HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON
UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND AND
UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND

Thursday, April 6, 2017

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

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

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN McCAIN, U.S. SENATOR

FROM ARIZONA

Chairman McCain: Well, good morning.

Since there is going to be a vote starting at 11:00, I believe we will try to expedite the process here, and I will forgo my opening statement except to welcome the witnesses and ask Senator Reed if he has an opening statement so we could get right through the witnesses after he completes that.

Senator Reed: I am tempted to say yes, but smart enough to say no.

Would you please include my opening statement in the record, Mr. Chairman?

Chairman McCain: Both moving and important opening statements will be made part of the record.

[The prepared statements of Chairman McCain and Senator Reed follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]
Chairman McCain: Welcome to the witnesses, Admiral Tidd and General Robinson. Please proceed, General Robinson.
STATEMENT OF GENERAL LORI J. ROBINSON, USAF,
COMMANDER, U.S. NORTHERN COMMAND AND COMMANDER, NORTH
AMERICAN AEROSPACE DEFENSE COMMAND

General Robinson: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking
Member Reed, distinguished members of the committee. I
certainly am honored to be here today, pleased to testify
with my very, very good friend, Admiral Kurt Tidd.

North American Aerospace Defense Command and United
States Northern Command are two distinct commands, but they
are unified in a common purpose. Every day, the men and
women of NORAD and USNORTHCOM, soldiers, sailors, airmen,
marines, coast guardsmen, and civilians, Americans and
Canadians, stand ready to defend two great countries, the
United States and Canada.

Today our adversaries are seeking ways to extend their
operational reach into North America and to hold us at risk.
The men and women of NORAD and U.S. Northern Command stand
watch, ready to defend against these adversaries. Today we
have a competitive advantage against them.

This advantage will not continue in the future,
however, if we continue to operate under continuing
resolutions. I echo the Secretary, the Chairman, the
service chiefs in saying that developing the joint force we
need in the future requires an actual budget this year.
Continuing resolutions do not enable continuity of effort.
We need an appropriations bill unrestricted by sequestration to upgrade our warfighting capabilities against threats to us here in the homeland.

These adversaries include North Korea, where Kim Jung-un continues his provocative behavior. He has conducted nearly three times as many ballistic missile tests as his father and grandfather did combined. North Korea uses what they learn from each test to make improvements to their missile capabilities. We are watching them very closely.

And we are also watching Iran as it develops a space program with potential dual-use technology.

NORTHCOM is prepared to counter ballistic missiles should North Korea attempt to launch an attack on the United States. While I am confident in our ability to defend the homeland today, we must keep improving. We are working in close partnership with the Missile Defense Agency to improve our sensors and the reliability of our ground-based interceptors.

Also today, Russian cruise missiles can reach us from greater ranges than ever before. No longer do they have to come close to North American airspace to hold us at risk.

But I am also confident in NORAD’s layered approach to cruise missile defense. But again, we must evolve and we are doing so as our adversaries’ capabilities increase.

Senator McCain, at my confirmation hearing, you asked
if I had ever visited the southwest border. 1 year later, I
can tell you that I visited our southwest border on foot, by
boat, by air, in a tunnel, and yes, sir, even on horseback.
I have gained an appreciation for the incredible variety of
terrain along the southwest border and how transnational
criminal organizations and their networks can exploit that
terrain.

I have also stood with my great friend, Kurt, on the
Guatemalan soil looking north to see firsthand the network
challenges that SEDENA and SEMAR face and what they are
going to strengthen Mexico’s southern border.

To counter these threat networks, NORTHCOM partners
with law enforcement agencies, SOUTHCOM, other combatant
commands, the intelligence community, military partners such
as SEDENA and SEMAR, all the while supporting Secretary
Kelly’s requests. The men and women of NORTHCOM stand
united in a common purpose, ready to face the threats of the
United States and Canada today, and we are evolving to face
the threats of tomorrow. Sir, we have the watch.

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to speak,
and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Robinson follows:]
Chairman McCain: Thank you.
Admiral Tidd?
STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL KURT W. TIDD, USN, COMMANDER, U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND

Admiral Tidd: Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

I am pleased to be here with my NORTHCOM teammate, General Lori Robinson. Although we focus on distinctly different mission sets, our teams work together to keep our Nation safe from a range of challenges. While General Robinson and her team are directly responsible for defending our homeland, SOUTHCOM extends that defense well beyond our borders throughout our southern approaches.

Now, I want to do something a little bit different today with my opening remarks. I want to tell you a story. Picture this. We gain information on a group of individuals who are planning to make their way to the United States. They are carrying a weapon that will kill dozens of people and put hundreds more in the hospital. This powerful weapon will drain millions from our economy in terms of health care costs, crime, and lost productivity. It is neither high-tech nor new. We know exactly how dangerous it is. And this weapon passes freely through our defenses as do hundreds more just like it.

Chairman, members, I tell you this true story to point out an uncomfortable fact. Those people are members of a
threat network, and the weapon that they move today is drugs. On average, 1 metric ton of cocaine will kill 10 Americans every year and harm hundreds more. Last year, we watched almost 450 tons pass freely towards our country. What made it through translates into American lives lost and illicit profit that fuels instability and violence.

Now, I tell you this story focused on drugs today because it is the scenario on which we have the best information, but these adaptive threat networks can move anything. What keeps me up at night is the potential for even more deadly cargo moving through these networks and directly into our cities. ISIS has encouraged its followers to exploit the vulnerability of the pathways leading directly into the United States in order to move weapons of mass destruction.

To address this challenge, we are changing our approach to better understand and disrupt the immediate threats. We are working with our partners to reduce the vulnerabilities that allow these networks to exist in the first place, and we are expanding information sharing and building the capacity of our partners so that they can better secure their territory against these challenges.

Now, today I also look forward to talking to you about other issues that we are addressing. Extremist networks like ISIS are radicalizing and recruiting individuals, and
they are encouraging them to conduct attacks on U.S. and partner interests in our region. Russia, China, and Iran are actively engaging in Latin America. While most of their activities are not military threats yet, some do warrant examination.

Even seemingly benign activities can build malign influence. With the peace accord now final in Colombia, a firm anchor for regional stability and one of our most trusted partners, Colombia still faces a challenging road ahead. We continue to stand together in defense of our shared interests.

And lastly, detention operations at Joint Task Force Guantanamo remain a sensitive and a demanding mission that our men and women continue to execute with discipline and professionalism. Now it is time to address the infrastructure requirements that we have been putting off. The safety and the security of our troops depend on it.

Finally, I would like to thank this committee for its unwavering support to the men and women both in uniform and out who serve our country. And I look forward to answering your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Tidd follows:]
Chairman McCain: Thank you very much, Admiral.

General Robinson, North Korea tested another medium-range ballistic missile this week. Kim Jung-un, known to some as the crazy, fat kid, has stated his intention to test an ICBM. How confident are you that you can intercept a North Korean ICBM targeting the homeland?

General Robinson: Senator McCain, I am extremely confident of our capability to defend the United States of America and be able to intercept an ICBM should it reach our homeland. Right now, as you know, he cannot reach our homeland, but I am confident, should he do that.

Chairman McCain: Admiral Tidd, your predecessor once testified before the Homeland Security Committee that he watches drug trafficking take place, particularly in the Caribbean, but does not have the equipment and funding necessary to intercept some of that drug trafficking. What is your assessment of your ability to intercept and stop drug trafficking that you can see but do not have the capability to address?

Admiral Tidd: Senator, we continue to have those shortfalls. We continue to be able to see a significant amount of traffic heading towards the Central American peninsula. Unfortunately, we only have the resources to be able to intercept about 25 percent.

Chairman McCain: Would you supply for the record what
you need in order to be able to intercept 100 percent?

Admiral Tidd: Simply put, more ships, more aircraft.

Chairman McCain: Again, would you be a little more specific?

Admiral Tidd: Yes, sir. For the record, we will provide the exact calculations.

[The information follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]
Chairman McCain: I think we all know that there is an epidemic of fatalities due to some of these drugs being used by more and more Americans such as oxycontin, et cetera. So I think it is even more important now for us to have the ability to intercept these drug shipments. Are you seeing an increase or decrease or the same?

Admiral Tidd: Senator, we are seeing the volume continuing to go up. We are seeing some significant improvement on the part of some of our partner nations in their ability to be able to conduct intercepts. But we still watch far more go by than we can actually act on.

Chairman McCain: The volume of what drugs have you seen?

Admiral Tidd: We are focusing on cocaine. That is what we principally see because it departs the SOUTHCOM region and heads north, but we are also aware that these threat networks that I spoke of previously are also actively engaged in the movement of precursor chemicals that produce the other drugs that you mentioned.

