, Senator. Senator, my understanding after Secretary Panetta rescinded the 1994 direct combat definition of assignment women in January 2013, the Secretary of the Army provided a plan on how to move forward. The idea would be to complete the integration of women by January 2016, so that is the timeframe that we're currently looking at.

It's been a work in progress, as I understand it. I don't think—I think we've looked at opening specific specialties, provided congressional notice as things have moved forward, and I think we will continue with that process through January 2016.

Senator KAINE. I hope we might have a status hearing at some point on this and have representatives from all the services. I think a lot of good work is being done, and it's different service to service for obvious reasons, but I think it's something that the committee would really enjoy hearing about across service. So that's something that I may suggest in the next calendar year.

I have no further questions, Madam Chairman.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Senator King?

Senator KING. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Mr. Scher, for well over 60 years we've had a clearly delineated, widely understood strategy with regard to nuclear weapons around the world called deterrence, mutually assured destruction. Everybody understood that, and it was based upon an assumption that people were at least somewhat rational and that they would not want their country to be destroyed.

Unfortunately, we now seem to be moving into an era where there is at least a possibility of non-state actors acquiring nuclear weapons who would not necessarily be concerned about their destruction.

Where do you see us going in terms of a long-term strategic deterrent, if "deterrent" is the right word, or a long-term strategy for dealing with a proliferation of nuclear weapons to non-state actors?

Mr. SCHER. Senator, the situation you point out is one of the reasons that we spend so much time and effort on nonproliferation efforts with the Department and the U.S. Government as a whole. The scenario you have painted is one that is frightening and also one that could be believable.

Obviously, nuclear weapons continue to have a modest but very important role in our overall strategy, but they are a part of the overall strategy and a part of what we bring to the table to deter adversaries. It is not simply the nuclear weapons, as you know.

So I think that as part of a broad whole, making sure that we have all of the capabilities of the Department of Defense, the U.S. Government as a whole to address the threats from terrorist groups, as well as a clear focus and work with other nations on deterring proliferation, that includes being part of the treaty structure, the nonproliferation treaty. That is how we look to approach hoping to stop proliferation and then dealing with the proliferants.

Senator KING. Well, I agree with you that nonproliferation certainly is a first line of defense, along with intelligence and other areas. But I commend to you the task of developing a strategy because I think this is a future that, unfortunately, we may well face. It's my particular nightmare scenario, because if you have people who don't care about dying, the idea of mutually assured destruction doesn't really have much resonance. So I hope that that's something you'll follow up on.

Mr. SCHER. Absolutely, Senator.

Senator KING. Ms. Slotkin, we don't want the Russians to invade Ukraine. Is that correct?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Correct, sir.

Senator KING. If you want to prevent an invasion, wouldn't the provision of lethal aid to the Ukrainian military be a way to help to deter that invasion rather than wait until the invasion occurs and then try to fight a rearguard action?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sir, imposing costs on the Russians for their aggressive behavior is part of the response to the Russians, and hopefully to prevent them doing future activities along the same lines. Part of that—there is a military dimension to that, but there's also an economic dimension, there's also a political dimension. It's much more than just the stuff we can give them.

Senator KING. I understand that. But you're being proposed here—the title is "advisor." As they used to ask on law school questions, the president or the secretary of defense walks into your of-

face and says we're worried that the Russians are going to invade Ukraine and the possibility of lethal aid might help prevent that. What do you advise?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sir, in this circumstance, no one piece of equipment is going to help the Ukrainians have military parity with the Russians. Unfortunately, there is no singular military solution to the problem. So I—

Senator KING. There may be no one singular piece of equipment, but a general reinforcement and strengthening of their capability, whether it's with military hardware, whatever the panoply of weapons that they've looked for, wouldn't that make the Russians think twice?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Yes, I think that that's an important component, and that is why we've provided over \$100 million in security assistance; and again, importantly, established this joint commission to try and get them to a new place in their military capability.

Senator KING. Let me move to ISIL. Can they be defeated entirely by air power?

Ms. SLOTKIN. No, sir.

Senator KING. So it's going to require troops; is that not correct?

Ms. SLOTKIN. It will require local forces on the ground who are able to clear and hold the territory that we use air power to—where we complement with air power.

Senator KING. And what's your assessment of the timing of the local forces on the ground, by which I presume you mean principally the Iraqi military? When will they be ready to do house-to-house clearing in Mosul?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I think the situation with the Iraqi military is currently mixed. So we sent assessors over in the summer to look at the Iraqi military and found that a little over half of the units that we looked at were capable of going on the offensive. So I think the picture is mixed.

Senator KING. What do you think the timing—I'm interested in your assessment of how long it will take to get to the point where enough of their army is capable in order to carry out the second half of the mission.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Well, first of all, we do have units already going on the offensive. They've taken back cities and dams and strategic infrastructure. So we do see units already moving out. But I think, sir, if your question is when do we really think we'll be able to destroy ISIL, I think this campaign will take years, not months.

Senator KING. A similar question in Syria. Who are going to be the troops in Syria?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Syria is a much more complicated picture, sir. We have the Syrian moderate opposition who are a diverse group of—a diverse number of groups with different levels of capabilities, and we know that they are under real pressure. This is why we've sent a proposal to Congress for a train and equip program for the Syrian moderate opposition to start to build up those forces on the ground.

Senator KING. But as you know, that train and equip program is rather modest and will be years in the making. I take it you're suggesting that the campaign in Syria may be also years.

Ms. SLOTKIN. I think, unfortunately, the struggles across both Iraq and Syria will take years, not months.

Senator KING. How are we doing in degrading ISIL's financial capability?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I think the good news story there, sir, is they were gleaning a significant amount of revenue from black market oil sales and their control of some key nodes in Iraq on the oil infrastructure, and through air power we have been able to destroy some of their heavy equipment, dislodge them from some of those key locations, particularly the Baiji Refinery. So we've seen their revenues, monthly revenues, go down significantly.

Senator KING. Can we put a number on 'significantly'? Is it 20 percent, 50 percent, 70 percent?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I don't have a number for you, sir. I'm happy to get back to you with what our current assessment is.

Senator KING. I would appreciate that.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sure.

Senator KING. Because I think that's a very important part of this war.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sure. Happy to do so.

Senator KING. Thank you.

Admiral, you talked about China as an enduring threat. I'd like to ask you a question, sort of analogizing it to Russia and the Ukraine. China moves against one of its neighbors in the South China Sea. What can we as a practical matter do given their concentration of force in that region? Similar to what can we as a practical matter do about Russia's annexation of Crimea?

Admiral HARRIS. Well, Senator, with regard to China moving against some of its neighbors, the potential for that to happen, we have treaty obligations with five of the countries in the Pacific, including Japan and Korea and Thailand and the Philippines and Australia. So if China were to move against one of those countries, then those treaty obligations would be brought to bear, I believe.

The best opportunity that we have to preclude China's expansionist tendencies in Asia is force presence, is to be there when it matters and where it matters.

Senator KING. Similar to what I was talking with Ms. Slotkin about, the deterrence of having force in the area.

