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COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE LONG-TERM BUDGETARY CHALLENGES FACING THE MILITARY SERVICES AND INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR MAINTAINING OUR MILITARY SUPERIORITY

Thursday, September 15, 2016

Washington, D.C.

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:34 a.m. in
Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John
McCain, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Committee Members Present: Senators McCain
[presiding], Inhofe, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst,
Tillis, Sullivan, Graham, Reed, McCaskill, Manchin, Shaheen,
Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Donnelly, Hirono, King, and
Heinrich.
OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN MCCAIN, U.S. SENATOR FROM ARIZONA

Chairman McCain: Good morning. The Senate Armed Services Committee meets this morning to receive testimony on the long-term budgetary challenges facing our military.

I would like to welcome our witnesses: the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Milley; the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Richardson; the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Neller; and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Goldfein. I thank each of you for your years of distinguished service and for your testimony today.

Far too often, Washington is governed by crisis and stop-gap deals like continuing resolutions, omnibus spending bills, and episodic budget agreements that are a poor substitute for actually doing our jobs. It has become an, unfortunately, all too familiar cycle of partisan gridlock, political brinksmanship, and backroom dealing. Is it any wonder why Americans say they are losing trust in government?

And through it all, we lose sight of the fact that the dysfunction of Washington has very real consequences for the thousands of Americans serving in uniform and sacrificing on our behalf all around the Nation and the world. From Afghanistan to Iraq and Syria, from the heart of Europe to the seas of Asia, our troops are doing everything we ask of
them. But we must ask ourselves are we doing everything we can for them. Are we serving them with a similar degree of courage in the performance of our duties? The answer I say with profound sadness is we are not. We are not.

Over many years across Presidents and congressional majorities of both parties, Washington has overseen a steady explosion of our national debt. This is just a fact. But 5 years ago, rather than confronting the real driver of our ballooning debt, which is the unsustainable growth of entitlement spending, we looked the other way. We failed to make tough choices and necessary reforms, and the result was the Budget Control Act which imposed arbitrary caps on discretionary spending, including defense spending for a decade. And when we failed to fix the real problem, we doubled down on these reckless cuts with mindless sequestration. In short, we lied to the American people.

The Budget Control Act and sequestration have done nothing to fix our national debt. This is just mathematics. And what is worse, the people we have punished for our failure are none other than the men and women of our armed services and many other important agencies. The world has only grown more dangerous over the past 5 years, but the resources available to our military has continued to decline.

This year’s defense budget is more than $150 billion
less than fiscal year 2011. Rising threats and declining
budgets have led to shrinking military forces that are
struggling to sustain higher operational tempo with aging
equipment and depleted readiness, and doing so at the
expense of modernizing to deal with the threats of tomorrow.

Our present crisis of military readiness is not just a
matter of training. It is also a capacity problem. Our
Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps are too small to
train for and meet our growing operational requirements
against low-end threats while simultaneously having enough
spare capacity to prepare for full spectrum warfare against
high-end threats. As it is, our services are cannibalizing
themselves just to keep up with the current pace of
deployments, as recent media reports about the Air Force and
Marine Corps aviation have made clear. And the result is
that our fighting forces are becoming effectively hollow
against great power competitors.

And if all of this is not bad enough, there is this.
We are only halfway through the Budget Control Act. There
are 5 more years of arbitrary defense spending cuts. It is
true that last year’s Bipartisan Budget Act provided some
much needed relief, but this 2-year deal is coming to an
end. And when it does, those arbitrary caps will return and
remain in place through the next President’s entire first
term.
The Department of Defense and many of us in the Congress believe this would devastate our national defense. And yet, we are fooling ourselves and deceiving the American people about the true cost of fixing the problem. Just consider the Department’s current 5-year defense plan is $100 billion in total above the spending caps set by the Budget Control Act. In addition, roughly $30 billion of annual spending for base defense requirements is buried in the budget account for emergency operations, requirements that will remain for our military even if our present operations immediately ended, which of course they will not.

What this means is that over the next 5 years, our Nation must come up with $250 billion just to pay for our current defense strategy and our current programs of record. $250 billion just to do what we are planning to do right now, which I think many of us would agree is insufficient to meet our present, let alone our future challenges. A quarter of a trillion dollars. That is the real hidden cost above our budget caps that we must come up with over the next 5 years.

Put simply, we have no plan as yet to pay for what our Department of Defense is doing right now, even as most of us agree that what we are doing at present is not sufficient for what we really need. And those needs are great indeed, from maintaining the capability and capacity to wage a
generational fight against radical Islamic terrorism, to rebuilding a ready and modernized force, to deter and, if necessary, defeat high-end threats, to modernizing our nuclear deterrent, to investing in the next generation capabilities that will preserve our military technological advantage and ensure our troops never find themselves in a fair fight.

The bottom line is this. From the Budget Control Act caps to the so-called OCO account, to our increasingly obsolete defense strategy, to the modernization bow wave that is coming for each of the services, we are lying to ourselves and the American people about the true cost of defending the Nation. The result is that our military’s ability to deter conflict is weakening, and should we find ourselves in conflict, it is becoming increasingly likely that our Nation will deploy young Americans into battle without sufficient training or equipment to fight a war that will take longer, be larger, cost more, and ultimately claim more American lives than it otherwise would have.

And if that comes to pass, who will be responsible? Who is to blame for the increasing risk to the lives of the men and women who volunteer to serve and defend our Nation? The answer is clear. We are, the President and the Congress, Democrats and Republicans, all of us.

With budget debates looming ahead, the question now is
whether we will find the courage we have lacked for 5 long years, the courage to put aside politics, to chart a better course, to adopt a defense budget worthy of the service and sacrifice of those who volunteer to put themselves in harm’s way on our behalf.

I am committed to doing everything I can as chairman of this committee to accomplishing this task. I know my colleagues on this committee are too. And despite the odds, I am ever hopeful that together we still can.

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

Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Let me join you in welcoming the members of the panel and thank them for their outstanding service to the Nation and ask them to convey our thanks to the men and women who serve so proudly in uniform for the United States. Thank you.

The focus of today’s hearing is the long-term budget challenges confronting our military services. For 15 years, our armed forces have been in continuous military operations. While our men and women in uniform have performed their duties superbly and doing all that we have asked them to do and more, the intense operational tempo has had an impact on our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, their training and their equipment. On top of all that, the services have had to grapple with sequestration and constrained budgets, as the chairman has pointed out.

The military leaders before us today have an important task. As they plan their budgets for fiscal year 2018 and beyond, they must anticipate emerging threats for the future and how our military will address and ultimately defeat those threats. As we are reminded on a daily basis, our country is facing many complicated and rapidly evolving challenges that do not offer easy or quick solutions.

For example, we have seen our near-peer competitors
learn from our past successes and make advancements of their own, particularly in the areas of precision and long-range strike, anti-access/area denial, space, and cyber. As a result, the Department of Defense has embarked on a third offset strategy to address the steady erosion of U.S. technological superiority and recapture our qualitative advantage over our adversaries.

We welcome our witnesses' thoughts on how their respective services plan to confront these critical issues again in the context of these very difficult budgetary issues.

In addition to anticipating and planning our future threats, our witnesses today must also ensure targeted investments are made to rebuild readiness levels, modernize the force, and maintain the wellbeing of our troops. Over the course of this year, the committee has repeatedly heard testimony on these issues, and I hope that our witnesses can provide this committee an update on the progress that they have made.

Finally, defense budgets should be based on our long-term military strategy which requires the Department to focus at least 5 years into the future. Last year, Congress passed the 2015 Bipartisan Budget Act that established the discretionary funding level for defense spending for fiscal year 2016 and 2017. And while the BBA provided the
Department with budget stability in the near term, there is no agreement for fiscal year 2018 and beyond. Therefore, without another bipartisan agreement that provides relief from sequestration, the military services will be forced to submit a fiscal year 2018 budget that adheres to the sequestration level budget caps and would undermine the investments made to rebuild readiness and modernization and other aspects of our military force.

Not only is the issue one of budgets, but the issue is one of the certainty of knowing that you have budget levels not just for a year but for at least 5 years. That is another aspect we have to come to grips with.

I will, indeed, welcome the witnesses’ thoughts and suggestions as we move forward.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman McCain: General Milley?
STATEMENT OF GENERAL MARK A. MILLEY, USA, CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

General Milley: Thanks, Chairman McCain -- I appreciate that -- and Ranking Member Reed and other distinguished members of the committee for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss our Army. And thank you for your consistent support and commitment to our Army's soldiers, civilians, and families.

A ready army, as you know, is manned, trained, equipped, and well led as the foundation of the joint force in order to deter and, if deterrence fails, to fight and defeat a wide range of state and non-state actors today, tomorrow, and deep into the future.

Although there are many challenges, as I outline below, the most important of which is consistent, sustained, and predictable funding over time, I still want to be clear. The United States Army is America’s combat force of decision, and we are more capable, better trained, better equipped, better led, and more lethal than any other ground force in the world today. We are highly valued by our allies, and we are feared by our enemies. And the enemies know full well we can destroy them. We can destroy any enemy. We can destroy them anywhere, and we can destroy them anytime.

But having said that, our challenge today is to sustain
the counterterrorist and the counterinsurgency capabilities that we have developed to a high degree of proficiency over the last 15 consecutive years of war for many years in the future, the prediction of which is unknown, and simultaneously rebuild our capability in ground combat against higher-end, near-peer, great power threats.

The Army prioritizes readiness in this NDAA because the global security environment is increasingly uncertain and complex. And I anticipate that we will have to continue to prioritize readiness for many years to come. While we cannot forecast precisely when and where the next contingency will arise, it is my professional military view that if any contingency happens, it will likely require a significant commitment of U.S. Army forces on the ground.

The Army is currently committed to winning our fight against radical terrorists during conflict in other parts of the globe. Currently, the Army provides 52 percent of all the global combatant commander demand for military forces, and we provide 69 percent of all the emerging combatant commander demand. And currently, we have 187,000 soldiers committed in 140 different countries globally conducting the Nation’s business.

To sustain current operations at that rate and to mitigate the risks of deploying an unready force into future combat operations, the Army will continue to prioritize and
fully fund readiness over end strength modernization and infrastructure. In other words, we are mortgaging future readiness for current readiness.

We request the resources to fully man and equip our combat formations and conduct realistic combined arms combat training at both home station and our combat training centers. We request continued support for our modernization in five key capability areas that we determined are lagging: aviation, command and control networks, integrated air and missile defense, combat vehicles, and emerging threat programs.

Our near-term innovation efforts are focused on developing overmatch in mobility, lethality, mission command, and force protection with specific emphasis on the following systems: long-range precision fires, missile defense, directed energy weapons, ground vehicles, vertical lift, cyber, electronic warfare, robotics, networks, and active protective systems for both ground and air.

And we ask your continued support for our soldiers and our families to recruit and retain the high level and the high quality of soldiers of character and competence that you have come to expect from the United States Army. With your support through sustained long-term, balanced, predictable resources, the Army will fund readiness at sufficient levels to meet current demands, build readiness.
for contingencies, and invest in the readiness of our future force.

   Thank you, Senators, for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to your questions.

   [The prepared statement of General Milley follows:]
Chairman McCain: Admiral Richardson?
STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL JOHN M. RICHARDSON, USN, CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY

Admiral Richardson: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and thank you for your sustained support to our Navy and our Nation.

I have been traveling around a fair amount recently to put eyes onto our Navy around the world. And as you know, the problems they face are getting more complex by the day. But your naval team is working hard, and our sailors, marines, and civilians are simply astounding in their skill and dedication. And we must focus on them with everything we do to respect their mission and their dedication.

I can describe our current challenges in terms of a triple whammy.

The first whammy, as we have said, is the continued high demand for our naval forces. We just marked the 15th anniversary of 9/11. And the past 15 years of high OPTEMPO in support of the wars has put tremendous wear and tear on our ships and aircraft. It has also taken a toll on the sailors that take those platforms out to sea, on the skilled Navy civilians that build and repair them, and on our family members.

