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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

POLITICAL AND SECURITY SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

Tuesday, October 3, 2017

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:03 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: Good morning. The U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee meets this morning to receive testimony on U.S. strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia.

We welcome Secretary Mattis and Chairman Dunford back to the committee. We thank you both for your many years of distinguished service and your leadership of our men and women in uniform.

Sixteen years ago this week, U.S. and coalition forces began combat operations in Afghanistan to eliminate the Al Qaeda terrorists who attacked our Nation and remove the Taliban regime that gave them sanctuary. Very few -- few -- would have predicted that 16 years later we would still be fighting what has become America's longest war.

To date, we have achieved our mission to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for terrorists to attack America or our allies and partners. But that success has come at a tremendous price. More than 2,000 Americans have given their lives in this war, and more than 20,000 have been wounded. I repeat, over 20,000 have been wounded.

And while we are still denying safe haven to terrorists in Afghanistan, there is no escaping our present reality. As Secretary Mattis and General Nicholson have already testified to this committee, America is losing the war in
Afghanistan. That is unacceptable.

Much of the responsibility for this failure rests with the prior administration, which was consistently more interested in leaving Afghanistan than succeeding there. As a result, for most of the past 8 years, our commanders on the ground have had to fight this war with restricted authorities and rules of engagement, insufficient resources, political micromanagement, artificial deadlines for withdrawal, and a lack of presidential leadership. Our troops have fought bravery and honorably. But too often, it seemed as if they were doing so with one hand tied behind their back.

This was the situation that President Trump inherited. It was not his doing, but it is now his responsibility.

When the President announced a new strategy for Afghanistan and South Asia on August 21st, it came after months of delay and indecision, but it was encouraging in some respects. In particular, the President ended the foolish policy of arbitrary timetables for withdrawal and shifted to a conditions-based approach. This was a step in the right direction.

At the same time, in the 6 weeks since the President made his announcement, this committee, and the Congress more broadly, still does not know many of the crucial details of this strategy.
This is totally unacceptable. I repeat, this is totally unacceptable.

Many members of this committee have been actively involved in the war in Afghanistan since it started. A few have even served in the war on Active Duty.

We expect -- indeed, we require -- a regular flow of detailed information about this war.

That is not because we want to inhibit our witnesses from doing their jobs. It is because we have to do ours. We have to provide our troops with the vital authorities and resources they need to perform their missions. That is our separate, co-equal responsibility under the Constitution, and we take our duties as seriously as our witnesses take theirs.

Though I must say, it is bizarre that for a hearing of such importance, our witnesses failed to submit written testimony to this committee.

We want to be your partners, but this committee will not be a rubber stamp for any policy or President. We must be well-informed. We must be convinced of the merits of the administration's actions. And, unfortunately, we still have far more questions than answers about this new strategy.

At the most basic level, we still do not know how the President's new strategy will better enable us to achieve our stated objectives. In short, at present, it remains
unclear why we should be confident that this new strategy could turn the tide in Afghanistan or bring us meaningfully closer to success than its failed predecessor.

The President said in his speech that, "Conditions on the ground, not arbitrary timetables, will guide our strategy from now on." But what are those conditions?

The President said that our goal is still, quote, "to have a political settlement that includes elements of the Taliban." But we still do not know what kind of settlement the administration seeks, on what timeline, what role the United States intends to play in bringing it about, or what role we expect other nations to play.

The President said we will use, quote, "strategically applied force to create the conditions for such a political settlement." We know that 3,500 more U.S. troops are on their way to Afghanistan, mostly to train and advise Afghan forces. And we know that the military has been given more flexible authorities to target our enemies. But we still do not know how these military gains will be translated into progress toward a political solution.

And we have yet to hear a compelling case for why this modest increase in U.S. forces will produce battlefield results that can significantly alter the Taliban's calculus and create the conditions for political reconciliation when we could not bring about this goal with far more troops on
the ground.