Admiral HARRIS. Yes, sir. Force presence matters, and having forces, whether they are in my case today naval forces or, if confirmed, the joint force there in the Western Pacific to be ready to respond immediately to our friends and allies, especially our allies there, matters. It matters on a fundamental level, and that's the value of force presence, and that is why I believe we must continue to maintain that presence in the Western Pacific.

Senator KING. I can't resist, in closing, pointing out the irony of if we were called upon to come to the aid of one of our allies in that region against an expansionist China, given our terrible financial condition, we would end up borrowing the money from China in order to arm our allies to fight China, but I won't pursue that.

Thank you very much, Admiral.

Admiral HARRIS. Sure.

Senator KING. Thank you all for your service.

Chairman LEVIN [presiding]. Thank you very much, Senator King.

Senator Donnelly?

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank all of you and your families for your sacrifice.

Ms. Slotkin, we recently passed another deadline in the P5+1 discussions. This is the second time, and I know how important it is to get this right, and what a great benefit it is if we can get it right. But I'm starting to become concerned by this pattern, and what I'm wondering is with regard to the most recent extension, your views on this and what is the hang-up and what do we have to do to get this right now.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sure. Well, sir, the negotiations and the extension, they still sort of are under the hat of our overall policy, which is to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. We still believe negotiations are the clearest route to do that right now, but from a Department perspective, we underwrite those negotiations with our posture, with our capabilities, with our presence in the Gulf, and we continue to provide all options, including contingency planning for whatever the President may decide to do.

So we believe the negotiations are the right way forward, but as the Department, we stand by with a whole range of options for the President.

Senator DONNELLY. How do these extensions impact our ability to manage Iran's influence with Iraq and with Syria in supporting the militias and the Assad regime?

Ms. SLOTKIN. The P5+1 negotiations are about the nuclear component, but what is separate are Iran's continuing destabilizing activities in the region, in the Middle East, and in other parts of the world. We haven't taken our eye off that ball. We continue, particularly from the Department's point of view, to go after the Iranians, to look at them very clearly in what they're doing in their meddling.

So the nuclear negotiations are one area where the State Department has the lead, but there are lots of other things that we remain deeply concerned about with the Iranians' behavior.

Senator DONNELLY. Ms. Starzak, one of the issues that has almost burned a hole in my heart, I guess you would say, is the military suicide rate. As counsel for the Army, you have the ability to play a prominent role in continuing to bring that rate down. We all shoot for zero on that one. I want to know your commitment to making sure that happens, that there's legislation that's going to be coming through in the NDAA, your implementation of it, and that there's a significant, in every way, commitment from the Army, and I know there is, to get this to zero.

Ms. STARZAK. Senator, I am absolutely committed to doing everything I can to help get it to zero, and I share your concern with the military suicide problem, particularly the suicide problem in the Army, and I will do whatever I can.

Senator DONNELLY. Okay. I hope when you see the NDAA come through you'll take a look at that and see the new clauses in there and do everything you can to implement it to make it as simple as possible for all of our servicemembers.

Ms. STARZAK. Thank you, Senator. Absolutely.

Senator DONNELLY. Ms. Slotkin, how closely are you working with Syrian tribal leaders and leaders in that country who may want to provide help for us? Because one of the things that you hear is a lack of human intelligence from Syria, which is extremely concerning because how do we know what's going on on the ground if we don't have friends to talk to us about it? So I know we're working with Sunni tribal leaders, to try to work with them and help move it in Iraq. Where are we, if anywhere, with Syrian tribal leaders?

Ms. SLOTKIN. So, Senator, the tribal leaders in Syria, I don't know the specifics of whether we deal with specific tribal leaders. I will tell you the good news is many of the tribes in Western Anbar in Iraq have families that span the border right there, so strong relationships with tribes on the Iraqi side of the border is particularly helpful with managing relationships with members of his family, of his tribe, on the other side of the border.

Senator DONNELLY. Do we have any programs with those Sunni tribal leaders in Iraq to find out what they know what's going on in Syria, to find out what they're doing with their relations in that area? Because Syria has been just an extraordinary killing field, as you know.

Ms. SLOTKIN. So, we are reestablishing many of our contacts with tribal leaders out in Western Anbar and, more importantly, we are assisting the Government of Iraq in their outreach to the tribal leaders. I know that Syria is a topic of regular conversation just because ISIL spans the border, the counter-ISIL campaign spans the border between Iraq and Syria. I'm not aware of the specifics, sir, but I'm happy to take that back. It's a perfectly reasonable—

Senator DONNELLY. Another thing I'd like you to take back is the amount of resources you have to get the job done there, specifically aerial resources, because from all I have seen, there has been an incredible shortage of UAVs and other products that are needed to find out what's going on. Our ability to function to the best of our capabilities is dependent on that, and it appears to me we are woefully short in that area, and I'd like to know why.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Definitely, sir, ISR, if that's what you're referring to, is an extremely high-density asset.

Senator DONNELLY. Yes.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Every COCOM commander, I'm sure—Admiral Harris will tell you every COCOM commander wants more ISR. It's in deep competition among the COCOM commanders. I can tell you we have thrown significant amounts of ISR at the counter-ISIL campaign. I think we are still at 24-hour coverage above Iraq, at a minimum.

But you're right, there is still competition for this resource. It's invaluable to us, and I hear your concerns.

Senator DONNELLY. Well, you certainly don't have 24-hour coverage over Syria, do you?

Ms. SLOTKIN. We do not.

Senator DONNELLY. I would like to see, if you could provide me, your list of priorities, because I've been very, very concerned that the way we've been using them, and with the way priorities were lined up, we're really skewed, which has caused us extraordinary

damage. I would like to see your ideas as to what should be prioritized right now, right now, and what is not.

Ms. SLOTKIN. I'm happy to take that back, sir. Thank you.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you very much.

Mr. Berteau, one of the things that we do in Indiana at Naval Warfare Center Crane in Southern Indiana, is we do a lot of work to detect counterfeit parts, and that's something that you get one part that's off, it can cause extraordinary damage to planes, to missiles, et cetera. I was wondering your views on counterfeit parts and the importance of continuing to make sure that what comes through comes through as what we bought for, what we paid for, and that we are getting what we were supposed to get.

Mr. BERTEAU. Senator, as you know, this has been an issue of some importance to this committee. In fact, statutory changes were put in place.

Senator DONNELLY. Right.

Mr. BERTEAU. I have not had the privilege of reviewing the data on where DOD stands today in terms of bringing down the incidence of counterfeit parts. I am aware of the role Crane plays. I've been there a number of times. But it's one of the issues that I would take as a high priority and look into, if confirmed.

Senator DONNELLY. That would be great, because as the logistics guru, we want to make sure that the stuff you're shipping is the right stuff.

Mr. BERTEAU. Absolutely.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you so much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Donnelly.

Senator HIRONO?

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I thank all of you for being here this morning.

I'd like to start with Admiral Harris.

Admiral Harris, the March 14, 2014 U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission Report said that, "There is growing concern among U.S. allies and partners that the United States will be unable to follow through on its commitment to the rebalance due to declining defense budgets and continuing security challenges elsewhere. There is also the perception that the rebalance to the Asia Pacific region is a concept and not something that is a priority."

Admiral Harris, the regional stability in the Asia Pacific area is very important, particularly as there is instability in so many other parts of the world, and I know that you said this morning in your testimony that the rebalance is real, and you cited some examples of decisions and actions that have been taken to reflect that reality.