Chairman McCain: In the NDAA, we called for greater cooperation with our military assets with our Border Patrol and other civilian agencies of government. Have we seen any progress in that area, General Robinson?

General Robinson: Sir, I would say we actually have. In fact, last summer when I went down on the southwest
border, I saw Marine Corps ground sensor platoons providing
information to Border Patrol folks. I saw UASs on the
border.

Chairman McCain: Drones?

General Robinson: Drones on the border providing
intelligence capability, and I watched Army reconnaissance
units --

Chairman McCain: Are you satisfied with the level of
the use and cooperative effort, understanding we have posse
comitatus and we do not put our military in direct contact,
but we are utilizing the assets of the military as well as
we could?

General Robinson: Sir, we are looking at ways, how can
we continue to maximize our capability and capacity. I am
working very closely with Army North Commander, Jeff
Buchanan, specifically with Fort Huachuca and the drone
capability and capacity there.

Chairman McCain: Finally -- and both of you may
answer-- if we continue sequestration, what does that do to
your ability to carry out these responsibilities? I am
specifically speaking about this flood of Mexican
manufactured heroin, opioids, and others that are creating
havoc in some parts of our society. Whichever one. Admiral
Tidd?

Admiral Tidd: In our case, anything that restricts the
ability of the services to provide forces --

Chairman McCain: Yes, but I am talking about sequestration specifically.

Admiral Tidd: Sequestration will further limit the ability of the services to provide any resources to us.

Chairman McCain: General?

General Robinson: And, sir, I totally work closely with the interagency, and so anything that takes away from --

Chairman McCain: I am talking about sequestration specifically.

General Robinson: Yes, sir.

Chairman McCain: What are the effects of it on your ability to carry out your mission?

General Robinson: Sir, the President nominated me and you confirmed me to defend the homeland. If I looked at what the United States Air Force talks about in their ability to provide pilot capability, trained, ready pilots to defend the United States of America and in a year or so, they will be down 1,000 pilots, will I be able to have the aircraft availability that I need to.

If I look at ballistic missile defense and our ability to look at long-range discriminating radar and the capabilities as we move forward, I get concerned that that will have an effect on that.
Those would be two things that I would say to you specifically.

Chairman McCain: Thank you.

Senator Reed?

Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Admiral Tidd and General Robinson, for your service. And please thank the men and women who every day support you and support us.

Your commands depend significantly on other federal agencies. You both brought up the issue of drugs infiltration to the United States. That involves the Treasury Department in terms of going after the financial backers that are involved. Obviously, Homeland Security, the Coast Guard. Those are the ships I think you are talking about, Admiral, in terms of the more ships you need. They are not Navy ships. They are Coast Guard ships and aircraft.

We have to reduce the demand. That means health care in the United States so that someone who has a problem does not go to the street and get drugs. They go to a health clinic and get rehabilitation, one hopes.

So the point I would ask both Admiral Tidd and General Robinson is just the essential need to adequately fund and resources for other agencies that you work with. Is that essential to your mission? I.e., even if we gave you
everything you asked for, if you did not have those other
components, you could not accomplish your mission.

Admiral Tidd: Senator, that is correct. Particularly
in the SOUTHCOM region, it is a team effort, and that team
requires significant contributions to be made by the State
Department, by the intelligence community, by our federal
law enforcement agencies. The Department of Homeland
Security is probably our staunchest ally in the work that we
do. As I point out frequently, because of the commitment of
Navy ships to other regions around the world, my Navy in the
SOUTHCOM region all has white hulls and orange stripes. We
could not do our job without the U.S. Coast Guard.

Senator Reed: Thank you.

And, General Robinson, your comments?

General Robinson: Yes, sir. If you go back to Admiral
Tidd’s conversation about the networks and understanding
about the commodity on the network, I want to understand
what the commodity is on the network because everything I do
to illuminate it, the disruption part of it comes to other
lead federal agencies, whether it is DHS or CBP or whomever.
And so any cuts that any of those folks take does not allow
that disruption and end game of what happens to the
information that I provide to them. So it is incredibly
important as a team that we bring this together.

Senator Reed: Thank you very much.
Admiral Tidd, one of the interesting things in your testimony and in our discussions is the presence of China and Russia. It is interesting that Russia has built an international police training facility in Nicaragua so that they are actively training Nicaraguans. That is a surprise to me because that used to be sort of a no-go zone. The only trainers were the United States.

But the point is that it comes down to matching and exceeding that with our IMET program, which is a State Department program. Is that a fair judgment?

Admiral Tidd: Senator, programs like IMET that you mentioned are critical to our ability to build the partnerships with the countries throughout the region to ensure that they have the trained individuals. It also creates partners who have a profound understanding of the United States because they come and they spend time in our schools. It pays enormous dividends. It is an investment often that does not pay off for 10 or 20 or sometimes 30 years, but it is an incredible investment in future relationships for our countries.

We do watch closely what Russia and China and Iran are up to. They are countries that are countries of global concern, and it is important that we pay attention to what they do here in this theater.

Senator Reed: Just a final question, Admiral Tidd, if
I could. Venezuela is under huge pressure because of economics, politics, everything. Can you give us sort of a sense of the outlook?

Admiral Tidd: Senator, the entire region is watching closely what happens in Venezuela. As you are well aware, when I mention the word "Venezuela," tomorrow in the newspapers of Caracas will be stories that USSOUTHCOM is engaged in operations against Venezuela. Nothing could be further from the truth, but the reality is that the enormous economic instability that is taking place in Venezuela affects the entire region. And the OAS is watching that very closely and taking very, I think, important action.

Senator Reed: And just quickly. Are there Chinese, Russian interests in Venezuela? Would they take advantage of that type of disruption?

Admiral Tidd: Both countries have significant economic involvement in Venezuela, and it would be difficult to imagine that they would not look to take advantage of further instability in that country.

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

Chairman McCain: Senator Inhofe?

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Robinson, first of all, I am sure that you developed your horse skills during your tenure as the wing commander at Tinker Air Force Base. It has obviously come
As I mentioned to you when you were in my office, I wanted to lay the groundwork for a question that I think is significant. Before this committee, General David Mann had said, and this is his quote. He said that there are nearly 30 countries that possess ballistic missile capability. Together these countries have approximately 50 different variants of ballistic missiles. Additionally, there are currently 13 new intermediate-range and 8 intercontinental ballistic missile variants under development.

Now, in 2009, the administration cut the missile defense budget by $1.4 billion, and then ultimately terminated the system that had been set up in both the Czech Republic and Poland for a ground-based interceptor. They terminated the multiple-kill vehicle and decreased the number of ground-based interceptors from 44 to 30.

Now, you testified that the MDA is really doing four things right now. One would be to increase the interceptors back to 44 from 30; secondly, upgrading the ground system hardware and software; number three, continuing development efforts on the re-designed kill vehicle; and number four, to deploy the long-range radar.

Now, my question would be, do you think that these actions are sufficient to overcome the problems that you and I talked about and that you mentioned in your opening
statement, if you do these things like additional improved
sensors, additional improved ground-based interceptors?
What else needs to be done, or is this enough?
    General Robinson: Well, sir, first of all, Happy Quail
    Breakfast Day. I apologize for not being there.
    Senator Inhofe: It is our 55th consecutive year I
    might add.
    General Robinson: Yes, sir, I know that, and it is a
    wonderful event.
    I believe the MDA strategy as they have laid out,
    improving the sensors for better discrimination, improving
    the reliability of the kill vehicle, and then looking at the
    number of ground-based interceptors is exactly the strategy
    that we should go based on what we see today.
    Senator Inhofe: And I appreciate that.
    Admiral Tidd, I think it is safe to say that the under-
    resourced commands would be your command and AFRICOM. That
    is my opinion. Do you agree with that?
    Admiral Tidd: I do.
    Senator Inhofe: If you look at some of the programs --
    and Senator Reed mentioned the IMET program. And I often
    look at these programs in the under-resourced area of
    AFRICOM such as the IMET program, which I have always
    thought is great. Once you develop a relationship at that
    stage of the careers of individuals, you got them. The
obvious point is if we do not do it, China will.

Secondly, the foreign military sales and foreign military financing. Is that something that should be expanded?

So on those two programs, what do you think can be expanded, and are there any barriers to you from being able to expand those programs?

Admiral Tidd: Senator, I think that the IMET program, as you describe, is probably one of the single most important, long-term investments that we can make in establishing positive, constructive relationships based on trust with our partners. There is nothing like an officer coming or a senior enlisted coming and studying in our schools and living in the United States and experiencing for themselves all that this country represents to be able to counteract the sometimes negative messages that they might see in the international press. And so when we have those opportunities, they are absolutely priceless. They pay off because we see time after time after time, particularly throughout our region, the senior military leaders of many of the services in the countries have trained in the United States. They have lived in our country. They know who we are. And frankly, I think our country and our culture sells itself. So I cannot place enough value on a program like IMET. We could always use more.
And one of the challenges is it is like most of the resources allocated based on a regional prioritization, and SOUTHCOM typically comes in at the bottom of that prioritization.

