

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE
SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

Thursday, February 4, 2016

Washington, D.C.

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U.S. Senate

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Committee on Armed Services

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Washington, D.C.

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The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:02 a.m. in

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Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John

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McCain, chairman of the committee, presiding.

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Committee Members Present: Senators McCain

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[presiding], Ayotte, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis,

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Sullivan, Lee, Graham, Reed, McCaskill, Manchin, Shaheen,

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Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Donnelly, Hirono, King, and

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Heinrich.

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1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN McCAIN, U.S. SENATOR
2 FROM ARIZONA

3 Chairman McCain: Well, good morning. The Senate Armed
4 Services Committee meets this morning to receive testimony
5 on the situation in Afghanistan.

6 I'm pleased to welcome General John Campbell before
7 this committee one more time.

8 General, this committee is grateful to you for your
9 many years of distinguished service and your leadership of
10 the United States and allied forces in Afghanistan at a
11 critical time. We know the many sacrifices you and your
12 family have made. We are proud of the work you have done.
13 We hope to benefit from your abilities and experience after
14 your service in the Army is complete. You have a great deal
15 still to offer our Nation and its security.

16 General Campbell, you have presided over important
17 progress in improving the capability and capacity of the
18 Afghan military. You've developed a strong and productive
19 relationship with the Afghan Unity Government. And, when
20 you saw that our hard-won gains were in danger, you spoke up
21 for what was right, that further troop withdrawals should be
22 based on conditions on the ground. Your successor will
23 profit greatly from your leadership and your record of
24 service.

25 In 2001, U.S. forces went to Afghanistan because that

1 was where, under the sanctuary of the Taliban regime, al-
2 Qaeda planned and trained for the September 11th attacks
3 that killed 3,000 innocent civilians on American soil. Our
4 mission was to ensure that Afghanistan would never again be
5 a safe haven for al-Qaeda or other terrorist groups to
6 attack the United States or our allies and partners. That
7 mission has been successful for 14 years, but it's far from
8 over. U.S. forces are carrying out the mission today by
9 performing two critical tasks: counterterrorism and
10 training, advising, and assisting our Afghan partners. Both
11 of these tasks are vital to achieving our strategic goals
12 and protecting our homeland. We're taking the fight to
13 America's enemies in Afghanistan while at the same time
14 building a -- sustainable Afghan Security Forces that can
15 stand on its own, take on violent extremists, and deny
16 terrorists safe haven in their country.

17 But, I fear that the latest calendar-based withdrawal
18 plan places these missions, and therefore our Nation's
19 security, at risk. While President Obama made the right
20 decision to keep 9,800 U.S. troops in Afghanistan, he
21 repeated again the strategic folly of setting a timetable
22 for withdrawal that ignores conditions on the ground,
23 discourages our friends, and gives hope to our enemies. I
24 continue to be disheartened by the perpetual political focus
25 on troop numbers. This decision should be, first, about

1 what capabilities we need to protect our national security
2 and, second, about the number of troops it takes to enable
3 those capabilities. The 5,500 U.S. troops that will be left
4 in Afghanistan if this plan goes forward be -- will not be
5 adequate -- will be adequate for either the counterterrorism
6 mission or the train, advise, and consent mission, but not
7 both. This smaller American force will inevitably be forced
8 to shoulder a higher level of risk to themselves, to their
9 mission, and to the national security of the United States.

10 The risk to American forces only grows worse as the
11 terrorist threat in Afghanistan intensifies. The Taliban,
12 al-Qaeda, and the Haqqani Network continue to threaten our
13 interests in Afghanistan and beyond. Now ISIL has arrived
14 on the battlefield, raising the specter of yet another ISIL
15 safe haven from which it can plan and execute attacks. This
16 complex and expanding terrorist threat is a test both for us
17 as well as the Afghan military, which must still develop key
18 enabling capabilities, including intelligence, logistics,
19 special forces, airlift, and close air support.

20 In short, as General Campbell said in his prepared
21 statement, "Afghan has not achieved an enduring level of
22 security and stability that justifies a reduction of our
23 support in 2016." As a result, the conditions on the ground
24 simply do not warrant a further withdrawal of U.S. forces.
25 By now, we should have learned, from the precipitous

1 withdrawal from Iraq and the disaster that ensued, that wars
2 do not end just because politicians say so.

3 Many of us are also increasingly concerned that our
4 rules of engagement, as dictated by the authorities the
5 President gives to our commanders on the ground, are making
6 our mission more difficult and increasing the risk to our
7 troops. For example, it is stunning that, up until just a
8 few weeks ago, we had to wait for ISIL to attack or threaten
9 our forces in Afghanistan before taking action. General
10 Campbell has talked about the importance of making the fight
11 against violent extremists like al-Qaeda and ISIL an away
12 game. I fear that restrictive authorities dictated by a
13 White House overly involved in battlefield tactical decision
14 is inviting a home game, as we saw in Paris and San
15 Bernardino.

16 To secure Afghanistan and prevent another attack on our
17 homeland requires the right capabilities in the right
18 places, supported by the right number of people with the
19 right authorities. It's time to give our commanders the
20 resources and authorities they need to seize the initiative
21 and force the enemy to react instead of the other way
22 around.

23 The world walked away from Afghanistan once before, and
24 it descended into chaos that contributed to the worst
25 terrorist attack ever against our homeland. We cannot

1 afford to repeat that mistake, because the threats we face
2 are real and the stakes are high for the lives of the Afghan
3 people, for the stability of the region, and for the
4 national security of the United States. President Obama has
5 the opportunity to make decisions now that will empower his
6 successor to do what is necessary to confront the challenges
7 we will face in Afghanistan in 2017 and beyond. I hope he
8 will seize that opportunity.

9 General Campbell, after your 18 months on the ground in
10 Afghanistan, almost 37 years of distinguished service in the
11 Army, this committee looks forward to hearing what you
12 believe the United States, our coalition partners, and our
13 Afghan friends need to do differently to put 2016 on a
14 better course than 2015.

15 Senator Reed.

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. JACK REED, U.S. SENATOR FROM RHODE
2 ISLAND

3 Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

4 And let me join you in welcoming General Campbell and
5 thanking him and saluting him for his extraordinary service
6 to the Nation and to the Army. I -- for the past 18 months,
7 you have led with distinction in Afghanistan. You've seen a
8 significant transition during that period of time. And your
9 leadership has been critical to the successes we've seen
10 there and to the situation we now enjoy.

11 I look forward to continuing our relationship, but I
12 know you're contemplating retirement, and I want to thank
13 you for your service, and also thank your family, who has
14 served so well and so faithfully with you. So, thank you
15 very much, sir.

16 I -- President Obama announced, on October 15th, 2015,
17 that U.S. troop levels will remain at 9800 personnel for
18 most of 2016, but with a planned reduction to 5,500
19 personnel by January 1st, 2017. Our forces, in conjunction
20 with NATO and other allies, continue to have two missions:
21 train, assist, and advise the Afghan National Security
22 Forces, or ANSF, and conduct counterterrorism operations.
23 And key to enabling both missions, the President also
24 announced in October that our troops would remain at a small
25 number of bases, including Bagram, Jalalabad in the east,

1 and Kandahar in the south, rather than falling back to a
2 Kabul-centric footprint. This adequately staffed and
3 geographically dispersed approach has allowed us to support
4 our missions in Afghanistan and encourage political and
5 governmental reforms by President Ghani and Chief Executive
6 Officer Abdullah. It is also signals to our allies of our
7 resolve and the need for their continued commitment.

8 The ANSF recently completed their first calendar year
9 bearing sole responsibility for the security of Afghanistan,
10 albeit with significant enabling support from the coalition.
11 The past year presented the ANSF with an array of
12 challenges, but they maintained their overall operational
13 coherence, despite a notable shift in Taliban operations
14 from seasonal fighting to a continuously sustained effort.
15 In addition, the emergence of the Islamic State in the
16 Khorasan Province, or ISKP, and the continuing and, indeed,
17 increased threat of al-Qaeda elements within Afghanistan.
18 General Campbell, I look forward to your assessment of the
19 performance of the ANSF over the past year, and plans for
20 addressing remaining capability shortfalls.

21 Given the dynamic security environment in Afghanistan,
22 it is important that we continually evaluate the assumptions
23 underlying our force posture in Afghanistan. As Lieutenant
24 General Nicholson stated last week: If confirmed, he
25 intends to take the first few months of this command to

1 assess what capabilities and associated number of troops he
2 believes we will need to remain in Afghanistan in order to
3 successfully carry out the train-advise-and-assist and
4 counterterror missions. I believe that additional troop
5 withdrawals in Afghanistan should be conditions-based, and
6 that any recommendations resulting from Lieutenant General
7 Nicholson's assessment should be given extraordinary weight.

8 General Campbell, I hope you will share with the
9 committee your views on the number of the troops and pace of
10 withdrawal you would recommend for 2016, and whether events
11 of the past year have illuminated ways in which we can
12 better enable security operations by the Afghans.

13 Lastly, as we look forward to the 2016 NATO Warsaw
14 Summit in July, it will be important for the National Unity
15 Government, led by President Ghani and Chief Executive
16 Officer Abdullah, to demonstrate progress on anticorruption
17 and other governance initiatives to give the international
18 community confidence that its assistance is being
19 effectively utilized. Continued international support is
20 going to be very important over the next few years.

21 General Campbell, I would also welcome your assessment
22 of progress on these issues and how your command is
23 assisting the Afghans in providing accountability for
24 support provided to the Afghan Security Forces Fund and
25 other sources.

1 2016 is going to be a critical year of transition for
2 Afghanistan, and decisions by the U.S. and our coalition
3 partners over the next few months could significantly impact
4 the trajectory of the country. I believe steady,
5 predictable U.S. presence and assistance is necessary for
6 continued success.

7 General Campbell, again, thank you for your service.

8 Thank you, sir.

9 Chairman McCain: General Campbell, welcome.

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1 STATEMENT OF GENERAL JOHN F. CAMPBELL, USA; COMMANDER,
2 RESOLUTE SUPPORT; COMMANDER, UNITED STATES FORCES-
3 AFGHANISTAN

4 General Campbell: Good morning, Chairman McCain,
5 Ranking Member Reed, and other distinguished members of the
6 committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before
7 you today while representing all the servicemen and -women
8 of the United States Forces-Afghanistan. And I've been
9 honored to lead and represent all of them and what they do,
10 here, for the last 18 months. And it's truly been a
11 privilege and an honor to do so.

12 I'd like to begin by thanking the committee again for
13 your steadfast support our soldiers, sailors, airmans, and
14 marines, and our civilians. And, due to your leadership and
15 commitment, they continue to be the best trained and
16 equipped force that our Nation has ever deployed. The
17 remarkable performance bears true testimony to your backing
18 and the backing of the American people.

19 I'd also like to recognize the unsung heroes of our
20 Nation, and that is our military families. They've stood by
21 us for 14 to 15 years of conflict. They endure the
22 hardships of frequent absences, and they allow us to focus
23 on our mission. And without their love and support, we
24 could not succeed. So, we thank them for their continued
25 support.

1 Finally, I'd like to acknowledge and honor the over
2 2200 servicemen and -women who have died in Afghanistan
3 since 2001, and the over 20,000 who have been wounded.
4 Tragically, we recently lost six U.S. airmen to a
5 motorcycle-borne IED attack just before Christmas and a
6 Special Forces advisor just after the New Year. And these
7 losses remind us that Afghanistan continues to be a very
8 dangerous place. And while we take every measure to reduce
9 force-protection threats, our servicemembers, our civilians,
10 and our coalition partners remain in harm's way. We also
11 remember the fallen of the Afghan Security Forces and the
12 loved ones that they've left behind. They now bear the
13 brunt of this conflict as they fight to bring peace and
14 security to Afghanistan. Every day, we honor their memories
15 by assisting our Afghan partners as they fight to improve
16 security and, by extension, help us protect our own
17 homeland.

18 The men and women I serve with have not forgotten why
19 we are in Afghanistan, and we remain there to ensure that
20 another terrorist attack originating from Afghanistan and
21 directed at the -- against the U.S. homeland will never,
22 ever happen again. That is why the counterterrorism mission
23 remains critical to our mutual security interests. Yet, we
24 recognize the importance of our train-advise-and-assist
25 mission as we build a sustainable Afghan Security Force

1 capable of standing alone in its mission of countering
2 violent extremists and denying terrorists safe haven. This
3 is a shared vital interest among Afghanistan, United States,
4 and the international community. Those who serve in this
5 mission understand that Afghanistan is worth our investment.
6 It is their commitment that keeps us focused on our vision
7 for a stable and secure Afghanistan. Together, the train-
8 advise-and-assist efforts, coupled with our counterterrorism
9 mission, underpin our overall mission.

10 Just 4 months have passed since I last appeared before
11 this committee. Even in that short time, there have been
12 many developments in the security situation, the progress of
13 the Afghan government and its security forces, our
14 coalition's commitments, and, of course, the U.S. way ahead
15 in 2016 and beyond. Today, I will speak to these
16 developments and answer questions you may have on the state
17 of our efforts and the overall situation in Afghanistan.
18 Specifically, I'd like to address the lessons we learned
19 from this last year, how we intend to ensure that 2016 is
20 different from 2015, and how we see 2017 and beyond.

21 To assess these questions, we must ask ourselves, What
22 else can we do to enable the Afghan Security Forces, and
23 what else can the Afghans do for themselves to secure their
24 country? 2015 was fundamentally different than previous
25 years of our campaign. It is important to remember this in

1 context as we assess our efforts in Afghanistan:

2 First, Afghanistan's government and security forces
3 have managed multiple transitions in 2015.

4 Second, the U.S. and coalition mission and force
5 structure have significantly changed.

6 And third, changing regional dynamics, including
7 evolving threats, have presented both challenges and
8 opportunities for our success.