The second whammy is budget uncertainty. 8 years of
continuing resolutions, including a year of sequestration, have driven additional cost and time into just about everything that we do. The services are essentially operating in three fiscal quarters per year now. Nobody schedules anything important in the first quarter. The disruption that this uncertainty imposes translates directly into risk to our Navy and our Nation.

The third whammy is the resource levels in the Budget Control and Bipartisan Budget Acts. Funding levels require us to prioritize achieving full readiness only for our deploying units. These are ready for full spectrum operations, but we are compromising the readiness of those ships and aircraft that we will have to surge to achieve victory in a large conflict. And we have also curtailed our modernization in a number of areas critical to staying ahead of our potential adversaries.

One more related point. Mr. Chairman, this highlights a point you brought up. Your Navy thrives on long-term stability, and when putting together shipbuilding plans, it is necessary to think in terms of decades. And while I know we are mostly here to talk about the current challenges, I feel I must say I was struck by the recent Congressional Budget Office report updating their long-term budget and economic outlook. In it, they predict that within the decade, discretionary spending, which includes defense, will
drop to the lowest levels in more than 50 years. It makes
crystal clear that it is vital that we all dive in and get
to work on this problem now for the security of our country.

In terms of a solution, we must work as partners. On
one hand, we must work to set sufficient resource levels and
restore stability to the budgeting process. And on the
other hand, we must ensure -- I must ensure that every
dollar that the American taxpayer gives the Navy is spent as
efficiently and effectively as possible. I am committed to
meeting my responsibilities here and in partnering with you
as we go forward.

Together with our sister services, your Navy is here to
protect our great Nation. Your sailors and civilians
continue to do everything that is being asked of them, even
as the demands continue to grow. Working together with you,
I am committed to finding a way to address these challenges.

Thank you, sir, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Richardson follows:]
Chairman McCain: General Neller?
STATEMENT OF GENERAL ROBERT B. NELLER, USMC,
COMMANDANT OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

General Neller: Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear today and talk about your marines. And I thank you for your support of marines, sailors that serve with marines, our civilian marines, and our families.

Marines have a unique perspective on readiness based on the intent of Congress. We are the Nation’s force in readiness, and being ready is central to our identity as part of the Navy/Marine Corps team.

That said, Mr. Chairman, my understanding of the purpose of this hearing is for the service chiefs to provide our best military advice on our current and future readiness challenges. My experience in the Marine Corps has been to make do with what we have been given. That is just the way I was raised, and I have never been comfortable asking for anything more. And I also understand there are many competing fiscal requirements that this Congress has to deal with.

However, based on the current top line in the future budget projections and though we are meeting our current requirements, I believe we are now pushing risk and the long-term health of the force into the future. As an example, we submitted an unfunded priority list of
approximately $2.6 billion, which is the largest we have ever submitted.

The global security environment drives our requirements, and requirements equal commitments. Your marines are as busy and as committed now as during the height of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Current OPTEMPO balanced against fiscal reductions, instability of continuing resolutions, and the threat of sequestration during the past few years have driven us to critically review the allocation of our resources in order to meet these commitments.

We, like the other services, make tough choices every day, and we are facing our readiness challenges head on. Our readiness has been to deployed and next-to-deploy units. Current readiness shortfalls in aviation, facility sustainment, future modernization, retention of critical skills, and building the depth on our ready bench forces at home are our primary concerns.

That said, we have not stood idly by in planning for our future. I am confident we have identified our requirements for readiness recovery and improvements, and we are making progress slowly, but progress nonetheless. Our Force 2025 initiative is identifying the requirements of our future Marine Corps, balanced against fiscal reality. Force 2025 addresses current capability shortfalls, sustainment of
capacity, and future manpower requirements to fight on the 21st century battlefield.

Fiscal constraints necessarily bring tradeoffs, and to paraphrase one of my predecessors, we will give you the most ready Marine Corps the Nation can afford. The Marine Corps remains good stewards of what we are given, and we will generate the maximum readiness possible with the resources we are provided. And we will create and generate a Marine Corps that is agile, ready, and lethal.

Working side by side with Congress, the other services, and our Navy shipmates especially, you can count on your marines to meet and exceed the standards the American people have set for us.

I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Neller follows:]
Chairman McCain: Thank you, General.

General Goldfein?
STATEMENT OF GENERAL DAVID L. GOLDFEIN, USAF, CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

General Goldfein: Thank you, Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished members of the committee. It is an honor to be here and to be a member of this JCS team, serving beside men I have known for years, fought with, and admire.

In the interest of brevity, Chairman, you and Ranking Member Reed asked five key questions in your letter to us requesting this hearing.

You asked, what are the Air Force’s modernization needs? We need to maintain stable, predictable funding for the F-35, the KC-46, and the B-21 in order to outpace our adversaries. At the same time, shoulder to shoulder with the Navy, we must modernize our aging nuclear enterprise. And while we continue to extend the life of our existing fleets, we need the flexibility to retire aging weapon systems and reduce excess infrastructure in order to afford the technology needed to maintain our advantage, given adversary advancements in satellite-enabled precision, stealth, cruise and ballistic missiles, ISR, and other anti-access/area denial capabilities that continue to proliferate worldwide.

You asked, how will the Air Force regain full spectrum readiness? It starts with people. Our Bipartisan Budget
Act end strength totals 492,000 airmen for fiscal year 2017, 317,000 of which are active duty. Based upon current and projected global demands for air power to deter and, if required, defeat challenges presented by China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and violent extremism, we respectfully request your support to grow our force to 321,000 active duty airmen by the end of fiscal year 2017. This remains our top priority in the current budget request.

You asked, how will the Air Force maintain its technological edge? We are laser-focused on fighter, tanker, and bomber recapitalization, nuclear modernization, preparing for a war that could extend into space, increasing our capability and capacity in the cyber domain, and leveraging and improving multi-domain and coalition-friendly command and control as the foundation of future combined arms operation.

You asked, how will your requirements impact the budgetary top line from fiscal year 2018 onward? We will be forced to continually make strategic trades to simultaneously sustain legacy fleets engaged in the current fight while smartly investing in modernization and the future technologies that will be required to meet combatant commander demands in the information age of warfare. Repealing sequestration, returning to stable budgets without extended continuing resolutions, and allowing us the
flexibility to reduce excess infrastructure and make
strategic trades are essential to success.

Finally, you asked, what solutions are available for
mitigating growing costs such as new acquisition authorities
or innovative solutions to maintaining our military? As the
chief requirements officer, I review every major program to
ensure requirements are clearly published and sustained
throughout the program and by personally signing documents
leading to milestone A and B decisions to ensure we meet
cost, schedule, and performance standards for our
warfighting commanders. Additionally, we aligned our
continuous process improvement efforts with DOD’s Better
Buying Power 3.0 initiatives, as well as Secretary James’
Bending the Cost Curve activities.

In summary, all of our portfolios depend on steady,
predictable, and timely funding, and the flexibility to make
key trades to balance capability, capacity, and readiness.
Current global security demands remind us that America’s
joint team must be ready to engage anytime, anywhere across
the full spectrum of conflict, all while defending the
homeland and providing a safe, secure, and reliable
strategic nuclear deterrent. America expects it. Combatant
commanders require it. And with your support, our soldiers,
sailors, airmen, and marines will continue to deliver it.

We look forward to your questions.
[The prepared statement of General Goldfein follows:]
Chairman McCain: Thank you. I thank the witnesses and thank you for your leadership and service to the Nation.

I think we would all agree that the world has changed a lot since the initiation of sequestration. A simple question. Do you feel that you would have resources and ability to defend this Nation against present and future threats if we continue down this path of sequestration, beginning with you, General Milley?

General Milley: Under sequestration, no, sir, I do not.

Chairman McCain: Admiral Richardson?

Admiral Richardson: I agree with General Milley, sir. Sequestration will prevent us from doing that.

Chairman McCain: General Neller?

General Neller: No, sir, we would not have the capability.

Chairman McCain: General Goldfein?

General Goldfein: The same.

Chairman McCain: Thank you.

Admiral Richardson, you talk about in your written statement our people are feeling the strain. We continue to meet our recruiting and retention goals. But you go on to talk about SEALs. You begin to talk about surface nuclear officers not meeting the goals. Naval aviation is another area of concern. We see declines in officer retention for
multiple grades, and bonuses are not proving fully effective.

I guess I would ask, Admiral Richardson, General Neller, and General Goldfein. It is not a matter of money with these young pilots. Is that not true? It is a matter of being able to fly and operate. I mean, when we just talk about solving this problem with bonuses, we are never going to compete with the airlines because they can always up the ante. But when our pilots are flying less hours a month than Russian and Chinese pilots are, you are going to have a problem. I will begin with you, Admiral Richardson.

Admiral Richardson: Sir, I agree with you. Our pilots join the Navy to fly naval aircraft. And that is what they want to do. This is a much bigger problem than money. Money can help up to a point. We want to make sure we adequately compensate all of our people. And there is competition, as you say. But at the heart of the matter, this is a highly dedicated team that wants to defend the Nation in high performance aircraft, and that is what they want to do. They want to fly.

Chairman McCain: General Neller?

General Neller: Sir, I would agree with that. On paper our situation looks a little bit better, but it does not take into account the experience level of those aircrew. But it is all about the best retention thing we can is
provide modern, maintainable, ready-to-fly airplanes.

But I would also say it is more than just the aircrew. It is also the maintainers. We are making it now on the backs of those sergeants and those staff sergeants out there that have to do work twice and to get the part from one to put it on the other. So I am as concerned about maintainers sticking around. And as we go to depots, we compete not just with airlines for aircrew, but we compete with contractors and commercial concerns for the marines that maintain our airplanes.

Chairman McCain: While I have still got you, in your written statement, you said the Marine Corps is no longer in a position to generate current readiness and reset our equipment while sustaining our facilities and modernizing to ensure our future readiness. That is a pretty strong statement, General.

General Neller: Based on the current fiscal environment, as was stated I believe by all my fellow chiefs, we are all making trades, and those trades require us to accept risk in certain areas. I would like to have our parts support when you look at the aviation particularly, but I could say the same thing about ground equipment. The amount of money we are able to put against parts and supply support is not what we need to maintain our legacy aircraft.
Chairman McCain: General Goldfein?

General Goldfein: Sir, I approach this as a balanced challenge and opportunity, quality of service, and quality of life. Removing financial burdens through aviation bonuses certainly fall in the quality of life category. But what we have found in the past -- and we have been through this before because airlines have hired before -- is that quality of service is as important as quality of life. And quality of service is making sure that you are given the opportunity to be the best you can be in your chosen occupation. Pilots who do not fly, maintainers who do not maintain, controllers who do not control will walk, and there is not enough money in the treasury to keep them in if we do not give them the resources they need to be the best they can be. In my mind, readiness and morale are inextricably linked. Where we have high readiness, we tend to have high morale because they are given the opportunities to compete. Where we have low readiness, we have our lowest morale.

Chairman McCain: General Milley, in your written statement, you said our goal is to have regular Army brigade combat teams achieve 60 to 66 percent full spectrum readiness, and I estimate that it will take the Army approximately 4 years to achieve that, assuming no significant increase in demand and no sequestration levels
of funding. That is a pretty alarming statement when you look at the potential challenges that we are facing. Do you want to elaborate on that a bit?

General Milley: Thanks, Senator.

For 15 consecutive years, the Army has been decisively committed in Iraq and Afghanistan and other counterterrorist/counterinsurgency type operations. In order to do that, we essentially came off of a core warfighting skills of combined arms maneuver against a near-peer or a higher-end threat.

So, for example -- just a couple of examples. An armor officer today, a tank officer, up through, say, the rank of major has very little experience in terms of maneuvering tanks against an opponent who has armor, very little experience in gunnery. Artillery battalion have not fired battalion level fires consistently in a decade and a half. So we have to rebuild that, and that is going to take considerable time, effort on our part. We have made a lot of progress, by the way, in the last year.