Senator Inhofe: What about barriers to you improving these programs?

Admiral Tidd: Thus far, we have not run into any other barriers except that we run out of money.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman McCain: Senator Shaheen?

Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you both for being here and for your service to this country.

You both mentioned the threats that transnational crime networks pose to the United States and to global stability for that matter. And Admiral Tidd, you started out with a story about drug traffickers, which we have seen very directly in the State of New Hampshire where the heroin and opioid epidemic is a huge threat where we have the third highest overdose rate in the country. And as Senator McCain pointed out, your predecessor talked about his inability to be able to intercept some of those traffickers because he did not have the equipment and the resources to do that.

Can you talk about what you are doing currently to work with authorities in this country to intercept those drug
traffickers?

Admiral Tidd: I will address the southern most part of that point, and then I would defer to General Robinson to address as it comes closer to our border.

Because we recognize the shortfall in U.S. platforms available to conduct the detection and monitoring mission, that is one of the reasons why we have shifted our focus from exclusively on the commodity itself to a focus on the networks that engage in the trafficking, thinking that if we can focus on those networks and find the areas where the networks overlap and then working with partner nations so that their law enforcement or their military or, in some cases, our U.S. federal law enforcement agencies have the authorities to be able to engage in that end game, we use our abilities to build the picture and then to share that picture in a way that can be used by those with the authorities to be able to conduct the disruption action.

We think that by building a stronger interagency team that we will be able to apply pressure across the length and the breadth of the networks, recognizing that we may not directly touch the networks that are directly responsible for the movement of the opioids that are wreaking such havoc in your State but that any pressure that we apply across these networks will have a beneficial effect across the length and breadth.
General Robinson: So, ma’am, you heard Admiral Tidd talk about that. One thing I think that is incredibly important for you and this committee to know, that Admiral Tidd and I meet about every other month to sit down and discuss what he just talked about. So the information that he has and that he is sharing with the lead federal agencies with his partner nations is the same information that I am sharing. So as we stood in Guatemala and the river that defined the barrier between Guatemala and Mexico, that information does not stop at that river.

And so if you think about it then as a larger network, the things that he shares with my staff and my folks, whether it is intel sharing at border points, whether it is building partnership capacity to help partner nations, or whether it is direct linkages with Border Patrol and DHS, that information that he gets, that I get, that I provide either to lead federal agencies or partner nations so that they can take care of business at the end game.

And so this relationship between the two of us is very strong, and we have a third partner that we bring into it, General Tony Thomas of Special Operations Command, to talk to us what is happening overseas to help inform that larger network.

Senator Shaheen: The National Guard has a counter-drug task force that has provided critical support to law
enforcement in New Hampshire. Do you all work with that
counter-drug task force with the Guard as well?

General Robinson: Ma’am, we work very closely with the
Guard. And so the information that we get that I provide to
lead federal agencies goes out to other agencies throughout
the States.

Senator Shaheen: And when you and I met yesterday --
and I appreciated the opportunity to sit down with you --
one of the things we talked about was the northern border
and the fact that what we have seen in New Hampshire is that
there are some drugs going back and forth across our
northern border as well, and I think that is less well
known.

General Robinson: Yes, ma’am. And, again, I would
say, as I mentioned yesterday, we have a very close
relationship with the lead federal agencies in Canada as
well with us. So that information not just stops at our
southern border, but also goes to our northern border to
share with our partners there.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

Just quickly. I am almost out of time, but I know you
talked yesterday and again today in response to Senator
Inhofe about sensors and kill vehicles and the need to
continue with those programs. Are there any other
improvements that you think we should take in order to
address missile defense given North Korea’s rising capabilities?

General Robinson: Ma’am, I think we are on a very good, solid track where we are going and the strategy that we have today. Again, I would urge for a budget to have predictability so we can keep on that track.

Senator Shaheen: I agree. Thanks very much.

Chairman McCain: Senator Rounds?

Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral Tidd and General Robinson, first of all, let me thank you both for your service to our country.

General Robinson, on page 12 of your statement, you say the increased standoff capability, low altitude, and small radar signature of cruise missiles make defending against them a technical and operational challenge. Yet, in the very next sentence, you say I am confident in a layered approach provided by our family of systems to conduct cruise missile defense.

What is this layered family of systems that we would be using in cruise missile defense? And if you could describe those family members for me, please.

General Robinson: Sir, I would tell you it comes on two approaches. If you look on the northern approach from Russia over Canada and Alaska, we are doing an analysis of alternatives to upgrade the radars that are there so that we
can be able to detect, track, identify, and if necessary, engage at ranges to defend Canada and the United States.

Senator Rounds: These are land-based radar systems.

General Robinson: Sir, right now they are, but what I have done from a requirements process is defined, hey, I want to be able to do that at ranges to defend. I do not want to just say upgrade my radar because then you do not allow the people that think differently or different ways to look at that problem. So that is from the northern approach.

Now here in the National Capital Region is the first part where we have sensors and capability here in the National Capital Region. If I go back out and then I look at my F-16’s with the AESA radars and the ability to use them to be able to detect at longer ranges, we can do that.

Senator Rounds: These are found in Block 50’s?

General Robinson: Yes, sir. I think it is Block 50’s. All I have asked for the requirement is to be AESA radars. So we can be able to detect at ranges but, most importantly, sir, to be able to identify at ranges to be able to defend the National Capital Region.

And then the last part of the layer for phase one is to what kind of radar or what kind of capability can I get to be able to look at longer ranges out over the eastern part of the United States and the ocean to be able to detect at
even longer.

So those are some of the layers that I talk about.

As we go further, phase two and three is now more part of the country.

Senator Rounds: I understand.

You did not mention the F-15C models. Do they play into the when defending against the cruise missile threat?


Senator Rounds: My understanding is that there is a possibility that we will be looking at perhaps reducing the number of F-15C’s due to the increasing costs of maintaining the structural integrity of that aircraft between now and the year 2020. Is that figured into your plans?

General Robinson: Sir, from the conversations that I have had with the Air Force, which have been very small, I know that that is something they are looking at. Obviously, my voice would come into this to make sure that we have enough capacity to defend the United States from an air threat.

Senator Rounds: What is the split between the number of F-15’s that you have available versus the current number of Block 50 or the F-16’s that have the appropriate radar in them today?

General Robinson: Sir, I do not have that number. I
will take it for the record.

Senator Rounds: Would you please?

General Robinson: Yes, sir, I will.

[The information follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]
Senator Rounds: I am just curious. Is there a plan in place to begin using F-35A’s in the middle of this for this particular defense system?

General Robinson: Sir, I know as the Air Force brings the F-35’s on board, that will be a conversation that we will have, making sure that I have the right capability and the right capacity to defend in the air domain.

Senator Rounds: The reason that I ask is it appears to me that this is one of the more serious threats that we have with air-launched cruise missiles. The second part is you have currently got F-15’s and apparently there is some concern about their long-term viability. Your F-16’s, which you have right now -- you have got Block 30’s, Block 40’s and some Block 50’s I understand.

General Robinson: Yes, sir.

Senator Rounds: The Block 40’s which we have in South Dakota may very well be -- if properly equipped with the appropriate radar, may very well be stand-in or at least be capable of handling part of that as the F-15’s go on.

I guess I am getting back down to is that part of the discussion that you are having, or are we not that far along?

General Robinson: We are not that far along. The Air Force I think is just looking into that. And as I can tell you, sir, I will assure you my voice will be a part of that
conversation because of the importance of defending in the air domain the United States. And those are the capabilities that I use.

Senator Rounds: Thank you.

General Robinson: Yes, sir.

Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman McCain: Senator Peters?

Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you to our witnesses. I appreciate, Admiral Tidd and General Robinson, your patriotism and your work in a very difficult job, and you do it with distinction. Thank you so much.

First, Admiral Tidd, I want to have you kind of elaborate a little more on a point that you brought up to a question that Senator Reed asked related to the U.S. Coast Guard. In addition, to serving on this committee, I am the ranking member of a subcommittee that oversees the Coast Guard and am very concerned, as I know you have expressed, with some potential budget cuts for the Coast Guard.

So I would like you to elaborate a little more on what I think is a very powerful statement that you made that your Navy has white hulls and orange stripes, as to the impact that the Coast Guard has. So certainly we need to protect their resources so they continue to execute that mission. But I would like you to go a step further as to what
additional resources do you think would be necessary for them to enhance their capabilities to support you.

