HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON

UNITED STATES POLICY IN IRAQ AND SYRIA

Thursday, May 21, 2015

U.S. Senate
Committee on Armed Services
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:32 a.m. in Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John McCain, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Committee Members Present: Senators McCain [presiding], Inhofe, Ayotte, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Sullivan, Graham, Cruz, Reed, Nelson, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Donnelly, Kaine, and King.
OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN MCCAIN, U.S. SENATOR 
FROM ARIZONA

Chairman McCain: Now that Senator Ernst is here, we can begin.

[Laughter.]

Chairman McCain: The committee meets today to receive testimony on U.S. policy in Iraq and Syria.

And I want to thank each of our expert witnesses for appearing before us today on this critical and complex topic.

Before I go any further, the Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs were invited to appear.

Admittedly, very short notice. And we will be asking them to appear after the recess is over, depending on whether the bill is on the floor, or not. But, we certainly would like to hear from the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

Today, we have General Jack Keane, former Vice Chief of Staff for the Army and chairman of the Institute for the Study of War.

And, General Keane, we're pleased you could take time from your duties on FOX News to being with us today.

Dr. Fred Kagan, who is -- that's a joke -- Dr. Fred Kagan, director --

[Laughter.]
Chairman McCain: Dr. Fred Kagan, the Director of the Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute; Colonel Derek Harvey, U.S. Army (Retired), Director of the Global Initiative for Civil Society and Conflict at the University of South Florida; and Brian Katulis, who is a Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress.

Could I point out, for the benefit of my colleagues, that General Keane and Dr. Kagan were key elements and individuals who went over to the White House in 2006 to talk to then-President George W. Bush concerning the need for a surge, that -- the strategy in Iraq was failing at that time, and they were two of the major architects -- and I know they'll give credit to many others, but two of the major architects of the surge, which turned out to be, at great sacrifice of American blood and treasure, a success.

The black flags of ISIL are now flying over yet another major Iraqi city, Ramadi, the capital of Iraq's Anbar Province, and reports overnight suggest that ISIL now controls the Syrian city of Palmyra, as well. This hearing does not -- is not about the fall of any one city, as important as those losses are, but, rather, what these defeats have revealed about the limitations of an overly constrained American air campaign, the weaknesses of Iraqi forces, the growing malign role of Iran, and the
ineffectiveness and inadequacy of U.S. military support of
-- for our Iraqi and Syrian partners. But, most concerning,
it highlights the shortcomings of the administration's
indecisive policy, inadequate commitment, and incoherent
strategy. This misguided approach has failed to stop, if
not fostered, the expansion of ISIL to a dozen countries.
The loss of Ramadi, once the symbol of Iraqis working
together with brave young Americans in uniform to defeat al-
Qaeda, must be recognized as a significant defeat. ISIL's
victory gives it the appearance of strength and boosts its
ability to recruit more fighters while reinforcing Iran's
narrative that only it and its proxies can rescue Iraq.

The fall of Ramadi and capture by ISIL of American-
supplied military equipment is another setback for the
United States and further undermines our credibility as a
reliable strategic partner in the region.

And yet, the Obama administration seems unwilling or
unable to grasp the strategic significance. As ISIL
terrorists ransacked Ramadi -- by the way, the Pentagon's
news page ran a story with the headline, quote, "Strategy to
Defeat ISIL is Working." Secretary of State John Kerry said
Ramadi was a mere, quote, "target of opportunity." And 2
days ago, when a review should have been well underway to
correct an incoherent strategy that is woefully under-
resourced, the White House Press Secretary, Josh Ernst,
said, "Are we going to light our hair on fire every time there's a setback?" I would point out for my colleagues that maybe his hair isn't on fire, but there are bodies on fire in the streets of Ramadi as we speak.

The disaster of Ramadi should lead to a complete overhaul of U.S. Strategy. The President has stated, quote, "Our goal is degrading and ultimately destroying ISIL," but neither strategy nor resources support this goal. Our efforts in Iraq may actually be aggravating the conditions that gave rise to ISIL in the first place by relying on brutal Iranian-backed Shi'a militias and insufficiently empowering Sunni Iraqis. At best, this increases Iran's malign influence. At worst, it reinforces ISIL's rhetoric that it is the only force standing against violent sectarian Iranian-backed militias.

President Obama has cleverly maneuvered us into the position that Sunni Iraqis that we -- think we support Iran, and Shi'a Iraqis think we support ISIL. But, the situation is far worse in Syria. The Iran-backed Assad regime, together with Iranian proxies like Hezbollah, continues the slaughter that has killed more than 200,000 Syrians and displaced 10 million more. Despite this tragedy, the administration has defined its policy in Syria more by what it will not do rather than the -- by the end state we aim to achieve. Although the U.S. military's train-and-equip
program for moderate Syrian forces is now finally providing assistance to vetted fighters, the administration still has not decided whether it will defend Syrian opposition against Assad's barrel bombs upon their return to Syria. Refusing to support the forces we train is not only ineffective, it is immoral.

While it is still unclear what President Obama is willing to do in Syria, it is clear our partners do not draw confidence from statements of what we will not do. Ramadi's fall should lead our Nation's leaders to reconsider its indecisive policy and incoherent strategy that has enabled ISIL's expansion, undermined regional stability, strengthened Iran, and harmed America's credibility. What we desperately need is a comprehensive strategy, the decisive application of an increased, but still limited, amount of U.S. military power, and a concerted effort by the Iraqi government to recruit, train, and equip Sunni forces. This will require disciplined thinking, clear priorities, a strategy supported by adequate resources, and, most of all, the leadership and resolve of the President to succeed.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today on these important questions.

Senator Reed.
STATEMENT OF HON. JACK REED, U.S. SENATOR FROM RHODE ISLAND

Senator Reed: Well, first, let me thank the Chairman for calling this timely and very, very important hearing, and also thank Senator Nelson for acting as the Ranking Member today. I have two Appropriations Committee -- one Appropriations Committee and one Bank Committee markup, and I apologize, I cannot be here.

And, with that, with your permission, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to yield to Senator Nelson.

Chairman McCain: Senator Nelson.
STATEMENT OF HON. BILL NELSON, U.S. SENATOR FROM FLORIDA

Senator Nelson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And what I'm going to do is just put my statement in the record so we can get on to it.

But, what you underscore is certainly accurate. The fall of Ramadi -- what is the Abadi government going to do? Do they have the capability of getting Sunnis to come in and take up the fight against ISIS? And so, we need, as you all testified to us -- How far are we along in implementing the counter-ISIS campaign in Iraq? And what has the Abadi government done to empower the Sunni tribes to resist ISIS? And what does Ramadi mean about retaking Mosul? And will these events force Iraq's political leadership to overcome their differences in their attempts at government?

So, with those questions, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Senator Nelson follows:]
Chairman McCain: Thank you, Senator Nelson.

And, you know, Palmyra is one of the historic places on Earth, and, as it's being threatened now, we know what ISIS does to these antiquities. We're about to perhaps, unfortunately, see another destruction of an obviously irreplaceable historic heritage sites that -- it would be another great tragedy along the lines of the destruction of the Buddhist statues at Bamiyan, years ago.

Welcome the witnesses.

And, General Keane, we'll begin with you. Thank you, sir.
STATEMENT OF GENERAL JOHN M. KEANE, USA (RET.), FORMER VICE CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMY

General Keane: Thank you, Chairman McCain and Ranking Member Reed and Senator Nelson, distinguished members of the committee. Appreciate you inviting me back to testify.

I was here a few months ago dealing with global security challenges facing the United States. And I must say, I was pretty impressed with the bipartisan support for the challenges our country is facing and the way you're willing to work together to come to grips with it.

I'm honored to be here with my distinguished colleagues. Obviously, I know Fred Kagan and Derek Harvey very well. They're long and close associates. As much as Fred and I may have had some impact on the previous administration in changing their strategy -- and there were others who were working towards that end, as well -- Derek Harvey, sitting here, was the catalyst for understanding the enemy. He was pushing against the intelligence group think that existed at the time. And he defined that enemy better than anybody did in this town. And that was the beginning of understanding what was happening to us, why it was happening, and what Fred and I thought we could realistically do about it. So, I'm honored to be here with all of them.

I've got some maps up there that you may want to use to
get a reference. It's always good to see where things are happening, to understand the scale and magnitude.

You know, approximately 9 months ago, the President announced the United States public policy --

Chairman McCain: General, could you give me a second?
I don't think we have --

General Keane: We've got to get the Chairman maps.
Okay.

Approximately 9 months ago, the President announced the United States public policy that, along with our coalition partners, the United States would degrade and ultimately destroy ISIS. Weeks later, he changed "destroy ISIS" to "defeat," a more appropriate term.

A strategy was crafted to accomplish this objective, which consisted among some things as humanitarian assistance, undermining the ISIS ideology, countering the finances, providing military assistance to our Iraqi partners, to include airstrikes into Syria, and assisting the Iraqi government politically to move toward a more representative government, which actually, obviously, led to a change in governments. I cannot address undermining the ideology and the finances in this testimony. It's beyond my expertise.

While there has been some progress and some success, looking at this strategy today, we know now that the
conceptual plan is fundamentally flawed. The resources provided to support Iraq are far from adequate. The timing and urgency to provide arms, equipment, and training is insufficient. And, as such, we are not only failing, we are, in fact, losing this war. Moreover, I can say with certainty that this strategy will not defeat ISIS.

As to the concept, ISIS, who is headquartered in Syria, recruits, trains, and resupplies in Syria, controls large swaths of territory in Syria -- and you can look at your map there to take a look at that -- to include the entire Euphrates River Valley in Syria from Iraq to the Turkish border. It connects now to the Euphrates River Valley in Anbar Province, which leads to the suburbs of Baghdad. And it's currently expanding to the west as far as Damascus. And they just seized, as the Chairman mentioned, Palmyra City and Palmyra Air Base in Central City -- in central Syria, aligning the central east-west corridor from Iraq all the way to homes in the west in Syria.

And yet -- and yet -- we have no strategy to defeat ISIS in Syria. We have no ground force, which is the defeat mechanism. Yes, we have airpower. And, despite the success at Khobani -- and yes, we have degraded ISIS command and control in Syria, their logistics, and we have killed many ISIS fighters -- but, airpower would not defeat ISIS. It has not been able to deny ISIS freedom of maneuver and the
ability to attack at will. Syria is ISIS's sanctuary. We cannot succeed in Iraq if ISIS is allowed to maintain that sanctuary in Syria. We need a strategy now to defeat ISIS in Syria.

As you can see on the map that deals with the global rings -- take a look at that -- many ISIS -- on that ISIS map -- ISIS is expanding beyond Iraq and Syria into Sinai, Yemen, Libya, and Afghanistan. This is where they actually have people on the ground, and they have actually provided resources, and they have -- actually have a contract written and signed with the people on the ground who are affiliated with them. And they're also inspiring and motivating radical sympathizers throughout the world, which are depicted in that map on yellow, as we are painfully aware of in Europe and in the United States and Australia. Yet, there is no strategy with our allies to counter that expansion. I would go further to say there is no strategy to counter the destabilization of the Middle East.

As to Iraq, it certainly makes sense to assist Iraq in reclaiming lost territory and avoid deploying U.S. ground combat units. However, ISIS, despite some setbacks, is on the offense, with the ability to attack at will anywhere, anytime. And, particularly, the fall of Ramadi has exposed the weakness of the current Iraq strategy. It is more than just a setback.
Politically, the administration deserves credit for helping to usher out the Maliki government and bring the new Abadi government in. However, Abadi is isolated, is undermined by Maliki, who is still and remains a nefarious character, and others within Abadi's own party. Abadi is unduly influenced by Iran. And the United States is not nearly as consequential as it should be. A U.S. objective should be, politically, to reduce Iran's influence. We need a focused diplomatic and political effort with the Abadi government, with the best people we have available to do it.

Militarily, clearly the Iraqi army is a serious problem. While some have fought heroically, many have not. There are serious leadership, discipline, morale, and competence issues. This will take time to fix. But, if we believe that Iraq is important to U.S. security, then we must help them fix it. And it will take many more trainers and a much more concerted effort to put in the best leaders available.

The Sunni tribal force is almost nonexistent, yet we cannot reclaim the Sunni territory that has been lost, particularly Anbar Province and Mosul, and we cannot hold the territory after we have reclaimed it if we do not have a Sunni tribal force. The Abadi government must authorize this force, and the United States should arm, equip, and train it. They must know that the Iraqi government and the
United States is behind them. Right now, they know the Iraqi government is not. Their families are being killed by the hundreds, eventually by the thousands. And they are disillusioned by the United States, in terms of its lack of support.

The Peshmerga. They're skilled, they're willed, they will fight. They need arms, and they need advisors, down at the fighting level, to assist them with planning, execution, and to call in airstrikes.

The Shi'a militia are largely protecting Baghdad. Most of what ISIS owns is Sunni territory. If we use the Shi'a militia to reclaim that territory and hold it, Iran has undue influence, politically, in Iraq as a result of it, and the Sunni people will suffer under the hand and the gun of the Shi'a militias. We must, in fact, reduce their influence.

The role of advisors. Advisors are only at brigade headquarters and above, currently. This is flawed. Advisor teams must be with the units that are fighting, at least at the battalion level, which is what we did in the past so successfully. Advisors, as the name implies, helps units plan and execute, and it also builds their confidence in themselves. They are also forward air controllers and can direct airpower as well as attack helicopters. The war in Iraq is largely close-combat urban warfare, which demands
the bombs be guided from our airplanes to the ground by people on the ground. Seventy-five percent of the sorties that we're currently running with our attack aircraft come back without dropping bombs, mostly because they cannot acquire the target or properly identify the target. Forward air controllers fix that problem.