Chairman McCain: And you cannot do it with sequestration.

General Milley: Oh, absolutely not. Sequestration will take the rug out from underneath us. Absolutely.

Chairman McCain: Well, you know, I would just like to say before I turn to Senator Reed at your confirmation
hearings, I asked you to come before this committee and give us your frank and honest view. I appreciate the testimony here today, and I think it will be very helpful in our efforts to eliminate the effect of sequestration and give you the wherewithal that you need to make sure that we meet the challenges which are, as I said in the beginning, far more significant than they were on the day that sequestration began. We have got a lot of issues, but I appreciate the fact that you have outlined for this committee and I hope for the American people the necessity of us addressing these challenges. I thank the witnesses.

Senator Reed?

Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Again, thank you, gentlemen, for your testimony. It is very insightful, very sobering, and also reinforces the point that the chairman made that we just have to move away from sequestration. And one of the issues that has been illustrated by your testimony is it is not just the limits on spending. It is the uncertainty. Admiral Richardson, you pointed out that you only operate really three quarters of a year, that one quarter is just sort of standing around wishing and hoping. Can you elaborate a bit?

Admiral Richardson: Well, sir, you know behaviors are modified to adapt to the reality of the last 8 years. So big programs that require new funding and that require
authorities for new starts -- those are all prohibited in a continuing resolution environment. And so rather than put those programs in the first quarter and put them all at risk, we just live in a three quarter year. That first quarter is a light touch on just trying to keep things going.

Senator Reed: General Milley and then General Neller, General Goldfein, your comments too about this uncertainty factor. In fact, one could argue -- let me get your insight -- that effectively you are losing lots of money and wasting lots of money because of this uncertainty, not saving anything because of sequestration. Is that fair?

General Milley: That is correct, Senator, because if all we are doing is planning things year to year or actually three quarters of a year to three quarters of a year, things like multiyear contracts, developing long-term relationships with industry where they can count on us and so on -- that becomes very difficult. And what ends up happening is the price per unit goes up. So it has built in inefficiency. It has built in cost overruns. It is an un-good situation. It is not good and it needs to end.

Senator Reed: General Neller, your comments?

General Neller: It is very much the same, Senator. We have got some major programs and we would like to have the certainty and be able to tell the vendor that they have got...
the funding there and we can press them to drive the cost down. If we live year to year or month to month, that is not going to happen.

But in line with what General Goldfein said, I think the force out there -- they are watching us. They are looking at us and they want to know what the plan is. People, for all of us, are our center of gravity. That is the one thing we have to protect. We can buy all the planes and ships and tanks and vehicles we want, but this is a volunteer force. This is a recruited and retained force. And they watch everything that is going on. These young men and women are very smart, and they want to know that there is commitment that they can count on as they decide whether they are going to continue to stay in.

Senator Reed: Thank you, sir.

General Goldfein?

General Goldfein: Thank you, sir.

Just perhaps to add some perspective, if we end up in a long-term continuing resolution, this will be the eighth that we have had to deal with. So just to give you a scale then for what will happen in the United States Air Force if we go beyond 3 months into a long-term CR, that will be about $1.3 billion less that is in the fiscal year 2017 budget. Some immediate impacts: KC-46 will go from 15 to 12 aircraft, and we will be procuring munitions at the
fiscal year 2016 rates. In the fiscal year 2017 budget, we were actually able to forecast, based on what we believe we will be dropping in the current fight. That will go away, and so we will be procuring preferred munitions at a lower rate, which not only affects all of us that are engaged in the campaign, but it also affects our coalition partners who are relying on us as well for preferred munitions. We will have 60 acquisition programs that will be affected and 50 MILCON projects, to include those that are new mission bed-down will also be affected, that just by a long-term CR.

Senator Reed: Thank you.

One of the issues that you all discussed and the chairman has made I think appropriate reference to is the changing situation in terms of unexpected challenges in the last several years. My sense too is that as we look around, particularly from technology, you are beginning to discover unanticipated costs for legacy systems in addition that we might not even have added into the projection. Is that fair to say, General Goldfein? And then we will go down the panel.

General Goldfein: Yes, sir. What happens is we do what we call a service life extension program, or SLEP. And there is actually a reason it is a four-letter word because what we do is we put an aircraft and we shake it and we put it through all kinds of environmental testings. And then we
find out what those failure parts are, and then we either
buy those parts or we put them in the bench stock and we try
to predict what we will need. And then we certify that
aircraft will fly to, you know, the next 2,000 hours. The
reality is we only fix what we can accurately predict, and
then we put these aircraft into depot maintenance. We pull
the skin off. What we find are there are things that are
breaking that we never predicted.

A classic example. F-15C has a nose wheel steering
problem, and we go look for the part and we have not made
that part in 5 years. And so then we go out to industry and
we find that we have got to hand make now a part that we
have not made in years, and that just causes the costs to go
up. So what we have found over the years is that older
aircraft -- it is actually not a linear path in terms of
cost growth. It actually gets at some point to an
exponential growth. And then that cost per flying hour
requires us to put more money into sustaining systems longer
than putting that money into the modernization which we
desperately need.

Senator Reed: Thank you. My time has expired. Thank
you, gentlemen, again for your service.

Chairman McCain: Senator Inhofe?

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

You know, General Milley, when you were talking about
ground troops, I am reminded of my last year in the House. I was on the House Armed Services Committee. It was 1994 when we had an expert witness sitting out there like you guys are saying in 10 years we would no longer need ground troops. I think about often what our needs are going to be in the future and how we are trying to survive today. And yet, looking into the future, yes, you talk about the KC-46 and the need. The KC-135 has been around for 57 years, and it is going to be around for a lot longer. This is not what the other side, the competition does.

I think the chairman is right when he says that he asked for your honest opinion. I do not have and we do not have the credibility to go out to the public and adequately explain the level of risk that we are accepting today and the fact that we are in the most threatened position in my opinion we have ever been. They depend on hearing that from you not from people like me.

When General Dempsey said -- and this is some time ago. He said we are putting our military on a path where the force is so degraded and so unready that it would be immoral to use force. Now, that to me was a courageous statement that I have used. People are shocked when they hear it. This is some time ago now.

Winnifield. He made the statement there could be for the first time in my career instances where we would be
asked to respond to a crisis, and we will have to say that
we cannot. You know, that is a shocker.

And then, of course, when our former colleague, Chuck
Hagel, said American dominance of the seas, in the skies,
and in space can no longer be taken for granted.

What I am saying is that you folks need to be
outspoken. You need to be heard because you are the
experts. And the public is not aware of the threats that we
have.

So I want to ask you in a minute a question just on the
size of the military but let me give you a couple of --
these are quotes from you and other people talking about
just the size. General Goldfein, you said our strategic
capability advantage over competitors is shrinking and our
ability to protect strategic deterrence is being challenged.

Your predecessor, General Welch, said virtually every
mission area faces critical manning shortages, and the Air
Force risks burning airmen out.

General Milley, you said in light of the threats
confronting our Nation, to include Russia, China, North
Korea, Iran, ISIS -- you know, we need to talk about that --
the Army has accepted high military risk to meet the
requirements of the national security strategy.

General Allen. At today’s end strength, the Army risks
consuming readiness as fast as it builds it.
So I would like to ask each one of you do the realities of the strategic environment today and the foreseeable future call for a change in the size of our military. We will start with you, General Milley.

General Milley: Thank you, Senator.

I think the Army has got adequate readiness and adequate size to deal with our current demand which is fighting terrorists, counterinsurgency operation in Iraq, Afghanistan, elsewhere around the world, and to meet the current global combatant commander demand for day-to-day operations.

Senator Inhofe: Now, you are saying the current end strength or that which is projected?

General Milley: The current. The day-to-day, what is going on today, the national military strategy, given that we are actively engaged against ISIS, Al Qaeda, and other groups. So that is current.

The risk comes if we have a conflict with a near-peer, high-end competitor. Those other contingencies that Secretary of Defense Carter and many others have talked about with China, Russia, North Korea, or Iran, each of which is different operationally and tactically, each of which would require different levels of forces, types of forces, and methods of operation.

But the bottom line is with the size of the U.S. Army.
today, if one or more of those other contingencies took place, I maintain that our risk would significantly increase, as I mentioned before, and if two of them happen at the same time, I think it is high risk for the Nation.

Senator Inhofe: We understand. Of course, that is not predictable. We do not know.

General Milley: Of course, not. But we have to be prepared for it.

And just one last comment. You know, what we want is to deter. Nobody wants to have these wars with near-peer competitors, great powers. And the only thing more expensive than deterrence is actually fighting a war, and the only thing more expensive than fighting a war is fighting one and losing one. This stuff is expensive. We are expensive. We recognize that. But the bottom line is it is an investment that is worth every nickel.

Senator Inhofe: Briefly, Admiral Richardson, size.

Admiral Richardson: Sir, philosophically I could not say it any better than General Milley did. I agree with him.

In terms of the size, we are asking the same question. When I first came in to be the CNO, our current fleet size -- and there is more to capability than size, but size does matter -- is 308 ships. That assessment was done without considering the emergent threat of Russia, without
considering the emergent threat of ISIS. We are completing a study this month that gets at a new force structure assessment, and we will be ready to bring that to you very shortly.

Senator Inhofe: You two generally agree with that?

General Neller: I think it is two things, Senator. First, it is the capacity and the size that you talked about, but it is also -- I think it was mentioned by everybody else -- the capability sets that we have now. The future fight, if there is one -- hopefully there is not, but they deter a future fight. There are capabilities that we do not in the Marine Corps have that we are going to require because we focused on the fight against terrorism in the last 15 years. So how big is that force? What do you do? Otherwise, you have to trade because there are capabilities that we have now that we do not want to get rid of. So as you trade one capability for another, you either give something up and you accept risk there to get the other capability. And those are the trades that we are in and discussing at this time.

Senator Inhofe: That is right. You have to accept risk. I know that.

There is not time for you to answer that question, but I do have another comment to make concerning you, General Goldfein.
I agree with the fact -- and I talked to the pilots.

They want to fly more. That is significant. You cannot completely eliminate the fact that it costs $9 million, if you take someone off the street and make an F-22 pilot out of them. And yet the bonuses -- you were talking about what? $25,000 a year. That has to be considered also I would say.

General Goldfein: Sir, in terms of the fact that we are moving forward for an aviation bonus --

Senator Inhofe: You have to consider that too along with the flying hours because the expense of taking someone and putting them in advanced Air Force training and then you take them all the way up to F-22 capability.

General Goldfein: Yes, sir. And as a matter of fact, our studies that we have done show that. We have not adjusted the aviation bonus for a number of years.

Senator Inhofe: That is right.

General Goldfein: And so we are asking for Congress’ support to give us authorization for a higher level based on the data that we have that shows that it will take more than what we offer today to be able to provide the quality of life incentives to be able to allow them to stay in.

But at the same time, I will tell you I am laser-focused on the quality of service aspect to this because even if I pay them more, if I do not get them in the air,
they are going to walk.

Senator Inhofe: You are right.

Thank you.

Senator Reed [presiding]: On behalf of the chairman,

Senator McCaskill.

Senator McCaskill: Thank you.

I want to associate myself with the opening statement
of Senator McCain in many ways because I think you all
honestly step forward and lead an amazing fighting force. I
think we owe the American people honesty about the military
budget.

And what is going on in the House of Representatives
this year is, once again, a phony budget gimmick to pretend
that they are somehow being fiscally conservative because
they are using the overseas contingency operations fund to
fund the base operations of our military. That is dishonest
on its face. It is inefficient and ineffective for our
military.

And, General Milley, I would like to bring this home to
my State. Obviously, we have Fort Leonard Wood that dates
back to World War II in terms of some of its buildings, and
we have temporary military construction dating back to that
time. And we are in an aggressive updating of that
facility, which is such a key facility for our Army. And I
noticed that they even had the nerve to put military
construction activities at bases in the United States in the overseas contingency operating fund.