You have talked in your testimony about how this maritime border is certainly one that we have to pay a great deal of attention to, and perhaps our discussion should not be about defending funding for the Coast Guard. It should be about additional resources they need or could use to supplement the great work that you are doing now.

Admiral Tidd: Well, Senator, obviously, I would defer to the expertise of the Commandant of the Coast Guard in terms of building the plan that would be required. But as I have said before, because of higher priority commitments for U.S. Navy warships in other parts of the world, the U.S. Coast Guard has surged additional capacity, almost doubling the number of cutters devoted to the USSOUTHCOM region. I know that that is a challenging responsibility that they are shouldering. And so we are very concerned that we are already shorthanded in the number of ships that we have available on the high seas and the Caribbean and in the eastern Pacific to be able to deal with the known cases of movement along those pathways. And so my concern is that the Coast Guard be able to continue to meet the commitments that they have established.

Senator Peters: Well, I appreciate that.

In your written testimony, you discussed as well the
impact of your Navy ships in the area, and you talk about
exploring nontraditional alternatives to fill these
requirements until more littoral combat ships are in the
fleet.

Could you describe some of these nontraditional
alternatives and also explain how they may compare to the
capabilities of the littoral combat ship?

Admiral Tidd: Not having yet had the luxury of having
a littoral combat ship down in our region, I cannot tell you
exactly how it would compare. But what we are trying to do
is sensors on other types of platforms that come down there
to be able to share information, working very closely with
our partner nations, ensuring that they have the capability
to be able to be out and to operate in the seas. We have
tremendous support provided by other countries that also
have interest in the region. For instance, France, the
Netherlands, and Canada all periodically provide warships
that contribute to that mission.

But I very much look forward to the arrival of the
first littoral combat ships in our theater. I think they
have capabilities that are ideally suited for the theater
that we are talking about.

Senator Peters: Very good.

And, General Robinson, also talking about Coast Guard
assets but in the area of responsibility that you have,
which is the Arctic, and the receding ice and the opening up
of those sea lanes and the very significant Russian presence
that exists up there. Could you speak a little bit about
the importance of the U.S. Coast Guard in the Arctic region
and how assets certainly cannot be reduced? In fact, we
should be thinking about having a larger presence to counter
a growing Russian presence.

General Robinson: Sir, I would tell you that the Coast
Guard presence in the Arctic is very important. If you
recall, last summer, the cruise ship, Crystal Serenity, that
grew through for the first time having a cruise ship go
through the Arctic, it talks about the need for the Coast
Guard there in the Arctic. So I certainly support the Coast
Guard and all their endeavors to be a part of that.

Senator Peters: Great. Thank you very much.

Chairman McCain: Senator Ernst?

Senator Ernst: Thank you, Admiral. Thank you both for
being here, Admiral Tidd, General Robinson. Thank you so
much for the great work that you are doing on behalf of
NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM.

Admiral Tidd, I will start with you and want to thank
you. I see that the great State of Iowa has been able to
provide yet a second sergeant major to SOUTHCOM. We are
pleased that you are both here with us.

I did appreciate meeting with you last week -- last
month. Excuse me. We had a very good conversation. And
during that conversation, you brought up the fact that you
have seen more activities from the Russians. You mentioned
that just a little bit earlier, as well as some other
countries. You stated that it may not be with a military
bent, but that there were some other activities that they
were engaging in. Can you enlighten us as to the types of
activities you are seeing from the Russians and why that
would be of a national security interest to us?

Admiral Tidd: Thank you, Senator.

We have seen the deployment of ships, particularly
frequent deployment of intelligence collection ships, that
we know operate frequently on the east coast of the United
States and then spend time down in the Caribbean. We have
seen periodically the deployment of long-range aviation that
comes down and spends a bit of time down in our theater.

But probably of greater long-term concern is the very
aggressive arms sales programs where Russia is down and
talking with our traditional partners and attempting to
displace the United States as the partner of choice.

And then the part that I think is most troubling is we
see they are engaged in a very aggressive misinformation
campaign, basically peddling the story that the United
States is not a reliable partner in Latin America, that we
are not interested in the region, and that we are
 withdrawing from the region. It is troubling because of resource constraints that we have had and the requirement for the number of forces available in our theater. As that has declined, that plays directly into that narrative that Russia has been peddling.

So these are relationships that we have with strong partners, and it is just up to us to be able to prove that we are the partner of choice.

Senator Ernst: So not only do we need to maintain a presence there, but we also need to reinforce our own message to those areas.

Admiral Tidd: Absolutely.

Senator Ernst: Admiral Tidd, in February of 2017, the Associated Press reported that Trinidad and Tobago has become the largest per capita source of ISIS recruits in the western hemisphere. And according to the report, as many as 125 fighters have traveled from the island to ISIS-controlled areas over the past 4 years.

So are you concerned about the rise of ISIS in SOUTHCOM?

Admiral Tidd: Senator, we are very concerned. There is, I think, a tendency often to think that ISIS is only present in the Middle East or North Africa, and the reality is ISIS is present here in the western hemisphere.

You cited the case of foreign fighters that have gone
over to Iraq and Syria to fight. Obviously, we are very concerned about the return of those fighters. But what has become more troubling is an active effort on the part of ISIS to communicate to radicalized individuals telling them to stay home and conduct attacks in your home countries against your countries and the United States and our interests in this region. So you cited Trinidad and Tobago, but that is not the only country where we know that there is a presence of radicalized individuals to whom the ISIS message is very appealing, and I think it is an area that we have to pay close attention.

Our counter-network approach that we are applying enables us to recognize this presence of ISIS in the theater when previously, when we focused exclusively on commodities, oftentimes we focused more on the criminal networks and did not pay attention to the fact that there are also terrorist networks as well.

Senator Ernst: So those terrorist networks -- they understand those pathways that are being used by various cartels and so forth, moving goods into the NORTHCOM area. Do you think those could be exploited then by those terrorist organizations?

Admiral Tidd: ISIS, in one of the recent issues of Dabiq magazine, communicates directly in English language to radicalized individuals to attempt to exploit those pathways
into the United States. So we have to assume that they are
going to try.

Senator Ernst: Those that are fighting in Iraq and
Syria -- how are they able to reach back into the Caribbean
and radicalize the folks there? What do you think is the
primary means of communication?

Admiral Tidd: I think it is Internet. It is by cyber
means.

Senator Ernst: And cyber is something that you believe
we should pay attention to then.

Admiral Tidd: I think we all recognize that it is a
domain that must bear increasing attention.

Senator Ernst: Absolutely. I appreciate that.

And then do you think we are doing enough to counter
ISIS’s recruiting efforts in the SOUTHCOM region?

Admiral Tidd: That is probably one of the areas of
greatest work that we are engaged in. In order to work with
our partner nations and in our discussions with them, they
now recognize that they must pay attention to the
radicalization phenomenon. We all, I think, had a wakeup
call with the attacks that occurred in Paris, in Brussels,
but also in San Bernardino and in Orlando that individuals
can become radicalized and can conduct horrific attacks.
And so it is up to all of us to work together, exchange
information, and attempt to remove the conditions that lead
to radicalization.

Senator Ernst: Thank you. I appreciate that. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman McCain: Before I call on Senator King, I just want to make it clear to everyone, Admiral Tidd, if we are really serious about addressing this issue of flow of drugs into the United States of America that Senator Shaheen has described as so dramatically affecting her State, that we need to provide the assets. It is not something that is a mystery. Is that right? If we want to be far more effective, you would need the assets in order to do that. Is that correct?

Admiral Tidd: Senator, that is correct.

Chairman McCain: Senator King?

Senator King: Thank you for asking my first question, Mr. Chairman.

[Laughter.]

Senator King: Admiral Tidd, your opening statement was very powerful and also disturbing, powerful because you describe this in terms of an attack, and that is what it is. It is an attack on our country. And to talk about the numbers, since we have been sitting here, four people have died of overdoses in the United States. It is about four an hour, 37,000 people a year, 1 a day in my State of Maine.
It is absolutely unacceptable to know that that is happening and to couple it with your testimony that you are only able to interdict 25 percent of the shipments you know of because of a lack of resources in the Coast Guard. And couple that with a proposed 15 percent cut in the Coast Guard budget, I just do not know how we can possibly turn a blind eye to the implications of this.

I just want you to reiterate. Your testimony was that you are only able to interdict 25 percent of shipments you know of because of a lack of essentially Coast Guard assets. Is that correct?

Admiral Tidd: Senator, it is due to a lack of any surface assets, whether it is U.S. Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, partner nations. I mean, it is a shortfall of platforms that are capable of conducting intercepts on tracks that we know are out there.

Senator King: And so a cut in the Coast Guard budget, which would further constrain the provision of those assets, would not be in the national interest. Would it?