9 As I travel around Afghanistan, I recognize the changes
10 and the progress made over the years of this mission. This
11 is my third deployment to Afghanistan over the last 14
12 years, and I have served as senior commander for the last 18
13 months. And I am ever mindful of how far we've come, but I
14 remain clear-eyed about the challenges that lie ahead.

15 Now more than ever, the United States should not waiver
16 on Afghanistan. The crucial investment we are making
17 provides dividends that achieve our strategic goals, secure
18 our homeland, and position us well in a region -- a region
19 that's been a source of terrorism and instability for
20 decades.

21 Many of you have heard me say that for every bad-news
22 story we hear coming out of Afghanistan, there are ten good-
23 news stories we don't. While this is to be expected, I
24 think it tints our view of our progress and prospects for
25 success in Afghanistan. It is my intent to provide a

1 balanced assessment that not only exposes the challenges
2 that lie ahead, but also illustrates our gains in the Afghan
3 progress.

4 With that in mind, I would like to address the concerns
5 over what many feel is an overall declining security
6 situation in Afghanistan. The situation is more dynamic
7 than a simple yes-or-no answer -- that a simple yes-or-no
8 answer would adequately address. In fact, as of last week,
9 the units we have on the ground throughout the country
10 report that, of the 407 district centers, eight of them, or
11 2 percent, are under insurgent control. We assess that
12 another 18, or 4 percent, are under what we call "insurgent
13 influence." Often, these district centers are in remote and
14 sparsely populated areas that security forces are not able
15 to access very often in force. Additionally, at any given
16 time, there may be up to 94 district centers, around 23
17 percent, that we view as at risk.

18 These figures make two clear points. Number one, that
19 approximately 70 percent of the inhabited parts of
20 Afghanistan are either under government influence or
21 government control. And two, the importance of prioritizing
22 Afghan resources to ensure key district centers do not fall
23 into insurgent influence or control.

24 Over the last 8 years, the Afghan Security Forces have
25 made advancements, beginning as an unorganized collection of

1 militia and developing into a modern security force with
2 many of the systems and processes of an advanced military.
3 They have proven resilient and continue to make significant
4 strides in only the second year in which Afghan forces
5 assumed the lead for security throughout Afghanistan.

6 They have demonstrated the ability to successfully
7 conduct effective large-scale multi-pillar clearing
8 operations across the country, including in Helmand, Ghazni,
9 and Nangarhar. Following insurgent offenses, the Afghan
10 Security Forces were able to retake key territory, as they
11 did in Kunduz, with strong performances from all the
12 security pillars. Simultaneously, while the tactical units
13 were conducting these operations, the security institutions
14 had to continue developing the force. This includes many
15 complex tasks, such as budgeting, force generation,
16 personnel management, national-level maintenance, logistics,
17 and procurement. These are areas that challenge even the
18 most advanced militaries in the world. And I like to say
19 what we have accomplished there is akin to building an
20 airplane while in flight. And, while these systems are far
21 from perfect, the foundation has been laid, and we continue
22 to advise and assist the Afghans as they build a sustainable
23 security force that is enduring and capable of standing on
24 its own.

25 With the Afghans in the lead for security for the first

1 time in 2015, the enemy and the naysayers predicted collapse
2 of the Afghan Security Forces and the Afghan government.
3 They sought to capitalize on this. Instead, the Afghan
4 Security Forces fought for the very survival of their
5 country, and held firm. They did not fracture, and they
6 kept the insurgents from achieving their strategic goals
7 while inflicting higher casualties on the enemies. They did
8 this while maintaining a significantly higher operational
9 tempo with significantly reduced coalition support.

10 However, the lessons learned in 2015 underscore the
11 Afghan shortfalls will persist beyond 2016. Capability gaps
12 still exist in the fixed and rotary wing aviation, combined
13 arms operations, intelligence collection, dissemination, and
14 maintenance. More prominently, one of the greatest tactical
15 challenges for the Afghan Security Forces has been the over-
16 -- has been overcoming the Afghan air force's extremely
17 limited organic close-air support capability. Admittedly,
18 we began building the Afghan air force late and were
19 constrained by the time it takes to build human capital.

20 Those capability gaps notwithstanding, I still assess
21 that at least 70 percent of the problems facing Afghan
22 Security Forces result from poor leadership. Minister of
23 Defense Stanekzai recognizes this. To date, Afghan National
24 Army has replaced 92 general officers, including the 215th
25 Corps commander in Helmand. The MOI is lagging behind in

1 making leadership changes, but we're taking steps to remedy
2 this through our train-advise-and-assist mission. This kind
3 of change takes time.

4 I have seen that the consequences of Kunduz and Helmand
5 still weigh heavily on the leadership of both the security
6 forces and the Afghan government. They realize that,
7 although not strategically significant in the pure military
8 sense, those incidents shaped media coverage and undermine
9 the confidence in the government. Their desire to do better
10 runs deep and is genuine. In many ways, these events forced
11 a greater sense of urgency to make the changes they greatly
12 require.

13 Over the last year, there have been many positive
14 trends. However, Afghan Security Forces have not
15 consolidated significant gains of their own, nor defeated
16 the insurgency across Afghanistan. Suffice it to say, the
17 performance this year was uneven. To be fair, this was not
18 unexpected, given the overall conditions.

19 Ultimately, Afghanistan has not achieved an enduring
20 level of security and stability that justifies a reduction
21 in our support in 2016. That is why the President's
22 decision to maintain current force levels through most of
23 2016 was welcome and important. This decision set the
24 example for NATO, encouraging other allies and partner
25 nations to maintain or, in some cases, increase their

1 contributions to the Resolute Support Mission.

2 During this winter lull, we are focusing on steps that
3 best prepare the Afghan Security Forces for the summer
4 campaign of 2016. Their leadership shares this focus, and
5 they are dedicated to resetting the force, implementing
6 reforms to improve training, equipping, and rebuilding of
7 units that have endured unusually high operational tempo for
8 long periods of time, especially those forces in Helmand.
9 Such reforms are critical and are taking root with the
10 Afghan Security Forces, but broader reforms remain important
11 to success in Afghanistan.

12 The Afghan government, including its security
13 institutions, continues to show progress in battling
14 corruption and achieving other reforms, such as gender
15 integration. However, much work still needs to be done. We
16 fully understand that many want to see more progress on
17 social and human rights issues before continuing to commit
18 resources to Afghanistan. The National Unity Government
19 also recognizes this and has welcomed our increased use of
20 conditionality to usher change. They understand the
21 importance of stability, opportunity, and hope. They
22 understand the importance that keeping the donor nations
23 engaged, and they understand that hope inspires people to
24 stay in Afghanistan instead of seeking opportunity
25 elsewhere.

1 Afghanistan is at an inflection point, and I believe if
2 we do not make deliberate, measured adjustments, 2016 is at
3 risk of being no better, and possibly worse, than 2015. To
4 place this into context, I would like to emphasize the
5 uniqueness of 2015 and some dynamics I think we should
6 soberly consider as we assess our way forward.

7 The enemy has also changed this year. Unlike previous
8 year, the Taliban extended the fighting season and has
9 continued to conduct operations in Helmand, as called for by
10 the Taliban leadership. Even so, the Taliban recognized
11 that they have no lasting gains to consolidate from last
12 year and can afford to cede -- and cannot afford to cede the
13 limited ground they do hold. They are also coming out of
14 the year that saw fracturing of their organization,
15 competition from other insurgent groups, resulting in loss
16 of legitimacy and high casualty rates, probably their
17 highest casualty rates in years.

18 As I meet with Afghan soldiers and police, I remind
19 them that the Taliban are not 10 feet tall and bulletproof.
20 They face significant challenges, and they can be defeated.
21 The fact is often forgotten in prominent media reports. The
22 brief notoriety that the Taliban gained in Kunduz and
23 Helmand is still overshadowed by the significant cost of
24 those efforts, compounded by the loss of credibility and
25 unity as the enemy infighting continues.

1 The Taliban's public narrative in Afghanistan is
2 waning, too. It is not lost on the people of Afghanistan
3 that the Taliban are killing Afghans, security forces and
4 innocent civilians alike. Recent public information
5 campaigns have also been more forceful, stressing to the
6 public that, "The Taliban have no plan for the development
7 of Afghanistan. The Taliban are here to kill you. The
8 Taliban are against women. The Taliban are against
9 education. And the Taliban are against progress for the
10 nation of Afghanistan." As these messages resonate, the
11 government must show that it is the only viable option for
12 Afghanistan. At the city, district, provincial, and
13 national levels, the people of Afghanistan see that the
14 return of the Taliban represents a return to brutality,
15 criminality, and oppression.

16 The operating environment is also evolving for the
17 Taliban due to the emergence of other insurgent groups and
18 terrorist groups. One such group is Daesh in Afghanistan or
19 the Islamic State Khorasan Province, ISKP. Daesh continues
20 to conduct brutal attacks against civilians, and directly
21 competes with the Taliban for resources to establish a
22 foothold in the country. They have focused their efforts on
23 establishing a presence in Nangahar and recruiting in other
24 areas. We recently gained the authority to strike Daesh.
25 Since then, we have had considerable success in degrading

1 their capabilities. The rejection of Daesh by local elders
2 who are working with the Afghan Security Forces has also
3 slowed the enemy's progress. The strikes have been
4 effective in mitigating their growth. We must maintain
5 constant pressure on Daesh and dedicate intelligence
6 resources to prevent strategic surprise.

7 The Taliban has had to adjust to this year's strategy
8 in order to counter the emergence of Daesh and the other
9 insurgent groups. This dynamic has served as a distraction
10 to the Taliban, requiring them to shift precious resources
11 from fighting the Afghan Security Forces to countering
12 opposition groups. More than just consuming resources, the
13 infighting and resultant inability to maintain cohesion has
14 also severely damaged the credibility of the Taliban's core
15 narrative of being a strong, united organization.

16 Groups aligned with the Taliban, such as al-Qaeda and
17 the Haqqani Network, continue to threaten our national
18 security interests. Al-Qaeda has been significantly
19 weakened, but, as evidenced by a recent discovery in an al-
20 Qaeda camp on Afghanistan's southern border, they are
21 certainly not extinct. Haqqani Network remains the most
22 capable threat to the U.S. and coalition forces, planning
23 and executing the most violent high-profile attacks in
24 Kabul. These are certainly not residual threats that would
25 allow for a peaceful transition across Afghanistan.

1 Instead, they are persistent threats that are adapting to
2 changing operational environment. Ultimately, the threats
3 Afghanistan faces require our sustained attention and
4 forward presence.

5 Reconciliation is a path needed to obtain a negotiated
6 settlement and end the conflict in Afghanistan. Current
7 reconciliation efforts are an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned
8 initiative. Recently renewed quadrilateral meeting in mid-
9 January included Afghanistan, Pakistan, United States, and
10 China.

11 It's been over a year since the formation of the
12 National Unity Government. It has faced institutional and
13 political difficulties, yet can lay claim to some meaningful
14 reform and progress during its first year. The Unity
15 Government may be fragile, but it is holding, despite being
16 challenged, and it's making continuous progress and building
17 momentum to create an increasingly viable future.

18 Politically, Afghanistan is postured for both progress
19 and continued strategic partnership with the United States.
20 We have a strong and willing partner -- partners in
21 President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah, and this has
22 not always been the case.

23 So, as I said at the beginning of this statement, we
24 now ask ourselves, What else can we do to enable the Afghan
25 Security Forces, and what else can the Afghans do for

1 themselves to secure their country? A strategic stalemate
2 without end is not the goal of this campaign, nor is it true
3 to the reason we came here over 14 years ago. In fact,
4 recently submitted NATO strategic assessment makes
5 recommendations for adjustments to the current NATO Op Plan
6 that, in my best military advice, will help push the
7 campaign past this inflection point and increase the
8 prospect of achieving our shared goals. Measures that NATO
9 is considering include advisory adjustments to give
10 commanders more flexibility on the ground and shifting from
11 a yearly outlook to a 5-year vision to give all donor
12 nations, and especially Afghanistan, the confidence that
13 comes with predictability of support.

14 The United States must continue to show flexibility
15 with our mission in 2016 and beyond. As the commander, I am
16 responsible for aligning our national objectives with ways
17 and means while managing risk. Now that we have been
18 allocated our resources for 2016, I'm assessing the ways in
19 which we assure that 2016 is not a rerun of 2015. Based on
20 conditions and the performance of the Afghan Security Forces
21 during this winter lull, I am also reviewing how well those
22 forces will likely perform in 2017 and the U.S. and
23 coalition resources required for their continued
24 development. This is all part of a broader process in which
25 my assessment is only one part. I will provide my

1 assessments of our strategy to my military leadership as
2 well as my successor, Mick Nicholson.

3 I think it is important to remember that this time last
4 year, our plan was to transition to 1,000 troops, Kabul-
5 centric footprint. Due to conditions on the ground, the
6 President made the decision to extend 9800 through most of
7 2016 and increased our posture to 5500 in 2017. This
8 decision proved flexibility to make adjustments and
9 represents the kind of conditions-based approach that is so
10 important for our mission in Afghanistan.

11 Key to this long-term success in the region is the
12 resiliency of the Afghan government and its security
13 institutions and the ability to serve as a regional partner
14 in our combined efforts to counter violent extremism. It's
15 important to remember that the National Unity Government
16 welcomes our assistance. They are a dependable and
17 steadfast counterterrorism partner in South Asia.