Can you comment about how this impacts your ability on readiness and training when you are being put in a fund that is year-to-year and not certain and you cannot plan with it?

General Milley: Sure, Senator. You are exactly right. You cannot plan with it and you cannot just go year to year. And things like multiyear contracts and having relationships with the commercial industry in order to upgrade either weapons, equipment, et cetera.

Now, specifically what you are talking about is infrastructure, which is a key component. We often talk about man, train, and equip sort of thing, but also the infrastructure on Army bases is atrophying and the training ranges are not as modern as they should be, throughput capacities and so on. And we have got a laundry list. It is not just in Missouri. It is in many other places. That is of great concern, and we have been robbing that account for quite a few years now in order to maintain readiness in order to pay for the war. So that is another area of great concern is that infrastructure.

Senator McCaskill: And our men and women that have been deployed -- they are not deployed for a half a year. So we certainly should not fund their money for half a year.

General Goldfein, I also had an opportunity to go to
the 139th Airlift Wing over the last few weeks. You know, it is the top gun of airlift in terms of training. And the frustration there is there seems to be a disconnect, and only you and people that you interact with can fix this. And that is, these are strategic level courses. We are training people from all over the country at this facility in terms of lift and internationally I might add, our allies, as you probably well know.

But for some reason, they are having to deal with an annual funding issue instead of getting programmatic funding. I do not get that. I do not get why the National Guard Bureau and the Air Mobility Command cannot get together because you know what they are both doing? They are doing this. One is saying, oh, we are putting it programmatic, and the other is saying, well, we do not have it. And it is really frustrating for that excellent facility to have to continue to beat on this door and have nobody answer. I would like your commitment today to look into this and see if you cannot get this resolved once and for all.

General Goldfein: Yes, ma’am. And I will just tell you quickly that we had this come also up in the remotely piloted aircraft business. And what we found was that because there are so many elements associated with actually getting a CAP airborne and doing a sortie, that we had not
gone through and done the work that built the requirements that lay out over an entire year. And so the wing commanders were having to plug holes and go month to month to month. So as a result of that, we put together a team and we are actually working with the Director of the Air National Guard to lay out annual requirements for the MPA days. And then once we have those annual requirements, then we are going to fund them on an annual basis so that wing commanders will not be there. So I will take this on and make sure that that --

Senator McCaskill: That would be terrific.

And finally for you, General Neller, I am a big, big fan of the Marines. But I was struck when I was at Fort Leonard Wood. I had a chance to visit with recruits who were in the last 2 weeks of their training. They had done 9 weeks. They were in their AIT training. And I had a chance to visit with these men and women. I was struck how many immigrants were in this training class from South Korea, Honduras, Costa Rica. They had just done a naturalization ceremony on the base for 67 soldiers becoming United States citizens. These people are saying they want to cross the line and die for their country.

When I saw the way that the Muslim soldier was treated in Parris Island, it hurt my heart, and I just want it on the record for you to commit that you will get to the bottom
of this and there will be no question in the Marines that
abusing someone because of their ethnicity or their religion
is absolutely unacceptable or their gender orientation.

General Neller: Senator, you have my complete and
total commitment to that.

Senator McCaskill: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Reed: On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator
Fischer, please.

Senator Fischer: Thank you, Senator Reed.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here today.

I am going to pick up a little bit on Senator
McCaskill’s expression of frustration and expand that. Many
times the American people -- they hear different stories,
different information from different sources, and I would
like to highlight part of that today and get your response
to that and if you would clarify it.

General Milley, the “Wall Street Journal” published an
article by General Petraeus last month, and it was entitled
“The Myth of the U.S. Military Readiness Crisis.” And in
it, he characterized the Army’s weapons inventory in the
following way. While some categories of aircraft and other
key weapons are aging and will need replacement or major
refurbishment soon, most equipment remains in fairly good
shape. According to our sources in the military, Army
equipment has, on average, mission capable rates today exceeding 90 percent, and that is a historically high level.

General, do you believe that General Petraeus was correct in this assessment that the equipment and the mission capable rates are what he says they are? And what does that tell us or possibly what does it not tell us about the state of the Army?

General Milley: Thanks, Senator.

I know General Petraeus well and have got a lot of respect for him, served under him, et cetera, along with Mr. O’Hanlon who is the co-author. Both of them are very talented.

But as you might expect, I do not necessarily agree with that. The title of the article is “Readiness Crisis: A Myth.” I do not know if “crisis” is the right word. That is packed with all kinds of emotion. But there are serious readiness challenges in the United States Army today. And the operational readiness rates for our key weapon systems are not above 90 percent. They are well below 90 percent in some cases, and that is cause for great concern. They are improving, but they are below 90 percent. 90 percent is the standard, 9 out of 10 weapon systems ready to go to war at a moment in time. Our weapon systems are not in that condition at this time.

Senator Fischer: Thank you, sir, for clarifying that.
Also, the column goes on to argue that training for full spectrum operations is resuming. It claims that by 2017 the Army plans to rotate nearly 20 brigades, about a third of its force, through national training centers each year. The Marine Corps plans to put 12 infantry battalions, about half its force, through large training exercises, and the Air Force is funding its training and readiness programs at 80 to 98 percent of what it considers fully resourced levels.

Generals, do you think that accurately portrays your services and their readiness to conduct the full spectrum operations? General Milley?

General Milley: It is a partial answer. So the flagship training event for an Army unit, an Army brigade combat team, is going to a combat training center at the National Training Center or Joint Readiness Training Center down in Louisiana. And a few years ago, we were not doing decisive action operations against higher-end threats. We changed gears about 24 months ago, and about 12 to 18 months ago, we started putting brigades through the paces of going against near-peer competitors unless they were specifically designated to go into Afghanistan or Iraq.

At the end of fiscal year 2017, by the end of next year, 100 percent of our brigade combat teams on active duty will have one rotation. It is all about reps. So if you
were, back in the day, pre-9/11, a typical battalion commander or a major, for example, or a company commander, you would have three, four, five, maybe more rotations through a training center by the time they reached those levels. Today we have an entire generation of officers going into the field grade ranks commanding battalions or even in some cases companies that have very little or no experience at a CTC. So by the end of fiscal year 2017, 100 percent of the brigades, but it is a matter of reps. We have to do it over and over again.

So the data I have and the forecast we have is by the end of 2018, 24 months from now, we will have nine of our brigades with three rotations, 18 of them with two, and 4 with one. That is not bad. It is better and all that is good. But there is more to it than just going to the training centers. That is a key part but there is more to it.

Manning levels are holding us back. We have over 30,000 non-available soldiers in the regular Army today. That is a corps, an entire corps not available for medical, legal, and a variety of other reasons. And that is not even talking about your training account, basic training, or the overhead it takes to run basic training. So your personnel piece is big, and then equipment maintenance, which you just talked about with OR rates. Those are big. Those are all
parts of readiness. And that is just readiness with the equipment, the modernization, the systems we have today. Or 10 years from now, there are lots of systems out there that we need to invest in to get them online to be able to deal with a near-peer great power, if in fact that day ever comes.

So I do not subscribe 100 percent to what General Petraeus, as much as I respect him, or Michael O’Hanlon wrote. And I like them both.

Senator Fischer: Thank you. I am out of time. But, General Neller and General Goldfein, if you could get that information to me, I would be happy to put that out.

And I too respect the service that General Petraeus has given to this country, but I think it is important that we get correct information out to the people of this country so they understand the situation that we are facing with our military.

Thank you.

Senator Reed: On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator Hirono, please.

Senator Hirono: Thank you very much, gentlemen, for your testimony and for your service and the service of the men and women whom you lead.

Over the course of the many hearings that this committee has had with regard to the negative impacts of
sequestration, we have been provided with objective
information as to those impacts that causes me to question
the article that my colleague just talked about, as much as,
of course, we appreciate the service of General Petraeus.

For General Neller, I have been monitoring the progress
with the Marine Corps Pacific laydown, including visits to
Okinawa, Guam, and CNMI. And I know that it will be very
important to have adequate training facilities.

So, General, can you talk briefly about the current
status and if you have any concerns about the progress so
far of the Marine Corps specifically to plan? I just read
an article recently about the Governor of CNMI and his
position regarding training in Pagan.

General Neller: Well, Senator, we are still in the
execution of the current plan of the Pacific laydown for
marine forces. The Futenma replacement facility has been
separated from the move from Guam, but from the very
beginning our movement to Guam was contingent based on the
fact that we could train and maintain our readiness once
deployed there. And because of actions of others and
environmental impact, right now that is potentially at risk
and has pushed the timeline to the right. So we are still
committed to go to Guam, but to go to Guam, we have to be
able to sustain the readiness of the force, whatever that
force is that we deploy there.
So I am concerned with it. I am watching it. I think there may be some other forces involved in this and that is causing delays in this. There are also still issues on Okinawa about building on to the north of the Futenma replacement facility that are tied up between negotiations between the Government of Japan and their prefecture of Okinawa, and we continue to monitor that.

Senator Hirono: I share your concerns because there are a number of moving parts with regard to the move out of Futenma and Henoko, and there are now delays there. I realize that we are doing the buildup necessary for Guam, but we cannot send our troops there unless they have a place to train. So CNMI and the discussions that we are having and whatever negotiations we are having with that government is really critical, and I would appreciate your keeping me apprised as we go along. And anything that this committee and I can do to help --

General Neller: Yes, ma’am, we will certainly do that.

Senator Hirono: For General Milley and General Goldfein, I want to commend you in your leadership of your respective services, including the National Guard components in your mission. As you know, a combined force of active, Guard, and Reserve components is imperative to the defense of our country.

At our full committee hearing on cybersecurity this
week, the important role that the National Guard plays in contributing to total force requirements was discussed. Can both of you talk about progress in other areas where you will be depending on your Guard components to fulfill Army and Air Force requirements?

General Goldfein: Senator, I will give General Milley a break.

We are looking across the entire enterprise of the five core missions that the Air Force does for the joint team in the Nation to look at where we can partner with Air National Guard to leverage that component and the Air Force Reserves across all these mission areas: cyber, intelligence, command and control, nuclear enterprise, conventional air power in terms of both bomber and fighter force. We are looking at all of that. In the mobility portion of our business, you go into a C-17 and ask the question in the cockpit today, okay, who is Guard, who is active, who is Reserve, and very often all three hands will go up because we are that connected. So we have three components. We have one Air Force. We have five missions. We are looking across all of those mission areas.

I predict that cyber will be a growth industry when it comes to including our Air National Guard because it is ideally suited for that mission set. And so we are looking across the enterprise at ways we can partner and we can
increase that.

Senator Hirono: General Milley?

General Milley: Thanks, Senator.

We have made a lot of strides I think in the last year in trying to integrate and enhance the readiness of the National Guard. It is my assessment that we are going to have to significantly improve the readiness of the United States Army National Guard and the Army Reserve.

We are the only service that has over 50 percent of our force structure in the reserve component, and we have got about 53 percent. So a significant chunk of the Army is in the reserve.

And as was designed many, many years ago, the bottom line is the United States Army cannot conduct sustained land campaigns overseas without the National Guard and without the United States Army Reserve. It is not possible. That is the way the system was designed many, many decades ago.

So today what do we rely on? There is a considerable amount of maneuver force in the Army National Guard. We are moving to 26 brigades with this President’s budget -- maneuver brigades. There is a lot of artillery. So there is a lot of combat power in the National Guard, a lot of attack helicopters, and so on. If you look at combat service support, logistics units, about 60 percent, 62 percent of the United States Army’s logistics is all in the
reserve component.

So the Army, bottom line, could not fight, could not
feed itself, could not maneuver, could not conduct any sort
of extended land campaign anywhere in the world without the
Guard or the Reserve. It is absolutely critical to what we
are doing and we need to increase their readiness as well.

Senator Hirono: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman McCain [presiding]: Senator Sullivan?

Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, I want to thank you for your service. As a
matter of fact, somebody stated Secretary Carter, when he
tested last time, I know a number of us have had a lot of
criticisms with some of the Obama administration’s foreign
policy and national security. But one area where I want to
commend the President is the quality and character of the
men and women he has been nominating that have come before
this committee for confirmation to lead our military. I
think the four of you exemplify that quality and character,
and I just want to commend you for that.

Part of the reason -- and the chairman has already
touched on it -- is the frank and honest views that you have
been giving this committee and others since your
confirmations and your important positions leading the men
and women in uniform of our Nation. And I want to commend
you on that as well.

General Milley, when you were here a couple months ago, you talked about the issue -- and you already restated it -- of a near-peer, full-spectrum threat in terms of a conflict. If we had to address that, you stated that the U.S. Army would be at high military risk and you mentioned again to meet our national security strategy. Do you continue to hold that view?

And then I would like to have each of the other service chiefs here give us your assessment of where your service is in terms of risk. I thought it was remarkable. I thought it was courageous of you to say that. The press did not pick up on it, but the fact that the Chief of Staff of the Army was saying high military risk is pretty remarkable. And I just want each of the service members in terms of a full-spectrum conflict, the ability to meet that for our Nation’s security, where are we in terms of risk for your service?

General Milley: Thank you, Senator.

My assessment remains the same. Just as a reminder, what does it mean when I am using that term? I am talking about the ability to accomplish the military tasks assigned to Army units. The ability to do it on time and the ability to do that at an acceptable level of cost expressed in terms of casualties, troops, killed and wounded. But I maintain
my same assessment.

Senator Sullivan: High military risk.

General Milley: That is correct.

Senator Sullivan: Admiral Richardson?

Admiral Richardson: Senator, I concur with General Milley. I have sort of forbidden my team to use the word “risk” because it has become so overused that you start to lose a sense of what that means. But it is exactly as General Milley described. If we get into one of those conflicts, we will win, but it is going to take a lot longer than we would like. It is going to cost a lot more in terms of dollars and in casualties.

Senator Sullivan: General Neller?

General Neller: Senator, in short, I agree. We built a force that has been focused on a counterinsurgency fight, and while we have been doing this effectively, our potential adversaries have recapitalized and from ground up built a force that has very significant capability that grows every day. And so we are in the process now of getting ourselves back and looking at those capabilities we need to match that up.

So would we win? Yes, we would win. But I would associate myself that it would take longer and I think the cost would be higher.

Senator Sullivan: So you are putting the Marine Corps
at high military risk as well.

General Neller: If we had to do, based on the
contingency plans that were one major contingency and then a
near simultaneous of a second one, yes.

Senator Sullivan: General Goldfein?

General Goldfein: Sir, that is the key for this
discussion, which is ready for what. And what we are all, I
believe, talking about is if the guidance tells us that we
have to be simultaneously ready to defeat a near-peer
adversary in an anti-access/area denial environment, a near-
peer, while at the same time imposing cost in deterring
another adversary, while at the same time ensuring your
safe, secure, reliable nuclear enterprise, while at the same
time defending the homeland to the level that will be
required, then we are at high risk. But you have got to
walk down that line --

Senator Sullivan: Right. But that is what we expect
of you. That is your mission.

Let me just end by mentioning we talk a lot about
costs. General Milley mentioned it. I know some of you in
the Army and in the Marine Corps -- the book by T.R.
Fehrenbach is still given to our infantry officers to read,
“This Kind of War.” When you talk about costs -- maybe this
is for General Milley and General Neller -- when we are
sending less ready units into a near-peer fight, we talk
about costs. That sounds like dollars and cents. What is it? Relate that to "This Kind of War." Relate that to the first summer in 1950 in Korea. The costs were dead Americans in the thousands. Is that not correct?

General Milley: Well, that is exactly right. I mean, the butcher’s bill is paid in blood with American soldiers for unready forces. And we have a long history of that. Kasserine Pass, Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Task Force Smith in the Korean War. And it goes all the way back to Bull Run. Lincoln thought he was going to fight a war for 90 days. Wars are often thought to be short when they begin. They are not. They are often thought to cost less than then they end up costing, and they end up with outcomes and take turns that you never know. It is a dangerous thing.

And the best thing I know of is to ensure that you have forces that are sized, trained, manned, equipped, and very, very capable to first prevent the war from starting to begin with, and then once it starts, to win and win fast and win decisively. And that is the most humane thing to do when you are engaged in combat. Otherwise, you are expending lives that I do not think are necessary.

In the Korean War, the book you are referring to, in that war, Task Force Smith, the 21st Infantry Regiment, was alerted out of Japan, went forward to the peninsula on relatively short notice, and they were essentially
decimated. And it was not because they were bad. It was not because they were incompetent. The battalion commander was an experienced World War II guy. It was because they had two 90 millimeter recoilless rifles. Their mortars did not work. Their ammo was not done. The training was not done. They were not properly equipped. They were not in great shape. They were doing occupation duty in Japan. They were sent into combat, into harm’s way unready, and they paid for it. And tens of thousands of others paid for it in those early months, the first 6 months of Korea. It is not a pretty picture.

Readiness matters. Reps at training centers matter. Equipment matters. Personnel fill matters. And to do otherwise for us at this table is the ultimate sin to send someone into combat who is unready.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman McCain: And that is a risk we are facing right now.

Senator King?

Senator King: Thank you.

General Milley, I think you have delivered the line of the day for me. The only thing more expensive than deterrence is fighting a war, and the only thing more expensive than fighting a war is losing a war. That sort of summarizes the situation.
I would like to ask a couple of questions of you specifically about Afghanistan and then go on to the more general question.

I know the President has modified the troop drawdown schedule in Afghanistan, which I think was an appropriate response to the situation. Were the authorities maintained for the forces that we have there that allow them to act effectively to assist the Afghan forces?

General Milley: As I understand it, yes. I am heading over there next month actually, and I will see General Nicholson. But with my JCS hat on, as I understand, the operational authorities are adequate to do his task. But I will double check that and I can get back with you.

Senator King: And the second question is related. Are the NATO commitments that have been, in a sense, proportional to ours being maintained?

General Milley: I believe yes, but let me get you a better answer than that. Let me get you a specific answer.

Senator King: I would appreciate it. Thank you.

This hearing has focused a lot on money, and I think it is appropriate. There should be some context. In 1967, defense spending was 8.6 percent of GDP. In 1991, it was 5.2 percent. Today it is 3.3 percent. And I think often the public and all of us get caught up in these big numbers of $560 billion, but the reality is our commitment to
defense has fallen dramatically in the last 45 years in part because of a perception that the world was getting safer and in part because of budgetary issues.

The other thing I would point out is that net interest on the national debt today is more than a third of the military budget, and we are at an all-time low in interest rates. That is going to only go up, which will tend to make the budget be strained even more.

I just think we need to be talking to the American people about the fundamental responsibility of any government, which is to keep its people safe, and that the dramatic reduction in the commitment that we have made to defending this country.

The follow-up point, of course, which has been made previously, is that since 2011 and the Budget Control Act, we have had Syria, ISIS, South China Sea, Ukraine, the North Korea nuclear development, and cyber. And to maintain a rigid budget structure in the light of those changes, it just seems to me is dumb. We are trying to protect this country. We have new threats.

And it is similar to the discussion we have had, Mr. Chairman, about the troop levels in Afghanistan. We have got to respond to circumstances on the ground, and the circumstances have dramatically changed in the last 5 years in terms of threats that this country faces.
The other point that has been made by Ranking Member Reed. Certainty is as important as amount. I think you testified to that. The other way we are not serving the public is by the absolutely ridiculous process around here of not adopting budgets, doing continuing resolutions, getting you the money in the middle of the year, which does not allow you to plan, does not allow you to do the capital planning and the long-term planning that you need to do.

I realize I have talked a long time without a question. I am going to add one more point.

The other piece of this financial burden that we are facing is the nuclear recapitalization, and I have got some slides that I think make this clear that to me are rather dramatic. And what we are facing is a very large bulge, if you will, in the commitment, and if we do not make some additional overall way of dealing with that issue, it is going to eat up everything else. We are not going to be able to maintain aircraft or develop the ships that we need because all the money is going to go into that. And I just point this out. It has been 40 years since there has been a recapitalization, and we are heading into a -- we have got to have some special way of accounting for this, it seems to me. And it does not mean borrow for it. But it does mean fund it in some way. Otherwise, it will crowd out the necessity of modernization across the rest of the
enterprise.

If you can find a question in there, gentlemen, you are welcome to it. Admiral?

Admiral Richardson: Senator, I will jump on that because between General Goldfein and I -- and we are lockstep on trying to solve this problem in every way we can. I think that that bulge talks to a number of the points that you made.

One, as General Milley said, it is much cheaper to deter a war, and this is what this program is all about. This is about deterrence.

Senator King: And it is a theory that has worked for us for 80 years.

Admiral Richardson: It has been absolutely effective for 80 years not only nuclear war, of course, but also conflict worldwide. If you look at sort of before and after, it is a startling difference.

The other point is that each of these recapitalizations, the first one in the 1960s, then in the 1980s, and then now, we are getting that mission done for less. Each of those peaks is subsequently smaller.

And then to your point, we can get that peak even smaller if we have predictable funding in place. We are going to recapitalize the undersea leg with 12 submarines. If we get that to predictable funding to buy that package in
a block, we could get those 12 submarines probably for the
cost of 10 or 11. And so you can see real savings that come
through this predictability.

But I want to go back to my first point. It is
absolutely essential that we get this done because without
that deterrent effect -- we think things are bad now -- it
would be much worse.

Senator King: Thank you, gentlemen. Thank you all for
your service and for your outstanding testimony here today.

Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman McCain: Senator Graham?

Senator Graham: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let us see if we can summarize here.

All of you agree that a long-term CR is bad for the
military.

General Goldfein: Yes, sir.

Senator Graham: So when I hear my House colleagues
wishing for a long-term CR, you do not wish for that.

General Goldfein: No.

Senator Graham: Okay.

To my House colleagues, the OCO account. Do you all
have a problem with what they are doing, taking OCO money to
fund the military?

General Goldfein: Sir, I will tell you that our
preference is a stable, long-term budget that we can plan on.

Senator Graham: Do you think OCO funding is not stable?

General Goldfein: It is 1-year funding. So it does not give us long-term stability.

Senator Graham: Does everybody agree with that? You would prefer not to go that route.

So why do they do this? They do not want to bust the caps. They do not want to take on the right and tell them you all are crazy. You know, this sequestration is not working.

Have you all talked to the President about this? Have you told the President what you are telling us about the state of the military under sequestration? Have you had a conversation with the commander-in-chief telling him what you just told us, General Milley?

General Milley: I have not personally had a conversation with the President.

Senator Graham: What about the Navy?

Admiral Richardson: No, sir, not personally.

Senator Graham: What about the Marines?

General Neller: No, sir, not personally.

Senator Graham: What about the Air Force?

General Goldfein: No, sir.
Senator Graham: What are you doing at the White House, Mr. President? You are threatening to veto a bill that would increase defense spending because it does not have non-defense increases. I will make some suggestions to you. Go tell the President what you are telling us.

I absolutely see the flaws in what the House is doing. I cannot believe the commander-in-chief is sitting on the sidelines and watching this happen, taking a laissez-faire attitude that if you send me a bill that increases defense spending without increasing non-defense spending, I will veto it. I find that as repugnant as what the House is doing.

Okay. By the end of 2021, we will be spending what percent of GDP on defense if sequestration is fully implemented? Does anybody know? 2.3 percent. Check the math. Senator King made a very good point.

Do you see by the end of 2021, given the threats we face as a Nation, it is wise to cut defense spending in half in terms of historical numbers?

General Goldfein: No, sir.

Senator Graham: Do you, General?

General Neller: No, sir, I do not.

Admiral Richardson: No, sir.

General Milley: No, sir.