Special Operation Forces direct-action teams should be employed, not as an exception, which is what we successfully saw this last weekend in Syria with the raid, but routinely in Iraq and Syria against the ISIS leadership and critical infrastructure. Similar to what we have done in Iraq and Afghanistan in the past during the surges, when Fred and I were there, as well as Colonel Harvey, we averaged -- the surges in Iraq and Afghanistan, we averaged somewhere between eight to ten of these operations a night. In fact, when the UBL raid was taking place in Pakistan, there were nine of these going on in Afghanistan that very night.

We should also do large-scale raids. What does that mean? We should use elements like Rangers to conduct attacks at night over critical infrastructure to kill ISIS fighters who are difficult to dig out with airpower at altitude. These are surprise attacks. They're not intended to stay. They're in and out maybe one night. We stay, at the most, a couple of days, depending on how much of a fight we're getting into.
We desperately need enablers to assist the Iraqi Security Forces. This is crucial support that helps them succeed on the battlefield. What is it? Robust intelligence capability. We have some, but we've got to ramp it up more than what we have. Increased UAVs, not to assist airpower, which we're currently doing in terms of surveillance, but to assist ground forces. That's a different application, and it's a different type of UAV. We need attack aviation. That's Apache helicopters. And we need other helicopters to assist the ground forces. C-130 transports to move troops and supplies and other logistics support. And we need increased U.S. command-and-control headquarters to help control the increase of trainers, advisors, and others that I'm suggesting here.

Obviously, what I am suggesting is increased U.S. political and military involvement in Iraq, which begins to shore up many of the weaknesses of the current strategy. While I believe we can still do this without U.S. and allied combat brigades, it is much more difficult now than what it was 9 months ago. I believe we have to do some serious contingency planning for the introduction of ground combat brigades, both U.S. and allied.

Finally, we need to get past our political psychosis on Iraq which is defined by the questions: Should the United States have gone into Iraq in 2003? Should the United States
States left Iraq in 2011? While they were crucial U.S. policy decisions, there is -- and there is much to learn from them, and we have -- we've got to get past it. ISIS is much more than Iraq. Our forces should be what the -- our focus should be what the President started out with: defeating ISIS. That will take political will. And war is a test of wills. It will take accepting risk. It will take accepting casualties. It will take focus. And it will take increased U.S. resources. And it will take honest evaluations as -- and assessments.

What I fear is this. I hear a disturbing and frightening echo of the summer of 2006, when administration, senior government -- when a different administration, senior government officials, and military senior generals came before this committee and, in the face of compelling evidence that our strategy in Iraq was failing, these officials looked at you and defended that strategy and told you that, overall, the strategy was succeeding. You and your predecessors took a strong bipartisan exception to those opinions. Many, as a result of it, wanted to give up on Iraq. Others wanted to do something about fixing the problem.

I hope you choose the latter and get on with helping to fix the problem. And I look forward to your questions.

Thank you.
[The prepared statement of General Keane follows:]
Chairman McCain: Dr. Kagan.
STATEMENT OF DR. FREDERICK W. KAGAN, CHRISTOPHER
DELmUTH CHAIR AND DIRECTOR, CRITICAL THREATS PROJECT,
AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE

Dr. Kagan: Mr. Chairman, Senator Nelson, thank you
very much for calling this hearing. And thank so many of
you for attending. It shows a sense of urgency about the
problem on the part of this committee that it's hard to
detect in the rest of the administration. So, I'm very
grateful to the committee, as always, for the opportunity to
speak, but for the attention that it's trying to focus on
this problem.

I receive, every day, a superb daily rollup of
activities in the region produced by my team in the Critical
Threats Project and the team at the Institute for the Study
of War. I can't read it all anymore. It's too long. It's
too long because the region is engulfed in war. It's sort
of hard to tell that from the isolated headlines that pop up
and fade away. But, we -- this is the regional war. This
is the beginning of the regional war. It could get a lot
worse, but this is a war that is becoming a sectarian war
across the region. It is a war between Saudi Arabia and
Iran, fought largely by proxies, but now, dismayingly, also
directly. There are some people who think that it's a good
thing that the Saudis and others are acting independently.
I would suggest that they take a look at the historical
efficacy of Saudi military forces and ask themselves if they think that that's really a reed we want to rest our weight on.

And I think we can focus too heavily on what the Iraqi Security Forces are doing, or not doing, as we have in the past. They're not doing enough. Prime Minister Abadi is in a box. We have helped put him there with our policies. So, it's not sufficient just to look at and criticize what the Iraqis are doing. We really do need to look in a mirror and look at what we are doing or not doing.

As I follow the daily reports, I see a coherent enemy strategy across the region. I see deliberate enemy operations, which you can actually depict on a map. And I commend to you a terrific report by the Institute for the Study of War called "ISIS Captures Ramadi," which actually has a military -- old-fashioned military-style map showing the ISIS maneuvers, because they are maneuvering. This is not a terrorist organization. This is an army that is conducting military maneuvers on an operational level with a great deal of skill. It is not an accident that Ramadi fell over the weekend and Palmyra fell yesterday. It is not an accident that there were ISIS attacks in Beiji and at the refinery, that there was a prison break in Diyala, that there were threats against the -- not the Hajj -- a pilgrimage in Baghdad, and then Ramadi was decisively
attacked and taken. This was a coherent campaign plan, and 
a very intelligent one, very well executed. This is a 
serious threat. What I can't discern from the daily 
operations, let alone from the statements of the 
administration, is any coherent American strategy to respond 
to this threat.

And I want to talk about the threat for a minute. ISIS 
is one of the most evil organizations that has ever existed 
in the world. We really have to reckon with that. This is 
not a minor annoyance. This is not a group that maybe we 
can negotiate with down the road someday. This is a group 
that is committed to the destruction of everything decent in 
the world. And the evidence of that is the wanton 
destruction, uncalled for even by their own ideology, 
frankly, of antiquities thousands of years old that 
represent the heart of the emergence of human civilization 
in the West. This is a group that sells captives into 
slavery. It's a major source of financing for them, 
actually. This is a room -- a group that engages 
deliberately in mass rape. This is a group that conducts 
mass murder. And this is a group that is calling for and 
condoning and supporting and encouraging lone-wolf attacks, 
and it will soon, I think, not be just lone-wolf attacks, in 
the United States and the West. This is a group of 
unfathomable evil. And, unfortunately, they are extremely
effective. And they have a degree of military capability -- not terrorist capability -- that we have not seen before in an al-Qaeda organization. This is not something where we should be spectators. This is not something where we should just say, as some people do, "Well, just let them kill each other." This is unacceptable, from a moral perspective and from a U.S. national security perspective, to just watch a group like this succeed in this way.

I want to make the point that, of course, any criticism of the White House today is received -- at least from our side -- is received as a partisan attack. And I want to make the point that if that was the case, then I must have been a Democrat in 2006, because we were attacking the Bush administration with the Senator -- with the Chairman and a number of other members of the committee, as aggressively, or, in fact, more aggressively, than we've ever critiqued this White House. The fact is that what matters is that the strategy is failing, as it was failing in 2006, only we are in a much worse strategic position today than we ever were in 2006, because it's not just Iraq.

I note that, to speak of the issue of urgency, the Iranians seem to feel a certain sense of urgency about this, as well. And their Minister of Defense, General Dehghan, was in Baghdad over the last few days, signing defense cooperation agreements, ostensibly, but surely working to
coordinate Iranian support on the ground. The Foreign Policy Advisor to the Supreme Leader, Velayati, was in Damascus and Beirut, talking with Bashar al-Assad and Hassan Nasrallah, no doubt coordinating plans to, I assume, maintain and increase the military deployment of Hezbollah forces in Syria and possibly ask Assad what his plan is, given the circumstances. Those are very senior leaders. I don't notice that we have sent senior leaders of that rank, or anything close to it, to speak with Prime Minister Abadi. And, of course, we have no one to speak with, effectively, in Syria.

Senator Nelson asked about what this means for the counter-ISIS campaign. It means that the campaign that has been described by the administration and our general officers is completely derailed. I do not believe that there is any reasonable prospect that it will be possible to retake Mosul this year. I think the fight for Ramadi will be hard enough. I think that these operations in and around Ramadi demonstrate that the Iraqi Security Forces, at current levels of U.S. support, are not capable even of defending their territory against determined ISIS attack, let alone clearing a major ISIS safe haven.

So, we are -- our campaign strategy is completely derailed, in my view. I think it was a campaign strategy, as the Chairman pointed out, that was of limited likelihood
to be successful, in any event, because it addressed only part of the problem and left a major safe haven effectively untouched. But, such as it was, it's over.

My colleague, Derek Harvey, will speak in some more detail about what kinds of troops and enablers are required. I agree with General Keane -- I'm even willing to put a number on the table -- I think that we need to have a total of 15- to 20,000 U.S. troops in Iraq in order to provide the necessary enablers, advisors, and so forth. I think anything less than that is simply unserious.

And I think we really need to do that, because, I think, otherwise, we're looking at an ISIS state that is going to persist. We're looking at an ISIS state that is going to continue to govern territory, that is going to continue to have resources that we simply cannot afford to let an evil enemy of this variety have. And I think it is a major U.S. national security priority to respond to this, especially as it's become clear that it's beyond the capabilities of the Iraqis.

And lastly, I want to make two larger points that are directly relevant to this committee. One is, you cannot argue for a forceful strategy in Iraq and defend the sequester. Our Armed Forces have been seriously damaged by the sequester. It needs to be removed immediately. In fact, the Armed Forces budget needs to be increased
significantly. We are at war, whether we like it or not, and the longer this President refuses to address it, the worse it's going to be when we become engaged. We need to be preparing for that now.

And lastly, we need to be strengthening our abilities to collect intelligence, and not weakening them. This is not the moment to dismantle our capabilities to see what the enemy is doing. This is the moment to be engaged in wise reform of oversight of the intelligence community. And so, it is ironic that one of your colleagues spent yesterday arguing for the elimination of a program important to our national security.

So, I think there are things that the administration can do and things that Congress can do, but it's going to be a tough fight.

I thank the committee for listening to me this morning.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Kagan follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]
Chairman McCain: Colonel Harvey.
STATEMENT OF COLONEL DEREK J. HARVEY, USA (RET.),
DIRECTOR, GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY AND CONFLICT,
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

Colonel Harvey: Mr. Chairman, Senator Nelson, and members of the committee, thank you for having me here. I appreciate the opportunity.

I want to begin with focusing on the Islamic State and the trends in Iraq. I believe that, even before the fall of Ramadi, the best that could be said is that Baghdad was holding the line. Even with the success in Tikrit, there's great difficulty in holding that terrain. And even in areas that have been cleared earlier in northern Diyala Province in eastern Saladin, ISIS has worked their way back in. They just changed their profile, went to ground, and now they're infiltrating back in and conducting attacks and rebuilding their capabilities.

Over the past month, they've continued to do shaping operations in the Baghdad area, western Baghdad. In one day, just a couple of days ago, there were eight IEDs, two VBIEDs, and several small-arms skirmishes in Baghdad itself. That's to say nothing about what's going on in Abu Ghraib and other areas around the belts of Baghdad.

They continue to hold the line along the Kurdish front, north in the Nineveh area around Mosul, and they've expanded successfully in other areas, particularly in Syria. They
are very good at doing shaping operations. They are taking advantage of their interior lines of communication. They are well armed, well resourced, and well led.

I think the fall of Ramadi should lead to questions about the progress asserted by the Pentagon and the administration. There are two strategically important Sunni Arab cities in Iraq: Mosul, the second largest city, which was a former Ottoman capital, and, of course, Ramadi, which is the capital of the largest geographic province. And ISIS controls Raqqa, which is another provincial capital, but it's in Syria. The fall of Ramadi renews the sense that ISIS has momentum, which is important for rallying Sunni Arabs who may be on the fence in this fight, and also could aid with foreign fighter recruitment and some funding.

without an alternative, Sunni Arabs, tribes, and the peoples in the region, without someone to protect them and lead them, are going to fall into the camp of the Islamic State, particularly as this campaign becomes increasingly polarized. And the movement of Shi'a militias, Popular Mobilization units, into Anbar Province is going to contribute to this polarization. And I fully expect that the Islamic State, in the near future, will try to conduct operations in Karbala and Najaf to further inflame this fight. That is part of their major strategy, to polarize this fight between the different communities.
Now, I would note that ISIS has many challenges and weaknesses, but the problem is that ISIS is not losing. I believe that the U.S. has continued to underestimate the Islamic State, which I suspect shows a lack of understanding about the Islamic State, its capabilities, strengths, and weaknesses and how it sees the fight and a path to victory.

We've seen this story before. It's like deja vu, for me. We focus too much on our own activity, our own programs, our own budgets, but we're not focusing on the impact on the enemy. And the enemy has a vote.

From public statements, we're not looking at the right things, and the metrics and measures that are asserted by the military, the Pentagon, are not really appropriate. The number of airstrikes is interesting, but irrelevant. What is the effect on the enemy and its capacity to fight? Stating that ISIS has lost 25 percent of the territory it conquered is interesting, but it's really not relevant, because ISIS did not control eastern Saladin or northern Diyala or some of the other areas, but they're still there. They're contesting, and they're rebuilding, and they're shaping. So, that is a false metric that's been put out.