18 2017 marks a significant change in our approach as we
19 focus our efforts to capitalize on the gains of the past
20 decade and build the capacity of the Afghan security
21 institutions. We now have a window of opportunity to
22 increase our likelihood of achieving strategic success. Of
23 course, our support should not be seen as open-ended, and I
24 believe our approach is sound. This year, we applied
25 greater conditionality to the Afghans in managing the

1 resources we give them. We're also developing a 5-year
2 vision out to 2020 to help better define what we are trying
3 to accomplish and avoid a year-to-year mentality. I believe
4 that by changing our and the Afghan's mindset from a cyclic
5 fighting-season-to-fighting-season view to a genuine long-
6 term outlook that best reflects our commitment, we need to
7 provide the Afghans the time and space for them to continue
8 to build their resiliency. Through their spirit and
9 fortitude, they have proven worthy of our continued support.
10 The actions we take now, combined with their resolve to
11 improve, will, over time, develop a sustainable force
12 capable of securing the nation and, in turn, help us secure
13 ours.

14 Lieutenant General Mick Nicholson is a good friend of
15 mine. He appeared before this committee last week. I'd
16 urge you to confirm him. He is the best-qualified
17 candidate. If I had to pick one man, I would pick Mick
18 Nicholson to replace me. He will do great in Afghanistan.

19 Thank you again for your steadfast support of our
20 campaign. And I look forward to your questions.

21 [The prepared statement of General Campbell follows:]

22

23

24

25

1 Chairman McCain: Thank you, General.

2 I think we're in agreement that we don't want a rerun
3 of 2015 in 2016. General Nicholson said that he agreed with
4 my assessment, in his hearing last week, that the situation
5 -- conditions in Afghanistan are deteriorating. Do you
6 share that view?

7 General Campbell: Sir, I said in the opening statement
8 that the situation in Afghanistan is very complex. It has
9 been a very tough year in 2015. We knew it would be. We
10 can't let '15 be like '16. There are things that they can
11 do -- they are working on those -- things that we can do.
12 And we can't have a repeat of 2015.

13 The Taliban have been emboldened by our withdrawal, our
14 -- the lack of close air support the Afghans have had. And
15 so, they have had -- they have fought the Afghan Security
16 Forces very tough, and we can't let that happen as we move
17 forward. The situation has been a lot harder for them, sir,
18 and we can't let that continue in '16.

19 Chairman McCain: I mentioned, in my opening statement
20 and our conversations, that we should not just focus on
21 numbers, but on missions and capabilities that are required
22 to be provided by United States forces that the Afghans
23 simply are incapable of. In my view, and, I believe,
24 General Nicholson's view, that 5,500, you'll either be able
25 to carry out the counterterrorism mission or the train-

1 advise-and-assist, but not both. Is that your assessment?

2 General Campbell: Sir, the 5500 plan was developed
3 primarily around counterterrorism. There's very limited
4 train-advise-and-assist in that -- in those numbers. To
5 continue to build on the Afghan Security Forces, the gaps
6 and seams in aviation, logistics, intelligence, as I've
7 talked about, we'd have to make some adjustments to that
8 number.

9 Chairman McCain: Well, my point is that right now the
10 plan is to go down 5,500, the end of 2016. Is that correct?

11 General Campbell: Sir, that is correct. By 1 January
12 2017 --

13 Chairman McCain: So, do you think that we would be
14 prepared, by the end of 2016, to go down to 5,500, giving
15 the requirements for both counterterrorism and train-advise-
16 and-assist?

17 General Campbell: Sir, I've taken a look, again, at
18 '15, and provided my military leadership with what I believe
19 are adjustments to the number. And, as you said, sir, we
20 don't want to talk about number, we want to talk about
21 capabilities. And I think --

22 Chairman McCain: But, if --

23 General Campbell: -- that if there are areas that we
24 need to take a look at their capabilities that they lacked
25 in '15 --

1 Chairman McCain: Yeah, but, General, again, are they
2 going to be able to carry out at -- with 2- -- with 5,500,
3 both the counterterrorism mission and the train-advise-and-
4 insist mission? Are they going to be able to do that with
5 5,500 troops? I think that's a pretty straightforward
6 question, sir.

7 General Campbell: Yes, sir. Sir, at 5500, I believe
8 that they can do the CT mission, the counterterrorism
9 mission, and a very limited train-advise-assist --

10 Chairman McCain: Will they be able to do both missions
11 adequately with 5,500 troops?

12 General Campbell: Sir, some of that will depend upon
13 how the Afghan forces continue to make the reforms here in
14 the winter lull, how they continue to improve over the
15 summer. And I think we've got to continually assess that.
16 If they don't get after the reforms, if some of the
17 assumptions we made --

18 Chairman McCain: So, is it correct for us to plan on
19 5,500 for the end of 2016?

20 General Campbell: Sir, right now, you know, my last
21 order is to get to 5500. And so, we're prepared to do that.
22 But --

23 Chairman McCain: But, do you think --

24 General Campbell: -- at the same time --

25 Chairman McCain: My question is, is -- Do you think

1 that that is appropriate for us to plan on that capability,
2 which we're certainly not sure of today, and, your successor
3 stated, with a deteriorating situation in Afghanistan?

4 General Campbell: Sir, as the commander on the ground,
5 what I believe is that I have to be prepared for all
6 situations. I will prepare for 5500, to make sure I can
7 follow those orders. But, to the same time, based on --

8 Chairman McCain: I'm asking for your professional
9 opinion; not whether you can do it or not, whether it is the
10 right thing to do or not.

11 General Campbell: Sir, I believe the right thing to do
12 is to prepare to go to 5500, as I am ordered, but, at the
13 same time, take a look at conditions on the ground, look at
14 the capabilities, as you discussed, sir, not the number, and
15 to provide those adjustments to my military leadership, and
16 then make those adjustments to the capabilities. If we
17 don't have the capabilities or if the assumptions that we
18 made for the 5500 plan don't come out true, then, of course,
19 we have to make those adjustments. And it --

20 Chairman McCain: But, you can't --

21 General Campbell: -- and it seems to me those
22 adjustments --

23 Chairman McCain: -- make adjustments on the --

24 General Campbell: -- would mean an increased number --

25 Chairman McCain: -- fly -- you can't make those

1 adjustments on the fly. We all know that, General. I'm --

2 General Campbell: Sir, we need to make those decisions
3 early on. We need to make those decisions --

4 Chairman McCain: The present situation, as it is, does
5 it call for continued -- either the counterterrorism mission
6 or train-advise-and-consent, but not both? Because that's
7 what 5500 troops give you.

8 General Campbell: Sir, again, very little TAA on 5500.
9 Absolutely right.

10 Chairman McCain: Are you concerned about the rules of
11 engagement that -- for example, I guess that we finally
12 decided to attack ISIS. How long had you known ISIS was
13 there before you got the go -- the green light to attack
14 ISIS?

15 General Campbell: Sir, ISIS-KP, or Daesh, in
16 Afghanistan, started forming probably in the January 2015
17 timeframe.

18 Chairman McCain: So, that was about a year later we
19 decided that we had -- you had permission to strike.

20 General Campbell: That's correct, sir.

21 Chairman McCain: Senator Reed.

22 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

23 And again, thank you, General Campbell, for your
24 service and your testimony.

25 You made the point, but I think it should be

1 emphasized. In order to effectively be prepared for 2016,
2 the decision about force level should be made earlier rather
3 than later. What do you think the optimal sort of timeframe
4 is to make that decision, regardless of what it is? The
5 next 2 months? The next 30 days?

6 General Campbell: Sir, I would -- my advice would be
7 to make that decision as early as you could. It would
8 probably be -- I would like to see that made before the
9 summer. What that does is, it really includes NATO. NATO's
10 force-generation cycle, they start looking at that in June.
11 So, if you want to have NATO part of this, you've got to
12 make that call early so they can force-generate so that
13 forces would be ready by 1 January 2017. Same with our
14 forces. You make those decisions late, it would be harder
15 to get the folks trained, ready to be there on 1 January
16 2017.

17 Senator Reed: So, given General Nicholson's obligation
18 and commitment to make a very careful review of -- which I
19 assume is stressed 30-plus days, he should be ready to make
20 a recommendation early spring so that the decision should be
21 made early summer, at the latest.

22 General Campbell: Sir, General Nicholson talked about
23 90 days. Sir, I'll make sure he has all of my assessments,
24 all -- everything that I have, a complete transition that
25 will help him move along in his assessment, as well.

1 Senator Reed: Regardless of what the decision is, it
2 should be made, in your view, by early summer. Say, June.

3 General Campbell: Sir, I would say it would -- it is
4 prudent if we make the decision as early as --

5 Senator Reed: All right.

6 General Campbell: -- we can. Yes, sir.

7 Senator Reed: Let me also ask about the nature of the
8 changing missions, based upon the last year. And I think
9 it's important, because the decisions that were made with
10 respect to the current force structure and the projected
11 force structure were made more than a year ago. In that
12 time, the Pakistan military forces have driven considerable
13 number of insurgents, particularly into Nangarhar Province
14 in the east, including al-Qaeda elements. You've also seen
15 the formation in that year of ISKP, which requires, I assume
16 -- I'll ask the question -- a much more vigorous
17 counterterrorism activity than you contemplated a year ago,
18 or the President contemplated a year ago. Is that accurate?

19 General Campbell: Sir, that would be accurate. Yes,
20 sir.

21 Senator Reed: So, in the counterterror mission alone,
22 there is a need for increased capacity. That might not be
23 directly related to numbers, but at least increased
24 capacity. Is that correct?

25 General Campbell: Sir, I'd rather discuss on CT in a

1 closed hearing, but --

2 Senator Reed: But --

3 General Campbell: -- on specific numbers and the
4 capability of a CT component. Just suffice it to say we
5 have the very best counterterrorism capability in the entire
6 world. With the additional authorities we received about 2
7 weeks ago, we've -- we have fused those with the resources
8 that I currently have. Yes, sir.

9 Senator Reed: Let me -- another variation on this is
10 that, as you suggested in your testimony, because of the --
11 a conflict between -- and fragmentation between the Taliban
12 and ISKP, there's been active combat between those two
13 elements. Is that correct?

14 General Campbell: Sir, that is correct, especially in
15 the Nangarhar Province.

16 Senator Reed: Right. And our efforts now are
17 authorized to degrade ISKP -- could leave a situation where
18 the Taliban is -- has much more flexibility to attack Afghan
19 National Security Forces. Is that a real possibility?

20 General Campbell: Sir, we've got to balance that, so,
21 yes, sir, that is a possibility.

22 Senator Reed: So, it raises the issue of authorities,
23 in terms of having the authority to also conduct strikes
24 against ANS- -- excuse me, against Taliban elements, even
25 though they might not be directly threatening American

1 personnel and force protection. Is that something you're
2 thinking about?

3 General Campbell: Sir, as I talked about, making sure
4 that 2016 is not like 2015, as I bin that -- you know, you
5 can bin more people, more resources, or more authorities.
6 And so, I believe that the -- the authorities piece, I have
7 taken a hard look at, and I have provided recommendations on
8 mitigating and adjusting authorities to my chain of command.

9 Senator Reed: But, one of the aspects here is that the
10 -- I know you suggested the complexity in the
11 interrelatedness of all of these different decisions, that
12 the decision to go after ISKP proactively raises the issue
13 of whether the Taliban will take advantage unwittingly of
14 our attacks, and that's something we have to also consider.
15 I think that's a point you would agree with.

16 General Campbell: Yes, sir. Again, sir, the goal is
17 to build the Afghan capacity so they --

18 Senator Reed: Right.

19 General Campbell: -- can do this, themselves, as well.
20 But, absolutely.

21 Senator Reed: The other issue, in terms of military,
22 is the overall requirements to move the Afghan National
23 Security Forces from a static deployment to a much more
24 proactive deployment, and that is something that will
25 require resources in the training-assist mission, to -- not

1 only training, but also providing enablers so that they can
2 get out of those fixed positions to checkpoints, et cetera.
3 That adds another sort of capacity requirement, in your
4 view?

5 General Campbell: Sir, it could. I think it really
6 depends on the leadership of the Afghan Security Forces.
7 They have been trying to reduce checkpoints. In some corps,
8 they've been able to do it okay; in other corps, they
9 haven't done anything. So, it is about leadership. And
10 additional train-advise-and-assist could potentially provide
11 assistance to them to get after that. This -- these are --
12 this is one of the short-term reforms we're trying to get
13 after during this winter campaign.

14 Senator Reed: And you'll evaluate that, and that'll
15 help inform you and, more appropriate, General Nicholson
16 when he makes a recommendation.

17 General Campbell: Absolutely, sir. Yes, sir.

18 Senator Reed: Thank you very much.

19 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 Chairman McCain: Senator Fischer.

21 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 Welcome, General Campbell, and thank you so much for
23 your many years of service to this country and to our
24 people.

25 When we met yesterday, you talked about transitioning

1 the Afghan army out of a defensive stance into more of a
2 focus on an offensive action. So, I would like to ask, What
3 are the main steps that you see that must be taken in order
4 to accomplish this? You, earlier, mentioned the capability
5 gaps, and we see that with intelligence aviation, but that's
6 going to take quite a few years to remedy. And so, I'd like
7 to focus on how those gaps relate more to operations. Do
8 you think it's going to take years for the ANF -- ANSF to
9 move to that defensive stance? And how is that transition
10 going to relate to those capability gaps?

11 General Campbell: Thank you, Senator, for the
12 question.

13 We've been working on reducing checkpoints, trying to
14 get them more maneuverable, for the last year, the focus
15 during the winter, because they saw the result of not doing
16 that during the fighting season of '15, where they had more
17 casualties and they were defensive in nature. I think what
18 they are doing now is identifying key terrain in different
19 provinces and districts where they absolutely need these
20 combat outposts, and then reduce where they have probably 80
21 percent of their force on these type of checkpoints, both in
22 the police and the army. To get there, they have to do
23 better coordination between the MOI and MOD so that you
24 can't have the police come off one, expecting the army will
25 occupy it, or vice versa, have the army come off, expecting

1 the police. They also have to make sure that there's some
2 sort of political consensus with the governors, with the
3 district governors, because sometimes they're an impediment
4 to make sure that the operating forces can adjust their
5 forces.