The President has also said, quite importantly, that we would change the U.S. approach to Pakistan, which continues to harbor militants and terrorists who target U.S. servicemembers and officials. But we still do not know what specific steps the United States will take to convince or compel Pakistan to change its behavior, or what costs we will impose if Pakistan fails to do so.

Indeed, it is unclear to me if the administration believes any step or series of steps the United States might take will lead Pakistan to cease its support and sanctuary for certain terrorist groups, which has been a feature of its national security policy for decades.

Secretary Mattis, General Dunford, this committee, the Congress, the American people, and our men and women in uniform, all hold you in the highest regard. We have confidence in your leadership, your integrity, and your judgment. But in light of the experience of the last 16 years, what should give us confidence that this new strategy for Afghanistan will be different?

To answer that central question, this committee, in particular, deserves a lot more detailed information from the President and from you, not just at today's hearing, but in the days, weeks, and months ahead.

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

Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would like to join you in welcoming Secretary Mattis and General Dunford.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being with us here today to discuss this very important topic.

On August 21st, President Trump announced that the United States would stay the course in Afghanistan, thereby continuing the military's two missions of counterterrorism and capacity-building to ensure that extremist groups never again use Afghanistan as a base to attack the United States.

In February, General John Nicholson, the commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, testified before this committee that the conflict in Afghanistan had reached a stalemate and stated the need for enhanced authorities and several thousand more troops to carry out the train, advise, and assist mission at lower levels within the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, and across the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior.

While I support the increase in troops and additional authorities, some have suggested that we have already been down this path, that a surge in the past of over 100,000 troops could not create the conditions on the ground to successfully bring this conflict to an end.
And so, gentlemen, we will ask you, in many different ways, what will be different about this effort that will bring about a change that did not happen in previous efforts with even greater troop numbers and associated authorities?

To many, the situation in Afghanistan is not trending in a positive direction. The Afghan Security Forces continue to suffer high casualty rates in the face of an intensified insurgency, with Taliban and ISIS Khorasan continuing to plan and carry out high-profile attacks while maintaining the ability to regenerate their losses.

The U.N. has reported near-record numbers of civilians killed and injured in the first 6 months of this year. Furthermore, it appears that record-setting amounts of opium will be produced in Afghanistan this year, providing a steady flow of funds to fuel the conflict.

On the other hand, in spite of this intensified fighting, the Afghan Security Forces have repeatedly demonstrated the ability to withstand Taliban offensives and recapture lost ground. They are seeking to grow their most effective units, the Afghan Special Security Forces, and further increase their offensive capabilities.

The growth of the Afghan Air Force has been a force multiplier for the Security Forces, enabling greater offensive actions. In the past year, they have provided support to ground forces with limited coalition assistance,
conducted target surveillance and selection, and after-action battle damage assessments.

And I am interested in your views as to whether these developments, with additional U.S. support, will finally tip the balance on the ground.

Ultimately though, this conflict will not be won on the battlefield. According to the President's speech, the military efforts in Afghanistan will serve to set the conditions for the ultimate goal of the South Asia strategy: a peace settlement between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban that protects U.S. interests.

The President also stated that the strategy will integrate all instruments of American power -- diplomatic, economic, and military. However, we have heard very little about the diplomatic and economic aspects of the plan.

General Mattis, this integration of all our Nation's tools is essential, and I hope you will give the committee a better sense of how our continuing military involvement in Afghanistan will help translate battlefield progress into political outcomes.

If the mission in Afghanistan is to be successful, it is imperative to disrupt the external sanctuaries in Pakistan, which continue to provide the Taliban, the Haqqani network, and other associated groups with the ability to train, recruit, rest, refit, and stage attacks without
significant fear of interference.

We have heard that the administration intends to change the relationship with Pakistan in order to compel action that supports our efforts in Afghanistan. I agree that a change in this area is needed and look forward to hearing the current thinking with regard to the tools available to press Pakistan to make more progress on these issues.