Senator Graham: Well, somebody should ask, how could
your Congress and your President allow that to happen. I ask that all the time. I do not have a really good answer.

If sequestration goes back into effect in 2017, are we putting people’s lives at risk because of the effects of sequestration in terms of training?

General Milley: Yes, sir.

General Goldfein: Yes, sir.

Senator Graham: Well, does anybody else listen to these hearings but us? How do you live with yourself? And I say that. I include me. I am part of this body. I voted against sequestration, but that is no excuse. Do you want to do revenue to fix it? I will do revenue. But what I am not going to do is keep playing this silly game.

When you rank threats to our military from nation states and terrorists, would you say sequestration is a threat to our military?

General Goldfein: Yes, sir.

General Milley: Sure.

Senator Graham: Would you agree with me, General, that the Congress is going to shoot down more planes than any enemy that we can think of in the near term?

General Goldfein: Potentially.

Senator Graham: Do you agree with me that we are going to park more marines and take them out of the fight than any enemy we can think of in the near term here, General, with
sequestration?

General Neller: Sir, nobody is going to park us. We are going to fight, but we will be at risk.

Senator Graham: So what is your budget in terms of personnel cost?

General Neller: We pay about 61 percent of the green TOA for personnel.

Senator Graham: So let us just walk through that real quickly. 60 percent of your budget is personnel.

General Neller: Yes, sir.

Senator Graham: If sequestration goes into effect, are you going to lose marines?

General Neller: Yes, sir, we will.

Senator Graham: Okay. So they will be out of the fight.

How many ships will the Navy have if sequestration is fully implemented, Admiral?

Admiral Richardson: Sir, hard to say, but fewer than the 308.

Senator Graham: They say 278. Is that about right?

Admiral Richardson: That is in the ball park.

Senator Graham: So the Congress is going to sink how many ships?

Admiral Richardson: Sir, I might take you on with the word “sink,” but it will be --
Senator Graham: Okay. Well, whatever. They are not going to be there.

Admiral Richardson: 30.

Senator Graham: So how many brigades are we going to wipe out, General, in the Army?

General Milley: Our estimation is we will lose between 60,000 and 100,000 troops if sequestration comes out.

Senator Graham: Would you agree with me when you rank the threats to the military, you would have to put Congress and the President in that mix if we do not fix sequestration?

General Milley: I will not judge either --

Chairman McCain: You are not required to answer that question.

[Laughter.]

General Milley: I am not judging the President or Congress.

Chairman McCain: Senator Blumenthal?

Senator Blumenthal: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman McCain: I would remind the witnesses. There are certain questions that you are not required to answer.

[Laughter.]

Senator Blumenthal: I was about to say that I was going to reask that question, but it would probably reach the same result.
I just want to say how much I respect your service, and I think we all do. Regardless of the demanding and tough questions that have been asked, we approach this as a collegial effort working together with men and women who have devoted their lives to the service of our Nation with extraordinary distinction and bravery. That goes for you and all who serve with you. And I just want to begin with my profound thanks for your service.

Admiral, I want to talk a little bit about submarines. I know that we are moving toward building two submarines a year, Virginia class. In your testimony, you briefly note your concern for the future shortfall in our attack submarines. What is the Navy’s strategy to deal with that shortfall when the desired 48-boat minimum in 2025 reaches a low point in 2029 of 41, potentially placing our Nation in jeopardy? Do we have a strategy to address that shortfall?

Admiral Richardson: Sir, we do. First, that shortfall highlights sort of a fundamental element of shipbuilding plans, which is that you have got to think long-term. And some of these things are very difficult to correct in the short term. It just takes time to build submarines and there are capital investments as well.

But we are building two per year. We are going to continue to do that. And we are also going to look to every possible way to extend the life of the current Los Angeles
class submarines that are carrying much of the burden today so that we can fill in that trough as much as possible. We are building two Virginia class submarines a year. We are going to examine continuing that as we bring the Ohio replacement program online, particularly in the year 2021. And if you put that submarine in place, it actually starts to fill in a good percentage of that trough. And so then we will look forward to more creative deployment options so that we get more out of every submarine. And we will use all of these methods together to try and minimize the effect of that trough, but we are not going to be able to erase it.

Senator Blumenthal: Your point about the importance of planning I think is profoundly important, little understood by the American people who often think we can snap our fingers and turn on the spigot for submarines. But we know and so do the dedicated men and women at Electric Boat in Groton that planning requires investment in skill training and the defense industrial base that consists of those men and women who in many ways are as vital as the men and women in uniform because they build the platforms, the submarines, that make our projection of power possible around the world. Would you agree?

Admiral Richardson: I would completely agree. In terms of their talent and the skill level, I wish we could take very American through that facility up at Electric Boat
and the same at all of our shipbuilding facilities just to see what America can do when it puts its mind to it. It is stunning.

But as we ramp up to build the Ohio replacement, the biggest challenge is the workforce and bringing those skilled laborers on. And so I agree with you 100 percent. It is a team effort, and it is a tough job.

Senator Blumenthal: I hope you will come back. I have been privileged to go through Electric Boat with you. I know Senator Reed has on many occasions as well. And this investment -- it is not spending. It is investment in our future -- I think is really vital.

Likewise, General Milley, on the Blackhawks, as you know, the National Commission on the Future of the Army issued aviation recommendations earlier this year, and these recommendations create some budgetary tension with the aviation restructure initiative the Army proposed in 2014. I am concerned that the planned UH-60 Blackhawk procurement, which is a vital modernization initiative for the active Army and National Guard across the Nation, will be reduced to pay for other programs. As you move forward with the Army aviation fiscal year 2018-2022 budget, are revisions being made to assure that future aviation modernization plans will be sustained in light of the commission’s recommendation?
General Milley: Aviation is one of our top priorities. It is one of the ones I mentioned in my opening statement, Senator. And absolutely we are committed to improving the modernization, and we have got several initiatives underway. With respect to the National Commission, we have put some of the aviation requirements into the UFR, into the unfinanced requirement list. Others we are funding. So we think the commission did great work, and we intend to implement their recommendations to the extent we can.

Senator Blumenthal: Thanks.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman McCain: Senator Ernst?

Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Gentlemen, thank you for being here today. It is a privilege to be in the same room with you. We do have a lot of difficulties coming up, especially with sequestration, and I do not think I can be any more eloquent than Senator Graham.

Admiral, I would like to start with you. I do understand the Navy is facing some significant budgetary challenges, and this is true of all of our services. However, I was able to visit one of your ships earlier this year, and I was stunned to learn about the requirement for up-to-date paper charts aboard U.S. Navy ships and the low priority of celestial training. And I did send a letter to
the Navy on this topic about 2 months ago, as of yesterday, and I am still waiting for a written response.

But what I would like to know from you, what steps are you taking to increase basic nautical and celestial navigation training for your sailors and remove dependency from electronic devices? The way I understand it, they do use an off-the-shelf product that other civilian navigators use, as well as a program that is specific to the Navy. They just do not get those up-to-date downloads, and they do not have the paper charts necessary. Maybe you can fill me in a little bit.

Admiral Richardson: Well, with respect to navigation, it is something that, obviously, we take very seriously every moment that we are underway and looking into the future.

With respect to minimizing our vulnerability to electronic navigation, global positioning system, and those sorts of systems, really a multifaceted approach. We have started teaching celestial navigation, and so those types of courses are back in the curriculum at the naval academy and other places. We can use technology to move us beyond the sextant in terms of proficiency and accuracy there.

And then one of the things that I am working hard with our industrial base partners is there are other ways to get precision navigation and timing into our systems, which is
so critical not only for navigation, but also for weapon
system performance and everything across the board. And so
that is an area of emphasis as well. And these would be
systems that would be independent of GPS and potentially
more precise than GPS. And so we are working very hard
across the full spectrum.

Senator Ernst: Okay. That is very encouraging. We
cannot forget that we need to stay a little bit old school.

Admiral Richardson: We have got to stay in the
channel, ma’am.

Senator Ernst: That is right. Outstanding. Thanks,
Admiral. I appreciate that.

General Goldfein, I recently did have the opportunity
to visit one of my Iowa Air National Guard units, 185th Air
Refueling Wing, in Sioux City. And one of the things I
noticed was the pilot shortage. They continue to talk about
that. I know the chairman has already addressed this issue.
But what I would like to maybe know from you is, is there a
solution for the Guard and Reserve force as well? What can
we do to better enable them with our pilot shortage?

General Goldfein: Ma’am, actually it is a very similar
solution to what we look at in the active duty because the
motivations are the same and the same pilot who joins
because very often, as you know, a lot of the Air National
Guard actually came from the active duty. So the important
part for us is to ensure that they are getting the same opportunities to train in the Air National Guard as they have in the active duty.

And like General Milley said for the Army, the Air Force is structured in a way as well that we could not do the job that we are required to do without the Air National Guard, the Air Force Reserves, and the active component all working together. And especially in the mobility community is where we are actually the most connected in terms of these associations and how we get together to get the mission done.

So actually what I mentioned in terms of quality of service, making sure they have the hours to fly, that they have the resources they need to be able to be competitive, at the same time, we also provide the financial incentives they need to stay. All those come together. That is going to improve our retention rates, and we are fully committed to that.

Senator Ernst: Wonderful. Thank you very much.

And just very briefly, in March, the Army announced a new associated units pilot program partnering National Guard and Reserve components with an active brigade combat team. And my understanding is that this could greatly increase the readiness of our Reserve forces and reduce costs.

General Milley, do you have any updates on how this
program is working so far? And again, sir, very briefly, please.

General Milley: Yes. We have got 14 associated units right now in the pilot program. We do think and hope that it will increase the readiness of the Guard, along with increased CTC rotations and increased requests for man-days. In combination, all of those things will help increase the readiness of the National Guard.

Senator Ernst: Outstanding. We love our Guard folks, do we not?

General Milley: Absolutely.

Senator Ernst: Okay. Thank you, sir.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman McCain: Senator Tillis?

Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And, General Goldfein, thank you for being here. I would note I was here for your opening comments. I had two concurrent committee meetings I had to run to. But you said something I think made me reflect on the 440th, and I am not going to focus on it except to say you were saying you need the flexibility to get to shed excess infrastructure if you are going to address some of your budget constraints. I think the 440th was a classic example of that because I know very well that there were at least five or six other sites that were either statutorily protected or protected by BRAC
that in your opinion would have been a better, more
appropriate way to get to the target that you were hitting.
So I understand the pressure you are under.

Hopefully, we will repeal sequestration, but if we do not, we need to find some other ways to provide you with flexibility to weather this storm.

I have one question for you, and it really has to do with the NDAA from fiscal year 2016 which has I think a requirement to retain 1,900 aircraft. How are you going to comply with that requirement, or can you?

General Goldfein: Sir, actually in this FYDP, we will comply with that. The next FYDP afterward is going to be a challenge because as we bring on new weapon systems, given all the other challenges we face, being able to maintain the 1,900 is going to be a challenge as we also increase investment in some other key areas that the Nation requires --

Senator Tillis: I am not sure I see how you do it. So we should probably, outside of this committee hearing, talk about shedding light on that versus putting a requirement in there that I do not think you are going to be able to achieve.

To the Commandant, General Neller, I have spent a fair amount of time down in North Carolina at Cherry Point, and I have had a number of discussions up here. And I continue to
hear about challenges facing readiness for your aircraft,
and then you have the second and third order effects on
challenges for pilot flying time, training time.

How would you assess the current state of readiness?
And give me an idea of what the trend lines look like.

General Neller: The current state of readiness for
Marine aviation is dependent upon what model type series,
but in the aggregate, it is improving but it is not where we
need it to be. It is below an acceptable level. We are not
flying enough. We do not have enough ready basic aircraft,
and that means the aircraft that we fly get turned faster
and so they are harder to maintain. We are at our flight
hour program, not that we are flying a lot of hours, but
that is also where we get our parts.