Striking oil infrastructure in Syria is a good thing, and it's been degraded. But, the enemy has a vote. It's -- their efforts there have been complicated. They've reduced their production. But, they've adapted, and, creatively,
they have developed miniature mobile refinement capabilities, even using blow-dryer air heaters to make refined product. It is crude, yet it is a sophisticated adaptation. And crude is still going to Turkey. And they are producing enough fuel for their own requirements. They're still earning millions of dollars every month from oil in Syria. It's been degraded, but I think the lower cost of oil on the markets has had just as much of an impact as any operations we've conducted. And again, they have adapted.

The same for funding and foreign fighter flow. They are still very resilient and adaptive in working around the actions that have been taken. And the actions that have been taken on foreign fighter flow and going after finances have been weak and not very assertive, not well resourced. And I'll talk more about that.

ISIS is excelling at a hybrid war. They're fighting conventionally, as needed, they're adapting, and they're employing terrorist techniques -- coercion, assassination, subversion -- as necessary, depending upon the terrain. It is showing that it can hold key terrain, fight hard, and synchronize operations across space and time. And they respond with agility to secure tactical and operational advantages and overmatch, as we saw in Ramadi. They are very effective, they are well led. They are skilled, and
they have professional-quality leadership and command-and-control. And they know the geography, they know the terrain, and they know the human terrain in these areas very, very, very well. They are ruthless, and they are committed and determined. And they're exhibiting the will to fight. And they're fighting for power, they're fighting for ideological reasons, but, for many Sunni Arabs who are frustrated and angered about their condition in life and how they have been treated by Baghdad, they're fighting for their land, their families, and their future. And they are not motivated by a hardline Salafist Takfiri annihilationist agenda, but they're fighting anyway, because they're fighting for their own lives and their own future, and they're fearful.

There are many Sunni military-aged males, to date, that have not taken sides in this fight. It's just a matter of time, if this polarization continues and we let this drag on, that ISIS will gain more and more recruits from the Iraqi population base. The Iraqi fight with ISIS is not dominated by foreign fighters. This is a homegrown fight, and we have to keep that in mind. ISIS, as Fred mentioned, maintains operational freedom in most of the Sunni Arab provinces, and they appear stronger because, importantly, relatively, their opposition is very weak.

Now, the Sunni Arab political and tribal leaders are
weak and divided, and seen as illegitimate by many within these Sunni Arab provinces. And too many Sunni Arabs are on the fence. They've been given no reason to come onto the side of the Baghdad government or to come to us. Prime Minister Abadi's government is weak and divided, and is increasingly undermined by Shi'a opposition. Same with the Iraqi Security Forces that are small, weak, poorly resourced, and not well led. And it will take far too long to train and rebuild them to make a difference this year.

Moreover, I assess that there is a concerted effort to undermine the efficacy of the Iraqi Security Forces by Shi'a militias, Iranian proxies, and some members within the government, including the Dawa Party, particularly some members in the Ministry of Interior. They seek to weaken the Iraqi Security Forces and provide alternative institutions of power that they control.

And again, the coalition is weak. And we could talk about that. But, there's not a lot of allied cooperation and resources put into this fight.

And lastly, the U.S. lines of operation, for the most part, have been poorly resourced, both in theater and at the interagency level right here in Washington, D.C. I do not see the urgency or the resourcing within Treasury or the intelligence community or others to really energy and aggressively go after this fight in this region.
So, although U.S. airstrikes, I believe, have complicated the ISIS operations, the air campaign has not been decisive. It's been relatively small and limited. And the Islamic State, as I mentioned, has been adaptive and creative. Importantly, they remain well armed and well resourced. And our lines of operation, be it counter-finance, counter-foreign-fighter flow, delegitimizing the brand, the training, building of the ISF, and the military campaign, at best, appear disjointed, poorly resourced, and lack an effective framework to bring it all together. I think we need to relook this.

And, with that, I'll look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Colonel Harvey follows:]
Chairman McCain: Thank you.
Mr. Katulis, thank you for being here.
STATEMENT OF BRIAN KATULIS, SENIOR FELLOW, CENTER FOR
AMERICAN PROGRESS

Mr. Katulis: Great. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and
Senator Nelson and all of your distinguished colleagues.
It's a real honor to be here today.

Mr. Chairman, your efforts, over the last few months,
to elevate our national security debate have been incredible
and very important, the hearings that you held earlier this
year and everything that the members of the committee have
been doing have been very important for our country as we
look at the world and not just the Middle East.

Mr. Chairman, I prepared written testimony. With your
permission, I'd like to submit that for the record --

Chairman McCain: Without objection.

Mr. Katulis: -- this afternoon.

And it's really an honor, here, to be with the
copanelists, who I have great respect for, not only their
expertise, but their service to country. And what I wanted
to do this morning with my remarks is to try to complement
their insights with what I focus on in my own work, which is
looking at dynamics within the region and the strategic
dynamics, and nesting the problem of Iraq, Syria, and ISIS
within that. And, Mr. Chairman, you said, at the outset,
beforehand, that you'd like to discuss concrete steps. So,
while I give my analysis of what I think is happening in
Iraq, Syria, the region, and more broadly, I will offer some ideas that I hope we can discuss, some of which I think members of the panel have proposed in legislation.

The way I see the challenge -- and I don't disagree with much of what was said here earlier -- the challenge of ISIS, I think, operates on three different levels, or three concentric circles:

The first is Iraq and Syria, quite obviously. That's where the devastation has been astounding over the last few years. And many of the steps, I think, that have been proposed here, in terms of security measures and security cooperation measures, is something that I, frankly -- it's a little outside of my expertise to evaluate. I look at the political and strategic dynamics. But, I do think, inside of Iraq, no matter what we've done or what we do in the coming years, every type of security assistance should be implemented with a close eye to internal political and power dynamics. And, at this stunning moment -- and what happened in Ramadi, I think, should shock everybody -- we should keep an eye on these measures of what we need to do to help our Iraqi partners on the security front, but understand what we have learned over the last 10 years plus, is that the political dynamics are terribly important.

In those regards, what I think we need to do and the Obama administration needs to do is to hold the Iraqi
government accountable for a lot of the ideas that have been discussed, in terms of arming Sunni tribes, building a national guard. If you look at what the Obama administration did last summer -- and I was a supporter of this measure of using security assistance as leverage to help the Iraqis create a different type of Iraqi government -- we need to continue that process. When the police in Ramadi were not being funded, when concepts like the national guard still remain stuck in parliament, it makes it hard for any number of U.S. trainers to actually do their job if those mechanisms are in place.

A second thing I think we need to start to entertain -- and I know people are discussing this -- is the notion of greater decentralization inside of Iraq, decentralization of authority, in some of the proposals that people have discussed about mechanisms for giving arms directly to Sunni tribes or to Kurdish forces. Again, I think we should consider that and balance it against the overall objective of trying to keep Iraq together.

The second component, obviously, is Syria. And this, in my view, is the weakest link in the overall approach in this first circle. And Mr. Chairman, Senator Kaine, many others, have highlighted this, but we need to do something about this. The gap between the Obama administration's stated goals and what we're actually doing to shape the
environment on the ground is alarming. In my view, we need to accelerate that which the administration proposed and you funded, the training and equipping of third-way forces. We need to link these efforts to the broader regional dynamics. What's happening in Syria right now is a very complicated engagement by actors in the region. If you see not only ISIS's gains, but the gains of Jabhat al-Nusra, al-Qaeda's front, this -- these gains don't come from nowhere. They're being offered support from various actors in the region.

And the main point is that the end state in Syria, which is often described by the administration in ways that our tactics don't link up with what we want to achieve.

But, the overall point in this first circle -- Iraq and Syria -- which I hope you take away and I think we need to discuss some more, is, How do you link these problems and how we address them? What worries me is that, quite often, we look at a challenge in Iraq, or a corner of Iraq, but we don't link it to the broader problem of Iraq and Syria.

Last summer, ISIS effectively eroded the borders between these two countries. And what we've had over the last year or so is a debate about a series of different tactics, some of which have been implemented, and some have not. And I think if we can all bring our thinking together to talk about, How do we actually have an integrated strategy that focuses on ISIS, both in Iraq and Syria?
On the second level, the regional level -- and here I hope we can think a little bit more about this -- but, for essentially the last 4 or 5 years, the Middle East has slipped into this period of fragmentation. Not only has Iraq and Syrian state structures collapsed, we've seen Libya and Yemen feel these strains. And a big part of what is going on -- and this challenge of ISIS and where it comes from -- is the struggle between the regional powers: Iran and Saudi Arabia, but there are other actors, too. Much of it is sectarian, but the conflict is multidimensional. It is multifaceted. Our resources matter, but Iran, Saudi Arabia, others, have been funding their own proxies. And what I think is missing, in terms of the U.S. leadership on all of this, is accounting for all of these efforts. How do we actually better organize and come up with a better strategic conception?

Essentially, since 2003 and the Iraq War, when we made the decision to move from a strategic posture of dual containment of Iran and Iraq, I think we've been struggling for: What is our overarching strategy in the Middle East? We made some gains at certain periods, as was noted, in the surge in Iraq in 2007-2008, but the broader picture of "What is the United States trying to do in the region?" -- I think, still that question has not been answered.

I think the Obama administration, rightfully, has taken
some positive steps in the right direction. The building of an anti-ISIL coalition that has 62 countries in it, including key stakeholders in the region, is an important opportunity, one that I don't think has been fully seized yet by the administration. Its engagements in that coalition effort has been episodic. In February, for instance, we had a Countering Violent Extremism Summit. And the questions of "What then, after the summit?" I think remain unanswered, to a large extent.

Just last week was a very important summit with the GCC nations and, I think, an important communique. As with everything in life, and with this administration, the followup is going to be very important. Those commitments, not only to Iraq and the fight in Syria, but the broader fight against ISIS, there needs to be implementation.

And finally, one last point on the equilibrium point, because I know it's a big debate up here, is the question of equilibrium in the broader region. The Obama administration often speaks of its engagement with Iran and the diplomatic engagement on the nuclear front as an opportunity to achieve some new type of equilibrium in the region. And I share that aspiration. But, we need to be clear-eyed about how hard that will be at a time when Iran, when other actors in the region, are actually investing in a number of different proxy wars. We need to be clear about how realistic that is
and what we're trying to do.

And on the final point, on the international level --
and I'll close here -- quite clearly, this problem of ISIS
is connected in ways that the problems that Derek and
General Keane and Dr. Kagan dealt with in the previous
decade -- it's much more complicated by the fact that you
have more than 15,000 foreign fighters flooding into -- and
perhaps the number is higher. And what I would suggest, at
the international level and our analysis, is that the debate
about ISIS is terribly important, but it's moving very
quickly. The debate that many people are having on Syria
right now is the fight between Jabhat al-Nusra, ISIL, and a
number of different actors. And I would say that 14 years
after 9/11, nearly 14 years, if you look at this broader
landscape, beyond Iraq and Syria, and Iraq and Syria as the
epicenter, this new trend toward Salafist jihadism, and the
growth of it, is something that we actually haven't wrestled
with, that we need to widen the landscape and keep focused
on it to assess what we're doing and whether we're applying
resources to meet those threats.

So, in conclusion, I hope the events of the last week
or so and, I hope our discussion today, is a constructive
wake-up call about what we can do to move from what I think
has been a largely reactive crisis management and somewhat
tactical approach to the problem set, not only over the last
year or two, but over the last decade. And I hope that the
events can motivate all of us, including you, with your
leadership, to drive towards the sorts of unity that we need
in things like an Authorization for the Use of Military
Force, a national conversation that reinvigorates our sense
of purpose. Because, as Derek and others have described,
this is a very dangerous adversary. We've not yet created
that strategy, the holistic strategy to actually defeat
them. And we can.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Katulis follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]
Chairman McCain:  Well, I thank you.

Could I mention to my colleagues that a vote is on, and, if you'd like to go and come back, please do so. I'll try to continue the hearing. I may have to pause. But, I know that you have questions for the panel, so maybe we could work it that way, however you'd like.

And I'd like to begin by picking up a little bit on what Mr. Katulis just said. And this is this whole idea of the perception of Iran and what the prospects are. Because it seems to me that -- and the necessity to be clear-eyed about it -- because it seems to me that one of the reasons why we were not acting more aggressively against Bashar Assad has got to do with this idea -- or, in my view, illusion -- that once we conclude the nuclear agreement, there will be a whole new relationship with Iran in the Middle East, which, in my conversations with our friends in the Sunni Arab states, scares the heck out of them.

And so, I -- maybe I could ask the panel about -- it seems to me, in my view, that it is a real impediment to any real significant action in Syria. For example, the Free Syrian Army, what little there is that we are training, we have not told -- or, the administration has said there is no policy yet about, when we send these young men that we are training back into Syria, that -- whether we would protect them from Bashar Assad's barrel bombing. It seems to me
that there's a degree of immorality associated with telling people you're going to train and equip them, and then not protect them from being killed when they go back in, and that they are only to fight ISIS and not Bashar Assad, the father of ISIS.

So, I'd maybe begin with you, General Keane, and -- because it -- I don't think that Americans are fully aware of this contradiction, here.

General Keane: Yeah. Well, Senator, I agree, in principle, here, with what you're saying.

Just a -- so, our audience and the committee can understand, we may forget that, early on in the rebellion against Assad, the momentum was actually on the opposition-forces side. Many people in this town were predicting that the regime was going to fall. I think we can all recall that.

Chairman McCain: That was testimony before this committee by the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, yes.