In addition to Pakistan, there are a number of regional actors who are endeavoring to play a role in Afghanistan's future. It will be important to understand the strategy with regard to countries such as Russia, China, Iran, and India, each of whom is seeking to ensure that their own national interests are preserved in Afghanistan, many of which may be divergent from U.S. interests.

Secretary Mattis, General Dunford, the committee is eager to hear greater detail regarding the military aspects of the South Asia strategy, as well as the manner in which these efforts will support the achievement of the desired political end state.

Thank you again for appearing, and I look forward to your testimony.

Chairman McCain: Welcome. Secretary Mattis?
STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES N. MATTIS, SECRETARY OF DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Secretary Mattis: Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished members of the committee, I appear before you following the tragic event in Las Vegas. The Department of Defense is staying closely linked with the intelligence community, and we remain alert to law enforcement's assessment of events.

This committee is keenly aware of the complex and volatile security environment that our country faces today. Russia continues to invest in a full range of capabilities designed to limit our ability to project power, erode U.S. influence, and undermine NATO's transatlantic alliance.

China is focused on limiting our ability to project power as well, and weakening our position in the Indo-Pacific region, even as we work to find common ground in confronting North Korea's provocative actions.

The international community, as reflected by the two latest unanimous Security Council sanctions resolutions, is focused on the destabilizing threat posed by North Korea and Kim Jong Un's relentless pursuit of nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities. The Defense Department supports fully Secretary Tillerson's efforts to find a diplomatic solution, but remains focused on defense of the United States and our
In the Middle East, Iran continues to project malign influence across the region while we continue to make gains against the terrorist enemy in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere. In Afghanistan, we have faced a difficult 16 years. General Nicholson, our NATO and U.S. field commander, with troops from 39 nations, has blunted the terrorists' offensive moves in Afghanistan. NATO strikes in support of the improving Afghan Security Forces, and disarray among various enemy groups in Afghanistan, have caused the Taliban to expend resources, constrain their movements, and limit the Taliban's ability to conduct major offensives. Beginning last month, and for the first time in this long fight, all six Afghan military corps are engaged in offensive operations. During these recent months, there have been fewer civilian casualties as a result of coalition operations, although, regrettably, Taliban high-profile attacks on civilians continue to murder the innocent. While the Taliban still attempts to seize district or provincial centers before the end of this fighting season, they have generally been forced into decentralized, small-scale ambushes and the use of improvised explosive devices. Importantly, the rate of Afghan National Security Force casualties has reduced from last year.
As you know, I just returned last week from a trip to India and Afghanistan, and I can report that General Nicholson and the NATO team are holding the line. Forecasts of a significant Taliban offensive remain unfulfilled.

Violence and progress in Afghanistan continue to coexist, but the uncertainty in the region about the NATO campaign has been replaced by certainty due to the implementation of President Trump's new South Asia strategy. This strategy has been welcomed almost uniformly by leaders in the South Asia region as well as by the 39 countries contributing troops to the NATO-led campaign.

We must always remember we are in Afghanistan to make America safer and ensure South Asia cannot be used to plot transnational attacks against the U.S. homeland or our partners and allies. Our goal is a stable and secure South Asia. A political settlement in Afghanistan is only possible if the Taliban rejects support or conduct of terrorism.

Based on the intelligence community's analysis and my own evaluation, I am convinced we would absent ourselves from this region to our ultimate peril.

Our new, conditions-based approach has set the stage for regional and Afghan national change. Our new strategy, vigorously reviewed and approved by President Trump, is "R4+S," which stands for regionalize, realign, reinforce,
reconcile, and sustain.

The first R, regionalize, recognizes challenges exist beyond Afghanistan. The strategy adopts a geographic framework with a holistic, comprehensive view. India, Pakistan, Iran, Russia, and China were considered at the outset rather than focusing only on Afghanistan and then introducing external variables late in our strategic design.

My visit last week to India was in part to thank them for their continued generous development support in Afghanistan, and we discussed ways to expand our collaboration to improve long-term regional stability and security.

We will firmly address Pakistan's role. NATO's demands need to be heard and embraced in Islamabad.