So we are not where we want to be. I do not think we
are going to be where we want to be. Assuming consistent,
stable funding, if we can increase the parts support
funding, it will happen faster. If we can get new airplanes
sooner, it will happen faster. But the trend line is up,
slightly up.

Senator Tillis: I tell you one thing I saw down at
Cherry Point where really the rubber hits the road and you
are down there and you see these repair operations. The way
that it works, they can go so far with certain repairs, and
then they are either waiting for parts or they are relying
on some other part of the supply chain to finish the
repairs. So we got planes that could probably be ready to
go but for changes in some of the processes, some other
things that we may need to do to provide you with the
flexibility or the funding to do it. And I know that has to
do with funding in some of the accounts that have been
depleted over time. So we have got to shed light on that as
we go into planning for next year.

General Milley, you made a comment about we are
mortgaging our future readiness to be ready today. I mean,
we are creating a debt. Would you mind getting into
specific examples of what that looks like?

General Milley: Well, specifically with respect to the
budget, we have, over many, many years now, undercut or
reduced our S&T and R&D parts in the modernization accounts.
That part of the budget, that part of the pie has been
reduced over time. That is the part of the pie that is
future readiness because 10 years from now, 15 years from
now, those R&D projects, those S&T projects -- they become
real weapons or real equipment. That is what I am talking
about. So that part of the pie has been reduced.

We are trying to, in this President’s budget, make some
hard choices as a service given a top line and given
basically a fixed amount on the compensation piece of it to
try to balance the readiness today versus modernization,
S&T, and infrastructure, et cetera for tomorrow. And these are hard, tough choices. And in the Army’s piece of it, we are preferencing, we are biasing today’s readiness because of the gaps from the last 15 years. We got to get them back up to speed because of the threats we have all been talking about.

Senator Tillis: Well, thank you all for your service. And I thank Senator McCain for opening his question about your position on the deleterious effects that sequestration is going to continue to have. If we take nothing away from this, we have to be unified and end this ridiculous way to budget and protect our Nation. Thank you all.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman McCain: Senator Donnelly?

Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for being here.

In 2014, the Jacob Sexton Military Suicide Prevention Act was signed into law through the fiscal year 2015 NDAA. It was the first bill I introduced after joining the Senate, and it is named after a Hoosier soldier we lost to suicide in 2009. Last year was the fourth straight year we lost more service members to suicide than to combat.

My colleague, Senator King, is sponsoring a showing of a movie, "Thank you for Your Service," which touches upon this very subject. And when we talk about taking care of
our troops, when we talk about readiness, when we talk about maintaining the strongest fighting force the world has ever known, I cannot think of anything more fundamental than ensuring the physical and mental health of our men and women in uniform.

The Sexton Act mandated that each of the services provide a robust mental health assessment to every service member, active or Guard or Reserve, every year. And I would like to know how each of your branches are doing in implementing this requirement. General Milley, if you could touch on that.

General Milley: Thank you, Senator.

Within the Army we are seeing in the last year an improvement, meaning a reduced number of suicides, slight but significant enough to be noticeable across the force. And that is important. So all the efforts that we have done with your help and Congress’ help and lots of folks’ help over the last several years we think are showing leading indicators of improvement in suicide, which we recognize is a component of readiness because it is a tragic event.

Specific to your question, we are implementing through MEDCOM annual mental health assessments for the force in the regular Army. I would have to check on the Guard and Reserve on how that is being done. But we are doing that throughout the force.
We also do routine post-deployment health assessments. So if you go to Iraq, Afghanistan, come back, we do TBI checks. So we have got a lot of programs right now throughout the force to focus on the very thing that you are talking about. We are taking it serious, and we think we are making some improvement.

Senator Donnelly: Thank you.

Admiral Richardson and General Neller, I know you are a team in many ways on this. If you could touch upon it.

Admiral Richardson: Sir, exactly the same commitment. We are on track to implement that completely in compliance with your intent. We share your deep commitment to the mental health of our sailors.

With respect to the other measures to prevent, we find that the more that we can make our sailors feel like a member of a team that they have got, a network of support that they can fall back on, that seems to be one of the most effective things. So that, in combination with an assessment, we hope to turn this thing downward.

Senator Donnelly: Thank you.

General Neller?

General Neller: According to the senior medical officer, who is a Navy admiral that is for the Marine Corps, we are in the process of implementation. He estimates on the active side by the end of fiscal year 2017, it will be
implemented. The Reserve will probably take longer just because of the nature of their drilling on weekends and having access. But as far as filling out the questionnaire online and then having a care provider contact them and have a conversation with all the intentions of the legislation and the law, we are planning on being fully implemented by the end of fiscal year 2017, Senator.

Senator Donnelly: Thank you so much.

General Goldfein?

General Goldfein: Sir, I will just say we are in the same boat, and we will be fully implemented by about the mid part of fiscal year 2017.

But I will also add we are taking a little bit different approach as well. It is fairly new. We are actually taking the SOCOM approach that they have approached it with. And their approach is if we would take an aircraft on the schedule at a certain periodic time to do periodic maintenance and then take an aircraft off the schedule at longer periods of time to do depot maintenance and make sure they are in good shape and put them back in the fight, why would we not do the same thing for airmen? So we are actually looking at taking your initiative to the next level, which is a periodic maintenance schedule for the human to increase performance. That takes the stigma off because if you are having to go in based on a schedule and
everybody is having to do it, we think it will have profound
effects.

Senator Donnelly: Okay.

Admiral Richardson, you were kind enough to visit Crane
Naval Base. And it is integral to several modernization
efforts we have going, most prominently the Ohio replacement
program. How does our pattern of reliance on continuing
resolutions impact your ability to modernize the Navy?

Admiral Richardson: Sir, I think that we all sort of
feel this pain in some way or another. This continuing
resolution business really undercuts the trust and
confidence that we have with our suppliers, with the
industrial base that are so key to providing not only at the
ship level, particularly in the strategic deterrent
business, but also down at the component level. And when
you disrupt that trust and confidence, when you double the
amount of contracts that you have to write just to get
through the year, when you prevent the ability to buy things
in blocks over a long period of time, the only thing you are
doing is increasing cost, increasing time, and that
translates to increasing risk to our warfighter.

Senator Donnelly: Thank you all for your hard work and
dedication.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman McCain: Senator Manchin?
Senator Manchin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I thank all of you for your service and for being here today.

The one question I wanted to ask -- and I know it has been batted around quite a bit, but the United States Air Force -- I will start, General Goldfein, with you, but it is really for all of you. Standing tradition of leadership and coalition building, which you all do, and it is evident today in the significant role in the 20-nation air coalition aligned against ISIL, which you all have done quite effectively. As you may know, only four of our fellow NATO coalition members spend at least 2 percent of their GDP on defense spending. And the target for NATO countries -- there are 28, and it should be at 2 percent. There is only five, including the U.S. That leaves 23 that do not seem to care or make any attempt whatsoever. I cannot figure why that condition was even put in if it was not intended to be kept or met.

So I think I would just like to hear your all’s assessment of this and what effect it is having. I know there have been some wild political statements made about what would be done. I do not subscribe to any of that. But I am thinking why do we still have that condition if we are not going to force anyone or there is no retribution if you do not. How is it affecting I think, sir, is what I would
General Goldfein: Sir, I will just tell you the Secretary has been over there and talking to NATO significantly about their contribution and increasing their investment in defense. And that was certainly something I think all of us at the table would want to see not only in the air domain but in all the domains.

One of the areas that we are focused on in the Air Force specifically over the next several years is coalition-friendly command and control because the information age of warfare is more about data sharing. It is more about information sharing, and it is more about being able to connect into a common network and architecture. And technology has increased security over time and has actually made that harder. And so as we partner with not only our NATO allies but other allies and partners around the globe, being able to have them connect into a common framework, a common network, share information, and be able to fight as a coalition is going to become more important in the future, not less.

Senator Manchin: I know that, but I am just saying how much or a strain does that put? We know with our challenges we have financially and everybody else’s challenges around the world. But if they are basically able to just neglect that, thinking we are going to do all the heavy lifting,
which we have done and I understand, but also come up with the financial wherewithal to do it too. Is there anything that we could do that kind of -- do you see any movement in a positive direction? I mean, I understand Germany kind of takes the lead on this and the rest of them follow Germany. And if Germany does not take it serious, it is not going to happen.

General Goldfein: Sir, one of the areas that would be very helpful I think -- and we have had this conversation. I know I do it as an air chief, as a global air chief, and my partners here do as well -- and that is, you know, we call something high-demand, low-density, and then we tend to admire it over time. And we do the best we can to be able to increase the density or decrease the demand, but it does not often happen. It would be very helpful if our NATO partners and others could actually contribute in those key mission areas and enablers, which would raise the bar for everyone as opposed to sometimes what they choose to invest in.

Senator Manchin: Would anybody else have any comments?

General Neller: Senator, I would just add that, first, this is not a new problem. I was a NATO officer in the 1990s, and after the end of the Cold War, they took a peace dividend and they have not reinvested.

Second, our military counterparts -- they want to
participate and they want to play, and they play within their capability. And I think we need to provide them opportunities to do that, whatever their percentage of GDP is for investment.

And lastly, I think it is changing. I think it is changing. I think the world environment and the strategic environment you see particularly in Europe is causing them to recognize that they have under-invested particularly if the Eastern European countries are going the point. And so I think there will be some change. I think we should encourage them. I think if there are foreign sales, that we should facilitate their purchase of U.S. equipment, which would increase our interoperability. And then whatever way, whether it is FMS or their own money, we encourage them to increase their capability.

Admiral Richardson: Sir, I will just add onto that. First, just like General Neller said, my counterparts in NATO -- they are as frustrated as anybody about this. They want to be full participants in securing not only their nation but Europe and contributing to global security and stability. And to that end, again, the importance of American leadership to provide an example, be there is another thing that they comment on consistently. And so as a team, whether it is equipment interoperability, command and control, they want to participate and they are as
frustrated at these policy decisions as anybody.

Senator Manchin: General?

General Milley: As you know, Senator, we have had a long history in Europe with Army. We have still got 30,000 troops over there doing a lot of exercises. We are putting out APS systems, et cetera.

With respect to the NATO partner spending, et cetera, what I have read is that their defense spending is actually increasing with many of these countries lately, perhaps not at 2 percent yet, but Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, even Germany, Sweden, Finland, Norway, to include the U.K. recently -- they are reversing some of these trends because of what they have seen in Ukraine, in Crimea, and elsewhere. So they are investing and they are expanding.

The key now is interoperability and work as a team.

NATO is a critical alliance. There has been a long peace in Europe since 1945, so going on 7 decades. Part of that is because of nuclear weapons but also because 300,000 soldiers stood on a wall up until 1989-1990, but also because of those European allies all shoulder to shoulder facing down the Soviet Union. So that alliance is key. It is critical, and I think it is mutually interdependent between us and them in order to achieve effect on any kind of future battlefield.

Senator Manchin: I will just finally wrap up real
quick. If this is one of the conditions that the NATO member nations had when they formed NATO, how many other conditions are not being met?

There is no enforcement, no policing. There is no retribution. I mean, it just seems that if you are not going to do anything, why do we have it there? And they are going to say do not worry about that. The Americans will pick it up. They will pay.

You know, you understand when we go to our constituents, it is pretty hard to explain why is it there if you are not going to make them do something, if there is no retribution. I am not saying we are not going to help, not going to defend. But maybe, you know, the World Bank, interest rates, things of this sort that gives them privileges being a NATO member, that there might be a little bit of a penalty. It might give them a little bit of a push. I am understanding it is not from the military. It must be coming from the policymakers and state departments.

But thank you all again for your service. I really appreciate it.

Senator Reed [presiding]: Thank you. On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator Wicker, please.

Senator Wicker: Thank you, sir.

For General Neller, on April 6th, Secretary Stackley testified that the required number of amphibious ships
necessary to provide the lift of two Marine expeditionary
brigades to conduct joint forcible entry operations is 38
ships. But he also said that number is fiscally constrained
to 34 ships, with an operational availability of 90 percent.