General Keane: And that opposition force came to town here and got many on their dance card to -- they needed additional arms and ammunition -- specifically, antitank weapons and antiaircraft weapons -- to deal with a conventional military. They were stuck with rifles, machine guns, RPGs, and the like. That early encounter in 2012 was
denied -- late 2011, early 2012. And then the CIA became convinced that we could actually vet the Free Syrian Army -- and I will say that the Institute for the Study of War had some impact on providing them information that assisted them with that conclusion. And General Petraeus would have met that, when he -- as the Director at the time. And he presented a briefing to Secretaries Clinton and Panetta and Dempsey -- General Dempsey -- and they agreed with him that it was -- this force could, in fact, be armed, equipped, and trained robustly. But, the administration did not do that. And, tragically, as a result of that, the Free Syrian Army now is a mere shadow of its former self. There's, frankly, not much of it left.

Chairman McCain: And could I add --

General Keane: Go ahead.

Chairman McCain: -- in desperation, isn't it true that they have now joined forces with al-Nusra, an al-Qaeda-affiliated organization. Is that true?

General Keane: Well, organizations that were a part of their organization, you know, have broken from them. They were Islamic organizations, not radicalized, and they have joined with Jabhat al-Nusra, who is -- who has gained more territories, more aggressive, and has had more success against the regime than any force out there. So, that is true.
And what we're doing is -- and I know the committee's been briefed on this -- we're attempting to train 5,000 people that would become part of the Free Syrian Army. But, what organization are they going to plug into? And it's totally disconnected, because the Free Syrian Army is not fighting ISIS. They don't have the wherewithal to fight ISIS and the regime. They're fighting the regime. So, we're training forces that will join Free Syrian Army, in theory. And, indeed, they will fight the regime forces, which has nothing to do with ISIS, at the moment. So, that's how flawed the strategy is in Syria. It makes no sense. We don't have ground forces.

And, as the Chairman suggests, Does it make any sense to train these forces, arm them and equip them and provide them some leadership, and then put them back into the fight against Assad's conventional military, which will bomb them and attack them with conventional artillery, mortars, and, obviously, barrel bombs and the like?

So, that strategy in Syria is flawed. And obviously, the only way that ISIS will eventually be defeated in Syria is with some kind of a ground force. Our allies in the region are suggesting to us -- and we having -- we're not agreeing with them -- is that what we should do is deal with Assad, change the momentum against Assad by shutting down his airpower, using no-fly zones and buffer zones to achieve
that end, and that change in military -- in momentum, militarily on the battlefield can shift the political equation to get some kind of a settlement.

Now, listen, that's arguable whether that's achievable, or not. But, sitting here and doing nothing, and permitting this to go on, I think that's quite irresponsible, in terms of the humanitarian catastrophe that's taking place there, and also that ISIS is expanding and gaining in strength in Syria every single week and month.

So, the Syrian strategy needs to be thought out. It needs to lead to a situation where we have our Arab -- where we have a coalition of Arabs in the region, and possibly the Turks participating also. And they would likely ask us to participate in a coalition to deal with ISIS in Syria. And I do think we should listen to them about dealing with Assad and that regime first, in some limited capacity, to change the political equation.

Chairman McCain: I'm going to have to go vote. I'd like to hear the -- from the other witnesses. I'm going to have to go vote.

Senator Ernst.

And if someone isn't back yet after you, we will take a brief pause until my return.

Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here today. I really
do appreciate it very much. And I apologize that I had to step out.

But, I do agree with the panel, that we need a comprehensive strategy. Right now, there is no strategy. As an element and -- really, just as an element, I do want to talk a little bit more about arming the Kurds. Of course, this is a passion of mine. So, over the past couple of months, I have been advocating for the administration to increase its support to the Kurdish regional government in Iraq to fight ISIS. And I believe that this is a commonsense proposal, considering the Peshmerga's willingness to fight -- they are willing to fight -- in close combat. And it is truly unmatched by any other group in that region in the fight against ISIS.

The Kurdish people have been vital in supporting our coalition efforts to defeat ISIS and in providing support to around the 1.6 million displaced persons from Iraq and Syria. And also, for the past quarter century, Iraqi Kurds have proven to be reliable partners by supporting U.S. interests every time that we have sought their assistance. And I have spoken with many of the men that have served up in that region, and they always state what great allies the Kurds have been to them in our fight. So, they are proven to be great allies of ours.

Earlier this week, former CIA and NSA Director, General
Michael Hayden, once again spoke for the need to increase U.S. support to the Kurds in the fight against ISIS. And, on Tuesday, General Hayden said, "I would double down on the Kurds. Their military has the virtue of showing up when it comes to a fight, and they've been our friends in the area for decades."

I would tend to agree with him. But, I would love to ask each of you to please explain that, if you do agree with General Hayden's assessment or if you disagree, and maybe why. So, please, to the panel -- General Keane, if we might start with you.

Thank you.

General Keane: Yes, certainly I agree with that. The problem we have is -- and they've told you, and they've told others, that they're not getting the kinds of arms that they need, the quantity of those arms are not there. We're passing that through the Iraqi government. We probably should have continued the covert problem -- program we did have with -- passing it through the Central Intelligence Agency, and we probably would have had them armed by now if we did it robustly. But, they also need advisors. Because, when they're fighting, they need coordination with airpower to make their ground operations that much more effective.

And I would say this. As good as the Kurds are, they have, also, a limited interest in what they're willing to
fight for inside Iraq. And they certainly are not going to participate in reclaiming Anbar Province and other parts of Iraq. So, yes, we have to do what we should for the Kurds, but we also need to recognize that a lot more needs to be done with others, as well.

And I'll leave it to my colleagues, here, who have more information than I do.

Senator Ernst: Right. Thank you.

Dr. Kagan.

Dr. Kagan: Thank you, Senator.

I agree with General Keane, especially about the last point. We certainly should help the Kurds defend Kurdistan. There's no question about that. And we could be doing more than we are. But, the Kurds cannot retake Arab Iraq for -- on behalf of the Arabs. And I think, in -- although the Kurds are not remotely -- I don't want to put the Kurds in the category of Shi'a militias, because they absolutely are not, and they don't behave that way. Nevertheless, I think if you saw large Kurdish forces in Mosul for a long period of time, you would find that you would have an ethnic war on your hands that would not be in our interest and would make room for ISIS or its successor to come in. So, I don't think the Kurds could actually do what we need them to do, even if they wanted to.

I would only add that, although I agree that we should
that the Kurds have been very reliable allies, fighting on the ground against our common enemies, they have been less than helpful in Baghdad, repeatedly, and they still are being somewhat less than helpful than they might be, on a number of issues, including demands for oil revenues and various other things.

I do believe that we should assist them in their defense, but I also think that we should use that assistance as leverage to try to get the Kurds to think a little bit more about the interests of Iraq as a whole, from a political standpoint, than they sometimes do.

Senator Ernst: Thank you.

Colonel Harvey.

Colonel Harvey: I agree with what has already been said on this issue. I would add that the Sunni Arab communities along the green line, the fault lines, are tremendous numbers of friction points there, about territory, about past grievances. So, we would have to be very careful about how we -- how they would be employed. And I think, you know, that's about making sure that there are red lines about how far they could go in coordination, where they are willing to fight along the frontiers where the Islamic State controls land. We do not want to further polarize these communities more than they are already. But, arming them effectively and developing a mechanism to
accommodate Baghdad's interest about knowing what's being
delivered, but making sure that it gets delivered -- we have
to figure a way to just get that done and coordinate that,
but deliver those weapons that are going to be very
important to the defense of those Kurdish lands.

Senator Ernst: Thank you.

Mr. Katulis: Very quickly, Senator, three points.

First, in principle, I think it's an idea worth --
worthy of consideration. The first point, though -- in my
recent visits to Kurdistan, the divisions that still exist
inside of the Kurdish Peshmerga, and some of the political
divisions -- the KDP and the PUK having separate lines of
control -- to actually implement that effectively, they'll
need to deal with those divisions.

The second is that you have actors in the region,
including us, beyond us, regional actors who have offered
some of this support. And sometimes it's been blocked by
Baghdad, itself. There are sensitivities to even the
proposal, because it leads to questions of, "Oh, are you
trying to break up Iraq?" And I think we need to be careful
in the presentation of that.

Which leads to a third point relevant to Iraq, to
Syria, to the region more broadly. The more that the United
States or other actors within the region invest in
subnational actors or nonstate actors for the benefit of
trying to defeat terrorist organizations like ISIS, there's advantages to that, because oftentimes they're more capable, as we've seen with the Kurdish Peshmerga. There's a potential long-term disadvantage to it, in that the fragmentation of states, the -- could accelerate if -- if we're working in the short term to defeat a threat and to deal with a counterterrorism issue, but the building blocks that we're putting into place actually then contribute to what I've seen, especially in Syria -- and again, I'm not arguing against it; it's just the potential downside risk in the long term, the notion that we could further inadvertently accelerate the fragmentation of these state entities.

Senator Ernst: Well, thank you. I appreciate that very much. And the idea, I believe, and where I am coming from, is that we simply have no strategy in that region, not one that has been communicated clearly to any of us. So, I think establishing at least a safe zone -- I do agree that the Peshmerga -- their interest is only in Kurdistan, it is not moving out into the rest of Iraq. I understand that. But, at least establishing a safe zone within Iraq that is free of ISIS is a step in the right direction. I think we need to think about that, we need to pursue that.

But, any thoughts on where -- just your idea of where the administration needs to go, at this point? I still see
some reluctance coming from the administration on admitting that ISIS continues to expand, not just within Iraq, but also globally. I -- any thoughts on what we need to do or how we can work with the administration on developing a strategy, one that will work?

Yes, please.

Mr. Katulis: I would stress, again, where I focus on, which is the regional aspects. I think what the U.S. can do more of -- my colleagues have talked about, militarily and other things -- it's beyond my expertise. The fact that the anti-ISIL coalition has five working groups -- a military one, one on countering violent extremism, on counterterrorism funding, on foreign fighters and stabilization -- I would suggest that those mechanisms are a great template, but also that they've not been used effectively.

And, going back to the point I was trying to make, in the region, that I think it's wise to actually try to channel the resources and the efforts of others to much more constructive ends. We often debate about what we do. And I think we need to do more. That's clear. And I think we need to lead. But, using these mechanisms in the anti-ISIL coalition more effectively, having more followup on things like -- we often think it's soft, but it's not -- the countering-violent-extremism efforts, it's not sufficient to
me to have a 1- or 2-day conference without any clear, precise followups. And I -- I mean, I think they're talking about it, but we need to have great clarity to our regional partners in knowing -- those in the coalition -- of, "Okay, this is what we're going to do." In the way that General Keane and Derek and Dr. Harvey have talked about -- Dr. Kagan have talked about -- in the military steps, we also need a campaign that is multifaceted on those regards, that, again, nests at its core what we do, but in partnership with others.

    Senator Ernst: Thank you.

    Yes, sir.

    Colonel Harvey: I think that, given the President's strategy and the lines of operation that they have had, I don't think those were ever given an opportunity to succeed, because, even though I thought that they were insufficient to the task last summer, in September, when he declared them, they have not been adequately resourced, organized, or executed, to date. And again, as I said in my opening statement, that's here in Washington, D.C., at the interagency level, as well as in theater.

    So, if we're not going to be determined to achieve results and have leadership that drives the interagency and makes this a matter of urgency and criticality to the United States, then we're not going to get where we need to go.
So, you need to, first, be determined to achieve results.

Two, we need to think about some core objectives here.

One, we can fight ISIS and still contain Iran and seek to
achieve an independent Iraq that is not a client of Tehran.

In order to do that, we need to support Sunni Arab
engagement and political inclusion. Without adequate force
structure on the ground, and commitment, you cannot get out
there and engage with the Sunni Arabs, you can't move around
the battlespace. And they won't believe you're serious
unless you put enough skin in the game.

And to do that, we're going to need, in my judgment,
about 15,000 or more enhancement of U.S. force structure in
theater. And to go to what General Keane said, we need
probably two brigades, we need aviation -- a mixed aviation
brigade, you need some artillery, you need enhanced direct-
action SOF operational capabilities to -- for direct action.

Direct action brings you the intelligence, which you then
share and allows you to go after those networks.

The Islamic State has not been stressed across its
large perimeter that it has, from the Syrian border up along
the Kurdish green line. They have tremendous
vulnerabilities. But, they have had the initiative, because
they have not been pressed along that large frontal area
that they have.

Senator Ernst: Sir, so, just to be clear, you are
stating that you believe 15,000 additional troops and aviation assets to directly engage ISIS as a combat --

Colonel Harvey: No, I want them to be there to provide the enablers, support for the Iraqi Security Forces for direct action of the Special Operations Forces for indirect fires, advisors embedded with Iraqi Security Forces or Ministry of Interior elements, in a way that gets us on the ground, can bring in our capabilities. I'm not advising that we put troops on the ground in combat outposts in Ramadi, clearing streets, you know, and communities and neighborhoods in a direct-action way. But, we need to be out there enabling and providing support and protection for Sunni Arab tribal militias, helping them grow and develop, and then that gives us influence that can reach into the political domain in the -- these provinces, but also in Baghdad. It's hard to have influence if you don't have skin in the game.

Senator Ernst: I would agree with that. I would also state, though, that anytime you do engage more of those types of troops on the ground, you may say that it is a train-and-assist mission, and that may be heavier on the assist mission, but we are engaging in combat at that point. I don't think there's any way that you avoid that. And I don't want to mislead the American people, because certainly there is danger anytime that we put troops on the ground.
So, I'm not saying I would support, or not support, that measure, but I do believe that you are correct, sir, in that we do need to engage if we expect others to engage. We know that the airstrikes are not doing it. So, thank you for that perspective.