The second R is for realign, and signifies that we are shifting our main effort to align more advisers who can provide training and advisory support at the battalion and brigade level. The fighting will continue to be carried out by our Afghan partners, but our advisers will accompany tactical units to advise and assist and bring NATO fire support to bear when needed.

Make no mistake, this is combat duty, but the Afghan forces remain in the lead to do the fighting. We have approximately 11,000 troops in Afghanistan alongside 6,800 from NATO and coalition partners, and 320,000 Afghan
National Security Forces. From these numbers alone, you can see the Afghan forces remain the main effort, and we are supporting them, not supplanting or substituting our troops for theirs.

The third R is reinforce, and that is seen in our addition of over 3,000 U.S. troops arriving now and in the coming months to extend NATO's advisory effort to Afghan troops that are currently without.

NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg and I together toured Afghanistan last week, sending a message of the NATO coalition's unity. He is also reaching out to allies to increase their troop levels. In light of our new strategy, 15 nations have signaled that they will increase their support.

Again, certainty having replaced uncertainty, we are now looking to our partners to provide even more troop and financial support.

The last R, reconcile, is the desired outcome from our military operations. Convincing our foes that the coalition is committed to a conditions-based outcome, we intend to drive fence-sitters, and those who will see that we are not quitting this fight, to reconcile with the Afghan national government. Our goal is a stabilized Afghanistan achieved through an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace process.

War is principally a matter of will, and the
international community is making clear that it will stand alongside the Afghans committed to this fight.

As we have shifted to a conditions-based strategy, not time-based or troop-number focused, ambiguity has been removed. The elements of this strategy are a tangible demonstration of our resolve. All this will be carried out by, with, and through our Afghan partners and within the coalition framework, ensuring this campaign is politically, fiscally, and militarily sustainable.

Our Afghan partners, who continue to take the lead, fight most effectively where NATO and partner advisers are alongside them. As President Ghani said to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City, "Afghans are determined to fight. No one should mistake our will to defend our country."

I am heartened and impressed by the international reception to our strategy. I am confident we will see heightened levels of support from our allies and partners in the months ahead.

As NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg said last week in Kabul, this is about making sure that Afghanistan doesn't once again become a safe haven for international terrorists, and the best way of doing that is to enable the Afghans to have defense security forces that are strong enough to do that.
We are already starting to see the psychological impact of the new strategy, both militarily in the field as well as through President Ghani and the Afghan Government's commitment to reform. President Ghani recognizes that fighting corruption and accelerating institutional reform across government are critical to success. The recently launched U.S.-Afghan Compact, outlining more than 200 measurable benchmarks for reform, demonstrates our shared emphasis on these goals.

Our South Asia strategy reinforces to the Taliban that the only path to peace and political legitimacy is through a negotiated settlement. It is time for the Taliban to recognize they cannot kill their way to power, nor can they provide refuge or support to transnational terrorists who intend to do us harm.

I want to close by recognizing the need to maintain the closest possible dialogue with Congress, and specifically with this committee. I pledge the Department of Defense will be fully responsive to your requirement to be kept appraised of current and planned operations.

As my Senate-confirmed positions get filled, we will also have greater capacity to deal with the multiple, worldwide security challenges while keeping you fully informed.

I trust I will have your support to ensure necessary
civilian oversight of our military as we address today's complex and increasingly volatile national security environment. Thank you.

Chairman McCain: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

General Dunford?
STATEMENT OF GENERAL JOSEPH F. DUNFORD, JR., USMC,
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

General Dunford: Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for opportunity to join Secretary Mattis in providing an update on the South Asia strategy.

In recent months, our commander in Afghanistan, General Nicholson, has described the current condition in the country as a stalemate. Secretary Mattis has testified that we are not winning, and members of this committee have made similar statements.

The situation has developed since the NATO mission in Afghanistan transitioned to an advisory effort. Since January 2015, we have advised and accompanied Afghan special operations units at the tactical level, but our advisory effort for conventional forces has generally been limited to the Afghan corps and institutional level. We also reduced the aviation, artillery, and intelligence support provided to the Afghan forces.