Admiral Tidd: Senator, all I will say is I am absolutely dependent on the Coast Guard to conduct the operations that we are able to conduct.

Senator King: And there are not sufficient assets today. Is that correct?

Admiral Tidd: That is correct.
Senator King: Thank you. Your answer was very
diplomatic.

General Robinson, let us go to missile defense. You
testified you have confidence in the missile defense
structure that we have today, but we do not live in a static
world. The North Koreans just in the last few months have
gone from liquid fuel to solid fuel, which drastically cuts
our warning time. Are we continuing to develop our
capability, and what are the gaps? Where should we be
focusing in order to strengthen our nuclear defense system?

General Robinson: Sir, thank you for that.

As you so rightly said, our lack of indications of
warning is increasing. And so as we look to the future how
do we ensure not just that but then when something launches
to make sure that we have the right radar in the right
place.

Senator King: And discrimination in radar is also --

General Robinson: You took the words right out of my
mouth. I was going to talk about the ability to ensure that
we have discrimination as we move to the future. So when
you talk about our radars, it is to ensure that we have
discrimination and ensure that we have an architecture that
today is terrestrial, but tomorrow or maybe even more in the
future will move to space. And so those are the things that
we need to continue looking as we move to the future is
ensuring we have got the right radar at the right place at
the right capability and with reliable kill vehicles.

Senator King: So if you were granted a billion dollars
to spend in this area, do you I take it that radar and
particularly the discrimination radar would be where you
would go first?

General Robinson: That is where I would go first, sir.

Senator King: Thank you.

General, do you have any idea offhand an approximate
number of Russian icebreakers that they have available in
the Arctic region?

General Robinson: No, sir, I do not. But I know they
have more than we do.

Senator King: If I said it was a low of 17 and a high
of 40, would that sound reasonable?

General Robinson: Yes, sir.

Senator King: And how many icebreakers do we have
available?

General Robinson: I believe it is one.

Senator King: One and a half.

General Robinson: Okay, 1.5.

Senator King: But the one that we have actually
transits between Antarctica and the Arctic. Is that not
correct?

General Robinson: Yes, sir.
Senator King: So the icebreakers, the essential infrastructure of the Arctic region, is the road builder in effect.

General Robinson: Yes, sir.

Senator King: And this is a place where we really are in a serious deficit situation. And the prior administration proposed the additional building of one icebreaker, but that is still a long way off.

But do you see this as an important priority even though this would not be a naval asset but probably be a Coast Guard asset? But it is one that is crucial to our future in the Arctic. Is it not?

General Robinson: Sir, I absolutely support the Coast Guard’s endeavors to bring more icebreakers to the Arctic. As you suggested, it is a pathway for them.

Senator King: And one of the things that you are seeing in your command is a significant Russian buildup of military assets along their shore of the Arctic.

General Robinson: Sir, I have seen their buildup. What I have also seen is Russian long-range aviation that comes east of the Urals that often does out-of-area flights that are in my AOR.

Senator King: And that is another threat. We talked prior about the North Korean threat, but that is another threat that is -- particularly that is the NORAD mission.
Is it not?

General Robinson: Yes, sir. You are exactly correct, defending the airspace both for the United States and Canada from the air domain.

Senator King: And a final short question. We have a seamless cooperation and agreement, arrangement, and working relationship with the Canadians in terms of NORAD?

General Robinson: Absolutely, sir. It is a bi-national command.

Senator King: Thank you.

General Robinson: Yes, sir.

Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman McCain: Senator Perdue?

Senator Perdue: Thank you, Chairman. And I really appreciate you bringing both these combatant commanders together.

I have a particular concern about what Russia is doing in our hemisphere. I have a quick question for both of you. When you look at Russia -- how they bracketed Europe with their facilities in Murmansk, Kaliningrad, Crimea, now Tortus and Latakia, I see them attempting to do the same thing here. So the Arctic, which was just mentioned -- it looks like to me they have opened up a new Arctic command. They have got four Arctic BCTs they have now assigned up there. They have got 16 deep water ports north of the
Arctic, 40 icebreakers, plus 11 more on order, and we are
down to one and a half icebreakers. I would like to know
what your assessment -- first of all, do you agree with that
assessment, General? And what is our -- that you can talk
about here -- what is our tactical response to that buildup
in the Arctic?

General Robinson: So, sir, I would agree with your
assessment. What I would tell you about response -- I will
parse it in a couple of different bins.

First, as we watch the Russians come east of the Urals
in the air domain, I ensure on my NORAD side that I have the
right capability and capacity with adequate indications and
warnings to make sure that we can defend Canada and the
United States, specifically Alaska. So in the air domain, I
do that.

From a policy perspective, at the end of 2016, the
Department policy put out an Arctic strategy, and that
Arctic strategy talked about ensuring security, promoting
safety, and promoting defense cooperation.

Senator Perdue: I am sorry. Do we have an Arctic
command today?

General Robinson: No, sir. My job as the Commander of
Northern Command is to provide -- I am the advocate for
Arctic capabilities. That is what I do. But I am in the
process of writing a strategic estimate for the Arctic where
I will be able to talk about theater security cooperation, talk about capabilities, and then kind of put my role out there with --

Senator Perdue: Will you share that with the committee?

General Robinson: I will when we are done. In fact, we should probably be done this fall, and I would be happy to share that estimate with you.

Senator Perdue: Thank you.

Admiral, in the Southern Command likewise -- and this is not a recent development. And it looks to me it is very obvious what Russia is trying to do here. They are bracketing us. They are already playing in our elections the same way they are playing in cyber warfare in Eastern Europe.

In Latin America between 2001 and 2013, Russia sold Latin America $15 billion worth of arms. That is about 40 percent of what was sold in the region. When I look at what they are doing with Nicaragua particularly -- oh, and between 2008 and 2011 -- I did not know this. If you look at what Russia sold, they have sold more than 3,000 surface-to-air missiles to the region, just in that 3-year period.

In the last couple of years, particularly since 2014, in Nicaragua alone 50 combat tanks, an established ground station for a Russian satellite network, and they are
talking about Russian-made fighter jets now to add to their fleet. And as was reported last week in TASS, they are announcing joint military drills together in Nicaragua. I find this to be very destabilizing.

Do you agree with that assessment? And if so, what is our response to Russia specifically in Nicaragua and Venezuela relative to the fact that we have got troubled governments there anyway? How do we manage the diplomatic development and defense efforts in that area specifically relating to what Russia is doing?

Admiral Tidd: Well, Senator, I think the first responsibility we have is to pay attention to it and not to ignore it and to ensure that if we are concerned about what Russia is engaged in in Eastern Europe, that we pay at least as much attention to what they are engaged in in our own hemisphere.

As you point out, they have got historic relationships going back to the era of the Soviet Union with Nicaragua and with Cuba. They have developed them with Venezuela. They are one of the largest suppliers of high capability arms to Venezuela. So it is very troubling that as they establish themselves and become I suppose both the arms supplier but also having greater influence in those two countries right close to our own Nation, that ought to be a matter of some concern. We have to continue to pay attention to it.
Our relationships with the countries in Latin America is strong, but they are relationships that must be tended to. We must continue to engage and we must continue to demonstrate not just by words but also by our action, our engagement, that we are reliable partners.

Senator Perdue: Thank you both.

Chairman, General Milley this week said that the lack of a budget and the potential danger of going to a CR bordered on professional malpractice. And I want you two combatant commanders to know that at least one Senator here agrees with that 100 percent.

I do not fully understand what a CR does to tie your hands in terms of moving money back and forth, but I take you at your word that it totally limits you from doing that. That to me is more dangerous than the total number. And so for one, I am standing firm with the chairman here that this is the most dangerous thing that we are facing right now.

General Mattis said earlier this year that the debt was the greatest threat in the national security. Well, here is where the rubber meets the road. And I want to pledge to both of you guys my personal full support to do whatever we can to make sure that we avoid that debacle.

Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman McCain: Senator Warren?

Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
And thank you, Admiral Tidd and General Robinson for being here and for your leadership.

I just want to quickly underline a point that was raised by Senator King and Senator Reed, and that is about the importance of our non-military foreign assistance and other civilian instruments of our national power to your missions.

So is it accurate to say that you work with the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security, and other civilian agencies in efforts to maintain security and stability in your regional areas of responsibility? General Robinson?

General Robinson: Yes, ma'am.

Senator Warren: Thank you.

And Admiral Tidd?

Admiral Tidd: Absolutely.

Senator Warren: You know, the budget proposal put out by the Trump administration calls for about a 29 percent cut to the State Department and significant cuts to FEMA and other domestic agencies. I just want to ask in general, would funding cuts to agencies that conduct diplomacy, provide disaster relief, and perform other civilian functions make your job easier or make your job more difficult? General Robinson?