From what you have seen, though, how is the rebalance progressing, and what are the future impacts of sequestration in 2016, and what have you heard about the rebalance from your counterparts in other countries?

Admiral HARRIS. Senator, I believe the rebalance is real and we're well into it. From the Navy perspective, our intent is to have 60 percent of the Navy rebalanced to the Pacific by 2020. We are at about 56 or 57 percent right now in terms of ships. We are already at 60 percent in terms of submarines. The Navy, if we con-

tinue on the path we're on, will actually increase in size by 2020 to about 308 ships from the present 289. So this 60 percent would be 60 percent of a larger number, and I think that's significant.

If we are sequestered, if the sequester continues, then that number could be diminished dramatically, as I mentioned before, to as low as 250. So the number of ships in the Navy that would be in the Pacific would be decreased. So I think the sequester has an effect on that.

My relationships with my colleagues in uniform in the Pacific are strong, and I believe that they welcome the U.S. rebalance, and I believe that they are watching what we do very closely. They're watching our commitment to the rebalance, the types of ships, aircraft and submarines that we are putting forward in the Pacific, and I'll be happy to tell you that we are putting our best and our newest platforms forward, our Virginia class submarines, our P8 Poseidons, EA-18 Growlers, our best aircraft, our best submarines, our best carriers are coming forward to the Pacific. But they are watching that very closely, as I am, and I think that they will be concerned should the sequester continue, just as I will be.

Senator HIRONO. Well, as you know, Admiral, the rebalance is not just about the military context but it involves diplomatic, cultural, economic concerns. I do have a very specific question about what sequestration could bring and the impact to Hawaii. As the Army's Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Assessment explores the impact of reducing some 19,800 Army service members and civilian personnel from Fort Shafter and Schofield Barracks in Hawaii, this scenario represents a population loss of 70 percent at Schofield Barracks and 34 percent at Fort Shafter.

Can you talk about the impact of these kinds of reductions on the capability and readiness of our 25th Infantry Division at Fort Shafter in Hawaii? Because I know you care about—you've talked about forward presence and how important that is.

Admiral HARRIS. Senator, I view with concern any reduction in any of the forces we have in the Pacific, including and especially Hawaii, and I'll review that even more if confirmed as the Pacific Command commander. I have said publicly that I think Hawaii is the key, is the gateway to the rebalance, and I think the sequester will affect that without a doubt.

Senator HIRONO. Well, a reduction of 19,800, which is a scenario that is reflected, as I said, in the Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Assessment, is a cause of huge concern to not just our national security but, of course, to Hawaii, because it would have a significant impact on the economy. But sitting here, though, what we're focusing on is national security and our readiness with regard to this part of the world.

So I just want to make a note for the record of this committee that sequestration in 2016 is an issue that we're going to need to deal with in a sensible way.

You noted in your testimony, and I quote you, "We should continue to use military engagement with China to demonstrate U.S. commitment to the security of the Asia Pacific region and to encourage China to play a constructive role in the region, and to press China to partner with the United States and our friends in the region to address common security challenges."

Could you elaborate on how you will specifically accomplish, assuming that you are confirmed, a military-to-military engagement with China to encourage more collaboration for mutual security and/or humanitarian relief concerns?

Admiral HARRIS. Yes, ma'am. I believe that a strong China of itself, a strong military in China of itself is not a bad thing, and we welcome the rise of a strong China that participates in the international arena. I'm concerned, as I mentioned before, about the provocations that China has embarked on in the East China Sea and the South China Sea. At the same time, I want to acknowledge and applaud China's efforts in the removal of chemical weapons from Syria and the counter-piracy efforts in the Horn of Africa/Gulf of Aden region, their work in the search for the Malaysian airliner MH-370, their work in supporting the Philippines during the Haiyan Typhoon disaster last year. These are positive things.

But on the other hand, they're engaged in increasing provocations and tensions in the South China Sea and the East China Sea with their neighbors. They have put in place the Air Defense Identification Zone, which we believe is illegal. And they are working counter to regional stability and peace in that area. So I view that with concern.

I think it's important that we continue to have a mil-to-mil dialogue with China, and I believe that, if confirmed, I will pursue that in the joint arena, as I'm doing now in the Navy arena.

Senator HIRONO. I do recall that when Admiral Locklear testified before this committee, he said that one of the areas that he would like to improve is a better mil-to-mil relationship with China. And at that time, he noted that he has that kind of relationship with Russia. That may have changed after Ukraine, but nonetheless we think it's really important.

Ms. Slotkin, Jordan is facing many challenges in a region that is filled with instability, and I know that they're taking in many refugees as a result of various conflicts, and most recently Syrian refugees. What is your assessment of the situation there, and what are we doing—we, our country doing—to assist our ally, Jordan?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sure. We have a robust relationship and an enduring relationship with the Jordanians, military-to-military, intelligence community to intelligence community, political, economic, spans the whole gamut. We have engaged with them for quite some time right now about minimizing the instability coming out of Syria.

They are hosting a significant number of refugees, and our close mil-to-mil relationship has resulted in quite a bit of joint cooperative work on deterring threats coming out of Syria. They are supporting us in our operations in and around the region. We are in regular dialogue with them every day, and we are extremely concerned, particularly given that they also border Iraq, with their border security and have invested significant resources in bulking up their border efforts.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Hirono.

we'll have a 5-minute second round. I expect other colleagues are coming back, and there is a vote, I think our final vote. We're trying to find out if this is our final vote.

Let me ask a couple of questions of you, Admiral. You've testified about the problems in the South China Sea, and my question has to do with the Convention on the Law of the Sea, as to whether or not joining that convention would benefit the United States military operations in the Asia Pacific, and how does not being a party disadvantage the United States, if it does.

Admiral HARRIS. Senator, I'm a supporter of the Law of the Sea, and I believe that U.S. succession to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea would be positive and would help me, if confirmed, in my responsibilities in the Western Pacific, especially in the South China Sea and in the East China Sea. I believe it gives us the moral high ground to be critical of other countries' actions there, and it shows support for the international norms and rules.

If we're not a member, it doesn't mean we're going to—I mean, being a member, acceding to the treaty does not mean that we're going to lose any of our rights or freedoms or ability to maneuver. But I believe that becoming a member of that treaty would be helpful in the region and would be perceived as positive by our friends and allies in the area.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Admiral, as it stands now, during a time of war on the Korean Peninsula, the United States would be in operational control of the combined U.S. and South Korean forces. That arrangement was put in place 60 years ago. Today, South Korea is a prosperous nation with a very capable military, and it should be responsible for its own national defense, with our support and the support of others.

Admiral, I've been promised on numerous occasions that there would be a transfer of wartime operational control from the United States to the Republic of Korea. That commitment has been made to me many times over the last decades. While the most recent announcement characterizes this as a delay, it doesn't appear that operational control or OPCON transfer is ever going to happen. I hate saying that because I hope it will, and I hope it will soon. But nonetheless, I just don't see it happening, and I see a lot of broken commitments. They're unnecessary, in my judgment, because of the capability of the Korean army. Obviously, we would continue to be there in a supporting role, but that's different from having operational control.