6 It's been a continuous struggle, where we've worked
7 with them closely and where they have good leadership and
8 understand how important it is to come off with the
9 checkpoints, be more maneuverable. We're starting to gain a
10 little bit of traction, and we'll stay with them.

11 How that ties in to the capability gaps. They have a
12 finite number of resources, especially in the close air
13 support. So, if you're -- got checkpoints all throughout
14 the country, it'll be hard to get those kind of precious
15 resources out there. So, they do have to prioritize where
16 they apply their 352,000 Afghan Security Forces. So, moving
17 out of the checkpoints into these key terrain places, I
18 think will help them.

19 The close air support, Afghan Air Force -- ma'am, is
20 going to take several more years. It takes about 3 years to
21 build a pilot. So, if we pick somebody today, they won't
22 see that pilot for 3 more years. And that's just the human
23 capital aspect, that doesn't include acquiring the
24 platforms, the helicopters and the fixed-wing. They just
25 received four of the A-29 Super Tucano fixed-wing aircraft

1 about 2 or 3 weeks ago. We'll get another four in the
2 April-May timeframe. But, that's it for this year. So,
3 it's going to take 3 years before they even get all of the
4 equipment for the Air Force, and we'll continue to build
5 upon that.

6 Senator Fischer: And how does that affect us in our
7 planning our strategy? Are you looking at the need to find
8 a solution for all of this as we look at cutting down
9 troops? How do -- how does that all tie in? Because
10 there's a number of operations that are out there. Do we
11 have to fix it all?

12 General Campbell: Ma'am, I think, for the closer air
13 support, again, it's a long-term effort to make sure that
14 they have the right rotary-wing and fixed-wing support.
15 But, that's going to take several years. We do have a
16 current plan. What I've asked to do is another study to
17 take a look at a longer-term plan to convert MI-17s, that
18 kind of aircraft, to probably a U.S. aircraft. We're going
19 to need support from this Congress once we get through that,
20 because that is not included in the current financing of the
21 Afghan Security Force as we go forward. But, the frames
22 that we've bought for them, the MI-17s, based on operational
23 losses, OPTEMPO, over the next couple of years, that's going
24 to continue to go down, and we'll have to figure out the
25 lifecycle maintenance of probably a different airframe.

1 Senator Fischer: And how important is it for the
2 Afghans and also for our allies that are there to maintain
3 the leadership of our country, America's leadership in this
4 area, to provide -- and again, not just the Afghans, but
5 also our allies with the certainty that we are committed?
6 And -- you said this is going to take years -- how do we get
7 the message to them that we are committed, they have that
8 certainty, when we have discussions about lowering
9 personnel, lowering our troops in the area without regards
10 to what's taking place on the ground?

11 General Campbell: Yes, ma'am. We have to -- again, we
12 have to talk in longer terms. We can't talk cyclic, one
13 year at a time. I think it begins this year at Warsaw,
14 where we get all the donor nations to commit to long term
15 for financing of 2018, 2019, 2020. If we can finance it
16 that way, we ought to talk about people, equipment,
17 resources the same way, and talk in terms of 5 years.

18 NATO made their decision to continue Resolute Support
19 after the President made our decision to stay at 9800. As
20 long as the U.S. leads, then I think NATO will continue to
21 be there with us. Now that they are going to be with us
22 into 2017, as I talked about adjustments to the 5500 number
23 did not include early support to NATO. So, again, that's
24 one of the adjustments I've taken a look at since that
25 decision was made, and I've provided those adjustments that

1 I said we have to make on that 5500 capability as we move
2 forward.

3 Senator Fischer: And we're seeing support of our NATO
4 allies when they know that we are going to be there and
5 lead. Do, we also see support with the Afghan people?

6 General Campbell: Ma'am, I talked to NATO right after
7 the October decision. They're absolutely on board. All the
8 countries continue to support in '16. Many have already
9 committed for '17. So, again, I think they understand that
10 NATO -- this is NATO's largest mission, NATO's longest
11 operation they've ever had in their history. They want it
12 to be successful. If we continue to lead, NATO will be
13 there.

14 As far as the Afghan people, you know, every survey,
15 every time I talk to Afghans, overwhelmingly understand
16 that, to continue to build their Afghan Security Forces for
17 the -- a secure country, they're going to need our support,
18 and they overwhelmingly want that.

19 Senator Fischer: Thank you, General.

20 Chairman McCain: Senator Shaheen.

21 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 And thank you, General Campbell, for your service. And
23 this country certainly owes a debt of gratitude to you and
24 your family for what you have done. And I wish you much
25 success in whatever you decide to do next.

1 I want to continue the conversation you were just
2 having with Senator Fischer, because I think your point in
3 your testimony about the need to provide a long-term
4 commitment to Afghanistan that people can count on, so they
5 don't feel like we're going to be leaving at the end of each
6 year, is very important. Do you -- when you talk about the
7 support from the international community and NATO, have they
8 continued to make the financial contributions that they have
9 committed to for Afghanistan? And are they -- have you
10 spoken with them about their willingness to commit to a 5-
11 year plan for the country?

12 General Campbell: Ma'am, I raised the 5-year issue.
13 General Breedlove raised it at the last Chief of Defense
14 Conference, a couple of weeks ago. It'll go ahead to the
15 Ministers of Defense of all the countries next week. And, I
16 think, based on what I saw from the CHOD Conference, there
17 should be pretty good support as we move forward. I think
18 they're absolutely for that. It gives them the ability to
19 plan, to resource. You know, again, any budget one year at
20 a time is very, very hard to do. So, I think NATO is
21 completely on board with that. All the countries continue
22 to provide the assistance that they pledged at the Chicago
23 2012 Conference. Again, the United States is the biggest
24 contributor, but the NATO countries continue to provide, and
25 have done so.

1 And I think if we talk in terms of a long-term
2 commitment, it does a couple of things. It gives confidence
3 to the Afghan government, to the National Unity Government,
4 to the Afghan people, to the Afghan Security Forces. It
5 sends a message to Pakistan, it sends a message to the
6 Taliban, and it sends a message to NATO. So, again, long-
7 term commitment, talking those kind of terms, conditions-
8 based on the ground, is the way we need to move forward to
9 enable the Afghans to have a -- to have predictability and
10 stability. A lot of reason you see a lot of refugees
11 leaving out of Afghanistan this year is because of that
12 instability. Security, of course --

13 Senator Shaheen: Right.

14 General Campbell: -- but, again, the instability of
15 thinking people are going to leave, year after year after
16 year.

17 Senator Shaheen: So, just to be clear, they are
18 current in financial obligations that have been made.

19 General Campbell: The countries have, yes, ma'am. And
20 Afghanistan, based on the Chicago Conference, pledged 500
21 million a year toward the security forces.

22 Senator Shaheen: Right.

23 General Campbell: And they have met that. And they
24 want to bring that -- continue to bring that up.

25 Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

1 Earlier this week, there were reports of several
2 airstrikes that destroyed a radio station that was operated
3 by ISIS near the border with Pakistan. And obviously the
4 radio station is assumed to be broadcasting extremist
5 messages. I was interested in your comments about the
6 efforts of the central government to -- I don't want to call
7 it "propaganda," but to point out the differences, to the
8 Afghan people, between the work of the central government
9 and what they're seeing from the Taliban and, I assume, from
10 ISIS.

11 So, first, I want to ask, Do the people of Afghanistan
12 distinguish between the Taliban and ISIS? And, as you say,
13 this battle is really as much as -- about the hearts and
14 minds of the Afghan people as it is about the military
15 conflict. And to what extent is there support for what the
16 central government is doing in trying to point out to the
17 people of the country the differences between the Taliban
18 and what the central government is proposing? And how much
19 are we helping in that effort?

20 General Campbell: Thank you, ma'am, for the question.

21 Absolutely, the Afghan people understand and see the
22 difference between Taliban and Daesh or ISIL, and they
23 understand that ISIL has been very brutal. And all the
24 countries in the region absolutely understand that ISIL has
25 been very brutal and have talked to Afghanistan about what

1 they can help fight this regional piece about ISIL. And
2 President Ghani looks at it as -- not as an Afghan problem,
3 but as a regional, and actually a global, piece, and that
4 everybody has to stand up for it.

5 As far as providing confidence to the people, you know,
6 I think it depends upon what part of the country, what
7 district you're in, what leadership is out there, if you
8 have good district governors. He has good people in his
9 staff that provide what the people want. They care for
10 them, and they absolutely believe that the National Unity
11 Government is supporting them. Other places that they don't
12 have that and all you have is the Taliban, and the Taliban
13 provides some sort of support to them, then they're going to
14 believe the Taliban.

15 But, again, people want the same things we want here.
16 They want their kids to go to school. Taliban don't believe
17 in that. They want folks to have a job, to have a roof over
18 their heads, on and on. So, overwhelmingly, they don't want
19 to go back to Taliban days. But, if they don't have support
20 from the government at the lowest levels, they're going to
21 make the choice to go with whoever is supporting them.

22 The National Unity Government knows it has to do a
23 better job in getting out and being with the people.
24 President Ghani was just in Kandahar yesterday. He is
25 getting out now to all the different provinces to really

1 meet with the leadership. And he's doing another thing by
2 taking the Ulama, or the religious leaders, as well, and
3 making sure that they're tied into it, because they
4 absolutely can help get the right message across about what
5 the government is trying to do and how bad the Taliban is.

6 Senator Shaheen: And I know my time is expired, Mr.
7 Chairman, but if I could just ask him to follow up on the
8 other part of my question, which is, Are we contributing at
9 all, in terms of direct assistance, to a counter-ISIL, a
10 counter-Taliban message to the people of Afghanistan, that's
11 organized?

12 General Campbell: Ma'am, I can give you that in a
13 closed hearing, if I --

14 Senator Shaheen: Okay.

15 General Campbell: -- could provide that to you. Yes,
16 ma'am.

17 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. That would be helpful.

18 Chairman McCain: Senator Ayotte.

19 Senator Ayotte: Thank you, Chairman.

20 General Campbell, I want to thank you for your
21 distinguished service to the country and for your
22 leadership. You've done an excellent job. And I wish you
23 the best, going forward. And I want to thank your family,
24 as well. We're very proud of you.

25 I wanted to follow up on the questions that Chairman

1 McCain asked you about the drop in troop levels in
2 Afghanistan to 5500. As I understand your answer, this will
3 enable very little train, advise, and assist, and will be
4 focused on a CT function in Afghanistan. And my question to
5 you is, If that decision, in fact, stands, and that's where
6 we remain, what risks do we incur by going in that
7 direction? What -- especially as I heard your testimony
8 based on what happened in 2015 in Afghanistan.

9 General Campbell: Thank you, ma'am, for the question.

10 Again, the 5500 number was primarily built around a CT
11 structure. And as we've taken a look at that decision and
12 what's changed on the ground, elections are going to happen,
13 potentially in October. That was not considered.
14 Assumptions that the Afghan Security Forces would provide
15 other things to support that number, if they don't make some
16 of the reforms, then General Nicholson will absolutely have
17 to come forward and said, "This assumption did not prove
18 true; therefore, we need X." So, right now, what we're
19 counting on is that the Afghans will make necessary reforms
20 that will complement and enable us to be at that capability
21 and that number. But, if they don't, as I have said before,
22 I've already looked at and provided the military chain of
23 command ways that we can make adjustments to the
24 capabilities, as Senator McCain talked about, that we're
25 going to absolutely need.

1 Senator Ayotte: So, I just want to --

2 General Campbell: There's very limited TAA at that
3 number, yes, ma'am.

4 Senator Ayotte: So, I want to understand, just so the
5 American people understand, What are the risks there, then?
6 If all this doesn't work out perfectly and we still yet go
7 to that number, what kind of risk do we face on the ground
8 that are risks to our interests?

9 General Campbell: The risk would be that the Afghan
10 Security Forces will not be able to make the necessary
11 adjustments and improve as we thought that they could. And
12 it would take them much longer, and it would be a much
13 harder fight against the insurgents in 2016 and '17.

14 Senator Ayotte: And would that also provide more safe
15 haven for, obviously, potential extremist groups and,
16 obviously, the Taliban's reemergence?

17 General Campbell: It could. Yes, ma'am.

18 Senator Ayotte: I wanted to also ask you -- you talked
19 about the NATO commitment. And I think you said that NATO
20 will follow us. So, if we do cut in half what we have in
21 Afghanistan, what do you expect our NATO partners would do?

22 General Campbell: Again, ma'am, under the 5500 number,
23 when that plan was developed, when the President made that
24 decision, NATO had not made their decision yet. NATO made
25 their decision after the 5500 number, probably in the

1 December timeframe, to continue the Resolute Support Mission
2 into 2017. I believe NATO in -- absolutely would welcome,
3 and needs, the U.S. to continue to have the lead. And we
4 actually provide some resources to our NATO partners, both
5 in the north and west.

6 Senator Ayotte: But, do you agree with me, if we go
7 down, NATO's going to -- I mean, they're going to diminish,
8 too, or, at some point, get out of this operation?

9 General Campbell: If our number continues to go down,
10 NATO will absolutely reduce their commitment in Afghanistan.
11 I believe that is true.

12 Senator Ayotte: So, Iran. I wanted to ask you to
13 describe for us what Iran's activities are in Afghanistan
14 right now, and also describe for us what activities they are
15 undertaking that concern you.

16 General Campbell: Ma'am, I think, you know, what
17 Afghanistan is trying to do is have a sovereign-country-to-
18 sovereign-country relationship with their neighbor to the
19 west, Iran. Dr. Abdullah was just there about 2 weeks
20 trying to work through that piece of it. I am concerned
21 that Iran has provided support to the Taliban in order for
22 the Taliban to fight ISIL or Daesh. They are worried about
23 ISIL or Daesh, so they have provided support to the Taliban.
24 And I'm worried that that support that they provide to the
25 Taliban could be used against the Afghan Security Forces.