We often hear about combatant commander requirements
concerning amphibious ships.

General, you are the man who provides the marines who
operate off those ships. What is the right number in your
opinion? And what mix of ships should that include, sir?

General Neller: Well, Senator, you are correct. The
combatant commanders -- if we could meet all the
requirements, it would take 50 ships. The fiscally
constrained requirement is 38 with 90 percent availability.
Right now, we are at 31. We are going to go to 34 by 2022.

Senator Wicker: We will get to 34?

General Neller: We will get to 34 by 2022.

Senator Wicker: Where would that leave us? What would
that not permit us to do, sir?

General Neller: It will not give us, based on the
average availability, the ability to embark two Marine
expeditionary brigades which is the minimum requirement for
forcible entry.

So ultimately we will get to 38, but it will be beyond
multiple FYDPs, I believe 33, and then it will start to go
down if we do not sustain it.
So what is the right mix? The right mix is ideally a minimum of 12 big deck amphibs that can handle F-35 and Osprey, 12 LPD-17 class, and then a 12 other comparable hull forms, ideally either an LPD-17 repeat or what we are calling the LXR, which uses the LPD-17 hull form as its base.

Senator Wicker: That is only 36.

General Neller: You have also got two LHARs and other ships that would get you to 38. So we have two non-well deck, big deck ships which would actually get you 14 big decks.

Senator Wicker: Between the LDP-28 and the LXR, can you get more ship at less cost if the schedule is accelerated?

General Neller: Well, first, Senator, I thank the Congress for giving us the 12th LPD.

But absolutely. It is similar to what the CNO said about submarines. Anything that we block buy and that we can give the shipyard, whatever shipyard it is, certainty where they can get the workforce, they can train the workforce and they can learn as they build the ships, they can build these ships faster for less money. So if we were to block buy five LPD-17 replacements or LXR, we could probably get three and a half ships for the cost of five. But that is a big number. And I know Mr. Stackley would
agree with that. And it goes with any type of ship or any
type of platform, whether it is an airplane. The more we
can provide certainty to not just to the primary vendor but
all the subs that build the parts, we can drive the cost
down, and the workforce gets better. They get smarter.
They get faster.

Senator Wicker: Thank you, sir.

General Milley, about Afghanistan, my understanding of
our goal in Afghanistan is to participate in a sustained
partnership with the elected leadership there. And I would
observe that we have had a sustained partnership for decades
with our friends in Europe and a successful sustained
partnership in Korea. Although there is not much kinetic
warfare going on in Korea at this point, we are there. We
have had a sustained partnership, and I think it has been
successful for the people there and for Americans also.

What is the understanding in your opinion of the Afghan
people about our purpose in being there and our long-term
relationship?

General Milley: Senator, thanks.

As you know, I have got a fair amount of time in
Afghanistan.

In general, the Afghan people are very supportive of
the United States military being there. And they would be
fearful of us withdrawing completely, at least in the near
So what we are trying to do is working by, with, and through the Afghan Security Forces, who have been built up to a significant size now -- what we are trying to do is train, advise, assist them in order to maintain stability against their enemy, their internal enemies, so that the government and the other elements of the campaign plan, the economy, and rule of law, et cetera can be sustained over time. I think that is going to take a considerable length of time. The attitude of the Afghan people is, at least from my experience, that they would prefer that we continue to stick with them. And I think that is our plan, our current U.S. Government plan, and I think that is also the NATO plan is to continue to sustain that effort.

Senator Wicker: I for one concur in your conclusion there, sir.

Is it unsettling to the Afghan people when they hear that we might leave early?

General Milley: I would say yes, but I think that we, the United States, and NATO have been very firm in our commitment now, and we have said what we are going to have going forward. And I think that the government, the military, and the people understand that message, that we are not going to abandon Afghanistan.

Senator Wicker: Mr. Ranking Member, I understand we
have had some discussion about sequestration. But my understanding is no one has asked these panelists if they are designing a FYDP that reflects the return to sequestration. I realize I am a bit over my time, but I think it would be important for us to hear. I know they are horrified at the thought of sequestration returning.

But if each of you could tell us, are you designing a future years defense plan to reflect going back to sequestration? General Goldfein?

General Goldfein: Sir, we are not.

Senator Wicker: You are not?

General Goldfein: We are not.

Senator Wicker: But you are aware it is the law of the land.

General Goldfein: Yes, sir. We absolutely are.

Senator Wicker: Okay.

General Neller?

General Neller: Sir, we are not designing one, but we have had discussions about what might be the consequences and some actions we could possibly have to take if it went into effect.

Senator Wicker: And Admiral Richardson?

Admiral Richardson: Sir, I would say our design is based on providing the security that the Americans expect of the United States Navy. But we have always got to start
that conversation with the sequestration levels, which puts us in a terrific bind to be able to meet that mission.

Senator Wicker: So no FYDP, though, that actually reflects the draconian things that you would have to implement.

Admiral Richardson: No, sir. We would have to adapt.

Senator Wicker: And finally, General Milley.

General Milley: We have done some preliminary planning, Senator. So I understand what the order of magnitude actions that would have to take place in the event of full sequestration. However, no, we have not developed a POM or a FYDP to that level of detail that would be submitted to the President and the Congress.

Senator Wicker: Well, I certainly we can avoid it, but as I said years ago, Senator Reed, it is the law of the land and it surprised us all the last time when we got to that point and it actually went into effect. I hope we can avoid it.

And thank you all for your service.

Senator Reed: Thank you very much.

On behalf of the chairman, Senator Shaheen, please.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all very much for being here and for your service to our country.

And I apologize. I had two other hearings this
morning. So I am sorry that I missed much of the
discussion. And I am sure you may have already answered
this question, but I think it is important to ask again.

As I have traveled around the month of August, when we
were not here in Washington, and met with businesses, one of
the things I consistently heard from many of our businesses
in New Hampshire -- and we have a significant number that
have contracts with the Department of Defense that provide
equipment and technology to our military -- was concern
about two things. One was about the budgeting process and
about the fact that we are going in again with no budget for
the upcoming year and a short-term continuing resolution.
Hopefully, we will have a longer-term budget after the
election. And the other was about the reduced investment in
research and development.

And so can I ask you to speak to what the impact is not
just of your budgets in the military but also of the
industrial base that supports our military that we need to
maintain if we are to keep our technological edge? And,
General Goldfein, I see you nodding. So maybe you could
begin.

General Goldfein: Yes, ma’am. You know, the impact to
industry, when we cannot provide some stable budget and
projection for them, probably hits them the hardest in their
technical workforce. So what I see as a rather technical
force is when I am talking to a company that is building, for instance, let us just say, an air-to-air or an exquisite air-to-ground missile or munition, they have got to keep a certain amount of that workforce engaged over time. And so then when I go to them with 1-year budgets and tell them my procurement quantities now are going to be here and the next year, because of trades, they are going to be down here, and I go jack them around back and forth, it causes an incredible challenge for industry to be able to sustain their workforce that we need. And that does not even go into at what point do I go to them and say because of the global security environment, I need you to surge and build even more capability and produce more weapons over the period of time. And what they tell me is, hey, we got rid of that workforce because you told me that you were coming down this year. So everything that we deal with in terms of an unstable budget and 1-year budgets actually gets accelerated into industry as well.

Senator Shaheen: And you alluded to the impact that has on our national security and our ability to be prepared. But can I get you to elaborate a little more on that?

General Goldfein: Well, ma’am, it goes to what kind of weapon systems that we need to modernize. So for the Air Force, like all the services, we have got aircraft that have already exceeded their service life or are at the end of
their service life and they have got to be replaced. And so we rely on industry to be able to support us with our acquisition programs going forward. If we do not have stable budgets, if we do not have the research and development dollars to be able to develop that technology for the future, then what happens to us is we continue to push that to the right. And like General Milley said, you start mortgaging the future to pay for the current readiness in the fight you have.

And the other challenge you have is as the aircraft age over time, they actually become more and more expensive to fly. And so you take even more of those dollars that you need for research, development, and modernization, and you shift them left into sustainment of older weapon systems. This all adds up to an increased risk.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

Admiral Richardson: Ma’am, if I can pile onto that -- Senator Shaheen: Please.

Admiral Richardson: -- in support of my fellow chief. This is really a team effort, and this message of stability is critical because it is not just government R&D but those businesses that you visited -- they are investing their own dollars in IRAD. And they need to know if they are going to get anything back on that investment. And when we do not give them that signal of stability and confidence, they are
simply not going to invest. They are going to cash out and
they are going to be out of the business.

The other thing is that particularly with technology
changing so quickly today -- and Senator Reed highlighted it
in his opening statement -- what used to be long-term
future, that is becoming a more short-term future. And so
we are not talking decades into the future anymore. We are
talking single digits of years because things are moving so
fast in directed energy, additive manufacturing, electronic
magnetic maneuver warfare, artificial intelligence,
biotechnologies. We have got to keep on the step with this
because we are not the only team out there looking to
capture these capabilities.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you. Well, hopefully that is
an admonition to Congress that we get our act together and
produce a budget and some certainty for the long term.

Mr. Chairman, could I ask one more question?

Senator Reed: Senator King will have one too if you
let him. So you go first.

Senator Shaheen: Okay.

I know this on budget, but I just came from a hearing
in the Foreign Relations Committee on Afghanistan, and I
heard Senator Wicker asking about Afghanistan. I wanted to
ask you all about the special immigrant visa program for the
Afghans because, as I am sure you are aware, it is about to
expire, and Congress so far has declined to extend that
program. Therefore, we have several thousand Afghans in the
pipeline who it is questionable whether they will get visas,
and many of them are under immediate threat or their
families are being threatened. So can I ask you to speak to
the importance of that program to our men and women on the
ground and why it would be important for Congress to extend
it? General Milley, do you want to start?

General Milley: Yes. Thank you, Senator.

Lots, hundreds of thousands, of Afghans work for us,
the United States military since 9/11, since we went in in
2001. They have been interpreters. They have been
analysts. They have been doing a lot of things. Many of
them have asked to become American citizens and get visas,
et cetera. So I personally would be in favor of extending
that because those are brave men and women who have fought
along our side, and there are American men and women in
uniform who are alive today because of a lot of those
Afghans were putting their life on the line, for their own
country, to be sure, but with us. And now they want to
become American citizens. I for one would like to afford
them that opportunity.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

Would anybody else like to add? General Neller?

General Neller: Yes, Senator. We saw a similar thing
in Iraq and the very same thing that General Milley described where they are out there shoulder to shoulder with marines, soldiers, sailors, and airmen risking their lives and sharing the risk and providing great services to keep our citizens alive, our folks alive. And I used to interview them myself and make sure they understood that this is not what you might have seen on TV but you are going to come here, you are going to work because you have an opportunity.

So I think there is a proper vetting process. I know commanders up to the rank of flag and general officers are involved in this. I signed off on all of these myself. And I know there are background checks. And I fully support, with the proper vetting process, that this program be allowed to continue.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you all very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Reed: On behalf of Chair McCain, Senator King, please.

Senator King: Just briefly, Senator.

One of the privileges of serving on this committee is the relationship that we have with our services, and one of those relationships is the military fellows that are assigned to our offices. Today marks probably the last hearing for Lieutenant Commander Dennis Wishmeyer, a naval
officer who has served in my office for this year. And I just want to recognize the importance of that program, recognize the work that Lieutenant Commander Wishmeyer has made. If I have asked good questions, they have been his. If I have asked stupid questions, they are mine. And I just wanted to provide that recognition.

    Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

    Senator Reed: He must have been here today, Senator King.

    On behalf of Chairman McCain, let me thank you, gentlemen, for your testimony, forthright and very sobering. Thank you for your service individually and please extend our thanks and gratitude to the men and women that you lead so proudly.

    With that, I would adjourn the hearing.

    [Whereupon, at 11:45 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]