Do you support the transfer of wartime operational control to South Korea?

Admiral HARRIS. Senator, I do support the concept of operational control transfer to South Korea when they are ready to take it, and I think that's an important consideration. I would defer to General Scaparrotti, of course, because he is there on the Peninsula. I would be concerned if they were to take it today. They think they're not ready, and operational control means that they would have control of our forces, of U.S. forces in Korea, and I would not want that to happen until we are both confident, us and Korea, we are both confident that they're ready to take it, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Well, I think they're always going to say they're not ready because that keeps us there in an operational control capacity, which is their preference apparently. But I think we have to, after all these decades, recognize the reality that they have a very prosperous nation, they have a capable military, and they should be responsible, with our help and support, for their own defense.

Let's see. In terms of a first round, in terms of Senator McCain and Senator Ayotte, we're on the first round. I've started the second round.

Senator McCain?

Oh, I'm sorry. Yes, it goes Senator McCain, then back to Senator Manchin to complete the first round.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I apologize for being on the floor. There was an issue on the floor, and this is what we run into when we are having a hearing and floor votes as well. And it's very regrettable because we have five nominees, the most I've ever seen, in a very truncated process here, and you and I have already discussed perhaps the need for additional hearing of these witnesses. It just doesn't work when we have votes on the floor and confirmation hearings at the same time because all of us should get the benefit of the responses to the questions by our colleagues.

Ms. Slotkin, in answer to previous questions, you said we are discussing a Turkish proposal. Is that correct?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Elements of a Turkish proposal. Yes, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. So we don't have a proposal of our own?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I'm sorry. For the no-fly zone is what you're referring to?

Senator MCCAIN. No-fly zone and other aspects of what was described to me by General Allen.

Ms. SLOTKIN. We have robust conversations going on on—

Senator MCCAIN. I'm asking do we have a proposal?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sir, I am not aware of a specific proposal.

Senator MCCAIN. So we don't have a strategy.

Ms. SLOTKIN. I don't think that—that's not what I'm saying, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, tell me what the strategy is.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Our strategy against ISIL is, first and foremost, to defeat that organization across both of our—

Senator MCCAIN. That's an objective. That's not a strategy.

Ms. SLOTKIN. So our strategy—I mean, if you're asking what our goals are in Syria—

Senator MCCAIN. I'm not asking what the goals are. I'm asking what the strategy is.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Our strategy is to defeat ISIL, to—

Senator MCCAIN. I just repeated, that's a goal, that's not a strategy. I want to know what the strategy is, which entails what we deploy, what forces are necessary, what actions need to be taken in order to implement or to succeed in the goal that the President has articulated of degrading and defeating ISIS.

Ms. SLOTKIN. On defeating ISIS, we have an air campaign going on across both Iraq and Syria. We are looking to improve the capability of the Syrian moderate opposition through a train and equip

program and ultimately force Assad into a political transition where he departs Damascus.

Senator MCCAIN. And are we bombing any Bashir Assad targets/forces?

Ms. SLOTKIN. My understanding is the targets at this time are ISIL targets.

Senator MCCAIN. I see, no attacks on—

Ms. SLOTKIN. ISIL targets—I'm sorry.

Senator MCCAIN. No attacks on Bashir Assad's forces while Bashir Assad is barrel bombing the free Syrian army.

Ms. SLOTKIN. My understanding is our targets are ISIL and—

Senator MCCAIN. I'm not asking for your understanding. Is it or not? I mean, you're working in the Pentagon. Your title is International Security Affairs. I'm not asking for your understanding. I'm asking for the facts.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Our targets are ISIL and other extremist groups, including the Khorasan group.

Senator MCCAIN. But not the free Syrian army.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Bombing the free Syrian army, sir, no.

Senator MCCAIN. Does that strike you as a bit immoral that we would ask thousands of young Syrians to go to Saudi Arabia and other places and be trained and equipped and sent back into the fight and be barrel bombed by Bashir Assad, and we leave Bashir Assad alone? Does that strike you as a little bit immoral, Ms. Slotkin?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sir, I think what Bashir Assad is doing is immoral. I think he is the magnet for terrorism.

Senator MCCAIN. And is it not immoral when we don't try to stop him from barrel bombing innocent men, women and children?

Ms. SLOTKIN. We are attempting to apply a strategy to force him to a political transition, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. By leaving him alone and not hitting him with air strikes? That's bizarre.

In one of your statements, you cited your work in helping to end the war in Iraq as among the most rewarding of your career. "I helped negotiate the U.S.-Iraqi Status of Forces Agreement in 2008, which for the first time established a concrete timetable for withdrawal from Iraq which President Obama completed in 2011. To see that agreement signed and our troops depart were important emotional events in my life." Is that an accurate quote?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Correct.

Senator MCCAIN. How is that working out?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sir, I'm extremely disturbed about what ISIL was able to do in Iraq.

Senator MCCAIN. And so it sort of just happened, like a hurricane or an earthquake?

Ms. SLOTKIN. No, sir. No, sir, it did not just happen.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, did you support what most of us argued passionately for, and that was to leave a stabilizing force behind, which Ambassador Crocker and Secretary Gates and Secretary Panetta all said that we could have gotten? don't take my and Joe Lieberman and Lindsay Graham's word for it, their word for it, that we could have negotiated.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sir, the administration attempted to negotiate with the Iraqi Government, and at the time they thought they could handle the threats on their own and they did not invite us in.

Senator MCCAIN. You know, that's just patently false, Ms. Slotkin, because I was in Baghdad when we talked to Maliki, and they were ready. And we came back and asked your superiors what is the force that we want to leave behind? In the words of Chairman Dempsey, 3,500 was the number agreed on, which was our final offer. We would not tell them the size of the force and what their mission would be. Now, those are facts, because we were there on the ground. And so for you to sit there and say that we tried obviously contradicts three of the most respected people in America, Ambassador Crocker, Secretary Panetta, and Secretary Gates. So in all due respect to you, Ms. Slotkin, you either don't know the truth or you are not telling the truth to this committee, because we could have left a stabilizing force behind.

Now, if it's your opinion, then that's fine. But the facts are not that.

So, you are glad to see the agreement signed and our troops depart, and that was an emotional event in your life. How are your emotions now?

Ms. SLOTKIN. As I told you, sir, I'm extremely disturbed about what ISIL was able to do in that country.

Senator MCCAIN. So did you believe—did the surge work?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Yes.

Senator MCCAIN. The surge worked, and you supported it.

Ms. SLOTKIN. I supported it because I lived it. I went and worked at the National Security Council under the Bush Administration when we decided to surge.

Senator MCCAIN. Uh-huh. And did it succeed in achieving the goals as the President, General Petraeus, and Ambassador Crocker defined them at the time?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Yes. It was absolutely the catalyst that turned the tide in Iraq.

Senator MCCAIN. Are you ruling out the involvement of U.S. troops in combat roles, as General Dempsey said he thought U.S. troops may need to take on a combat role?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Do I support combat troops, sir? Is that—

Senator MCCAIN. Are you ruling out the involvement of U.S. troops in combat roles?

Ms. SLOTKIN. While I'm obviously not the ultimate decision-maker, sir, I think General Dempsey said that if he feels the need, he would recommend that. That is his right. And we'd have to look at the conditions in the future on the ground.