1 Senator Ayotte: Are you worried, at some point, that
2 Iran's territory could be used as a potential safe haven, as
3 well, as we've seen in Pakistan for the Taliban?

4 General Campbell: I think that's a possibility, yes,
5 ma'am. And I think we've got to do everything we can to
6 make sure that doesn't happen.

7 Senator Ayotte: Thank you, General.

8 Chairman McCain: We are two -- I'd very much like to
9 move the nomination of Lieutenant General Nicholson. We are
10 two Senators short of the required quorum. I would ask --
11 one short, who I understand is on his way -- I would ask
12 unanimous consent, since we're only one short, to waive the
13 rules and ask the committee to consider the nomination of
14 Lieutenant General John W. Nicholson, Jr., to be general and
15 Commander of Resolute Support and Commander United States
16 Forces-Afghanistan. This nomination has been before the
17 committee the required time.

18 If there's an objection to the one short of the quorum,
19 I'll be glad to withdraw that.

20 [No response.]

21 Chairman McCain: Hearing none, then is there a motion
22 to so favorably report Lieutenant General Nicholson's
23 nomination to the Senate?

24 Senator Reed: So moved.

25 Chairman McCain: Is there a second?

1 Senator Ayotte: Second.

2 Chairman McCain: All in favor, say aye.

3 [A chorus of ayes.]

4 Chairman McCain: The motion carries.

5 Thank you.

6 Senator Blumenthal.

7 Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

8 General Campbell, thank you for your service in --

9 Chairman McCain: Could I just -- Senator Donnelly, you
10 are in favor of the nomination of General Nicholson?

11 Senator Donnelly: If you say so, sir, I --

12 [Laughter.]

13 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 General Campbell, thank you for your service to our
15 Nation in this job and many previous assignments, and your
16 distinction in providing insightful and deliberate testimony
17 to this committee.

18 You have said, I think, in the past, that 70 percent of
19 Afghanistan's military problems are related to weak
20 political leadership. I may be misstating or exaggerating,
21 but my question is directed to less the technical strength
22 or viability of the military capacity of the country and
23 more to the effectiveness and reliability of the political
24 leadership. In your view, is Afghanistan's political
25 leadership up to the job?

1 General Campbell: Sir, if I can just say about the 70
2 percent, I was referring to military leadership; 70 percent
3 of the problems they have in the MOI and the MOD is based on
4 the leadership they have there. And if they pick the right
5 leaders, and they hold them accountable, that'll take care
6 of many of their issues.

7 Sir, your question on the political piece -- and again,
8 I --

9 Senator Blumenthal: I stand corrected, and I apologize
10 for --

11 General Campbell: I understand, sir. I -- on the --
12 whether or not President Ghani, Dr. Abdullah -- I think you
13 asked, sir, the National Unity Government is viable -- can
14 it govern as we move forward? Sir, it survived the last 15-
15 16 months under very, very tough fighting season, where
16 Afghanistan was fighting for its survival. It survived
17 President Ghani reaching out to Pakistan to try to change
18 the dynamics on the ground in that relationship. It
19 sustained opposition, like President Karzai doing different
20 things out there. So, it's been a rough road. We shouldn't
21 make light of that, sir. But, President Ghani and Dr.
22 Abdullah, on the big policy issues, I believe there's no
23 daylight between them. They continue to work very hard,
24 because they understand how important it is for the future
25 of Afghanistan, and they know there's no other viable

1 option.

2 When it comes to picking governors, ministers, other
3 folks, I really do think it's the people around the
4 President, people around Dr. Abdullah, that are stirring up
5 the waters. And I see both Dr. Abdullah, President Ghani
6 many times a week, and they are a great partner, and they
7 understand how -- and they value the -- their foundational
8 partner is the United States. And I think we have to
9 continue to work with them. They understand the issues and
10 challenges they have to work on. But, it's going to take
11 them a while to do that, sir. And I think we've just got to
12 continue to provide the assistance we can to help them move
13 that forward.

14 Senator Blumenthal: And you'd agree that, as we saw in
15 Iraq, an inclusive and effective government in Afghanistan
16 is essential to military success.

17 Senator Blumenthal: Sir, absolutely. I mean, there's
18 no comparison between what you had in Iraq with Maliki and
19 then what you have in Afghanistan today with the National
20 Unity Government.

21 Senator Blumenthal: On the issue of political
22 relationships, I want to mention Pakistan. Are you
23 satisfied with progress that has been made, if there has
24 been progress, in combating the flow of both militants and
25 munitions across the border from Pakistan?

1 General Campbell: Sir, I -- when I think about
2 Pakistan, I think about, you know, both political issues,
3 economic issues. I most deal with the military-to-military
4 issues and make sure that the Pak Army and the Afghan Army
5 continue to talk corps-to-corps, and they talk those kind of
6 issues. So, they understand that they have to continue to
7 do that, to fight this enemy that knows no borders, and that
8 it's good for both of them to continue to develop that
9 relationship. And if they're not talking, they're not going
10 to go anywhere.

11 I am concerned about what is going across both from
12 Pakistan into Afghanistan and, quite frankly, as General
13 Raheel has talked to me about, the chief of the Pakistan
14 Army, potential stuff going from Afghanistan into Pakistan,
15 as they believe happened a couple of weeks ago on a school
16 attack there.

17 So, I think the more mil-to-mil they can work together
18 to improve discussion between corps-to-corps, what goes on
19 between that very open border, that it'll only get better.
20 But, I am concerned about what's going across. Yes, sir.

21 Senator Blumenthal: And my time is expired, but I
22 thank you very much.

23 Thank you.

24 Chairman McCain: Senator Graham.

25 Senator Graham: General, thank you and your whole

1 team. I had the pleasure to meet most of your folks over
2 there, and I think you can look back on your time and say,
3 "Well done."

4 You kept Afghanistan together. And it's not Iraq. And
5 let's talk about that for a second.

6 Kunduz. When the Taliban came in and dislodged the
7 police and the security forces, the town was retaken by the
8 Afghans. Is that correct?

9 General Campbell: Sir, that is correct.

10 Senator Graham: There's a big difference between
11 Kunduz, Mosul, and Ramadi?

12 General Campbell: Sir, absolutely. I mean, the
13 fortitude and resilience of the Afghan forces to get back
14 and take over a town of 300,000 in a very short time was
15 pretty remarkable.

16 Senator Graham: If we had no U.S. troops there, how
17 hard would it have been to accomplish that task?

18 General Campbell: Sir, in my estimation, it would have
19 taken a lot longer to be able to do that.

20 Senator Graham: Right now, at this moment, if you had
21 to tell this committee should we stay at 9800, based on what
22 you know right now, at this moment, for the rest of the year
23 and into next year, what would you say?

24 General Campbell: Sir, then I would be violating what
25 Senator McCain told me to talk about, about capabilities,

1 sir. And I -- and as -- again, sir, what I've done --

2 Senator Graham: You're not bound by that.

3 [Laughter.]

4 General Campbell: Sir, I'm -- what I'm telling you is
5 that the 5500 -- I am glad we're at 5500, sir. We're in a
6 much better place than we were.

7 Senator Graham: You mean the 9800.

8 General Campbell: 5500 -- we're at 98- now, yes, sir.

9 Senator Graham: Yeah.

10 General Campbell: So, we're in a much better place
11 than we were. And I am very glad that we're there. But, as
12 we look at going down to 5500, I've got to manage it. I
13 want to keep 9800 as long as I can in 2016 before I have to
14 drop to 5500. To do that after the fighting season, between
15 the October-November-December timeframe, is going to be
16 very, very difficult, but I have to figure out a way, and
17 I'll pass it --

18 Senator Graham: Is the 5500 a military goal or a
19 political goal?

20 General Campbell: Sir, the 5500 was a number based on
21 certain assumptions and mission sets that were required to
22 accomplish --

23 Senator Graham: If I ask you right now, "Do you think
24 we should be at 5500 at the end of the year?" is that a good
25 military thing?

1 General Campbell: Sir, I would have to base it on
2 conditions on the ground.

3 Senator Graham: Yeah. But, you want to do
4 counterterrorism, right?

5 General Campbell: Yes, sir.

6 Senator Graham: So, 5500 is mostly counterterrorism-
7 centric.

8 General Campbell: It's most CT. It has limited TAA --

9 Senator Graham: You just described to Senator Fischer
10 tremendous gaps in their air capability of the Afghans.
11 You've talked about 2015 being tough. I just -- is -- I
12 just don't see where the 5500 -- did the military recommend
13 5500, or was this just a number picked by the White House?

14 General Campbell: Sir, that was part of a long process
15 that the military was tied into. Yes, sir.

16 Senator Graham: I mean -- well, no. My question is,
17 Did the military say, "We think, based on everything we know
18 about Afghanistan, 5500 is the right number"? Or did that
19 come from the politicians in the White House?

20 General Campbell: Sir, I don't believe that came from
21 the politicians. That was an overall process --

22 Senator Graham: What general recommended 5500?

23 General Campbell: Sir, I don't want to go into, you
24 know, discussions --

25 Senator Graham: I just want to know where this number

1 came from. I want to know, Is it a politically-driven
2 number or is it a military-driven number?

3 General Campbell: Sir, I think it's a number driven
4 based on the mission sets, the narrow mission sets of TAA,
5 limited as I talked about, and a CT mission. And in the --
6 but, again, there were assumptions made -- as every course
7 of action, there are assumptions made. And if those
8 assumptions don't prove --

9 Senator Graham: Did the military suggest we just do
10 two things in Afghanistan -- counterterrorism, train-advise-
11 and-insist -- or did that come from the political
12 leadership?

13 General Campbell: Sir, the military has an opportunity
14 to provide their best military advice on the -- you know,
15 the purpose of why we're there, the mission sets that are
16 assigned --

17 Senator Graham: The only reason I mention this is that
18 we're in Iraq in a state of disarray. I've been hearing,
19 for a long time, that it is the Iraqis who said no to
20 residual forces. I don't believe that for a moment. I know
21 what the military recommended to the White House, and I know
22 how we got to zero. The same people that pushed us to zero,
23 I think, are pushing us to 5500. But, maybe I'm wrong.
24 Maybe 5500 is the best military configuration at the end of
25 2016. I just have real serious doubts about that. Am I

1 wrong to doubt that?

2 General Campbell: Sir, as I said, I have already
3 provided what I think are adjustments to that number --

4 Senator Graham: Okay.

5 General Campbell: -- based on the capabilities that
6 will be required to move forward --

7 Senator Graham: Is the Taliban an enemy of this
8 country?

9 General Campbell: I didn't hear the question, sir.

10 Senator Graham: Is the Taliban an enemy of the United
11 States?

12 General Campbell: The Taliban -- as far as helping al-
13 Qaeda and Haqqani and other insurgence groups, Taliban have
14 been responsible for --

15 Senator Graham: If the Taliban were in charge of
16 Afghanistan tomorrow, would our homeland be threatened?

17 General Campbell: Sir, I think it would be more at
18 risk.

19 Senator Graham: Are you prohibited from attacking
20 senior leadership of the Taliban?

21 General Campbell: Sir, I have all the authorities I
22 need to protect our coalition --

23 Senator Graham: Can you attack the senior leadership
24 of the Taliban?

25 General Campbell: Sir, if there's senior leadership of

1 the Taliban that are attacking --

2 Senator Graham: I'm not talking about force
3 protection. I'm talking about, Can you go after the Taliban
4 who are trying to take over the country of Afghanistan that
5 would invite terrorists back into that region to attack us?
6 Can you attack the Taliban?

7 General Campbell: Sir, I believe that the Taliban are
8 a threat to us, and I'd attack them if -- I cannot attack
9 Taliban --

10 Senator Graham: Without shooting at a soldier, can you
11 attack them? If they're not shooting at one of our
12 soldiers, can you attack them?

13 General Campbell: Sir, I have to make a force-
14 protection nexus to the Taliban.

15 Senator Graham: So, our limitations on the Taliban is
16 that they've got to have a direct threat to U.S. forces.
17 Right?

18 General Campbell: Sir, again, I don't go into rules-
19 of-engagement authorities in open hearing. What I would
20 tell you is that our country has made the decision that we
21 are not at war with the Taliban.

22 Senator Graham: Do you think we're at war with the
23 Taliban?

24 General Campbell: I think the Taliban have killed many
25 of my soldiers --

1 Senator Graham: Do you think they're at war with us?

2 General Campbell: Sir, the Taliban continue to --

3 Senator Graham: Do you think the Taliban would welcome
4 an attack on the United States if they could help make one
5 happen?

6 General Campbell: I do, sir.

7 Senator Graham: Yeah.

8 Thank you.

9 Chairman McCain: Senator Donnelly.

10 Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 And, General, thank you for everything you've done for
12 our country. We are really in your debt.

13 When the 9800 level was set, in light of the things
14 that have happened on the ground -- push here, push there,
15 those kind of things -- does the 9800 level being there --
16 when you set that number, did you anticipate things like
17 this would happen? I mean, has that number, in your mind,
18 needed to be adjusted because of what's happened, or do you
19 think it's sufficient to meet the challenges that you deal
20 with every day?

21 General Campbell: Sir, the 9800 number was already
22 determined before I got there.

23 Senator Donnelly: Right.

24 General Campbell: All right? So -- and we were going
25 down to 1,000 when I got there. And we had no CT capability

1 at 1,000. We were Kabul-centric. Today, we have a CT
2 mission and the ability to work that mission, and we're not
3 Kabul-centric. So, I think we have great flexibility as we
4 move forward because of the decisions that have been made.