Dr. Kagan: Senator, I want to second what Derek said, and agree with him about the need to deploy forces. I agree with you, and I know that Derek also does, that it's -- the purpose of talking about train, advise, and assist, in this context, is not to imply that American troops are not going to be in combat. Of course they are, if we're doing our job. But, I think the point that Derek was trying to make, which is very important, is that we're not anticipating putting American brigades in Ramadi and having them clear, house to house, the way we have done previously.

Senator Ernst: Thank you.

Dr. Kagan: That's not what we're looking at.

I have to say, we, as a Nation, are defeated as long as we do not have the will to fight this war. And I would assess right now, we seem to be showing that we do not have the will to fight this war. And until and unless the -- beginning with the President, there is a demonstration that we have the will to fight, we are going to lose this war. And so, what Congress has to do, what we all have to do, is find any way that we can to persuade the President to own
this fight, to recognize that it's a war, to recognize that
we must win, and to help develop the will among the American
people to fight this.

Senator Ernst: Thank you very much.

General Keane: The thing -- the only thing I would add
is that you do have to look at this strategically. When you
think -- the World Trade Center in '93 was the introduction
of radical Islam directly against the United States, not
using proxies that the Iranians did since 1980. And that
was followed by Embassy bombings in Africa, the U.S.S. Cole,
and 9/11. And, to date, we've gone through three
administrations, and we've never developed a comprehensive
strategy to deal with it. We're sitting here today without
one, despite all of that killing, despite all of the
aggressiveness and assertiveness that this enemy has showed.
We have always looked at this narrowly. And it's tragic
that we do. And we're more sophisticated than that.

Yes, the solution is right in front of us. When you
look at this map -- look at -- this is just ISIS. If I put
al-Qaeda on the map, it would be worse. This is a regional
and global problem that can only be solved by those
countries who are being affected by this, either directly or
indirectly. This is not about the United States dealing
with all of this; this is about the United States, when
we're hosting a conference, like we just did, as opposed to
shaking hands and slapping everybody on the back, which we did, we should have hosted a conference that came out with a strategy on what to do with this, plans on what to do with this. What is the level of contribution that's going to deal with this? We don't develop that strategy. Together, we can design a comprehensive strategy that does undermine the ideology, that does take their finances away, and that does meet this threat, militarily, where it needs to be met.

We cannot do this by ourselves. We have no comprehensive strategies to deal with radical Islam, to include ISIS. We have no strategy in the region to deal with the morphing of radical Islam, as defined by ISIS and al-Qaeda. And we certainly -- as we've all been saying, we have no strategy immediately to deal -- effective strategy to deal with this issue in Iraq and Syria.

So, I agree with you, that is the start point that we should have to deal with this problem. And then you start to put underneath that those things that make sense. And we've got to bring our allies into this in a very cohesive way. Listen, they've -- we have their attention. The Iranians are forcing their attention, ISIS is forcing their attention, and the spread of al-Qaeda. We have to help them organize to do this effort, and bring the means to deal with that. And not all of that is kinetic. And certainly most of it is not United States military power.
Senator Ernst: Yes. Thank you very much.

And, General Keane, you brought up Iranian influences. And since I have come into the Senate, I have been very, very concerned about the Iranian influence with the Shi'a militia. And here we have the Shi'a militia pushing back against ISIS. And I would love to hear a little bit more about that Iranian influence with the Shi'a militia. Where do we go from here? Assuming that we do take care of ISIS, the Shi'a are controlling areas, but their intent, I think, could easily turn against American influences, American soldiers that might be on the ground there. So, as we look at arming the Shi'a militia, if we talk about that, engaging with them, just remembering that they are being influenced heavily by the Iranians, and -- what would your thoughts be on that?

Dr. Kagan: Senator, I'd like to say I don't think the Shi'a -- the Iraqi Shi'a are the problem. And there are elements in the Popular Mobilization Forces and so forth that I think are not pro-Iranian and do not desire to be governed by Iran. We've seen this repeatedly. And, of course, this is the view of Grand Ayatollah Sistani and his -- the people who follow him, is that Iraq is an Arab country, it's not a Persian country, and they don't want to be dominated by Persians.

However, the most effective Shi'a militia forces are
part of the Iranian military, de facto. The Badr Corps, run
by Hadi al-Amiri, reports to Qassem Suleimani, the commander
of the Quds Force. Kata'ib Hezbollah, run by Muhandis,
reports to Qassem Suleimani, commander of the Quds Force.
And we have seen this repeatedly. So, we have -- it's not a
Shi'a problem. It is a specific problem of Iranian --
they're no longer even really proxies. They're now really
extensions of the Iranian irregular military forces, and
those are the elements that are now leading the charge into
Ramadi, which is unacceptable.

They also helped to get us off track by launching the
attack on Tikrit on their own, spontaneously, which then
failed, and we had to bail them out, which was an enormous
positive turning point for us, because it demonstrated the
limitations of the ability of those Iranian-controlled Iraqi
militias to take this fight to the enemy. We have just not
only undone that benefit that we gained from that, but moved
many steps back. And if, in fact, these groups are
successful in retaking even part of Ramadi, when the troops
that we backed failed, it will demonstrate the viability of
these elements within Iraq in a catastrophic way that will
undermine Prime -- any independence Prime Minister Abadi
might have, any independence the ISF might have, and be a
significant extension of Iranian military power, not just
political influence, in the region.
Senator Ernst: Thank you.

Chairman McCain: I'd just --

Senator Ernst: Yes, I -- my time is way over, Senator.

Chairman McCain: I was going to say, I'm glad you were able to have --

Senator Ernst: I could go all day.

Chairman McCain: -- this encounter. I hope you'll have them over to your house for dinner.

Senator Ernst: I would love that.

Thank you very much, gentlemen.

Chairman McCain: Before I turn to Senator Kaine -- and I apologize for this disjointedness of the votes on the floor -- I -- maybe, General Keane and Colonel Harvey, particularly you two, can respond to this. I don't know if there's a real logical argument to the -- that would counter what has been said here today, as far as the assessment of the overall situation is concerned, because I think the facts on the ground are -- would indicate that there's strong support for the argument or the position that you have stated. But yet, we have members of the military, who many years of experience, who have fought in Iraq and Afghanistan, and yet, as military spokesmen, or even military leaders, make statements that are totally divorced, if not -- I won't say "reality," but certainly is directly counter to the testimony that you have given here today. I
do not understand it.

Maybe, Colonel Harvey, could I begin with you?

Colonel Harvey: Sir, what I find is, quite often our commanders and leaders are misreading the operational environment that they're dealing with. They don't understand the enemy well enough. And part of the problem there is, the intelligence that they get is reporting of information, it's not being put in context in a very insightful and deep way to understand how they are organized, how they really think, tactically, operationally, and strategically. It's reporting history rather than thinking about who they really are and what the enemy's doing.

Chairman McCain: Does that account for statements like, "We're winning"?

Colonel Harvey: Because they're looking at the wrong metrics. As I said in my opening statement, sir, you know, in order to get the context, you really need to deep -- have the deep dives and focus in on this, and quit looking at this on a day-to-day basis. And you have to have an operational construct. You have to understand who the enemy is and how they're going to win. You -- and probably we need better alternative analysis about this, and be truthful to ourselves about how we're doing in our lines of operation.
Chairman McCain: So, this is an argument for Team B.

Colonel Harvey: In part, yes, sir. We had group-think before, in 2005 and 2006. In May have 2006, we were being
told that everything's on track --

Chairman McCain: I --

Colonel Harvey: -- we're doing fine.

Chairman McCain: I remember it well.

Colonel Harvey: Yes, sir.

They get built-in assumptions and they're focused in
what their mission set is. Where is the order to actually
impose our will and defeat the enemy? How are we going to
align our force structure and all of our national
capabilities, in partnership with allies and folks on the
ground that we can count on, to build momentum, to impose
our will, to establish security? We don't think in those
terms anymore. We talk about management rather than
breaking the will of the enemy.

Chairman McCain: General Keane.

General Keane: Yes, sir. I mean, it -- I share your
frustration. I know we all share it. We talk about it
among ourselves quite a bit. We just had a spokesperson,
last week -- I think that's probably what you're referring
to -- who made a report, you know, to the American people at
large, that we, in fact, were succeeding against ISIS, that
we're pushing back against them, and that they're only
capable of conducting small attacks against us.

Chairman McCain: Right --

General Keane: That hasn't --

Chairman McCain: -- before Ramadi fell.

General Keane: That hasn't been true since we started, and certainly isn't true now. So, one, how do we -- this committee members, when I provided testimony in 2006 and we were pushing against the narrative at that time by senior generals and Secretaries of Defense, et cetera, we were asked the same question. How could that be? How could capable people, well-intentioned, be so wrong, in general sense, is the issue. And I think once we make up our minds that we're going to do something inside this military culture, we drive towards it. And we have a tendency, to a fault, to see those indices that contribute to what that mission success is, and to disregard -- not wholly, but to minimize those things that are really pushing against it. That's inside our culture.

How do you fix that? One way, and one way only: competent leadership fixes that. You don't permit that to happen, because you are driving honest, tough, deep-dive assessments of what's taking place, "This is what we're trying to do. These are the four things we said we were going to do. How are we doing that?"

How could you ever come to the conclusion that ISIS is
losing if it enjoys freedom of maneuver, a principle of 
warfare, and it can attack, at will, any place of its 
choosing at any time of its choosing? If a force has that 
capability to do that, and gets results as a -- as a 
manifestation of that, then that force, in fact, by 
definition, is winning.

And so, the leader should say to those subordinates 
below him, say, "What are you talking about? You're -- what 
you're telling me, none of that makes any sense. This is 
what this force is doing. This is what they're capable of. 
We have got this wrong, and how are we going to fix it?"

That is about competent leadership.

Chairman McCain: Senator Kaine.

Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And I'm jealous of my colleague's 13 minutes, and I 
hope my other colleagues don't come back, and then I may try 
your patience and go over time.

Dr. Kagan, you said something that I wrote down, just 
like a bolt of lightning, "We should not just be 
spectators." You were going through the atrocities that 
ISIL is committing, and who they are, and how dangerous they 
are, "We should not just be spectators." We are spectators. 
Congress -- Congress has been a spectator. Since August 8, 
we've been a spectator.

Absent the one vote, in September, that we took to arm
Syrian moderates, there is no evidence that Congress is concerned at all about ISIL. None. Our allies have no evidence that Congress is concerned -- as an institution; I'm not talking about individuals -- our allies have no evidence that Congress is concerned about ISIL. ISIL has no evidence that Congress is concerned about ISIL. But, most tragically, the thousands of people -- U.S. men and women in service who are deployed and fighting this battle every day, they have no evidence that Congress is concerned about ISIL, in the least.

We've been at war since August the 8th. Everybody calls it a war. The President calls it a war. Within 2 weeks, the Article 2 mission to defend the Embassy and the Consulate in Arbil were pretty safe. And he said, "We've got to go on the offense against ISIL." And Presidents since Jefferson have basically said that was the dividing line between an Article 2 power of the Commander in Chief and an Article 1 power, where Congress has got to declare war or authorize military action.

But, now, for 9 and a half months, we have failed to do what is our fundamental job, what only we are supposed to do -- there's not been a declaration of war, there's not been an authorization for use of military force, there's been no House committee action, there's been no House floor debate or vote. There was one committee vote, in the Senate
Foreign Relations Committee in December, but there's been no meaningful floor debate and no meaningful Senate floor action.

How strange it is. We're in a Congress that loves to punch this President as an imperial President, and threaten lawsuits against him when he does stuff without congressional approval. In the most solemn responsibility under Article 1 that Congress has, we have been silent, when we've got all these people overseas who are risking their lives every day, we have been silent. It's Congress that's the spectators. We've got opinions. You know, we'd call the play differently. But, we're spectators when we ought to be decisionmakers.

This is now a war, into the 10th month, without a clear legal basis. I call it extralegal or even illegal. The President, himself, has, in his own words, acknowledged that he's gone past the Article 2 power of imminent defense. The claim that the 2001 or 2002 authorizations cover an organization that didn't form til 2 years after 9/11, that doesn't make any sense. It doesn't make any sense whatsoever.

And yet, Congress has come up with one excuse after another to avoid taking action. The first excuse was this. The leaders -- both parties, both houses -- the four leaders went to the White House in June and said, "Do not
make us take action on this war. You do what you want. Do not make us take action in Congress before the midterm elections." And Congress adjourned, with an ongoing war, 6 weeks before a midterm election. The earliest adjournment since 1960 before a midterm election with an ongoing war, and we haven't done anything about it.

After the midterm election, then it was, "Well, but now the Senate's going to change hands, so we shouldn't do anything gas a lameduck Senate, because there will be a new Senate." So, we waited til January.

Then we came in, and a lot of folks said, "Well, you know, we shouldn't do our Article 1 job, because the President hasn't sent us a draft authorization." I harshly criticize the administration for not sending in a draft authorization over right when they started this legal action. But, the fact that they didn't doesn't excuse Congress for not doing the job we're supposed to do.

And now there's been an authorization pending before Congress since the 17th of February, more than 3 months, and we still haven't done anything. And I don't know what the excuse is now.