Senator MCCAIN. How are the conditions now, Ms. Slotkin?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I think that they're better than they were in the early summer, but I think we still have a long way to go.

Senator MCCAIN. They're better than they were?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Yes, when Mosul fell in June.

Senator MCCAIN. In Kobani and the fact that they've taken additional places and they continue to attract thousands of young men and a few young women from around the world to their banner, and they continue to slaughter innocent men, women and children, declaring that enslavement of women is in keeping with Sharia

law? I guess your view and my view are very different about how we're succeeding. The most powerful air force in the world has still been unable to allow the opposition to take Kobani back.

And you know why that is, Ms. Slotkin? It's because we don't have air controllers on the ground. We don't have people identifying targets. We don't have the kind of close air support that is necessary to win these conflicts. And when we give them a week's warning that we're going to attack them and then strike empty buildings, and with the small number of attacks that are carried out, we're not winning, Ms. Slotkin, because we're not succeeding in rolling back the enormous gains that they have made.

I have lots of additional questions for this witness, Mr. Chairman. I do not believe she is qualified. I believe that she can't articulate a strategy for the defeat of ISIS, and I will have many additional questions.

I see my time has expired.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

We're in the middle of a second round. We're having kind of the end of the first round and the second round going on simultaneously.

Senator Manchin to complete his first round, and then I believe it's Senator Ayotte.

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

To Mr. Berteau, if I may ask, I understand the Defense Logistics Agency is responsible for the oversight of more than 5.2 million items at a price tag of \$35 billion in annual spending for acquisitions.

Given these rather astounding impressive numbers, how well prepared is the DLA to complete a full audit? We've been trying to get an audit at the Department of Defense. How well prepared are you all to do that?

Mr. BERTEAU. Sir, I have not looked at the finances internally of DLA. I'm aware of the reports that they provide publicly and to the Congress, but I can't gauge from that how close they are to audit readiness. I think that would be a primary interest that I would take on immediately if confirmed.

Senator MANCHIN. Do you accept the audit proposal? I mean, we've been asking for an audit of the Department of Defense, agency by agency within the Defense Department.

Mr. BERTEAU. That's absolutely critical. I'm impressed with the progress that appears to have been made there. This is an issue that's been on the docket for 30 years, and elements of DOD are now, for the first time, passing audits, and I think that's an enormous step in the right direction. How close DLA is itself to being ready to do that I can't gauge, but I will certainly take that on.

Senator MANCHIN. I'll ask the question of all of you. I'm going to go to Admiral Harris. But first of all, in your role of the tremendous job that you have and that you're doing, do you believe that we can do more with less, or do you believe that sequestering is basically without the flexibility? If we gave you the flexibility to sequester, and let's say politically we can't get through the sequester and get over that hump but we were able to give you more latitude as far as flexibility, would that help relieve some of the problems

you're incurring, or is just the lack of money, period, causing most of your problems?

Admiral HARRIS. Senator, I think any increase in flexibility would be helpful. But at the end of the day, the amount we're talking about can't be overcome by just shifting money around.

Senator MANCHIN. Got you.

Admiral HARRIS. And I believe that we should go to a knife fight with a gun and not with a butter knife. I think the long-term sequester will have that effect on us.

Senator MANCHIN. But you also described basically China's strategy in maritime East Asia and how well we're doing to support our allies over there?

Admiral HARRIS. Yes, sir. I believe that China has embarked on a maritime sovereignty campaign in East Asia, and I believe that we best support our allies and partners and friends out there by being there. Forward presence matters, and I believe that—

Senator MANCHIN. What's the period of time, do you think? I'm so sorry, Admiral, because they gave us such little time here. What's the period of time you think it will take for China to get up to a very threatening force, if you will?

Admiral HARRIS. Well, I think for some regimes, they're already at a threatening level. I believe by 2020, some estimates will have them having a navy of 350 ships. The U.S. China Commission Report that Senator Hirono talked about, the 2014 report says that China will soon be able to threaten our national security advantages in space, our national security satellite program. I view that with significant concern.

Senator MANCHIN. This is to Ms. Slotkin again, if you will. The Iraqi army is reportedly paying salaries to 50,000 soldiers who exist only on paper. I think you've touched on this, but if you could do it again, it just boggles my mind. American taxpayers spent \$20 billion training the Iraqi army. We saw them fold quicker than a cheap suit and run.

What actions are you all taking to make sure that this doesn't—with the amount of money that you're trying to re-surge, if you will, to get them up to speed, what are you taking, what steps are you taking so this will be prevented, and what have you done on these ghost payments and all these millions and millions of dollars? And who is receiving that money?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sir, the good news was it was Prime Minister Abadi, in front of his parliament, who made that speech about fighting corruption, and he was the one who cited the number of 50,000 ghost soldiers on his account. The Iraqis are very cash poor right now, so he is extremely interested in reaping that money—

Senator MANCHIN. Who received the money? Since there were no soldiers receiving the pay, who took the graft?

Ms. SLOTKIN. What I understand is that corrupt military leaders, many of whom have been removed from their posts—

Senator MANCHIN. Under Maliki?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Under Maliki.

Senator MANCHIN. So Maliki himself directly?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I don't know about him himself, but certainly commanders who had those ghost soldiers on their books were simply taking their salaries is what I understand.

Senator MANCHIN. And do you know if there is any action being taken against them?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Well, besides the Prime Minister removed 36 of those commanders and another 20-plus today from the Ministry of the Interior, and—

Senator MANCHIN. Do you know if there are any actions the United States Government is taking to get that money back to the United States Treasury?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I do not know of any action.

Senator MANCHIN. Could you check that out for me and let me know on that?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sure.

Senator MANCHIN. And also, what are we doing to ensure this doesn't—I mean, I can't believe that we're sending checks, giving them money designated for soldiers that don't even exist. Who is checking that?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Right now, sir, we are not providing any money for salaries, for uniforms, for life support for the Iraqi soldiers. The Iraqi government is providing that. What we're proposing in our Iraq train and equip fund is to provide them some capability training to help them stand up or restand 12 brigades up in the country. We're not suggesting that we pay for salaries, for life support, for uniforms, as we did previously.

Senator MANCHIN. Real quick, if I may, sir, one final thing.

On the Kurds, where do we stand with the Kurds? Are we getting any equipment to the Kurds to defend themselves? Because they're the only ones who seem willing to fight and die for their country.

Ms. SLOTKIN. The Kurds had a delegation here last week. You may have seen them. I think this is actually a good news story. The Government of Iraq responded in extremis when the Kurds came to them and to us and to everyone in the world asking for a surge of weapons that they desperately needed. The Government of Iraq was the first to respond. They flew two C-130s of their own up there full of equipment; and then, frankly, a huge coalition of international partners has come to the aid of the Kurds to provide them those weapons because they are very much on the front lines. They just had a second tranche of equipment that they requested get approved by the Government of Iraq, and it includes things like MRAPs and Humvees and anti-tank weapons, more serious weaponry.

So they are very much on the front lines, but I believe we're getting them equipment that they need.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Manchin.

Senator Ayotte?

Senator AYOTTE. I want to thank the Chairman.

I'm going to give the beginning of my time to Senator McCain.