5 The 5500 number, as I've said several times today in
6 testimony, is -- I have made my recommendations to
7 adjustments on the capabilities that are required based on
8 what we learned in 2015. And the 5500 number is primarily
9 focused on CT. If the Afghans cannot improve, we're going
10 to have to make some adjustments, and that means that number
11 will most likely go up. So, yes, sir.

12 Senator Donnelly: When you look at the situation and
13 make a judgment, what are the things that worry you the most
14 as you look at what lies ahead?

15 General Campbell: Sir, always number one in my mind is
16 force protection of our men and women, to make sure that we
17 have all the resources, the authorities to be able to
18 protect them, and whether they're sitting at Bagram or
19 whether they're sitting in Kabul, whether they're doing
20 expedition advising on another combat outpost someplace in
21 Afghanistan. So, that's number one.

22 Number two is, I want to make sure that we continue --
23 or I worry about the Afghans not putting the right
24 leadership and having a sense of urgency to continue to move
25 forward. They've made so many gains, they've done so well

1 over the last 14 years to get to where they're at, that, if
2 they do -- don't do some of the things here because of how
3 long it's taken, they'll lose the confidence of the donor
4 nations; and if they don't have the money, then they can't
5 move forward. They absolutely need to have the continued
6 support of the coalition and the nations that provide the
7 funding. They will not have the funding, their economy will
8 not be able to support, by all the reports I've seen, a --
9 without any help, til about 2024. We're looking at the
10 Warsaw to get them through 2020. But, again, President
11 Ghani is doing everything he can to build upon a regional
12 peace to get their economy going.

13 So, I worry about our force protection, I worry about
14 them being able to continue to make progress without other
15 nations losing confidence and abandoning them.

16 Senator Donnelly: When you look at Afghanistan, and
17 some of the challenges with the Taliban have been in the
18 more rural or outlying areas, where they've had an outsized
19 influence, is it that the people in those areas are more
20 accepting of the Taliban, or they just have the ability to
21 push back as much?

22 General Campbell: Sir, I think it's probably a little
23 bit both, but probably more the latter, that, you know, they
24 would like to push back, but, if they don't have the police,
25 the army to be able to support them in those areas, and if

1 the Taliban threatens them -- in some areas, they stand up,
2 and they do a great job. And that's where we get Afghan
3 local police, and they work through that. But, in other
4 areas, you know, they want to continue to survive, and
5 they'll -- the Taliban put that pressure on them.

6 Senator Donnelly: When you look at the Taliban, what
7 are the biggest advantages that they bring to the fight on
8 their side? And what's our best way to counter that?

9 General Campbell: Sir, again, the Taliban -- what
10 they've done well is, they have -- they've -- the Afghan
11 people, or really the Afghan Security Forces in -- the first
12 time I've seen it -- and that's why I said the Taliban can
13 be beaten, they're not 10 feet tall -- but, in many areas,
14 their propaganda, their information ops have convinced many
15 of the security forces that they can beat them. They can't.
16 They can't. They're not manned, they're not equipped,
17 they're not trained. The advantage they have is, they don't
18 follow any rules, they can kill civilians, they can target
19 whoever they want to target, they can put out little IEDs
20 out there that just kill indiscriminately. So, that's what
21 they do. I mean, that -- they're terrorists. And so,
22 that's how they take advantage. They put fear in the hearts
23 of the people. The Afghan Security Forces are like any of
24 our other militaries that we want; they have to abide by
25 rules, they have to watch out for civilian casualties, they

1 have discipline. The Taliban don't have any of that. They
2 offer nothing to the future of Afghanistan.

3 Senator Donnelly: Thank you very much.

4 Thank you.

5 Chairman McCain: Senator Cotton.

6 Senator Cotton: General Campbell, it's good to see you
7 again before this committee; for the last time, it would
8 appear. Thank you for your service, not just in
9 Afghanistan, but your service for many years in uniform.
10 You certainly are in the right to drop the rucksack and ask
11 someone else to pick it up now.

12 I want to return a topic that Senator Graham was
13 addressing. You said, quote, "Our country is not at war
14 with the Taliban," end quote. People have to make decisions
15 for countries. Is that a decision that was made by the
16 Commander in Chief, that our country is no longer at war
17 with the Taliban?

18 General Campbell: Sir, that's a policy decision.

19 Senator Cotton: Okay. But, when you were asked if the
20 Taliban would attack the United States today if they could,
21 you answered, "I do." That's correct?

22 General Campbell: Sir, they're attacking forces in
23 Afghanistan. And, again, the network in Afghanistan, where
24 you get Haqqani, al-Qaeda, LET- -- it's all intermingled.
25 And we know for sure that ISIL, we know for sure that AQ and

1 some of its remnants have already attacked the U.S. and want
2 to continue to -- have vision on doing that. So, the
3 Taliban support that in other ways, yes, sir.

4 Senator Cotton: Okay. In your opening statement, you
5 indicated that newly authorized airstrikes against the
6 Islamic States in Afghanistan have been effective in slowing
7 their growth. Would you expect the use of U.S. airpower
8 against the Taliban to have similar effect on the Taliban's
9 progress in the country if you used airpower against the
10 Taliban?

11 General Campbell: Sir, again, I'm trying to build the
12 Afghan capability to do that. But, as I take a look at
13 adjustments that need to be made, authorities is one of
14 those for 2016. And, as I said up front, I have provided my
15 leadership some mitigating efforts that I think will improve
16 the Afghan forces and their probability of success against
17 the Taliban as we move forward. Yes, sir.

18 Senator Cotton: As you were suggesting to Senator
19 Graham about responding to the Taliban if they're attacking
20 coalition forces, David Petraeus wrote, in the Washington
21 Post approximately 3 weeks ago, that, "Airpower currently is
22 used only, one, to attack validated al-Qaeda targets; two,
23 to counter specific individuals or groups who have attacked
24 coalition forces previously; and three, to respond directly
25 to attacks on coalition forces. According to leaders on the

1 ground, U.S. and NATO forces are not otherwise allowed to
2 attack Taliban targets." Do you think the lack of U.S.
3 airpower being employed against the Taliban accounts for
4 some of their gains in the country?

5 General Campbell: I think the Taliban know that we've
6 downsized, and I think the Taliban understand that, in the
7 past, they couldn't gather in larger formations. I think
8 we've seen, this year, that they have taken advantage of the
9 reduction of the number of coalition aircraft, absolutely.

10 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

11 I want to turn now to the attacks in Helmand Province
12 on January 5th in which Army staff sergeant Matthew
13 McClintock died. There's been some reporting in the media
14 that the Quick Reaction Force was not allowed to deploy
15 rapidly, and that an AC-130 gunship was in the air and was
16 not allowed to engage during the firefight. I'm sure you're
17 up to speed on this event. Could you -- would you care to
18 share with the committee your thoughts on what happened that
19 evening?

20 General Campbell: Sir, that's under investigation
21 right now. And, as you know, when investigations are
22 ongoing, we don't discuss it. What I would tell you is
23 that, you know, we'll do everything to provide force
24 protection. I've said that's number one utmost in my mind.
25 And we'll make sure whenever we employ our forces and they

1 are in a train-advise-assist role with the Afghan Special
2 Operating Forces that we have all the necessary resources
3 required to reduce the threat to them. I mean, whenever we
4 send folks out, there is a CONOP process that goes forward
5 to make sure that we have the right Medevac, we have the
6 right Quick Reaction Force, on and on and on.

7 So, this investigation will find out what exactly
8 happened on that. And I need to hold off on that until that
9 investigation is brought forward to me.

10 Senator Cotton: Are the restrictions that you face,
11 both in the resources available to you and the way you
12 employ those resources, potentially at play in what happened
13 in Marjah that evening?

14 General Campbell: Sir, again, I have no restrictions
15 on providing force protection --

16 Senator Cotton: Well, you only have 9800 troops there,
17 right?

18 General Campbell: We're authorized 9800, yes, sir.

19 Senator Cotton: If you were to reduce from 9800 to
20 5500, or even lower than that, might we be more likely to
21 see something like this happen once again in the future
22 because the next commander, General Nicholson, is
23 constrained in the resources he has and the way he can
24 employ those resources?

25 General Campbell: Sir, there is no restraint on force

1 protection. So, I think General Nicholson, before he would
2 allow soldiers to go out and do a train-advise-assist
3 mission with the Special Operating Forces, he and the
4 commanders on the ground would make sure they had all the
5 necessary requirements there to do that, as they did, I'm
6 sure, in this case here.

7 Senator Cotton: So, the -- but, the way they were --

8 General Campbell: I don't see the number -- I don't
9 see the tie between that number --

10 Senator Cotton: So -- but, the way the restraint might
11 play out then is a limitation on the kind of missions they
12 can conduct if they don't have the resources to support the
13 force protection in the CASEVAC for those missions. Is that
14 fair to say?

15 General Campbell: What's fair to say is, I would not
16 let them go out on a mission unless we have the right
17 CASEVAC, unless we had the right Quick Reaction Force. No,
18 sir.

19 Senator Cotton: Which necessarily means that some
20 missions may not be able to be accomplished.

21 General Campbell: We work within the resources we
22 have. Yes, sir.

23 Senator Cotton: Well, thank you very much, again, for
24 your service. I know you've been a commanding general of
25 the Screaming Eagles. It came to our attention at his

1 confirmation hearing that General Nicholson had never served
2 there. He had only served in the 82nd. I hope that he can
3 overcome this deficiency in his background. But, I do
4 understand he once served under 101st Headquarters at -- in
5 Afghanistan, so maybe if you leave the combat patch in your
6 desk, he'll get -- hit the ground running.

7 General Campbell: Sir, I'll do that. I also have
8 three tours in the 82nd, sir, so I've got a great affinity
9 for the 82nd. But --

10 Senator Cotton: But, you capped it off at the 101st
11 Air Assault.

12 General Campbell: I did. Thanks, sir.

13 Chairman McCain: Thank you, Senator Cotton, for that
14 summary of General Campbell's career. We appreciate it very
15 much.

16 [Laughter.]

17 Chairman McCain: Senator King.

18 Senator King: General Campbell, you had a narrow
19 escape, a few minutes ago, when the Chairman asked for
20 unanimous consent to move that nomination. I almost
21 objected, not because of any reservations about General
22 Nicholson, but about my extreme admiration for you and my
23 desire to keep you there. So, you -- we -- I'm thinking of
24 introducing a resolution forbidding your retirement, but --

25 General Campbell: Sir, you'll have to deal with Mrs.

1 Campbell --

2 Senator King: Yeah, thank you. I --

3 General Campbell: That's what I'd say.

4 Senator King: I appreciate that.

5 We've been talking around an issue today that's really
6 troubling to me. I can't understand any good reason to
7 announce in advance to an enemy that you're going to reduce
8 your troop levels. I just can't -- I can't -- if I were the
9 Taliban, I'd say, "Okay, fellows, let's go to Acapulco for 6
10 months, and we'll come back in the fall, when the Americans
11 are no longer going to be doing anything but
12 counterterrorism." Why -- I -- help me with this.

13 But, first -- and you've been very diplomatic this
14 morning -- but, first, isn't it true that in order to go to
15 the 5500, which is a fundamental change of mission -- as
16 you've testified this morning, it's a change of mission from
17 train-and-assist and counterterrorism to almost entirely
18 counterterrorism. When does that change of -- that
19 qualitative change have to start? It's not January 1st of
20 2017. Isn't it sometime late this summer, early fall?

21 General Campbell: Sir, again, it -- you know, it
22 becomes physics, at some point in time, on how you can move
23 forces out responsibly and safely. And I would like to keep
24 -- and I -- my recommendation to General Nicholson will be
25 to keep 9800 as long as you can during the most violent part

1 of the fighting season, which is the summer. So, probably
2 in the October timeframe, they'd have to really work hard to
3 make sure they got down to the right number if they continue
4 on the path to go to 5500.

5 Senator King: You've been so diplomatic in your
6 testimony this morning. But, in your professional military
7 opinion, does it make any sense to announce to an enemy that
8 you're going to reduce your -- not only your troop level,
9 but your mission, particularly as it pertains to them, in
10 advance? I just don't -- I do understand trying to motivate
11 the Afghans to understand that they can't rely on us
12 forever. That's the one policy I do understand. But, it's
13 countervailed, it seems to me, by the signal it sends to the
14 enemy that all they've got to do is wait for 6 or 8 months
15 or a year.

16 General Campbell: Sir, I'd -- you know, again, this is
17 a policy decision, not a military decision. The
18 announcement is --

19 Senator King: But, I'm asking a military man. As a
20 general, you would not put a bulletin out the day before a
21 battle, saying, "We're going to fight you guys like hell
22 until midnight, but then we're going to withdraw our
23 troops."

24 General Campbell: Sir, any military leader would want
25 to keep all the advantage to him, not provide any advantage

1 to the enemy.

2 Senator King: I'll take that as a --

3 General Campbell: Sir, I'm not trying to be
4 diplomatic.

5 Senator King: No, I understand.

6 General Campbell: What I'm trying to tell you is that,
7 you know, any guy on the ground, any military commander, is
8 going to want to have as many resources as he can, as many
9 soldiers as he can, and he's going to want to accomplish the
10 mission. But, at the same time -- what I'm trying to do
11 here -- and I'm not trying to be disrespectful -- what I'm
12 trying to do is make sure that I provide my military
13 leadership the opportunity to make those judgments and pass
14 that to our political leadership, and not debate it in open,
15 because I think that hurts us, as well. And I think that --
16 that gives the enemy an advantage and non-advantage. And
17 what I'm trying to say -- just as Senator McCain said, it
18 isn't about numbers; it is about the capability. And right
19 now, where we were to where we are with Bagram, Jalalabad,
20 Kandahar --

21 Senator King: We're way ahead of where we were a year
22 ago.

23 General Campbell: We have options now. And I think we
24 ought to take advantage of those options as we move forward.

25 Senator King: I completely agree. I just -- I'm -- as

1 you can tell, I have real reservations about the policy.