This construct did not provide Afghan conventional forces with the support they needed to succeed in combat operations. My military assessment is that we drew down our advisory effort and combat support for the Afghan forces too far and too fast.

As a result, the Taliban expanded territorial and
population control, and inflicted significant casualties on the Afghan Army and police while the campaign lost momentum.

Last spring, Secretary Mattis directed the department to conduct a detailed failure analysis to identify the root causes for the lack of progress in Afghanistan, and he directed we provide targeted solutions. Informed by these findings, our commanders developed, and Secretary Mattis approved, a new operational approach to break the stalemate and bolster Afghan capabilities.

The new approach supports the President's broader strategy by expanding our advisory efforts to the tactical level, increasing the combat support we provide to our Afghan partners, and enhancing authorities to our commanders. We believe these adjustments will improve the ability of the Afghans to conduct offensive operations, defend critical terrain, and reduce Afghan casualties.

The emphasis is on providing effective support to the over 300,000 Afghans we have trained and equipped so they can secure their own country.

Going forward, we will support President Ghani's efforts to reorganize the Afghan forces, which will expand special operations units while reducing less effective units.

We will also continue our efforts to develop a capable and sustainable Afghan Air Force.
And finally, we will enhance and expand our own counterterrorism operations in the region.

By next spring, this approach will have our most senior, capable, and operationally experienced leaders advising at the decisive point in Afghan operations. Their efforts will be fully enabled by the support and authorities needed for the Afghans to take the fight to the enemy. As we implement the strategy, we are also tackling corruption, the single greatest roadblock to progress.

Our military objectives for this new strategy are clear, and they are achievable: defeat ISIS and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and ensure other terrorist groups are unable to launch attacks against the homeland, U.S. citizens, or our allies; further develop Afghan forces that are capable of managing residual violence with limited international support; support President Ghani's effort to secure key population and economic centers; and provide an enduring counterterrorism partnership with Afghanistan to protect our shared interests in South Asia.

As Secretary Tillerson has recently outlined, this entire effort is intended to put pressure on the Taliban and have them understand they will not win a battlefield victory, so they will enter an Afghan-led peace process to end the conflict.

Thanks again, Chairman, for the opportunity to join you
today, and I look forward to your questions.

Chairman McCain: Thank you very much, General.

And thank you, Mr. Secretary. And I thank you for your appearing today.

As I mentioned in my opening statement, 16 years ago, I think most of us would have been surprised to think that, 16 years later, we would still be involved in a conflict in Afghanistan, arguably, militarily, the strongest Nation on Earth. And, of course, as I mentioned, earlier, the tremendous price: 2,000 Americans have given their lives; 20,000 more have been wounded; and our commander in Afghanistan testifies before this committee that we are in a "stalemate." That is hard for most Americans to understand.

And some of that, obviously, as I mentioned, is the failed strategy, or lack of strategy, by the previous administration. And I have said that fairly often.

But I would like to say, again, that you have been in office now since January, and so far, we have not seen the details of a conditions-based strategy that will bring about an end to the conflict in Afghanistan.

We have had as many as 100,000 troops in Afghanistan at one time or another, and it did not end the conflict. I would like for you to tell me how the inclusion of 2,500 is going to change the battlefield equation, including the fact that we have a classic West Point text of an enemy that is
based in a sanctuary, that has a sanctuary in Pakistan.

We all know the street address of the Haqqani network. We know where they are. We know what they are doing. We know what they are doing across the border. And yet, we still have not, with any effectiveness, in the last 16 years, restricted their activities and have had any particular progress in eliminating their sanctuary status.

I would just like to add one other point. General Nicholson said that we are in a "stalemate." After 16 years, should the taxpayers of America be satisfied that we are still in a "stalemate"? I do not think so.