General Robinson: It would make it more difficult,
ma’am.

Senator Warren: And Admiral Tidd?

Admiral Tidd: More difficult.

Senator Warren: Thank you. I agree.

Admiral Tidd, I want to turn back, if I can, to something you said last year. In your posture statement, you expressed concern about economic conditions and persistent threats to people’s safety that caused the mass migration of unaccompanied children from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras back in 2014. Are you still concerned about these underlying factors?

Admiral Tidd: We think that we must continue to pay attention to the push factors. Insecurity in Central America is a significant push factor.

Senator Warren: But are you worried about the gangs and other criminal networks that take advantage of these conditions to be able to recruit and to stay in business?

Admiral Tidd: Yes, we are.

Senator Warren: And do you think that lack of security and economic opportunity provide an opening for some of our adversaries to exert influence in these areas?

Admiral Tidd: I think we are seeing that in a number of countries in Central America.

Senator Warren: So let me ask you, Admiral Tidd. What more should the United States Government be doing to address
these underlying conditions?

Admiral Tidd: I think the efforts to provide some limited resources that are available in the case of Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, for them to develop a regional solution to a regional problem is very important. A very high bar condition has been set for them to receive those resources, but I think we must be realistic and we must help them achieve those standards because it is ultimately in all of our interests that they achieve them.

Senator Warren: And this is something you are working on now actively?

Admiral Tidd: Senator, it is.

Senator Warren: I appreciate it.

And I also want to note that in your posture statement last year, you thanked Congress for funding the State Department and USAID to implement the U.S. strategy for engagement in Central America to help address these root causes of migration.

There has been a lot of talk about how to address unlawful immigration. By itself the tallest wall in the world will not help us if we choke off funding for non-military strategies to address the root causes of migration from Central America. And I think that would be bad for regional stability and for our security.

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

Senator Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral Tidd, you state that the southern border should be the last line of defense not the first. Given the diminishing Navy presence dedicated to Southern Command, is the Coast Guard an increasingly valuable partner as a forward line of defense?

Admiral Tidd: Sir, you know, we also talk about there is a third border, and that is the maritime border up through the Caribbean. And the Coast Guard right now is the principal U.S. maritime force that is present in the Caribbean.

Senator Wicker: And I think they do a good job for you.

Your testimony states that SOUTHCOM lacks the forces necessary to interdict about 75 percent of identified and validated drug trafficking targets. A successful interdiction requires two things: an end game asset, a boat or a helicopter, to stop the trafficker, and law enforcement authority to make the arrest. Does the Coast Guard’s new national security cutter have these two attributes?

Admiral Tidd: Senator, they do. The national security cutters are a superb platform, very capable, and frankly, they also have the sea-keeping abilities to operate in the eastern Pacific further offshore where the vast majority of
the trafficking is occurring today. And so they are very valuable platforms.

Senator Wicker: A U.S. national security cutter recently seized 16 tons of cocaine worth $400 million. In fact, the Coast Guard has reportedly seized about 100 metric tons of cocaine, about $3 billion worth since its first operational deployment.

Do these national security cutters arguably pay for themselves in this regard?

Admiral Tidd: Senator, I would never turn down an additional national security cutter operating in the SOUTHCOM region.

Senator Wicker: One other thing. Your testimony states that Southern Command is dedicated to becoming a platform for experimentation and innovation, and this includes unmanned platforms and advanced sensors. So tell us about that. Expand on that testimony, if you will, sir.

Admiral Tidd: Senator, in our efforts to find new and innovative ways to get after the resourcing problem, we have aggressively discussed with services and with the research and development organizations that we would be an ideal region to come and test out new technologies, perhaps new technologies that are being developed for a different theater, for a different problem set, but that we have a meaningful operational mission. We can provide real
feedback and that my commitment as the combatant commander
is to ensure that we eliminate any bureaucratic impediments
to being able to bring them down and operate them, test them
out for a period of time, and provide that feedback.

Senator Wicker: Well, thank you very much, Admiral.
And I would like to invite you down to the Gulf Coast to the
Stennis Space Center to see the cutting-edge research being
done at the Naval Research Lab with regard to unmanned
underwater vehicles and also the Navy Meteorological and
Oceanographic Command operating a large fleet of UUVs. You
might want to come down and visit us, and perhaps you could
leverage these installations as you push for new
innovations.

Admiral Tidd: Thank you very much, Senator.

Senator Wicker: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman McCain: Senator Donnelly?

Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank you both for being here today.

I appreciate you taking the time to come by my office,
both of you, to talk about the heroin crisis that is
impacting Indiana and so many other States. And we have
heard from other members here today. It may be the single
biggest threat to the safety and security of the people of
my State, and I am convinced we need to everything --
everything we can -- to stop it. This is a whole-of-government effort.

We heard the chairman talking about the 75 percent figure, and we have been talking about that for a while.

And as we look at this, in Indiana in 2015, we lost more people to opioid and heroin deaths than in car crashes, which forever was the biggest thing. And now this has changed it. And the heroin is coming in from Mexico and it is coming in across borders that we actively monitor. It is not coming through the desert or over hills or over here or over there. It is coming through our cross points.

So as we look at this, Admiral Tidd, we talk about the 25 percent figure, that we catch 25 percent of what is coming in. The other 75 percent are killing my friends and neighbors. We have lost so many families, children and brothers and sisters.

And so what I would love to see is, as the chairman was talking about, a plan. If we had all the resources, how much resources do you need? How much time will it take? What will we do? How do we stop it? Can you put that together for us?

Admiral Tidd: Senator, we will be happy to work with our partners in Northern Command.

I think as we discussed in your office, though, the challenge that we have is we are not going to interdict our
way out of this crisis. This is going to be a challenge
that will require a significant amount of work on the demand
reduction side of the problem, as well as on --

Chairman McCain: Could I interrupt, Admiral? We are
not asking you to address the demand side. But if you are
capable of stopping some of the flow, let us have that.

Sorry, Senator Donnelly.

Senator Donnelly: That is okay, sir.

Admiral Tidd: Yes, Senator.

General Robinson: Sir, if I could add. As we
discussed in your office too, all the support that we give
to Department of Homeland Security on the border is
incredibly important, whether it is intel sharing or
providing detection and monitoring to help them do their
jobs there on the border.

Senator Donnelly: And I know you know the real-world
effects. Let me tell you just a couple.

I have a small town in southern Indiana, a town of
4,200 people. The opioid crisis has hit it so hard -- and
this was a few years ago -- 174 cases of HIV in a town of
4,200 people.

In another small town or small county, rural county, we
had a shipment of heroin come in from Ohio. It was laced
with fentanyl, which is 10 times more powerful than the
heroin. In a 2-hour period in one county, we had 10
overdoses and 1 death in a 2-hour period from this.

As Senator Shaheen and others have said, this is not just an Indiana problem. This is a nationwide problem that is eating us alive. And I always look and I go this might have been the young person who would have cured cancer, who would have found the key to ending diabetes.

And so if we can stop that other 75 percent -- and we can, and it is a resource issue. That is why I am so eager to get the plan of if we gave you the keys to the kingdom, so to speak, you have the resources, you have everything you need, so how do we do this because every day as we are sitting here right now, it is coming through the checkpoints.

General Robinson, I wanted to ask you about Mexico’s ability and willingness to work with us on this in collaboration. In your written testimony, you indicated Mexico is growing increasingly capable of helping us. What is your assessment of the capability and the will of the Mexican Government and security forces to work with us on combating this?

General Robinson: Sir, I will tell you, having been on Mexico’s southern border talking to their senior leadership about their strategy on the southern border, in addition to working very closely on the border with their military, the willingness of the Mexican military and them to work with us
is very, very great. I have been very impressed.

Senator Donnelly: The more you can send that message
to them, the stronger and better off we will be because this
really is a national emergency.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman McCain: Senator Cotton?

Senator Cotton: Thank you, Admiral Tidd and General
Robinson, for your testimony today and for your continuing
service to our country.

Admiral Tidd, how different is Russia’s activities in
Latin America today from the Soviet Union’s activities there
in the Cold War, if different at all?

Admiral Tidd: I think that it is certainly not
ideologically motivated like it was during the Cold War. It
is motivated for economic reasons and for the ability to
gain influence with countries in the region.

Senator Cotton: To what extent is Russia and, for that
matter, other hostile powers in the old world aiming to tie
down the United States, our attention, and our resources in
the new world so we cannot project power and influence into
the old world?

General Robinson: So, sir, I would say if you look
specifically, as you mentioned, Russia as they have
increased their capability and capacity, as they continue to
work west of the Urals, the thing that I watch is them
coming east of the Urals. And so on occasions, they will come over and power project or do out-of-area operations. And so that makes me then, as the Commander of NORAD, increase my levels of responsiveness and put force structure in the right place at the right time, should they power project.