Senator MCCAIN. Ms. Slotkin, do you believe that we should be providing the Ukrainians with defensive weapons?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sir, that is something that's under consideration right now.

Senator AYOTTE. I want to thank the witnesses for being here and your willingness to serve.

Admiral Harris, I would like to follow up with you. How much in terms of our—I know you've talked about the importance of our attack submarine fleet. What currently is our attack submarine fleet meeting the requests of our combatant commanders, and also the requests of what we need in PACOM?

Admiral HARRIS. Senator, right now the combatant commander demand for attack submarines, we're only meeting as a Navy about half that demand, about 53 percent in the Pacific. Right now, while I can't go into the specifics of what the demand signal is in this hearing, the Pacific Command commander's demand signal is being met by me as the Pacific Fleet commander at just over 50 percent.

Senator AYOTTE. So obviously you've already talked about the importance of the Virginia Class submarine and continuing to ensure that we have production of that submarine at an adequate rate to try to meet our concerns in terms of the requests of the combatant commanders.

You and I have talked when we met in the office about the importance of our public shipyards, and one of the things that is very important is how we maintain our submarine fleet. I know that you have agreed, and I'm very glad and looking forward to hosting you at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. We're very proud of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and the work done by the very talented and trained workers there.

In fact, one thing I wanted to highlight is that the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard has actually been producing and putting things out ahead of schedule, including in April the workers at the Shipyard undocked the USS *Topeka* 20 days ahead of schedule following an engineering overhaul. In June, they did the same thing in terms of maintenance availability for the USS *California* and got it back in the fleet 14 days ahead of time, as well as in September the Shipyard did the same, delivering the USS *Springfield* back to the fleet ahead of schedule and under budget.

So these are the kinds of examples of how do we, in a resource constrained environment, perform to a top level. So I look forward to you seeing what we're doing at the Shipyard, what the workers are doing there to be able to perform ahead of schedule on such an important function of maintaining our attack submarine fleet, and I look forward to hosting you and working out a time to do that.

Admiral HARRIS. Yes, ma'am. I look forward to visiting Portsmouth. And if confirmed, I'll do so as soon after I assume the command as possible. I think our public shipyards are national treasures. I think that schedule is money, and if you can make schedule or beat schedule, then you're making money, and I think that's important. So I look forward to visiting Portsmouth.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, Admiral. I appreciate your willingness to do that.

Ms. Slotkin, I wanted to follow up on the question. One of the questions I wanted to ask you was, as I understood it, Senator Inhofe asked you about what is happening in Ukraine. You answered his question saying you don't know what the actual definition of an invasion is.

So do you believe what the Russians have done in Ukraine is an invasion of that country, yes or no?

Ms. SLOTKIN. ma'am, we consider it an unlawful occupation of Crimea in particular and continuing destabilizing activities in Eastern Ukraine.

Senator AYOTTE. So do you believe that's an invasion?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Again, I don't believe that—I don't want to misspeak, but I can tell you we believe it's an unlawful occupation.

Senator AYOTTE. So General Breedlove in November, who is the commander of the U.S. European Command, has said "We have seen columns of Russian equipment, primarily Russian tanks, Russian artillery, Russian air defense systems, and Russian combat troops entering Ukraine."

So if, in the United States of America, we saw columns of equipment from another country, tanks, artillery, air defense systems and combat troops against the will of our government entering this country, would you be prepared to call that an invasion?

Ms. SLOTKIN. ma'am, again, I think—I mean, it sounds like an invasion, yes, the way you described it.

Senator AYOTTE. Okay. So let's just call it what it is, because you're being nominated for a very important position, and if we can't have basic conversation about what is an invasion of another country and what is not, then it's going to be very difficult to address the challenges we face in the national security context.

So now that we understand that it is an invasion of another country, on this issue of lethal aid to Ukraine, what will you or will you not recommend that we should be providing lethal aid to Ukraine?

Ms. SLOTKIN. ma'am, I believe, particularly in light of the events this fall with the Russian flagrant violation of the Minsk agreement that they had just signed up to, that all options should be on the table.

Senator AYOTTE. So one thing that my office has been trying to get an answer from is that we have asked the Office of the Secretary of Defense to answer a very simple question, and that is, is the Defense Security Cooperation Agency developing a contingency plan to provide arms to Ukraine?

Ms. SLOTKIN. ma'am, again, we've made a series of options available, including additional arms.

Senator AYOTTE. So does that mean that the answer is that the Defense Security Cooperation Agency is developing a contingency plan to provide arms to Ukraine? So the answer to that would be yes?

Ms. SLOTKIN. As I've said, we've provided quite a number of options, including sending additional arms.

Senator AYOTTE. So I want to make sure that I can get a specific follow-up to what I've just asked because that will be key to a contingency plan on the provision of arms.

One thing, having listened to President Poroshenko come before the joint session of Congress, and essentially he's very appreciative of the assistance of the United States of America, but he rightly said that they cannot defend against columns of tanks, troops, air defense systems coming from Russia with blankets alone, and I would hope that we have a country with Ukraine that actually, under the Budapest Memorandum, gave up their nuclear weapons. We were a signatory to that agreement. Russia has actually repudi-

ated that agreement by its actions in terms of not respecting the sovereignty of that country.

I would hope that we would provide lethal assistance to Ukraine because I'm just not sure why any other country would ever give up their nuclear weapons again when we won't give them basic arms. don't you think that is an important consideration for us in the bigger picture?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I think it's a consideration, ma'am, of course. But I do think, again, no matter what we give the Ukrainians, no one piece of equipment is going to make them military competitors to the Russians. There is certainly a military dimension to this problem, but there's not a military solution to the problem.

Senator AYOTTE. The president of Ukraine came to our Congress and asked for lethal assistance. He believes it's important. They're willing to fight and die for their own sovereignty. They gave up nuclear weapons, and in return for respect for their sovereignty we were signatory to that agreement, the Russians were a signatory to that agreement. When other countries like Lithuania and the Baltics say they are worried about what Russia's next steps are, I think that to think about the fact that they could be out-matched, so we're just going to let Russia run all over that country when they're willing to defend themselves, I think it's unconscionable that we have not provided this assistance to them, and I would hope—you are going to have a very important position—that you will provide a leadership position in saying that we really should be doing all that we can to allow them to defend themselves. If we don't, I think the consequences are quite grave, not only for Ukraine but the surrounding countries in the region.

I know I'm beyond my time, so I thank the Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Ayotte.

Senator Blumenthal?

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for being here, and congratulations to you, and thank you for your service.

I want to kind of follow some of the questions about Ukraine that have been asked and at the outset say that I share the impatience and concern that has been articulated so well by my colleague and friend from New Hampshire and others on this panel. I think our situation there is increasingly untenable, whatever it's called—engagement, unlawful occupation. The fact of the matter is, as the New York Times reported just recently, Russian “tanks and other military vehicles are pouring over the border from Russia into Eastern Ukraine.” Put aside what's happened in Crimea, Russian aggression has been flagrant, blatant, ongoing, effective in Eastern Ukraine, in real time. It's not history. It's ongoing right now.

So I believe that the time has come to provide defensive weapons, to listen to the Ukrainians, most recently the president of Ukraine, President Poroshenko, when he came to us in this Congress and asked for those kinds of weapons so that the Ukrainians could defend themselves.