2 But --

3 General Campbell: Announcing numbers provides the
4 enemy, maybe in their mind, that they can wait us out.

5 Senator King: Bingo.

6 Close air support. One of the asymmetric advantages we
7 have is airpower. And you testified this morning about the
8 limitations on Afghan airpower and how long it's going to
9 take. Wouldn't it make sense for us to maintain -- forget
10 about all the other missions we're talking about, but to
11 maintain a close-air-support capability without the
12 limitations, necessarily, that we have now for some longer
13 period of time? Wouldn't that be a tremendous advantage to
14 the Afghan Security Forces?

15 General Campbell: Sir, you can give me all the
16 resources you want and all the people. If you don't have
17 the authorities, you've got a mismatch. Or we can have --

18 Senator King: I can --

19 General Campbell: -- all the authorities you want, and
20 if you don't have the right resources -- so, you've got to
21 -- we've got to have that balance, absolutely.

22 Senator King: But, I'm talking about resources and
23 authorities. That -- what I'm asking is -- close air
24 support would be a significant advantage to the Afghan
25 Security Forces if we had the resources and the authority.

1 General Campbell: Sir, the close air support has been
2 the -- has been the one resource in the capability that the
3 Afghans have asked me for every single day. And again, a
4 couple of years ago, 150 attack helicopters, two squadrons,
5 air force. When we started Resolute Support, they were down
6 to five MI-35s. They have zero at the end of the fighting
7 season. They just picked up three because India passed
8 those on to them. That'll make -- that'll really help.

9 But, yeah, they desire that. We would have to work
10 TTPs, have the right authorities to provide the right
11 assistance on the ground for them. But --

12 Senator King: I would hope that, in your final
13 recommendations as you're -- in your exit interview, if you
14 will -- that you would emphasize the importance of that --

15 General Campbell: Sir, I absolutely will.

16 Senator King: Thank you. Thank you again for your
17 service, General.

18 General Campbell: Thank you, sir.

19 Chairman McCain: Senator Rounds.

20 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

21 General, thank you for your service, and thank you to
22 your family for sticking with you and working through this
23 marvelous career, and, at the same time, all of the
24 sacrifice that you've made is most certainly a sacrifice
25 which they have endured with you, and I appreciate that.

1 General, last time that you were here, we had asked you
2 for some specific responses to what had happened in Kunduz
3 with the very unfortunate incident where a hospital was
4 attacked. I want to thank you for having a -- in a timely
5 fashion, to having responded to our request and providing a
6 very good answer to our questions. It is appreciated.

7 Also, I just -- I know that you've already talked about
8 this somewhat with Senator Blumenthal, but I'd like to give
9 you the opportunity to perhaps specifically work in with
10 regard to governance and the challenges there. We know that
11 ultimately effective governance will be required for the
12 counterinsurgency effort to succeed. To what extent has
13 effective governance evolved during your time in
14 Afghanistan? And how do you see the relationship between
15 the effective governance and the U.S. troop level that
16 should remain?

17 And let me preface the question with this. In October,
18 when we came and you had the opportunity to show us kind of
19 what you were doing and how you were working with this
20 government, this Unity Government, was at the same time that
21 the announcement was that we would maintain 10,000 and
22 eventually have to come down to 5500. But, I got the
23 impression that it was because of the governance and the
24 capabilities that were there that we were even considering
25 doing that. And yet, at the same time, it seemed to be

1 reported that this was there because of the incompetence of
2 the Afghans rather than because we could see progress being
3 made.

4 I'd like you to have the opportunity to comment on that
5 and get your thoughts.

6 General Campbell: Sir, thanks for the question.
7 Several years ago, when I was there before, sir, we had
8 Provincial Reconstruction Teams, PRTs, we had an influx of
9 civilians that would help at district levels, and we had
10 prioritized districts. And we tried to help build the
11 Afghan capability all the way down to the district level.
12 And you could see the services that were provided to the
13 people of those districts and provinces continue to rise.
14 We've gone away from PRTs over the last several years, as we
15 believe that the Afghans could pick that up, themselves.

16 For me, again, even on the governance side, it's about
17 leadership, it's about having the right people in the right
18 position, and giving them the authority, and then holding
19 them accountable. President Ghani and Dr. Abdullah are
20 trying to do that. You know, it starts with governors of
21 the 34 provinces, and picking the right folks there. Then
22 it goes down to the 407-plus districts, and having the right
23 people there. If you have the right people and you don't
24 fill out the staffs, they don't have the budget -- I mean,
25 that -- so, it's a hard process. But, I do see them getting

1 after it.

2 I sit right next to the -- I do to the National
3 Security Council meetings with the -- that President Ghani
4 allows me to go to once a week, 3 or 4 hours at a chunk --
5 right next to me is the IDLG, which is -- works through all
6 the governance. He and I have many conversations as he
7 tries to work after getting the right people in place to
8 really start that. They reach out to many other countries
9 to help them in different ways, to have programs that help
10 build their governance capability.

11 From a military standpoint, all I do, really, sir, is
12 work to help build the security forces so they can provide
13 security down to those districts that would embolden the
14 governance to take shape.

15 Senator Rounds: General, right now you have the option
16 of maintaining 9800 or so troops. And I know that you have
17 a responsibility. You've been directed that you must get
18 that down to approximately 5500 by the end of the year. If
19 the current plan is allowed in place, how long can you
20 maintain the adequate levels for both the counterinsurgency
21 and the training mission, which I know you believe in -- how
22 long can you maintain the higher number until you have to
23 start drawing down in order to meet the obligation that
24 you've been given?

25 General Campbell: Sir, we're working through, and

1 we'll have very detailed plans that show that glide slope.
2 But, my opinion right now is, I'm going to try to keep 9800
3 -- recommend to General Nicholson to keep 9800 all the way
4 through most of the fighting season, but, at some point, as
5 I said before, it becomes physics, and you have to get
6 people out of different areas and bring them in. And that's
7 a -- we've done that over the years, from 100,000-plus to
8 where we are today. So, we have a very methodical, well-
9 thought-out process. Our logisticians are the best in the
10 world to be able to get that done.

11 Senator Rounds: But, your goal is to maintain as many
12 as possible for as long as possible, just in case there may
13 be a change in heart with regard to what we need there.
14 Would that be fair to say, sir?

15 General Campbell: Sir, I'm going to try to keep as
16 many as I can, as long as I can. But, understand I have an
17 order to get down to --

18 Senator Rounds: Yes, sir. And I appreciate that.

19 Thank you once again for your service and for your
20 answers today, sir.

21 General Campbell: Thank you, sir.

22 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 Chairman McCain: Senator Hirono.

24 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 And I add my thanks, General, to you and your family

1 for your years of service to our country.

2 In the series of questions and your responses regarding
3 what is the appropriate number of U.S. forces in
4 Afghanistan, part of the assessment from your testimony is
5 that we need to assess the capability of the Afghan --
6 Afghani military to protect themselves. So, I know that --
7 in your testimony, that you assess that at least 70 percent
8 of the problems facing the Afghan Security Forces results
9 from poor leadership, and that there are some positive
10 changes occurring with regard to replacing the poor
11 leadership, which I assume is poor leadership in the Afghan
12 military. That's what you're referring to, right?

13 General Campbell: Yes, ma'am.

14 Senator Hirono: Military. So, the army has replaced
15 92 general officers, which I assume is a positive change
16 that was made.

17 General Campbell: Ma'am, for the most part, those were
18 all very positive changes. That's happened just probably in
19 the last 3 months.

20 Senator Hirono: So, I don't know out of how many
21 general officers -- how many more general officers do you
22 think needs to be replaced in order to strengthen the
23 capability of the Afghan army?

24 General Campbell: Ma'am, on the MOD side, on the army
25 side, I think we're down to very few. There's a couple of

1 key positions that the Minister of Defense is taking a look
2 at that I know that he wants to change out, that I would
3 concur with him.

4 Senator Hirono: Although --

5 General Campbell: I think more -- we've got to get to
6 the MOI side, on the police side. We have not made very
7 many changes on the police side. I think that's really
8 where we have to go next.

9 Senator Hirono: So, that's what you were referring to
10 when you said, "These changes will take time." It's on the
11 police side, military police side.

12 General Campbell: Yes, ma'am.

13 Senator Hirono: Not necessarily --

14 General Campbell: I mean, the future of both the army
15 and the police are the great young leaders they have today
16 -- the captains, majors. They're building their
17 noncommissioned officer corps. They have folks who have
18 been trained in the U.S., the U.K., Germany, other places.
19 We've got to continue to put them in the right leadership
20 positions. And again, that's -- I think that's the hope,
21 that's the future of their security force.

22 Senator Hirono: So, what kind of factors will need to
23 be in place to ensure that these kinds of leadership changes
24 continue to occur in Afghanistan?

25 General Campbell: Ma'am, you have to have leaders of

1 courage that want to make those decisions based on merit,
2 based on standards, not based on patronage. You have that
3 in the National Unity Government.

4 Senator Hirono: So, you need political leaders with
5 that kind of perspective, as well as military leaders. That
6 kind of --

7 General Campbell: You do, ma'am, because the general
8 officers, for sure, the two-, three-, and four-stars, are
9 picked by the political leadership. And below, the one-
10 star, it really is with -- inside the Ministry of Defense,
11 but that's also political leadership.

12 Senator Hirono: So, since the changing leadership is
13 such a critical part of assessing -- it's going to have an
14 impact on what would be an appropriate number of U.S.
15 forces, what is the length of time, do you see, of -- that
16 would be necessary for these kinds of changes to occur in
17 Afghanistan?

18 General Campbell: Ma'am, I would hope that they would
19 make all the critical ones prior to this summer fighting
20 season, so they can get those in place and have a better
21 opportunity to change the dynamic of '16 verse '15. So, I
22 would hope they could make most of those here very quickly.

23 Senator Hirono: So, that's very positive.

24 I know that we use -- turning to conditionalities when
25 it comes to the distribution of our aid and resources in

1 Afghanistan -- one of the areas of conditionality involves
2 women's rights in Afghanistan. What progress has the Afghan
3 government made with regard to women's rights? Can you
4 express your thoughts on that --

5 General Campbell: Yes, ma'am. Thank --

6 Senator Hirono: -- point?

7 General Campbell: -- you for the question. I mean,
8 they're doing much better in the MOI and the police than
9 they are in the army. They're working both, but they're --
10 there's institutional challenges on the army side to recruit
11 women, because the army is a national force, and I think the
12 women want to join and stay where they grew up. The police,
13 they can do that. The army, they usually can't. So,
14 they're working around that. They've done, actually, again,
15 quite good on police side, of encouraging women to join,
16 sending them to Jordan and other -- Turkey -- to get
17 schooling, and then bringing them back in. The money that
18 has been appropriated from our Congress specifically towards
19 women issues, I think, has encouraged many to continue to
20 join. And we'll continue to push. President Ghani has
21 talked about this. Dr. Abdullah's talked about it. They
22 just have to continue to implement.

23 Senator Hirono: So, do you think we should increase
24 the direct funding that we provide to the women who want to
25 be a part of, you know, what Afghanistan needs to do?

1 General Campbell: Ma'am, I think right now we're very
2 good on where we're at on the funding. I think the numbers
3 that we're at are fine for where we're at. I think what
4 we've done differently here the last year or so is, in the
5 past, we would take that money and say, "Hey, they need this
6 or they need that," not really understanding what the women
7 of Afghanistan really needed. And now what we've done is
8 bring them into the process. We have a Women's Advisory
9 Committee, that I chair along with Ms. Ghani, that helps us
10 determine some of those pieces. But, we take their feedback
11 more now, which makes us be more efficient with the money we
12 have.

13 Senator Hirono: That makes a lot of sense.

14 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 General Campbell: Thank you, ma'am.

16 Chairman McCain: Senator Tillis.

17 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 General Campbell, thank you for being here, for your
19 service. I have to say that, when I visited Afghanistan
20 last year, I came away inspired by the morale on the ground
21 and by their utmost confidence in your leadership and the
22 leadership of your team. So, thank you.

23 A quick question. I know you've been pummeled on the
24 troop levels. Can you at least concur that, at the time the
25 decision was made to go to a Kabul-centric 1,000-person

1 footprint, that that in no way reflected the force needs
2 that we had in -- based on the conditions on the ground?

3 General Campbell: Sir, I don't know when the 1,000
4 Kabul-centric was made, tell you the truth. I wasn't there.

5 Senator Tillis: But, when the policy decision was
6 made, I mean, what -- can you imagine any time, whether you
7 were there or not, that that made sense, based on the
8 conditions on the ground?

9 General Campbell: Sir, the 1,000 Kabul-centric, you
10 know, limits what you can do --

11 Senator Tillis: Yeah, just --

12 General Campbell: -- no CT with that 1,000. So, I
13 believe we need a CT mission, going forward, to protect our
14 homeland --

15 Senator Tillis: Yeah.

16 General Campbell: -- to build the Afghan capability.
17 So, I --

18 Senator Tillis: It just seems to me that that was a --
19 that that policy decision, which at one point was made,
20 could not have possibly been based on any on-the-ground
21 assessment of what we needed to do there.

22 But, to move on, I want to talk about something else
23 that I mentioned in General Nicholson's hearing last week,
24 and it's something that I picked up on when you briefed us
25 last year. And that has to do with something that's really

1 outside of your lane, but very important. That's the
2 economic assistance. You discussed, in the hearing last
3 year, about the tail in 2017 and the need to sustain funding
4 well beyond that. To what extent do you think our apparent
5 reduction in force influences the investments that are made
6 by other partners in the region, and potentially puts that
7 at risk?