I think you can only conclude that we don't want to take it up because we're either indifferent to this threat -- and I don't think that's true. I think the real reason is, we don't have the backbone to take it up and do the job
that Congress is supposed to do. And what that means is, while we're not doing our job, there are others who are doing their job. We deployed thousands into the theater of battle, two folks who are pilots, off the deck of the Theodore Roosevelt, which was -- which is home-ported in Virginia, crashed a plane on takeoff the other day. We're deploying thousands, and they're risking their lives. We have had deaths of American servicemen in connection with Operation Inherent Resolve. We had -- have had deaths of American civilians who were held hostage. ISIL didn't start executing American hostages until after we started bombing them on the 8th of August. So, we've had American deaths as a result of this war. We still haven't done anything. We've had over 3,000 airstrikes that the U.S. has -- and we still haven't done anything. And now the costs passed the $2 billion mark in April, and we still haven't done anything.

It's just -- I never would have contemplated, before I came to this body, that there would be a situation in which Congress would tolerate an ongoing war and just stand back and say, "Well, I guess the President can just do whatever the President wants to do." It's just not supposed to be that way. And one of the reasons I'm glad that the Chair called this committee today, as I'm hoping that the challenging
events of last weekend -- not only the fall of Ramadi, but
if you go into the details of that Special Forces operation
in Syria -- very, very serious. We were lucky that we
didn't lose U.S. lives in that operation. It was very well
done. But, this is complicated and detailed, and it's going
to go on for a very long time. And I just wonder how much
longer Congress is going to just be a spectator.

I mean, we can criticize the White House and the
administration strategy -- and I'm going to, and we ought to
keep doing it if we don't like it -- but, we really haven't
earned the right -- we haven't earned the right to be
critics as long as we stand back and don't do the one thing
that Congress is supposed to do.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman McCain: I know there's a question in there
somewhere.

Senator Graham.

Senator Graham: Well, thank you.

Here's my question. Does the current strategy in Iraq
and Syria have any chance to succeed?

General Keane: Well, Senator, that's really been the
basis of our testimony. And --

Senator Graham: Well, I didn't hear it, so just --

General Keane: I know.

Senator Graham: -- say no.
General Keane: We'll gladly say it again.

Senator Graham: Yeah, say it again.

General Keane: And respect you asking the question, quite frankly. The answer is no. It's --

Senator Graham: Does everybody agree the answer is no? Does everybody agree that, in the current configuration, that the problems in Iraq and Syria present a direct threat to the homeland?

General Keane: Yes.

Dr. Kagan: Yes.

Colonel Harvey: Yes.

Senator Graham: I had a conversation with the CIA Director, yesterday, who echoed that sentiment. So, the average American needs to understand that failure in Iraq and Syria is putting the homeland at risk because so many foreign fighters are flowing in, and they have the ability, potentially, to hit us here at home. Is that all correct?

General Keane: Yes.

Senator Graham: And I think, General Keane, you've described this strategy as not enough. Is that correct?

General Keane: Yeah. Absolutely. It's far from it. And we all, collectively, laid out some details to support that.

Senator Graham: Do you see any way to defeat ISIL in Syria without a substantial Arab army involved?
General Keane: I don't know how you get there. I mean, obviously, if we deployed tens of thousands of troops, ourselves, we could defeat ISIS in Syria. I don't think anybody here would recommend such an event. I think the people who have vested interests there should be involved, and I think they would get involved. I mean, you know that they've said as much, but we have to do something to change the momentum of the Assad regime.

Senator Graham: Dr. Kagan, is it fair to say that no Arab army is going into Syria unless part of the -- one of the objectives is to take Assad down?

Dr. Kagan: Absolutely, Senator. That's going to be a precondition for --

Senator Graham: Because they're not going to just fight ISIL and leave Assad in power, therefore giving the place to Syria. Is that correct?

Dr. Kagan: On the contrary, sir.

Senator Graham: I mean, to Iran.

Dr. Kagan: On the contrary, sir. What we're seeing, I think, is increasing levels of support of various varieties to Jabhat al-Nusra as an alternative to the --

Senator Graham: So, I want people to understand that our strategy is to empower a radical Islamic Sunni group to fight Assad rather than having an army on the ground that -- made up of allies. Is that fairly accurate?
We're choosing to work with terrorists --

Dr. Kagan: I think --

Senator Graham: -- or somebody's -- the Arabs are choosing to work with terrorists, because there's a vacuum created by us.

Dr. Kagan: I think some people are choosing to work with terrorists because of the vacuum that we have created. I don't think that's the intent of our policy.

Senator Graham: No, but that's the effect of the policy.

Dr. Kagan: I believe it is, yes, sir.

Senator Graham: So, we find ourselves where our allies in the region are supporting a terrorist group as a last-resort proposition because America is AWOL.

Colonel Harvey, at the end of the day, do you see a scenario of dislodging ISIL, taking Assad out, that doesn't require a sustained commitment by the world to put Syria back together?

Colonel Harvey: No, I do not see.

Senator Graham: We're talking years, and billions of dollars.

Colonel Harvey: I believe so, sir, yes.

Senator Graham: All right. Sir, I don't want to butcher your last name. If this war keeps going on the way it is a year from now, do you worry about Jordan and Lebanon
being affected?

Mr. Katulis: I do, and especially Jordan, a country I've lived in and studied as a Fulbright scholar. We are doing important things to help strengthen that government, but it is feeling the force of not only the --

Senator Graham: If we lost the King of Jordan, we'd be losing one of the most trustworthy allies in the region. Is that correct?

Mr. Katulis: Correct.

Senator Graham: I was told yesterday that there are more Syrian children in elementary school in Lebanon than Lebanese children. Does that surprise anybody?

Mr. Katulis: It doesn't surprise me, but it should shock all of us.

Senator Graham: Well, it should shock everybody. I've just made a statement that there are more kids in elementary school in Lebanon from Syria than Lebanese kids. So, if this war continues in its current fashion, it will create unending chaos in the Mideast that will change the map for generations to come. Do you all agree with that?

Mr. Katulis: Yes.

General Keane: Yes.

Senator Graham: And there is no way to get Iraq right until you deal with Syria in a responsible manner. Is that correct?
1  General Keane: That is correct.
2  Colonel Harvey: Correct.
3  Senator Graham: And Iran is all in when it comes to
4  Syria. Assad wouldn't last 15 minutes without Iran's help.
5  Do you agree?
6  Colonel Harvey: It's been critical to sustaining the
7  Assad regime. They don't --
8  Senator Graham: Do you agree that, if we gave
9  Iranians, say, $50 billion as a signing bonus for their
10  nuclear program, it's highly likely that some of that money
11  would go to Assad?
12  General Keane: And to the rest of his proxies that are
13  seeking domination of the Middle East.
14  Senator Graham: Have you seen anything to suggest the
15  Iranians are changing their behavior for the better when it
16  comes to the region?
17  Dr. Kagan: On the contrary, sir. They're becoming
18  more aggressive in many facets.
19  Senator Graham: Would you say they're the most
20  aggressive they've been in modern times?
21  Dr. Kagan: Yes, sir.
22  General Keane: Yes.
23  Senator Graham: Would you say that the Iranians are
24  directly responsible for toppling -- toppling a pro-American
25  government in Yemen by supporting the Houthis?
General Keane: They contributed to it, for sure.

Senator Graham: Would you agree with me that, now that we've lost our eyes and ears in Yemen, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is growing as a threat to the homeland?

Colonel Harvey: Yes.

Dr. Kagan: Not only that, but ISIS is also gaining position in Yemen.

Senator Graham: Do you agree with me that Syria is now a perfect forum to launch an attack from the United States because there are so many foreign fighters with Western passports?

Colonel Harvey: Yes.

Senator Graham: Do you agree with me that the Shi'a militia on the ground in Iraq are controlled by the Iranians?

Colonel Harvey: Yes.

Senator Graham: Do you agree with me that we're doing permanent damage to the ability of Iraq to reconstruct if we allow the Shi'a militia to continue to have dominance on the battlefield?

General Keane: Yes.

Colonel Harvey: Yes.

Senator Graham: Do you see any good thing coming from this strategy being continued?

General Keane: No.
Colonel Harvey: No, sir.

General Keane: It's destined to fail.

Senator Graham: And there is a better way. We just have to choose that way.

Colonel Harvey: Correct, sir.

General Keane: Correct.

Senator Graham: There is a better way. Do you all agree?

Colonel Harvey: Yes, sir.

General Keane: Yes, sir.

Senator Graham: Thank you.

Chairman McCain: Any more --

Senator Cruz.

Senator Cruz: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you very much for being here. Thank you for your service and your leadership.

I'd like to ask the panel, first, for your assessment of the current level of success we are seeing in the military campaign against ISIS.

Dr. Kagan: It is failing, Senator. That's our -- I think our assessment, generally, across the board, is that it is failing in Iraq, it is failing in Syria, and it is failing across the board in the region.

Senator Cruz: And why is it failing?

Dr. Kagan: In my view, it was ill-conceived to begin
with, because it focused exclusively on Iraq. It was badly
under-resourced, and excessive restraints and constraints
have been put on the limited resources that we were willing
to deploy.

Senator Cruz: Could you please elaborate on the
excessive constraints that have been placed on our military?

Dr. Kagan: Yes, sir.

We have forces in theater that could have made a
significant difference, I believe, in the fight for Ramadi,
had they been allowed to embed at lower levels, had they
been allowed to perform functions of forward air controllers
and bring in precision air support, had the -- some of the
rotary-wing aviation that we have in theater been used in
direct support of that fight, had the forces that we have in
theater been able to go out to the tribes and reach out to
them directly rather than relying on the tribes to come to
them. There were a number of things that even this limited
force could have done, I think, that would have made a
difference. But, the force was probably too limited to be
decisive, in any event.

General Keane: Yeah. Now, just to add on to that, I
mean -- you know, the military -- these other components to
the President's strategy, as you know -- and there's huge
problems with them, as well -- but the military component is
clearly under-resourced. There's not enough trainers,
there's not enough advisors. And the role of the advisors is fundamentally flawed, itself. The advisors have to be down where the units are doing the fighting, at least at the battalion level. What reason is that? Because they help them plan, they help them execute, they contribute to their success, they have the capability to call in airstrikes, they have the capability to use drones in support of those ground forces to help acquire intelligence for them, and they can use attack helicopters, as well.

And therefore, the airstrikes that we currently have, which are excellent in taking out command and control, other infrastructure, logistic infrastructures, depots -- essentially, facilities -- they get -- it starts to fall off very rapidly when you're dealing with mobile targets. And then, Senator, the overwhelming amount of combat that takes place, to use military terms, is close combat in urban centers that are populated and where we get -- we, our forces, Iraqi forces -- get very close to the enemy. To be able to do that, you have to guide the bombs from that airplane, take control of them. And that's called close air support. That's what we need the forward air controllers for.

So, the effectiveness of our airpower is this: 75 percent of the missions that are flown come back with their bombs, because they cannot acquire the target or properly
identify the target so they have some assurances that they're not going to hit -- hurt somebody with those bombs that we don't want to be hurt. That changes dramatically if we put those forward air controllers on the ground.

I'll tell you what. If you're fighting as the fighting took place in Ramadi, and, as that fight unfolded, the scenario was -- they had prepared, for weeks, to get to Ramadi. This was not due to a sandstorm. This is taking out supporting towns, other attacks, diversionary attacks, that led to, finally, an assault using suicide-bombers' vehicles to do that. If that force had antitank weapons, they could have killed those vehicles. If they had Apache helicopters, they could have killed those vehicles. Those vehicles blew up and destroyed almost entire blocks, and destroyed entire units, because the explosives were so heavy on it.

After that came the fighting forces, themselves. If -- again, if we had close air support, we could easily deal with those fighting forces before they actually closed with the Iraqi military. Apache helicopters, close air support, would have significantly impacted them. And then we have a close fight, and assuming the Iraqi forces could deal with that.

But, I would tell you this. Many of those Iraqi forces -- it's not reported -- did fight heroically in Ramadi. And
a lot of them fled. But, that resolve gets stiffened very quickly when they watch those suicide bombers get blown up before they get to them, when they watch those units — those caravans coming down the road after them get blown up before they get to them, because we have proper surveillance, we have resources that can deal with that — antitank guided missiles and the like. We start to change the dimension on the battlefield very significantly as a result of providing them with the proper resources.

These are the constraints that are out there that are manifesting itself in the behavior of the Iraqi Security Forces. They have their own problems — leadership, discipline, morale, and competence. I'm not suggesting that they don't. But, there's a lot we could do that could make a difference.

Senator Cruz: Let me ask one final question, which is: The administration is currently declining to arm the Kurds. The Peshmerga are fighting ISIS. They are effective fighters. They have been allies of America. In my judgment, the policy of not arming the Kurds makes very little sense. I would be interested in the panel's assessment of, Should we be arming the Kurds? And is the current policy reasonable and effective in defeating ISIS?

Dr. Kagan: Sir, we -- I think it's a consensus on the panel that we should be helping the Kurds defend themselves,
but that the Kurds will not be able to be effective partners in retaking the portions of Arab Iraq that ISIS now controls, but that certainly we should be helping the Kurds defend themselves, I think.

Chairman McCain: Could I point out the -- actually, we're not refusing to arm the Kurds. The problem is, it goes through Baghdad, and the Kurds continue to complain that there is not the kind of facilitation of the delivery of those weapons. But, the Senator's point is, for all practical purposes, I think, correct.

Senator King.

Senator King: One of the -- a phrase you just used struck a chord with me. It -- there was weeks in preparation for going to Ramadi -- raises the question of intelligence. And, General Keane, would you comment? Do we have adequate intelligence? Do we have any intelligence? And have we become too reliant on signals intelligence and, therefore, don't have human beings giving us information?