It's not that they are seeking to add land. They are defending themselves, and I've come to that point of view after a great deal of thought. I respect the expertise and experience, Ms. Slotkin, that you and others in the Department of Defense and the Department

of State have in this area, and I'm not going to put you through the same round of questions.

But I would ask, when will this decision be made about whether to provide these weapons? Because time is not on our side. The Russians are continuing to arm the rebels and separatists there, and people are dying. Two of the victims of Russian aggression are in the Bridgeport, Connecticut Burn Center right now, having lost limbs to this struggle. It affects the Ukrainian community in Connecticut and around the country. It's not just a Ukrainian struggle. Ukraine is the testing ground for the United States against this kind of blatant, ongoing aggression.

So what is the timeframe?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Senator, those conversations are happening in real time. They're happening now. The ultimate decision is the President's, and I'm just not privy to the final timeline.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. When do you think we should be making a decision?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sir, I would always want decisions as fast as possible.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. What do you see as the immediate development there in terms of holding ground, holding land there, by the Ukrainian Government?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I'm sorry, Senator, could you repeat that?

Senator BLUMENTHAL. What do you see as the developing line of events in the future? How soon do you think there will be continuing losses, or do you think there will be a continuing stalemate? What's your prediction as to what will happen in the next very short timeframe?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Unfortunately, we continue to see Russia's destabilizing activities, their flagrant violation of the Minsk agreement. So I, unfortunately, fear that will continue. I don't see that ebbing right now.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. That there will be continuing Russian aggression. But will there be loss of cities, of land? What's your prognosis?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I hope not, Senator, and I believe the Ukrainian military is fortifying itself, and we continue to provide advice and counsel to them, along with additional equipment.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. And if the President were to decide to increase the level of equipment, what would you recommend to him?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sir, as I've said, we've provided a range of options. I'm not at liberty to provide my private advice that I've provided up my chain.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Let me shift topics, although the subject is still Russia. As you're aware, Rosoboronexport has been providing helicopters and 17's to the Afghan government with American taxpayer dollars buying them. I have been at the lead of the effort to stop those transactions, and the NDAA has a provision relating to those continuing purchases now of components and parts to maintain and supply the helicopters that have already been delivered.

I regret that we are in the situation that we have found ourselves. I have opposed those continued deliveries of helicopters, as well as the continued sales of parts. They ought to be American

helicopters, and the purchases certainly should not be from the Russian arms agency that continues to fuel aggression in Ukraine.

So I'm asking for your commitment on your confirmation. Will you commit to finding alternative means of maintaining and supplying parts for the existing inventories of M-17 helicopters that we have financed, in effect?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I will certainly commit to looking into alternatives, sir. I share your frustration.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you.

And that concludes my questions, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.

For a second round, Senator Ayotte?

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Scher, I wanted to follow up with you. In your written response to the committee's questions, you were asked about nuclear weapons reductions, and you said, "Yes, I believe we should pursue further negotiated verifiable reductions in the nuclear forces of the United States and Russia, and that would enhance U.S. national security."

You also cited the Nuclear Weapons Guidance announced in June 2013, and that would have included the President's assertion that we can ensure the security of the United States and our allies by safely pursuing up to a one-third reduction in our deployed strategic nuclear weapons from the levels established by the new START Treaty.

So I want to ask you about that because, as I look at your answer in the Advance Policy Questions, and citing the President's desire to reduce our nuclear deterrent another third, our strategic weapons, I would ask you how does that play when you look at the Russian violation of the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the INF Treaty, which the White House, in my view, belatedly acknowledged? Because I've been pursuing this issue for a while behind the scenes, but obviously that's a deep concern where they are flight testing ground-launched Cruise missiles within a range of 500 to 5,500 kilometers, so a violation of the INF Treaty. We have the invasion of Ukraine by the Russians.

So tell me what you think about the potential reduction of our nuclear strategic stockpile and resources in light of the potential INF violations, in light of the invasion of Ukraine. That worries me in terms of your view of the role of our nuclear deterrent.

Mr. SCHER. Senator, I believe that—I agree with the President's statements when they were made that we could reduce by up to a third if we did it in conjunction with the Russians in a negotiated process, that we would still be able to achieve our operational aims, as well as be safer with fewer nuclear weapons across the world.

Certainly, however, as you have pointed out, we have to take a look at any discussions with Russia in the context of all of the activities that are going on, be it Ukraine, be it the violations of the INF Treaty. At this point, we've seen no indications that Russia has any interest in discussing any of these topics with us, especially not nuclear arms reductions, and as a result I would agree with the President that absent that cooperation with Russia, that we stay with the new START agreements, which we still see Russia adhering to.

Senator AYOTTE. Well, let me ask you this. Do you think that we should ever undertake a unilateral reduction without a negotiated agreement with Russia?

Mr. SCHER. I think that we are in a position now where I would obviously agree with the President that we could, but that the key is a negotiated reduction.

Senator AYOTTE. So do you believe that it would be important that if we were to achieve any reductions, it would be a negotiated reduction?

Mr. SCHER. I believe that that is a critical part to looking at how we could achieve our operational ends.

Senator AYOTTE. And I would hope that if there were ever a move in that direction again, that you would also seek congressional approval. I might add, too, that obviously I don't think we could trust negotiating with the Russians right now, so I would hope that the administration would never at this point, in light of their behavior, think about going down that road.

I also wanted to follow up one additional question to Admiral Harris, and that is on the MIA recovery operations in North Korea, Admiral. As you know, in October 2011, the Department of Defense announced an agreement with North Korea that would have allowed U.S. personnel to return to North Korea to resume recovery of remains of U.S. servicemembers missing in the Korean War. In your Advance Responses, you said that the arrangement negotiated in 2011 covered for a year is no longer valid, and I understand that given what we have seen from the Government of North Korea, and certainly that's really unfortunate when we look at the efforts we want to make on behalf of those who are missing in action and their families.

We have 43 from New Hampshire that have been listed in terms of Korea, and we have a solemn obligation to ensure that we never leave our service members behind and make every effort to recover their remains, and we owe them that.

Do I have your commitment that you'll do everything possible, obviously consistent with our national security interests, to facilitate recovery operations in North Korea if it ever becomes viable again for us to do that with that government?

Admiral HARRIS. Yes, ma'am, you do.

Senator AYOTTE. Okay. Thank you, Admiral.

Chairman LEVIN. Let me continue, then, my second round.

Ms. Slotkin, the ethnic and religious minority communities in Northern Iraq, including the Christians, have suffered horrific attacks by ISIL. They have had to flee violence in mass numbers. Several years ago the Government of Iraq issued an order to begin establishing the Nineveh Plain Police Force, a security force recruited from those vulnerable communities to provide local protection. U.S. forces in Iraq at the time supported the effort, but the Nineveh Force never attained its goal of 5,000 police personnel.

Does the military assistance plan for Iraq include training and equipping local security forces in vulnerable ethnic and religious minority communities such as the Yazidis and the Christian communities in Nineveh to empower those communities to defend themselves from ISIL?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Senator, we certainly welcome and support representatives of all the groups, particularly the most vulnerable, in our training program. It has not yet begun, but there's no reason why representatives from the entire spectrum shouldn't be in it.