Admiral Tidd: And I think if I could add to that, certainly in Latin America, they do not have vital strategic interests, and so they see these as opportunities to take advantage of at least a perception of the United States being focused in other crises in other parts of the world.

Senator Cotton: Speaking of countries without vital strategic interest in Latin America, let us turn to Iran. Admiral Tidd, you state on page 9 of your written testimony, with the easing of economic sanctions, Iran may be seeking to rebuild its relationships in the region. Tehran uses cooperative technology, economic and diplomatic interests as a centerpiece of its regional diplomacy. Although on the surface, it portrays its actions as innocuous, Iran could exploit its cultural centers to develop networks, which could be leveraged to extend its influence and advance its interests.

To your knowledge, are there deep cultural, historical, religious ties between Latin Americans and Persian Shiites?

Admiral Tidd: No, Senator, not longstanding.
Senator Cotton: I did not think so.

You state earlier in your written testimony on page 4 and 5, Hezbollah members, facilitators, supporters engage in licit and illicit activities in support of the organization, moving weapons, cash and other contraband to raise funds and build Hezbollah’s infrastructure in the region. Hezbollah is the terrorist organization based in Lebanon, a cat’s paw of Iran. To your knowledge, do Arab Shiites have deep cultural and historical ties with Latin America?

Admiral Tidd: What I would observe is that Hezbollah has been present in this region in small pockets scattered throughout the region for decades. They have been actively engaged largely in criminal activities to raise funds to support the terrorist activities of Hezbollah in other parts of the world. But we also recognize that Hezbollah was responsible for the two terrible terrorist attacks on Jewish sites in an Israeli consular center in Argentina back in the 1990s. So they have been present here and we view them as probably the most dangerous of the terrorist groups present in this region.

Senator Cotton: I want to zero in on one phrase in that statement: moving weapons, cash, and other contraband to raise funds. What kind of other contraband is Hezbollah moving in Latin America?

Admiral Tidd: I think one of the more interesting
ones, cars, basically movement of cars to raise money, to launder money in order to develop the resources to fund Hezbollah activities in the Middle East.

Senator Cotton: What about drugs?

Admiral Tidd: Yes, sir, drugs also.

Senator Cotton: So Hezbollah, a declared terrorist organization that operates in the Middle East, is responsible in part for the drug flow in Latin America that has had the impact that you have heard Senators on this dais talk about today, killing Americans in our hometowns.

Admiral Tidd: I would say they are one of a number. They certainly are not the largest, but they play a contributing role.

Senator Cotton: Thank you.

Senator Reed [presiding]: On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator Kaine.

Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thanks to our witnesses for your testimony.

I want to just follow up on a couple of points that Senator Cotton was making. General Robinson, we talked, had a good visit in my office yesterday. And you talked about the flows of drugs on the seam between NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM as sort of a system of systems. We have to look at it as networks and systems. And if these distribution networks can bring drugs here, they could bring human trafficking.
They could potentially get people in the United States, terrorists in the United States. They could bring weapons of mass destruction, biological agents. And is that how you both kind of look at this challenge? The interdiction of drugs is really important, but also it is important to disrupt these networks because they could also do us harm in other ways.

General Robinson: Yes, sir. As we discussed, it is the importance of illuminating that network, understanding what is on it, and then whatever that commodity is, is making sure that the information for the customer of the commodity gets it so that can finish whatever activity they are doing. So your point is exactly right. And that is why it is incredibly important that Admiral Tidd and I and our staffs share information because, again, it just does not stop at the river.

Senator Kaine: And let us just focus on the commodity. There are all kinds of commodities we could worry about, but just the commodity of the drug trade. Admiral Tidd, you have talked about this, you know, 25 percent of what you know you can stop, and if you had more assets, you could stop more. And I am all for that. So Coast Guard, military assets to stop more.

But let us drill down on this. If you had enough assets to try to stop everything you knew about but there
was still a significant demand for drugs in the United States, there would still be drugs that would get to the United States. Correct?

Admiral Tidd: Yes, Senator. Unfortunately, I believe that to be true. And these networks are very adaptive. If the price is right, they will work very, very hard to work around the bars that we try and put in their place. So it is a dynamic problem that we will continuously have to work at.

Senator Kaine: Is there anything you can do within your military lane that would bring down drug demand, or is that other parts of our government?

Admiral Tidd: I am not aware, at least not in USSOUTHCOM.

Senator Kaine: So it is other parts of our government. So if we are going to deal with this significant national security issue, we ought to be funding the interdiction efforts to the degree that you talk about. But if we do not do anything on the demand side, we are going to continue to see the national security problem.

And ultimately, this is about the budget. In the submitted budget, there is not only a proposed cut to the Coast Guard, there is a $100 million reduction of funds to SAMHSA, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. There are dramatic cuts to CDBG funds,
which are often used by community drug prevention/drug treatment programs. And so this is an example of how a defense budget, SOUTHCOM, fits together with the non-defense budget, Coast Guard, which is under DOT. It is part of non-defense discretionary. SAMHSA is part of non-defense discretionary. CDBG’s funds are part of non-defense discretionary.

So as we look at the sequester, there are so many things that are in the non-defense discretionary budget that are really about our defense. And if we are not wise in those investments, we are going to continue to have this challenge of drugs flowing south to north and potentially creating networks that can move other commodities as well.

Do either of you disagree with that?

Admiral Tidd: Senator, what I would just observe is if somehow you could wave your hand and the drugs disappeared overnight, these same threat networks would engage in other activities in order to preserve their power and their access to resources. So that is why we focus on the networks. We have got to be able to bring pressure to bear on the networks.

Senator Kaine: The chair and ranking on this committee have been so eloquent really since I got here to the Senate about the foolishness of the sequester. And I understand why it was put in place in a vote in the summer of 2011, and
then it went active March 1, 2013. But it was put in place at a time of a political reality where there were significant Republican majority in one house and then two but a Democratic President. So it was going to be kind of a budgetary check.

I would just argue the GOP now has all the leverage, the White House and both houses. These non-defense expenditures of the kind that we are talking about, Coast Guard, SAMHSA funding, could help us deal with the drug problem. They are really important to our national security.

I think the time is just to get rid of the caps, not just lift the caps on defense and then keep capping non-defense. Just lift the caps on both and let everybody make the case for what we need to interdict or make the case for what we need to bring down the demand on drugs. And especially with power all in the hands of one party right now, there is no danger that the Dems would sort of roll the majority on the budgetary side.

But I think lifting the budgetary cap on defense without doing it on non-defense means we are going to hurt an awful lot of priorities that are in the non-defense side that actually directly contribute to some of these national security challenges that we are talking about.

One other quick question. Activity of China in
SOUTHCOM, to follow up on Senator Cotton. He asked really good questions about Russia and Iran. How about activities of China, military activities?

Admiral Tidd: I would say right now that the activity is largely economic in nature. The military-focused activities -- they are very aggressively engaged in an IMET-like program where they will seek to bring senior military leaders from throughout the region to Beijing for all expense paid trips. Again, it is an opportunity to influence the region and to displace the United States as the partner of choice in Latin America.

Senator Kaine: Thank you.

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Chairman McCain [presiding]: Senator Sullivan?

Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I appreciate the witnesses’ testimony.

I think you are seeing this is helpful. I think is as important to this committee as it is to all of you, some bipartisan consensus on some key issues. A lot of us, my State of Alaska, is also dealing with the opioid problem in a massive way. There is concern about the Coast Guard’s budget. I chair the subcommittee on the Commerce Committee that oversees the Coast Guard. I can tell you it is clear to me Secretary Kelly does not agree with cutting the Coast Guard’s budget. So we are all going to work together on
that, and I think it is a seam some ways between this
commitee and the Commerce Committee because the Coast Guard
is a branch of the U.S. military and it is a very important
branch of the U.S. military. So I think a lot of us are
concerned on that.

And then you have seen a lot of concern and interest in
the Arctic, not just coming from the Senator from Alaska,
but a bipartisan group of Senators are concerned about that.

So, General Robinson, you are the advocate for the
Arctic in terms of capabilities. There is a lot of talk
about icebreakers. We have really one and a half. The
Russians have 40, building 13 more. Senator Perdue talked a
lot about that.

Have you actually been on one of the icebreakers that
we have?

General Robinson: No, sir, I have not.

Senator Sullivan: So I was this weekend. The Polar
Star, which is the heavy icebreaker, and the Healy, which is
the medium icebreaker.