And then I would like to, finally, repeat again, we have had a lack of communication and a lack of information to this committee that, to me, is very disturbing. There are not two individuals that I admire more than those sitting at the table facing this committee. But I want to tell you again, we will not accept a lack of information, a lack of strategy, a lack of coordination with this committee. And there are several methods, thanks to the Constitution, that we have to try to force a change in that relationship.

I have been told by both of you that we would have new strategy, that we are now going to work closely together with the committee, that we are working with various allies. I am glad to hear that.
But if anyone on this committee feels that they have been fully briefed on what our strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq is, please raise your hand.

So the Constitution of the United States is something that every one of us raised our hands when we were sworn in as United States Senators. One of the phrases is, "support and defend the Constitution of the United States." Not support and defend the President of the United States, but support and defend the Constitution of the United States.

So all I can say is, with my deep admiration and respect for both of you, we are going to have to act to preserve and respect our constitutional responsibilities.

The hearing that you gave a week or so ago, I thought it was nice to hear. I thought it was a lot of interesting information. But I certainly did not think it was sufficient information for us to act on the defense authorization bill, which provides for the training, equipping, protection, and capabilities of the men and women who are serving, that we represent, that are serving in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, et cetera.

So all I can say to you, my friends, and you are my friends, there is a Constitution; we are a co-equal branch; and we will expect -- and I know there has been turmoil within the White House, et cetera, and a number of other personnel issues. But that does not relieve you of the
responsibility to keep us informed, to seek our advice and consent, which is also in the Constitution.

And if you do not, then we have no choice but to exercise our responsibilities under the Constitution, which we have. And I regret to say this to two of the people that I admire and respect as much as anyone I have ever known in my years of service.

Senator Reed?

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

I raise this question, Secretary Mattis, because you raised it in your opening comments, and that is the Department of Defense strongly supports Secretary Tillerson’s diplomatic efforts versus North Korea.

That does not seem to be translated to the President, since he has, in several tweets, suggested that Secretary Tillerson opening channels and preparing to discuss issues, directly and indirectly, is essentially a waste of time.

How do you respond to those? On one hand, you strongly support him. On the other hand, the President is telling him to knock it off.

Secretary Mattis: Senator Reed, President Trump’s guidance to both Secretary Tillerson and me has been very clearly that we would pursue the diplomatic effort, to include the various initiatives with China, and to ensure that we pushed on sanctions, economic sanctions designed to
keep this in the diplomatic framework for moving forward.

I believe that Secretary Tillerson is accurately stating that we are probing for opportunities to talk with the North. All we are doing is probing. We are not talking with them, consistent with the President's dismay about not talking with them before the time is right, before they are willing to talk.

So I do not see the divergence as strongly as some have interpreted it.

At the same time, the President, I think, has a responsibility to ensure that we go into this with our eyes wide open, with numerous Republican and Democratic administrations in the past having been disappointed in this initiative.

I think it is a dynamic balance, as we try to go forward with a solution but at the same time ensure that we have military options.

Senator Reed: Just a final point, I do not want to dwell on this. But in these situations, and I think you are aware of it, the possibility of miscalculation, misinformation, misinterpretation, is very real. And communication, even back-channel communications, not to negotiating, but simply to be able to send messages, do you think that is vitally important? Because the President seems to be disparaging even those types of messaging
channels.

Secretary Mattis: Senator, I think the President dispatching Secretary Tillerson to Beijing here within the last several days to carry messages and to look at the way we can work with them is the most accurate answer to your question, that, in fact, this is part of a whole-of-government integrated effort that we have underway right now. And that is what Secretary Tillerson was carrying forward for the President.

Senator Reed: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

And following the Chairman’s comments about the need to essentially describe in more detail this strategy, which conceptually seems to be appropriate, but the devil, as they say, is in the details, specifically with respect to Pakistan, the President called out Pakistan, I think rightfully so. But the question is, what are we going to do? What are the options we are considering, vis-a-vis Pakistan?

Secretary Mattis: The first thing is, Senator, we are working with the international community, including Secretary General Stoltenberg of NATO, to ensure that we go in with a unified NATO position vis-a-vis Afghanistan.