8 General Campbell: Sir, again, I can only speculate on
9 that, but I would -- I know for sure that our forces going
10 down have take -- have hurt the economy of Afghanistan.
11 They were very dependent upon a lot of the influx of money
12 that was provided based on the number of forces from the
13 coalition, especially in the transportation arena and the
14 services. So, as we've come down, I'm sure that's had a
15 negative effect on --

16 Senator Tillis: Do you think that the change -- in
17 your testimony, you talked about how the Taliban have
18 changed their strategies, they've extended the fighting
19 season -- do you think that a reduction in that economic
20 assistance, the continued changes in the Taliban could have
21 a negative impact, in terms of the conditions on the ground
22 and stress a 5500 troop level?

23 General Campbell: Sir, I think --

24 Senator Tillis: Our risk assessment, likelihood of
25 that actually stressing those levels.

1 General Campbell: Yeah, I'm not sure it would have an
2 impact on the number, sir, but what it would do would -- it
3 would give the Taliban, you know, the opportunity to use
4 that against the National Unity Government, against the
5 coalition.

6 Senator Tillis: As we retreat to a strictly
7 counterterrorism role and the army -- the Afghan army and
8 the police continue to deal with the counterinsurgency, how
9 would you assess their ability, as it exists today with 9800
10 troops on the ground, and their ability of -- let's say,
11 their ability now is at -- on a scale -- a random scale of 1
12 to 10; and let's say they're an 8 now with our train-advise-
13 and-assist capability -- it's going to be reduced,
14 obviously, with our withdrawal back to purely
15 counterterrorism -- how, on that scale -- does it stay the
16 same? Is it appreciably lower, in terms of their ability to
17 take the fight to the Taliban without our train-advise-and-
18 assist capabilities?

19 General Campbell: Sir, you're not going to like the
20 answer, but it depends. So, if I can give you -- if I can
21 give you an example. You know, we've only been doing train,
22 advise, assist at the corps level on four of the six corps,
23 two that we came off of. The 203rd Corps in Ghazni and the
24 215th Corps in Helmand were two that we didn't have advisors
25 there all the time. The 203rd Corps, over the last fighting

1 season, led -- because of the leadership of General Yaftali,
2 the corps commander, has actually done pretty well. And we
3 haven't had to provide a lot of other advisors to them over
4 this past fighting season. The 215th, completely different
5 story. And it's because of the leadership, but also because
6 of the threat and the fight they had down in Helmand. And
7 I've had to apply more resources, and I've made Helmand the
8 main effort for not only our advisors, but also the Afghans
9 have made that their main effort over the winter campaign,
10 to build the 215th back up.

11 So, again, I think it does have a lot to do with
12 leadership. But, again, they value any advising they can
13 get. President Ghani welcomes all of our nations. He
14 welcomes to continue to professionalize both the army and
15 the police. And he knows that he needs the United States to
16 lead to do that.

17 Senator Tillis: Well, General Campbell, I would maybe
18 close with just a comment, but I will tell you, when we met
19 there, and we met -- we went to the forward operating base
20 -- we met with the Afghan general there. It was very clear
21 to me what a confidence-builder your presence was there, and
22 an inspiration for their troops just to execute at a higher
23 level. It seems to me, as someone who's not served in the
24 military, that that reduction -- there's going to be some
25 proportionate reduction in their confidence. As they're

1 gaining their capabilities, there was no doubt in my mind,
2 when that general looked over to you and your team and
3 talked about what great mentors you were, that's a loss that
4 they're going to feel. And hopefully the conditions on the
5 ground will not change to a point to where we ultimately
6 have to rebuild and go back in.

7 The last thing I want to tell you is, thank you for
8 your service. I want you to seriously consider at least a
9 retirement home near your 82nd Airborne folks, down
10 Pinehurst. There's a golf course that I think's really
11 going to gain some notoriety there that you may want to
12 consider coming and spending time. A man of your stature,
13 we would greatly welcome back to North Carolina. Thank you
14 for your service.

15 General Campbell: Sir, I am looking at that. Thank
16 you.

17 Senator Reed [presiding]: On behalf of the Chairman,
18 let me recognize Senator Sullivan.

19 Thank you, Senator Tillis.

20 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

21 General, you probably know that a lot of members of the
22 Army also retire in Alaska, so I want to make sure you keep
23 that option open, too.

24 [Laughter.]

25 Senator Sullivan: We don't have good -- we don't have

1 such great golfing, but we have better hunting and fishing
2 than North Carolina.

3 General Campbell: Yes, sir.

4 Senator Sullivan: So, I hope you keep that -- keep an
5 open mind on that.

6 But, I -- like all the other members of the committee,
7 I want to thank you for your service -- exemplary service.
8 And not only to you, but your family, as well. Because, as
9 you know, families serve when their members are serving.
10 And so, just want to thank the whole clan for your decades
11 of service.

12 I wanted to follow on the question that Senator King
13 raised. And I'm just asking your view on it, because I
14 think sometimes we actually -- certainly I do -- get a
15 little confused on the difference when we have members of
16 the military testifying in front of this committee -- you
17 broke down the difference between what you called a policy
18 decision versus a military decision. To me, I'm not sure
19 there's such a clear dichotomy. So, how do you think we
20 should be thinking about those issues?

21 And let me give you an example. Is the -- was the
22 troop-strength decision a military decision, or was it a
23 policy decision, or did you bring a military decision to the
24 civilian leaders and they came up with a different policy
25 decision? How -- I'm not clear what you meant by the

1 distinction. And I'm not 100 percent sure there's a fine,
2 you know, bright line between the two.

3 General Campbell: Sir, thanks for the question. Sir,
4 what I would tell you is that, you know, the military has an
5 opportunity to provide its best military advice. And when
6 we look at, as Senator McCain talked about earlier, the
7 requirements and the capabilities required to accomplish a
8 mission that you've been given by your senior leadership --
9 in this case, the President of the United States -- and so,
10 we take many different -- we take some assumptions of that
11 plan, and we work through that. And usually there's three
12 or four different courses of action. And the 5500 is
13 probably one of those different courses of action.

14 What I can't get into, sir, is all the giving back and
15 -- going back and forth and taking a look at that from --
16 both from a military perspective and then as you engage with
17 the interagency, because there's -- you know, there -- what
18 we look at is risk to force and risk to mission. So, you
19 know, the military absolutely has the responsibility to
20 provide, you know, what it thinks is necessary to accomplish
21 the mission, but there are also outside factors that tie
22 into that, that we have to understand. And if some of those
23 come in and adjust the capability or the requirements that
24 you need there, then what we're required to do is go back
25 and say, "Okay, we can still do the mission, but the risks

1 may be higher, or the risk goes down." And so, that --
2 that's how I think we --

3 Senator Sullivan: Well, your military decision in this
4 case was the COAs that you provided on troop strengths that
5 came with certain risks, depending on what the COA was. And
6 the policy decision was ultimately the decision chosen by
7 the President to go with 5500? Is that a good way to think
8 about it?

9 General Campbell: Well, sir, I think, again, that the
10 decision -- ultimately, the President makes the decision,
11 and that's the policy that we follow. But, I -- again,
12 there's a lot of give-and-take as we go through there, and I
13 -- and we have the opportunity, at all different levels, to
14 provide our input. Sometime the input is taken, sometime
15 it's not taken. But, I think that's part of the process as
16 we move through there. And I think we've learned many of
17 those lessons over the -- over several years, of how we work
18 within this process to do that. And I'm very proud that,
19 you know, we have great leaders, like Joe Dunford and others
20 -- General Dempsey and others that have been -- that have
21 helped us get through this process.

22 But, we absolutely have to provide our input. And if
23 we can't live with that, you know, if there's something we
24 can't live with, then we have to say so.

25 Senator Sullivan: Right.

1 General Campbell: And then --

2 Senator Sullivan: Okay.

3 General Campbell: We follow orders, sir. And, you
4 know, you follow --

5 Senator Sullivan: I know.

6 General Campbell: -- the last orders first, and --

7 Senator Sullivan: I appreciate that.

8 General Campbell: -- if you can't live with it, if
9 it's not immoral, it's not illegal -- all right? -- then
10 you've got to do the best of your ability to make sure that
11 you can accomplish the mission.

12 Senator Sullivan: Let me ask you another question on
13 the safe haven issue on the border between Afghanistan and
14 Pakistan. Is that solvable? And if it's not solvable, do
15 we have a perpetual problem with the Taliban, with the
16 Haqqani Network, with al-Qaeda? I mean, how should we be
17 thinking about that? Because it doesn't seem like that
18 looks like it's going away anytime soon. And it certainly
19 has had to be an enormous frustration for you, to have a --
20 be ready for a fighting season and then know that some of
21 the enemies that we and the Afghan army were battling go to
22 the other side of the border, train, equip, rest, and then
23 come back at us. How should we think about that issue,
24 which seems to not get as much attention as it deserves,
25 but, in my view, seems to be one of the most critical issues

1 we face in the entire region?

2 General Campbell: Sir, thanks. Again, I think we have
3 to continue to work with Pakistan. Pakistan and Afghanistan
4 have got to work together. They've got to talk military-to-
5 military on how they can get after a common enemy that knows
6 no border, knows no boundaries. Transnational terrorism
7 does that. Pakistan and Afghanistan have a lot of
8 ungoverned space. This is going to be a problem for years
9 and years and years. This is a -- the terrorism piece is a
10 generational issue.

11 The one way that we can get after it is to continue to
12 build upon the capability of the Afghan forces to fight this
13 enemy. But, you know, I believe we're always going to need
14 a CT presence of some sort as we continue to build their
15 presence, to keep pressure on so that we don't allow this
16 transnational terrorism to come to the homeland of the
17 United States.

18 Senator Sullivan: And, if I may, Mr. Chairman, I know
19 my time's up, but, seeing that I'm the --

20 Senator Reed: Go ahead.

21 Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

22 I just want to follow up on the last point you made.
23 And one of the things that I think is important for our
24 military leaders, civilian leaders, Members of Congress, is
25 -- make sure that we're having a discussion, not only in

1 these kind of settings, but with the American people on what
2 -- the challenges that we face, what the -- the cold truth
3 on some of the challenges that we face. Because, I think,
4 when we do that, you have better policy, you have better
5 support, ultimately, from the American people, which is
6 fundamentally critical to any successful policy.

7 So, let me just ask a final followup. You talk about a
8 generational struggle. General Abizaid has talked about
9 "the long war." And you've had experience battling the long
10 war for quite some time now. You know, one of the things
11 that I think where the President hasn't really leveled with
12 the American people is when we talk about, "Well, we're --
13 we've ended combat operations in Afghanistan."

14 The CT mission is clearly a combat operation. And
15 we've had soldiers, unfortunately, killed recently. But,
16 could you talk about how we, again, should be thinking about
17 this issue of what you term "generational struggle," General
18 Abizaid's talked about "the long war" -- you know, there's
19 different models here, and some people talk about Korea,
20 some people talk about Germany -- what's the historical
21 analogy that we should be trying to think about with regard
22 to our troop presence in Afghanistan or other regions where
23 the threat of transnational terrorism is not going away next
24 year, it's not going away 2 years from now, it's probably
25 not going away in 5 years? How should we be thinking about

1 that, from a policy perspective, but also in terms of
2 leveling with the American people?

3 General Campbell: Sir, thanks.

4 Again, I do believe that -- you know, that
5 transnational terrorism, the -- it's a global threat. You
6 know, 9/11 changed our lives forever. I think we're very
7 fortunate that the men and women of our country, for the
8 most part, you know, don't worry about a lot of it now,
9 because they have great men and women, less than one-half of
10 1 percent, that continue to serve willingly, voluntarily, to
11 do what they can to make sure that they -- that they're
12 safe. And it's good that our --

13 Senator Sullivan: And are on offense in many parts of
14 the world.

15 General Campbell: Absolutely. So -- but, again, there
16 are going to continue to be bad people who want to do bad
17 things to the United States and our way of life, and we
18 shouldn't try to hide that. That's going to be out there.
19 So, we ought to do everything we can to continue to have the
20 very best military in the world that we can, the strongest
21 military. We're dependent upon Congress to provide us the
22 money to be able to do that. And we appreciate that great
23 support. But, you know, the -- it's going to take a global
24 effort. The U.S. can't do all this by itself. It's going
25 to continue to take a global effort as we move forward. And

1 I think we've got to talk in those kind of terms.

2 But, it'll be hard to take a model like Germany or
3 Korea or Japan or something like that, to say, "Hey, we're
4 going to continue 30,000." You know, I don't think we're in
5 that case. Technology -- you know, the -- has changed the
6 world we live in, so I think there's other ways to get after
7 this. But, bottom line is, we're going to have to continue
8 to keep pressure on it. And the way you do that is,
9 continue to provide the right equipment, the right training,
10 and the right leadership for the men and women who volunteer
11 to serve our country. And once you neglect them, then we're
12 in trouble.

13 And, you know, after 37 years of begin in the --
14 almost 37 years of being in the Army, with my son, who I
15 talked about the other day, who's at Fort Hood, Texas, so I
16 haven't seen since August of 2014, in Jalalabad, on his
17 second tour, who's getting ready to go on his third tour.
18 And if I didn't think this was important -- what I said the
19 other day is, I'd tell him to get out of the Army. But, I
20 absolutely think it's important, and I think people need to
21 go find ways that they can serve our country. And the
22 military is one way, and it's been very good to me. But --

23 Again, sir, it's a global thing. We're going to have
24 to stay on it. It's going to take continued leadership from
25 the United States. And that's the only way I see it going

1 in the future.

2 Senator Sullivan: Well, General, thank you again for
3 your exceptional service to our country, and your son, and
4 for that very wise wrap-up.

5 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 Senator Reed: Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

7 And in behalf of the Chairman, I will thank you again
8 for your testimony, for your extraordinary service to the
9 Nation, to the Army, and for your testimony this morning.

10 With that, the hearing is adjourned.

11 [Whereupon, at 12:01 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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