And I want to mention -- and again, I am not sure which
jurisdiction it is in terms of committees, but they are
shameful. Shameful. The Polar Star was built in the 1970s
with technologies from the 1960s. And as Senator King
mentioned, it deploys down to Antarctica. We should never--
ever -- allow the men and women who serve in the U.S.
military to deploy on such a bucket. This ship is a joke and it is dangerous. And I encourage you as the advocate for the Arctic to go out and look at what our men and women who volunteer deploy on. These guys have to go on eBay to get parts for this ship. It is shameful. We should not have the men and women of the Coast Guard deploying on such an unseaworthy vessel, and we need to do something about it.

You mentioned the new strategy on the Arctic. It talks about FONOPS, which I think it is important. Do you think we have any remote capability of conducting FONOPS if the Russians tried to, say, block off sea transportation routes or block off access to resource development, all of which I guarantee at some point they are going to try and test us on? That is why they are building up so much capacity. Do we have any kind of capacity right now to conduct a FONOP that would try to push back on Russian aggression buildup in the Arctic?

General Robinson: Sir, we have discussed that briefly, but I have not taken it to the next level of discussion.

Senator Sullivan: I think the answer is no. But that is my view having been out there. Do you have an answer on that?

General Robinson: Sir, we have discussed it briefly, but we have not taken it to the next level of discussion. I do watch where Russian ships are each and every day. I can
tell you that.

Senator Sullivan: Well, it is one of these things. We put out a strategy. It is the new DOD strategy. We say we are going to do this. And my view is we do not have even the remote capability to do this. And when we have a strategy that says we are going to do something and we do not have the capability to actually do it, it undermines U.S. credibility in the world. And Lord knows, we need to get credibility back in our foreign policy and national security.

Let me talk about missile defense. Do you agree that the threat to the homeland is increasing almost daily?

General Robinson: I think that Kim Jung-un very much wants to reach out and touch the homeland.

Senator Sullivan: So General Hyten said February 11th was a real, real important date, a bad date with regard to the security of the continental United States and Kim Jung-un’s capability because they tested solid fuel rockets.

I am not convinced at all. As a matter of fact, I do not think we have -- I think we need to do a lot more with regard to missile defense. Do you agree with that?

General Robinson: Sir, given the budget where we are today and today’s budget and the strategy that we have of making our sensors better and making our kill vehicles better is the right strategy. I think if we have a
different budget, then we can have a different strategy.

Senator Sullivan: So let me ask you the question
without your reference to the budget. Given the increasing
threat, which everybody sees, given the likelihood -- not
the likelihood, the certainty that within 1, 2, 3, 4 years
Kim Jung-un is going to be able to reach us with an
intercontinental ballistic nuclear missile -- do not worry
about the budget. Just give me your military answer. Do
you think we have done enough? Are you satisfied where we
are on missile defense right now for our Nation?

General Robinson: Yes, sir, I am.

Senator Sullivan: I am not and we need to do a lot,
lot more given this threat is going to be on our shores. He
is going to have the capability to nuke cities in the Lower
48 at some point in the future. We know that. And I do not
think we have done enough on missile defense. And I think
we need to do a lot more.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman McCain: Senator Graham?

Senator Graham: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Robinson, if we did a CR, would it
substantially hurt your capability to defend the homeland
from such attacks?

General Robinson: Sir, as you know, as a consumer of
the services’ capabilities, the U.S. Air Force -- the chief
testified yesterday about being down 1,000 pilots. I need trained and ready and qualified pilots to defend our airspace. If you look at the things that we are doing to delay maintenance and AWACS being one of those things to delay maintenance, I need an E-3 airborne also to help defend --

Senator Graham: So a CR would be hurtful.

General Robinson: Yes, sir.

Senator Graham: If we went back into sequestration next year, would that be disastrous?

General Robinson: Yes, sir.

Senator Graham: The same for you, Admiral.

Admiral Tidd: Sir, the services are already challenged to provide resources for SOUTHCOM, and so anything that decreased the available resources is only going to make the matter worse.

Senator Graham: That would include a CR and sequestration.

Admiral Tidd: In my understanding, yes, sir.

Senator Graham: How many ships do you need to cover your theater in not a perfect world but in a better world?

Admiral Tidd: We have had a longstanding requirement for a combination of medium and high endurance platforms for as many as 23 surface combatants and accompanying aircraft.

Senator Graham: How many do you have now?
Admiral Tidd: On any given day, probably about six.

Senator Graham: So do you think at the time they did the survey for 23, things have gotten better or worse in terms of the theater?

Admiral Tidd: Sir, in that particular regard, they are worse.

Senator Graham: So you got six ships. A long time ago, you said you needed 23 and things are worse now than they were when you said you needed 23. Okay.

So, General Robinson, let us get back to North Korea. Do you believe that it is the intention of the regime to develop an ICBM that can hit the homeland?

General Robinson: Yes, sir.

Senator Graham: Do you believe it is just a matter of time until they achieve that capability, unless something changes?

General Robinson: Yes, sir.

Senator Graham: Do you believe it is just a matter of time until they can miniaturize a nuclear to put on top of the ICBM?

General Robinson: In my discussions with General Hyten, yes, sir.

Senator Graham: So I guess there are two ways to deal with that threat. Never let the missile program mature to the point it can hit the homeland. That is one. Is that
correct?

General Robinson: Yes, sir.

Senator Graham: The other would be to have a missile defense system that could knock it down.

General Robinson: Yes, sir.

Senator Graham: What do you prefer?

General Robinson: I prefer both.

Senator Graham: I agree. That was like the best answer anybody could give.

Do we have both?

General Robinson: Today we have exactly what we need to defend the United States of America against North Korea.

Senator Graham: So if a missile were launched from North Korea next year, we could knock it down?

General Robinson: Yes, sir.

Senator Graham: Do you agree with me it is better not to let them have that missile?

General Robinson: Yes, sir.

Senator Graham: So in terms of homeland defense, what is the biggest threat to the homeland, starting with North Korea and kind of listing threats that you see?

General Robinson: Yes, sir. I worry about North Korea, as we were just discussing, from a ballistic missile defense perspective when I look at Kim Jung-un and his lack of indications and warning, as General Hyten talked about
the other day, and all of that.

I also look at Russia and their long-range aviation and the capability that they have provided.

Right now, I pay attention to Iran because of some of the technologies that they are using.

And I also, obviously, watch China as they continue to go further and further away from --

Senator Graham: So these are nation-state threats.

General Robinson: Yes, sir.

But I also am very concerned about the homegrown violent extremists and the things that can happen with them. This goes back to the conversation that Admiral Tidd and I had about the networks and what is on the networks.

Senator Graham: Speaking of emerging threats, are you familiar with the increased use of drones by terrorist organizations?

General Robinson: Yes, sir. I read that.

Senator Graham: Do we need to up our game when it comes to dealing with potential drone attacks on the country?

General Robinson: Sir, so as the person responsible for force protection over installations, I pay attention to that each and every day. And I know that the Department -- we are working very hard on a policy on what we do with that.
Senator Graham: Do you think we need to change our laws at all to be able to deal with this threat?

General Robinson: I think we need to understand what it could be and what it could do -- from an installation perspective, what do we need --

Senator Graham: Is it fair to say that in 5 years, this threat, if not unchecked, is going to get worse and more lethal?

General Robinson: Sir, if you just look at the proliferation of drones itself and then you add to what you were just talking about and you mate those two together, I can only imagine.

Senator Graham: Thank you both.

Chairman McCain: Admiral Tidd, we would like to have a letter from you describing what additional assets that you could use effectively to apprehend all of those drugs, particularly in the Caribbean. That seems to be an area, as we tighten the border, of increased trafficking.

And, General Robinson, we would like to know from you also if you could write us a letter how we can fully utilize the assets of our uniformed military in keeping with the posse comitatus rule so that we can maximize border security.

And finally, General, would you believe that a definition of a wall could be electronics, could be towers,
could be UAVs, could be anti-tunneling capabilities,
surveillance towers, in other words dramatically increasing
our capabilities through the use of technology?

General Robinson: Sir, anything that disturbs,
interrupts, and gets after the flow --

Chairman McCain: I am asking would technology -- that
it be more effectively utilized. I am talking about towers.
I am talking about --

General Robinson: Yes, sir. Those are helpful as part
of a wall.

Chairman McCain: Well, then write us a note, would
you, as to what assets you think could be used and
construction and ways of preventing the flow not only of
drugs, which has been a central theme of this hearing, but
also the possible infiltration of terrorists as we see Mosul
and Raqqa fall. We all know that these individuals are
spreading out throughout the world. So we would appreciate
that information from both of you, and I hope it is not too
tough a task.

General Robinson: Yes, sir.

Chairman McCain: And I am certainly glad to see this
inter-service cooperation. It is a rare and beautiful
event. Thank you.

This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:06 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]