General Keane: Yeah, I mean, that's a great question. And it's more appropriately put to the military leaders when they come in here, because they have the details of it, and -- but, this much I do know. My sensing, from talking to my sources, is the intelligence function is not robust enough. And it -- yes, we are relying on national intelligence sources and some regional intelligence sources. Some of
that is surveillance, some of that is, you know, signals intelligence, as well. But, there's a lot more that we can do to assist them. We use surveillance a lot to assist the use of airpower, because it's not controlled by forward air controllers. We need different kinds of surveillance in there to assist ground forces.

When we were fighting in Iraq, and now finishing up in Afghanistan, our maneuver units used different kinds of drones. They've much smaller. They don't stay up, necessarily, as long as the ones that assist the airpower function. And they assist the ground commanders. That kind of capability there, controlled by U.S., would dramatically make a difference for the ground forces that are in the fight, because that would give them the ability to see the preparations the enemy is making, to see the execution before they -- it impacts on them, and, most importantly, to do something about it.

I think the entire intelligence function has got to be put under review. We have a tendency to focus on other things that are kinetic --

Senator King: Right.

General Keane: -- but the intelligence function, in this kind of warfare, is significant, in terms of its enhancing ground forces and air forces to be able to use their capabilities to the fullest.
Senator King: And it's unfortunate that we continue to -- we seem to continue to be surprised.

Did you --

Colonel Harvey: Sir, if I could, on the Ramadi issue, just -- I'm at the University of South Florida, and, you know, we drafted a paper outlining that Ramadi was going to fall, early last week, and we were looking at data that's only available to us through open-source information, but understanding the enemy, their intent, trying to get inside how they're orchestrating the fight. And it's not just about having the intelligence, it's knowing what to do with the information and how to think about it.

The warnings were there, the indicators were there. If we could see it, at the University of South Florida, and others here in -- like the Institute for the Study of War, I think, also saw that -- then we shouldn't have been making public statements, midweek, officially saying that Ramadi was not going to fall, that it wasn't really under threat, because that creates another problem of its own, because then you have the collapse, and it looks like there's a real problem in our communication and understanding at the most -- highest levels of our government.

Senator King: Well, and also it makes the ISIS look invincible and more powerful, and that's -- helps in their recruiting, and it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.
You've made a strong case for things like close air support, forward controllers, all of those kinds of things. But, isn't one of the fundamental problems -- we could have all of those assets, but, if the Iraqi Security Forces don't have the will to fight, and if the local population doesn't have the -- any confidence in the government in Baghdad, it's still a very difficult, if not impossible, proposition. Can you give me some thoughts on that?

Dr. Kagan: Senator, I agree with the statement that you made. If those two conditions are true, then it's difficult, to impossible. I don't think it's true that the Iraqi forces don't have the will to fight. I think they do have the will to fight. But, I think, as General Keane pointed out and as we've seen repeatedly, will to fight is one thing, belief in your ability to succeed is another critical component to will to fight. And that's one of the things that we have provided, historically, to our allies in Iraq and Afghanistan, and also to NATO allies and various other partners who rely on our overmatching military capabilities just as much as the Iraqis would. We can make it so that the Iraqis don't have to worry about being overrun. That's what we used to do. We are allowing them to be overrun in these circumstances. And that erodes their will to fight, significantly.

Your point about the political accommodation is also
1 incredibly important. We absolutely need to have an Iraqi
government that is prepared to reach out to Sunni
effectively. And we haven't seen that. Unfortunately, the
more that we try to subcontract these conflicts to local
forces in preference to our own --

Senator King: Then you're talking about the --

Dr. Kagan: -- you get a --

Senator King: -- Shi'a militia.

Dr. Kagan: Exactly, sir.

Senator King: Which only exacerbates the sectarian
conflict, which makes ISIS look good to the Sunni chiefs in
Anbar.

Dr. Kagan: Or more tolerable, perhaps, than the
alternatives.

Senator King: Yeah. I don't think they look good to
anybody.

Dr. Kagan: Yes, sir.

Senator King: It's -- but, if they don't have
confidence -- I mean, isn't that one of the fundamental
problems here, is that ISIS has been swimming in, if not a
friendly sea, at least a neutral sea, in terms of the Sunni
provinces?

Dr. Kagan: I think it's a very fearful sea. And I
think that that's -- you know, we shouldn't forget that
terrorism works both ways, and these guys are incredibly
brutal in dealing with the populations that they control.

So, people are going to require a certain amount of assurance that, if they rise up against these guys, that they will win, because it -- the alternative is that they will be completely destroyed as communities.

General Keane: You know, the other thing is, the force that we had in Iraq, the Iraqi Security Force that took us -- it took us a while to get them to be effective, to be frank about it. And one of the things that made them very effective during the surge period, where General Petraeus changed the dimension on the battlefield, and he said, "We're not just going to provide them advisors, we're going to ask them to fight side by side with us" -- platoon, side by side; company, side by side; battalion, side by side.

That dimension exponentially increased the capability of the force, because they could see what right looked like. They could see it. It was right there. A sergeant could see a U.S. sergeant's performance, how he acted under stress. Soldiers could see it. Other leaders could see their counterparts' performance.

So, that force grew rather dramatically, and we were there multiple weeks throughout 2007 and 2008, the three of us on this side of the table. And that was an effective force. And I can tell you for a fact, because I saw it with my own eyes, I saw battalion commanders, brigade commanders,
and division commanders distinguish themselves in combat and
under significant stress. And we felt good about that
force. We were saying, "Wow, they finally -- they've got it
together." What happened to that force? Well, so much
attention has been placed on Maliki's malice in what he did
to undermine his political opponents. He destroyed that
force, because he saw those distinguished leaders, who were
accomplished as a result of their performance on the
battlefield, and their people were devoted to them -- he saw
them as threats to him, politically as well as his political
opponents. And he undermined that force. He purged that
force.

So, that force is not there, the one that we used to
have. He put in these political phonies and cranks and
other people who didn't have the military competence. Well,
that -- changing leadership and getting that leadership
back, and others who are willing to have that kind of
commitment and competence, that takes a little time to fix.
But, the fact that we did have it, Senator, at one time, and
it was pretty good, tells you that there is something there
that we can work with, and we can get it back there.
Whether that can be done in time is another issue.

Senator King: Looks around -- I may be the chair now,
so I'm going to give myself another 10 seconds.

One simple question, though. In 2007-2008, how many
Americans were in Iraq?

General Keane: Certainly. I mean, we had somewhere in the neighborhood -- correct me if I'm wrong, guys -- about 130,000 in Iraq. And that's how that force grew to the -- but, what I'm saying to you is that, when we finished, when we had completed our involvement in Iraq, the force that we'd left there was a capable force, the Iraqi Security Force.

Senator King: I understand that. The question is, What do we have to do to rebuild it? That's the question. I'm out of time.

Senator Sullivan [presiding]: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Gentlemen, thank you for your testimony.

I wanted to talk at -- initially, about the issue of credibility. And, you know, there's been a lot of discussion about how we've lost credibility with our allies in places like Syria. But, I also want to talk about the importance of the issue of credibility with the American people. And there has been, I think, a narrative in the administration that has not been helpful, in that there's been an emphasis on the fact that we are now -- our combat role in the Middle East is now finished. Well, of course, it isn't finished. Just tell that to the pilots who are flying daily missions. We think of combat in terms of the infantry soldiers, but a lot of times we forget the brave
men and women who are flying these missions, daily. And they're -- that's combat. And obviously, also, with the recent Delta Force mission by some very brave Americans, that's boots on the ground. So, we're in combat. We even have boots on the ground, but there's still this narrative that somehow we're done.

So, General Keane, what I wanted to ask you, first of all, is, Do you think that this narrative, which is a false one, in my view, has inhibited our ability to actually develop a robust strategy we're talking about? Do we need JTACs, do we need other forces on the ground? And yet, we're competing with a narrative from the White House that says, "No, no, no, no, we're done." And it seems to me that would be a limiting factor to developing a strategy that ultimately is -- would do what we all want it to do, which is protect America's national security interests.

General Keane: Well, yes, I certainly -- when I look at it and try to speculate about what is driving some of our decisions, what is driving our narrative, you know, one of the things I've observed since I've been closer to it in recent years than when I was when I was a younger officer, is that most administrations, Democratic or Republican, have a tendency to overreact to what took place in the previous administration. And I think this one is no exception to that, making a -- making it a principle of the
administration to have a guarantor that we will not be involved in any military activity in the Middle East or in South Asia that could lead to another protracted war. And I think that's probably good -- a good principle. But, the issue is, that should not trump what's necessary to do, given the fact that ISIS represents a new organization --

Senator Sullivan: Yeah.

General Keane: -- with new leadership, a new vision, in terms of its global and regional strategy, and that it is a barbaric organization committing genocide, assassination, enslavement of women, and raping of women, as we all know, and that it is fully intent on conducting a religious war based on their ideology. And we cannot let the rearview mirror of Iraq and Afghanistan so disincentivize us to deal with the reality of what this is. And I'm convinced that the American people, when we inform them --

Senator Sullivan: Yeah.

General Keane: -- and we educate them, and we take them through this -- I mean, I dealt with the Bush administration. They never truly explained what radical Islam is and why it was so dangerous. We never truly took apart the ideology.

Senator Sullivan: Yeah.

General Keane: We never truly fashioned a strategy to deal with it in a comprehensive way.
Senator Sullivan: Can I -- I'd like to follow up --
General Keane: And here we sit, with the same problem
today.
Senator Sullivan: I think that's a great point, and
it's something that I think -- my own view is that you're
directly on point. If we level with the American people,
talk about the threats, talk about the strategy, that --
it's really important -- many of you have been raising that
-- I think everybody recognizes what we -- you know, once we
lay that out, what we would or wouldn't have to do to
address it.

So, let me ask a kind of a related question for Mr.
Kagan. You've written on the long war, the idea of -- that
I think sometimes we look at what's going on with ISIS and
other issues in the Middle East and think, "Hey, we're going
to have this done in a couple of months -- 18 months, 20
months, maybe a couple of years." Do you think that there
is an importance to having the leadership, both in terms of
Congress, but particularly the executive branch, talk more
broadly -- and again, level with the American people --
about that this might be a generational conflict, this might
be akin to the Cold War, where we've got to lay out a broad
strategy -- and, Mr. Katulis, I think your point, early on
in your testimony, about the need for a strategic concept is
so important -- lay out a strategy that the executive
branch, the legislative branch, and the American people can get behind, and then execute it. And level with the American people that this might not be done in 18 months.

So, would any of you care -- Mr. Kagan, I know you've written about the long war. Could you -- would you feel free to talk about that?

And, Mr. Katulis, I'd be very interested -- when you talked about the strategic concept. What is it? Obviously, 20 seconds left, that's a big topic. But, if you could point us in the direction of your writings or some principles that all of you have thought about, I think that would be very helpful.

Mr. Kagan?

Dr. Kagan: Senator, I mean, this is a generational struggle that we're in, at least. It may be longer than -- Senator Sullivan: But, we don't talk about it that way, do we --

Dr. Kagan: No, on the --

Senator Sullivan: -- very much?

Dr. Kagan: -- contrary. I think your first -- the point that you opened with is a very important one, that when the administration's narrative is that we're ending the wars, it is impossible to develop an -- a coherent strategy for fighting the wars. And we do need to understand that this is a war. This is -- these are battle fronts on a
common war that is going to last for a long time. And we
don't get to end it unless we win. But, you don't get to
decide -- we may not be interested in war, but war is
interested in us. And this is going to continue to be a
problem. And we need to level with the American people, as
you say, as a basis for developing any kind of strategy. I
totally agree with you.

Mr. Katulis: I think we need to define what we want to
achieve. Quite often over the last 14 years, in
Afghanistan, in Iraq, now with ISIL, we define our
objectives in terms of what we're going to counter and
defeat. That's important. But, what has been missing, I
think, comprehensively, whether it's in a particular
theater, like Iraq or Syria or Afghanistan, is the
definition of what we actually need to leave behind in those
societies, how we help others help themselves.

I do believe, at certain points -- President Bush
certainly did this; certain points, President Obama does
this -- talks about the long-term nature of this. If you
look at their planning documents, at least, for the anti-
ISIL strategy, it doesn't say, "Let's end this." As the
administration used to say about Afghanistan and Iraq,
"We're going to end it at a particular period of time." It
extends into who will be the next President.

But, your point is terribly important, and I have
written several articles and a book about this, too. It's important, because, for our own society, there is a new generation, called Millennials, that are actually, this year, in number, larger than the Baby Boomers or -- I'm a Generation X-er. Our leaders aren't messaging in a cohesive way. And I think part of it is the partisanship that we have in our politics and other things. And I -- I'm a strong centrist internationalist. I believe that we need to bring the American people along with us.

And something Senator Kaine has said here earlier and before is that the debate that we need to be having on the authorization of the use of military force, and action on it -- this is a moment which has not been seized. You could criticize the administration or you could criticize whomever in Congress. There's been this muddle. And I think part of the reason, it goes back to, we actually haven't defined for the American public, in the way that Fred and others have argued here, that the U.S. has a special leadership role in the world. Our leadership -- countries in the region are still looking to us to actually do more. But, we need to actually take those steps beyond the questions on military and security steps, which are terribly important. We need to actually, then, talk about, How do we defeat these ideologies? We've done it before, with Naziism or Communism. You know, they're on the margins. Our model is
much better. Our values are better. But, what happened to
the battle of ideas? We had that debate for a couple of
years after 9/11. We kind of rediscovered it for a little
bit. But, I think our ADD, our attention deficit disorder,
in our own society -- and that's what I would say is, as
thought leaders, as leaders in Congress, we all have a
responsibility to continue to talk about this in a sustained
way.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

Thank you, gentlemen.