Chairman LEVIN. Is that part of the local police force plan, like the National Guard which we talk about, so that we have local people defending their own communities? Is it part of our plan specifically that the religious communities be focused on so that they can have the power to defend themselves?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Yes. One of the key items of discussion with the Iraqis is the National Guard Program, which would indeed allow communities to provide for their own local security. It's an important initiative and would do exactly what you're talking about, allow forces to maintain responsibility for their own safety of their families and their communities.

Chairman LEVIN. And that includes an awareness that these very vulnerable communities have a need to do exactly that?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sir, I—

Chairman LEVIN. Are they included in our plan specifically?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sir, again, there is no group that is excluded or included right now. It is a—

Chairman LEVIN. Which means they're included?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Absolutely.

Chairman LEVIN. The question that you were asked about Ukraine—and, by the way, I very publicly urged that we provide the Government of Ukraine with non-provocative lethal weapons that are defensive weapons. When you answered the question that you don't have an answer on defensive weapons, I assume your answer referred to lethal defensive weapons.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Yes.

Chairman LEVIN. On non-lethal defensive weapons, I presume you—

Ms. SLOTKIN. We're already providing, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. And that you would support.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Of course.

Chairman LEVIN. As long as I make clear my position, as I have repeatedly, I happen to believe it's long overdue, that non-provocative defensive weapons, even if they are lethal, should be provided. I also believe that there is no military solution but that if the Ukrainians want to die going down fighting, that they have that right to defend themselves, and we should give them what they're asking for, providing it's not provocative. If it's defensive weapons, that's different. But there's no intent or no evidence that Ukraine is going to invade Russia.

So the question really comes down to—and I add the word purposefully “non-provocative defensive weapons.” I don't know why we can't provide anti-tank weaponry to the Ukrainian government. I don't understand why we can't do it. We understand that if Russia decided to move into the Ukraine in massive numbers, that there would be no stopping them. Ukrainians understand that, by the way, because we made it clear to the Ukrainians that this isn't going to be Hungary all over again, where we're implying to you that we're going to come militarily to your assistance with boots on the ground. They understand that. But they also don't understand

why we don't help them do what they are determined to do, which is defend themselves, even if that means they end up in a guerilla war against Russia instead of being able to defeat them on a battlefield.

So I know you're in a position here, and I gather from your answers that you're in the middle of your present job of providing advice to the Administration, so that kind of puts some constraints on you, I gather, as to what your advice is. When you're asked what your advice would be, that is, in essence, asking for what your advice currently is in the areas of Ukraine and Iraq and Syria. Is that one of the reasons why there's some constraint in terms of your expressing your opinion as to what your advice would be, because you're currently giving that advice and you're not able publicly to say what your advice is to the administration?

Ms. SLOTKIN. That's correct, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. I think it would have been useful probably for you to indicate what those constraints are. I mean, you don't have to—that there are constraints. We don't have to have the exact definition of the constraints, but the fact that there are constraints, it seems to me, should—if it's not clear to everybody here, which it isn't, I think that it would have been helpful if you had made clear that there are those constraints. And there are such constraints?

Ms. SLOTKIN. There are, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Now, in terms of one of the questions of Senator McCain, this has to do with how much effort was made to leave some residual forces in Iraq. The decision was made by President Bush to set a date for the deadline for the removal of all of our forces. So the issue battled back and forth is whether or not the Obama Administration made an adequate effort to try to persuade Maliki that we should be able to—it's in everybody's interest, theirs and ours, that we leave some kind of a force there.

And this is what Secretary Gates said in his book. "In the end, the Iraqi leadership did not try to get an agreement through their parliament that would have made possible a continued U.S. military presence after December 31." And these are Gates' words: "Maliki was just too fearful of the political consequences. Most Iraqis wanted us gone." So from Gates' book, that's what I get. I have not heard him speak otherwise on this subject, or if I have I've forgotten what he said, but I read his book on this subject, and his book says that Maliki would not present an agreement to the parliament. And that agreement, of course, would be a bilateral security agreement which would protect our troops in case of a claim that there was a criminal violation by one of our troops. We weren't about to leave it up to an Iraqi system of justice to try our troops. So we insisted on a bilateral security agreement which would protect our troops, which we have with every other country where we have troops, at least most other countries where we have troops.

So that, just for the record, is what Gates said in his book, somewhat different from what Senator McCain said is Gates' position. But again, Senator McCain may have information I don't have about something that Secretary Gates may have said in some places other than in his book on this subject.

When you say that relative to Ukraine there's a series of options which have been made available, to whom?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sir, as you know, the Defense Department, the State Department, we all sit in an interagency process. The Defense Department provides recommendations up through the Secretary of Defense and then over to the White House and the rest of the interagency for consideration. So that's what I'm referring to.

Chairman LEVIN. It goes up the chain, ultimately to the President?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Ultimately the decisions that are made in the interagency must go up through the President when it's on an important decision. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. And you indicated that something was better in Iraq, I believe, than it was last summer. Were you referring to Iraq or to Syria or what?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I was saying the security situation in Iraq today is at least better than when Mosul originally fell in June in Iraq.

Chairman LEVIN. Okay. And can you explain what you meant by better? I know you don't believe it's good because—

Ms. SLOTKIN. Yes, I wouldn't define it as good.

Chairman LEVIN. But you indicated it was better. I'm just wondering if you would explain your position on that.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sure. I think since the summer, and certainly since we decided to take kinetic action in Iraq and provide air support, we've seen Iraqis, the Iraqi security forces and Kurdish Peshmerga forces and Iraqi tribal forces take back critical areas in Iraq that ISIL had captured in the early parts of their offensive in June, in particular key infrastructure locations, the Mosul dam, the Haditha dam, the Baiji refinery, major towns along the border with the Kurdistan regional government.

So I would by no means call it good, sir, but we have been able to support the Iraqis as they retake critical areas that were taken in the early parts of the summer.

Chairman LEVIN. We're going to leave the—I don't see any of my colleagues here for the second round. It's about, I guess, quarter to 1:00 now. So what we will do is we will adjourn this hearing, and there will be questions for the record. Whether or not there's a need for an additional hearing for one or more of our witnesses, we will leave that question open.

We obviously hope to move these nominations. It is a lame duck session. The timing is very, very difficult, not just for nominations but for the Defense bill that is the main responsibility of this committee. Our major responsibility is to get our Defense authorization passed. Our second responsibility, obviously, is to deal with nominees as part of the confirmation process.

So we're going to do the best we can on both fronts, hopefully get a Defense authorization bill, a new bill that would be a bipartisan bill, a bicameral bill introduced today which would reflect the efforts of our committees, the leadership of our committees, the staff on our committees for many, many months, indeed for a whole year. I hope we can get that bill passed.

It will be introduced in a few hours, and I also again hope that we can get as many nominees as we can confirmed, but I don't want to raise false hopes on either account. Lame duck sessions are

named in a weird way, but they also maybe involve much more than the usual understanding of lame duck, which means less power. It also means a lot less time to get an awful lot of work done that in some cases should have been done long ago.

With that, we thank our witnesses. We thank your families.

Again, the record will stay open, and we stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:50 p.m., the committee adjourned.]