Senator Kaine [presiding]: We've all had one round,
but if anybody has a second round -- I'm just going to seize
the moment, here, to continue for a few minutes, if we can.

I'm interested -- we've had visits in the Senate
Foreign Relations from leaders that are our allies -- King
-- the King of Jordan, in January; the Emir of Qatar, in
February. We've had discussions with Saudi leadership,
including the Saudi Ambassador. And every time we have
these discussions, I ask them, "Tell us what you think the
role of the U.S. should be, vis-a-vis ISIL, the battle
against ISIL." And, in particular, because this is a point
of difference among some on the Foreign Relations Committee,
I've asked about the -- their thought about American ground
troops. And I want to tell you what they've said, but then
I'm curious about your opinions about what they've said.
The King of Jordan said, "That would be a mistake. This is our battle, not yours. And if it gets positioned as the U.S. against ISIL, then that will not be a helpful thing. If it's -- we stand up against the terrorist threat in our own region, and the U.S. helps us in a vigorous way, but clearly a supporter, not the main driver, that's the way this should position, and significant U.S. ground troops would -- just like the U.S. is doing 90 percent of the airstrikes, the significant U.S. ground troops would make this the U.S. against ISIL."

The Emir of Qatar said, similarly, "If there's significant ground troop presence from the United States, this will be the -- a recruiting bonanza for ISIL."

In Saudi Arabia -- and this -- the meetings with the Saudis occurred right after the Saudis had gone in a major way into Yemen, but -- so, they're -- you know, they're willing, at least somewhere, to take some significant military action to deal with threats in their own region, but they also said, "U.S. ground troops against ISIL would be problematic."

Now, I don't -- you know, I'm not -- I didn't read that to say, "not even one," or "under no circumstances." But, they were very wary about the notion of U.S. ground troops. So, we're trying to work that out on the Foreign Relations Committee as we think about an authorization. Are
they right? Are they wrong? Of, if they're right, how would you square that with what a U.S. presence, U.S. support should mean?

Mr. Katulis: If I could start. It's why I -- the thrust of my remarks were on this coalition.

I actually think, for all of the criticisms of the Obama administration's strategy, some of which I share, this is the one component that simply did not exist before. It's one that has been underutilized, I believe. I do think that things like the GCC Summit last week, though there were a lot of optics and news articles about it, there is a conversation to try to build on, What can we do in partnership with them?

So, I think if there's one thing we should have learned from 2003 to 2010 or '11 in Iraq, is that, yes, U.S. forces can have an important impact on the security situation there. But, there's also downsides to having such a visible presence.

I don't think anyone on the panel -- unless I misheard it -- was talking about ever going back to, say, a 2006-2007 posture. But, I do think striking the right balance is the key question. I think the administration has been understandably reticent about what it does in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and other places, given the unforced errors on the part of the United States. But, this regional
dynamic has shifted quite a lot, which is what I was trying to emphasize.

The region, itself, recognizes that the U.S., in a very visible presence on the ground, does have significant downsides for their own legitimacy with their own populations. The region also is taking action in what it sees as its own self-interest. What I was trying to say, in terms of a multidimensional -- it's not only security support; it's investment in media campaigns and different political forces across the region.

Where I think the U.S. strategy right now -- and again, it's more honed in on what my expertise and focus is -- where we need to enhance it more is working with those reliable partners, from Jordan to the United Arab Emirates to Saudi Arabia to a number of different allies, including the Kurds we've talked about, and some of the Iraqis, to actually take what has been a significantly larger amount of resources in energy and activity and channel it towards more constructive purposes. I don't see that happening in Yemen right now. I don't see that happening yet in Syria. And I don't see that happening in many other theaters.

So, I think the basic answer to the question -- the leaders that you spoke with, I think, are reflecting a very popular view at the popular level in their countries, as well. They understand that, for whatever happened in the
Iraq War, the surge, and other things, the U.S. is better sort of seen as a backbone of support behind them, as opposed to visibly out in the front.

Dr. Kagan: Senator, I think we need to distinguish between the ideal and reality. Ideally, of course it would be better for regional states to take care of regional problems, and regional militaries to be involved, with a caveat that we do have a regional war going on, and the regional actors we're talking about are being seen as on one side of that. So, we need to think about what the Iranian reaction would be to Saudi divisions deploying into Iraq on behalf of the Iraqis. I don't think we would enjoy that very much. And I think it might be worse, actually, than the Iranian reaction to the deployment of U.S. forces in there. So, it's a complicated dynamic.

But, look, in the world of reality, the Jordanians, they don't have the forces to do this. The Saudis don't have -- the regional militaries are not capable of providing the kind of assistance to Iraq that we can provide. They don't have it in their force structure, they don't have it in their --

Senator Kaine: How about the Turks?

Dr. Kagan: The Turks might be able to provide some element of it, although no one provides the capability that the U.S. provides to its allies, including the Turks, and
they would still be dependent on us.

But, again, the -- I'm really not sure that the optics of the return of the Ottoman Empire in force to Iraq would be better than the optics of having a limited number of American troops on the ground there. So, I think that the regional leaders you're talking to are expressing an ideal version of a strategy which we would all like to see, but it's not in accord with reality.

And, as you think about an AUMF, I would say an AUMF in which Congress micromanages what forces can or cannot be sent, and thereby, in my opinion, infringes somewhat on the prerogative of the President to choose how to fight a war that Congress authorizes, but also, in this circumstances, that would constrain the deployment of American ground forces when they are so clearly necessary, would be extremely damaging.

Colonel Harvey: Senator Kaine, if I could.

This reminds me of the myth that I heard in Iraq about: U.S. forces were the generator of the antibodies that caused the insurgency. It was a real misreading of what was going on in Iraq in the drivers of the fight.

We have to be focused on what are U.S. interests and how do we defeat this enemy. And the seeds of strategic failure are found in failing to define that enemy, define our interests, the costs, and the risks. And if we do those
things, and we think about our interests, it will drive us
to engage more seriously than we have, in my mind. I think
it's a very similar situation today. We study
radicalization, recruitment for the foreign fighter flow.
The U.S. presence in Iraq is not going to dramatically
increase the foreign fighter flow. It is being driven by a
range of issues and the different types of recruits that are
being pulled in from Tunisia and elsewhere. The driver
within Iraq is not the U.S. presence, it's Shi'a domination,
it's the fear for their future and their own lives and lack
of political inclusion, et cetera. That's the issue we need
to get our head around.

General Keane: Yeah, I -- you know, I agree with what
everybody's said here. And I think we talk past each other
a little bit on this issue. No one here, certainly, is
advocating that we should have ground units that are
occupying towns and villages, and securing them, and
therefore, protecting them from ISIS attack that would put
us right in the mainstream of defending against ISIS. Now,
I think that's unnecessary, and it would be a mistake. But
also, when we have a policy that says "no boots on the
ground," that doesn't make any sense, either, because it
denies us from having advisors that have a role to play, it
denies us with -- from forward air controllers that have a
role to play, as we pointed out, and other military
capabilities that are unique to us. And we've elaborated on
what they are. They are significant enablers that make --
would make a difference in what the 60 nations have agreed
to do, which is support the Iraqi ground forces, as
imperfect as they are. But, let's give them a better hand
to play than what we are doing. And I don't believe there
is a single nation that would object to anything of what we
are describing is -- are enablers that would make a
difference.

Second, when it comes to Syria, I think this is a
difference. And if you spoke to them about that, you know
what their view is about Assad. We've already dealt with
that in the regime. And they know full well that the deal
with ISIS in Syria, this is going to take a ground force,
and they would have to contribute to that ground force. I
would think that they would logically ask us to participate
in that with them. We would -- I don't think we would
necessarily have to be the largest contributor, but I think
we would have to participate. And I think they would
reasonably want us, too, because of our experience and our
capabilities, if we would actually lead it. Maybe not.

But, I think those two things would probably be on the
table for discussion. And I think it's reasonable that that
kind of allocation of U.S. capability and leadership to deal
with ISIS in Syria is, in fact, an eventuality.
Senator Kaine: Senator Blumenthal, do you have questions for the panel?

Senator Blumenthal: I do. Thank you very much.

Thank you all for being here and for your very thoughtful and eloquent remarks. I was here for the beginning remarks. Unfortunately, as so often happens here, I was diverted to another committee meeting after our vote.

I want to come back to what Mr. Kagan was describing as the "evil" of ISIS/ISIL and the absolutely horrid, unspeakable acts of brutality that they commit -- mass rape, mass murder. And I agree with you that they are one of the most evil, maybe the most evil institution in history. We can argue about it. But, when I go home this weekend, most folks are going to ask me, What's the threat to the United States? And 50 years from now, others will be sitting where you are, and where I am, talking about probably other evil institutions that are committing mass brutality. Because that seems to be, unfortunately and tragically, the nature of the human condition. It's happened throughout our history. And I think the ordinary person in Connecticut over the Memorial Day weekend is going to wonder what our role should be in stopping that from occurring unless there is a threat to this country. So, perhaps you and others on the panel could tell me what I should tell the people of Connecticut about why the United States should be involved,
whether it is Special Operations Forces or better air
support or whatever the involvement is, and why that matters
to our security.

Dr. Kagan: Senator, I think it's a fair question.
And, as a Connecticut native, I'm -- I am concerned about
what you have to tell the Connecticut people to get them
onboard with this.

May I start by saying -- as I was driving down to
Virginia the other day, I drove past the Holocaust Museum,
and I saw, again, the sign that's up there that is always
there, which is "Never Again." And I would submit that we
need -- one of the things we need to tell the American
people is that America is not historically a country that
watches these kinds of atrocities on this scale occur and
does nothing. It actually is a core American value to take
a stand against these kind of -- we do it very late, we did
-- we try to talk ourselves out of it, we have long
arguments about it, but, ultimately, we generally do it.
And that's one of the things that makes us America. And I
think we really shouldn't lose sight of that moral
imperative as we talk about this.

But, your comments are very well taken, sir. The
reality is, ISIS poses a clear and present danger to the
United States homeland. It has already been encouraging,
condoning, and applauding lone-wolf attacks here. It has
made it clear that it has the objective of attacking America and the West, that it is actively recruiting cells in America and the West. And it will do that with the resources of a ministate behind it, which is something that we have never seen before with al-Qaeda. This is not a group of bandits hanging out in the mountains in Afghanistan. And that attack was devastating enough. But, if we reflect on the resources that ISIS has access to, controlling Mosul, Fallujah, Ramadi, al-Raqqa, oil infrastructure, the resources that were in various universities in Mosul and so forth, that -- thousands of fighters, tens of thousands of recruits -- this is an army, and this is an army that is very sophisticated and has an ability to conduct operational military planning and execute it that is in advance of anything that I've seen from any of these groups. And it has declared its intention to come after the United States, and shown a willingness to do that. That is something that I think the people of Connecticut need to be concerned about.

General Keane: Yeah, I would certainly agree with what Fred is saying, is that it should be a concern to us, in a couple of ways. Certainly, what they are doing to motivate and inspire others who are not necessarily in the region but are in other countries and are -- can identify with this movement, and many of them are self-radicalized or possibly
they're already radicalized, but they're motivated to take action, and take violent action. We've seen plenty of
evidence of that.

And the longer you permit the organization to succeed -- can you imagine what has gone out on the Internet from
ISIS around the world as a result of their success in Ramadi, and how that has motivated others, that ISIS, in
fact, is winning, and they're standing up against the United States, they're standing up against these strong allies of
the United States in the region and Europe, and they're actually winning? So, there's huge danger there. As long
as you let this organization stay and we don't decapitate it, then they -- the motivation and inspiration of self-
radicalization continues to grow. That's one thing.

The second thing is, in the region itself -- and we showed on a map -- they're moving into other countries at
the same time they're defending what they have in Syria and Iraq, and expanding in those countries. This is what makes
this organization so very different than what we've dealt with in the past. And they're looking at Libya as a --
because of the social and political upheaval in Libya -- and there's hardly a government there and anybody to push back
on it -- they're going to put huge resources in there. Why are we concerned about that? Our interests in the region,
our interests in North Africa, that would be on the southern
tip of NATO there, not too many miles away from Italy. In Afghanistan, they have expanded rapidly, beyond most of our expectations, I would assume, into eight provinces in Afghanistan. Now, we have interests in Afghanistan, for obvious reasons.

So, this is a movement that we can tie directly to the security of the American people and to our national security objectives of the United States in this region and in South Asia.

Senator Blumenthal: So, it -- if I can put it a different way, just to conclude, it's more than -- and, by the way, American values are directly and inevitably linked to stopping human atrocities. I agree totally with you, Mr. Kagan. But, our interests go beyond that -- those values. And, by the way, all of the reasons that you've articulated are the reasons that I voted for the training and equipping measures that have been implemented. But, my frustration is that, as you also have observed, there is a huge gap between the goals and missions that we've outlined for the United States and the actual action that we're undertaking. The train-and-equip activities are way behind what we might have hoped by this point, and there's no clear timetable for really achieving the level of capability that we expected or hoped.

So, I think this has been a very sobering morning, and
I thank you all for being here.

Thank you.

Chairman McCain [presiding]: Well, I also want to thank the witnesses. And it's been, I think, very helpful to all members. And this is not an issue that's going away. So, I'm sure that we'll be seeing you again.

Thank you.

This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:59 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]