You are aware that I stopped first in New Delhi on my way to Kabul last week in order to further integrate what the Indians are doing in terms of development aid and
diplomatic efforts to ensure that South Asia stability and
peace are prioritized, not just by us, or not just by us in
Afghanistan, but across South Asia.

So there will be a very specific number of things that
we deal with Pakistan on, and those will be balanced with
the appropriate levels of firmness, as we set a new
relationship with Pakistan.

And we can go into great detail, I would prefer to do
so in your office, over what those specifics are, to ensure
that our diplomats go in fully armed and have the initiative
when the discussions open here starting in a couple weeks in
Islamabad.

Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.
Thank you, General.
Chairman McCain: Senator Inhofe.
Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just as an observation of one member here, one of the
major improvements that I have seen is -- and I congratulate
the Defense Department and the administration for saying
that they will no longer comment on exact troop numbers and
imposing public deadlines. I think that is a major change
from the previous administration that I think is very
helpful.

I think, Secretary Mattis, in your opening statement,
you gave a pretty long answer to the question that we get
confronted with quite often. And let me just ask for a short answer.

We understand the problem for a safe haven for terrorists in Afghanistan and all these other things. But can you reiterate for the American people just why they should, in a very brief way, they should care about the future of Afghanistan, and why we should continue to expend resources and risk any more American lives? What is the short answer?

Secretary Mattis: Why should we continue, sir, is to make certain that Americans can live safely. And when I advise the President on sending troops in a position where they can die, I have to know in my analysis that this is going to sufficiently contribute to the well-being of the American people to put those troops lives at risk.

Senator Inhofe: That is a good, brief answer. Thank you.

On February 21st, Senator Rounds and four other members and I sat down and spent quite a bit of time with President Ghani and General Nicholson, and we made a list of some eight things that they are looking at for the future.

I would like to just pick out three of these and ask either one of you for a current status of where we are, because I think you would agree with the eight points they brought out. The first of the three would be the need for
more coalition forces to train and assist the Afghan military. The second is the strength and commitment of the Afghan people who want to take their country back, the status of that. And third is shifting the focus to winning versus not losing.

Start with the first one, the need for more coalition forces to train and assist the Afghan military. What is the status, currently, of that?

Secretary Mattis: Sir, the Afghan Special Forces commandos that have our trainers, they have won every time they have fought the enemy. Those without have not won.

Right now, we are adding more troops for that very purpose. We are bringing in more NATO coalition partners and trying to bring in more of their troops for advise and assist.

And we intend to get this down to every corps. Every corps is going to have a brigade that will have the trainers and the advisers with them. And within that brigade, since when they do offensive ops, there is usually one or two kandaks, battalions, they will also now have trainers. They have not had them in the past several years. That means they were not able to get swift access to NATO air support, fire support.

Senator Inhofe: Yes, that is very good.

Now, the level of commitment of the Afghan people, what
is the status of that? How about you, General Dunford?

General Dunford: Senator, thanks.

There is constant polling done in Afghanistan, and the most recent poll came out and said 87 percent of the Afghan people reject what the Taliban represents, and more than 75 percent of the people had confidence and trusted Afghan Security Forces.

So I think that is actually moving in the right direction, Senator.

Senator Inhofe: Yes, because it was not that way last February. That is an improvement, an obvious one.

General Dunford: It is a slight improvement from last February, but certainly a significant improvement from 2011-2012.

Senator Inhofe: That is right.

And the third one, the shifting the focus to winning versus not losing?

General Dunford: Senator, that is exactly what the strategy that we have just outlined is designed to do. And certainly, from a military perspective, Secretary Mattis has made very clear that we needed measurable objectives. The objectives, again, to ensure that the Afghan Security Forces are capable of providing security with a minimal amount of support, that is one element. Making sure that ISIS and Al Qaeda in the region are defeated, that is a second element.
Keeping other groups from conducting attacks against the United States, our allies, that is a third element. And then reinforcing the efforts for the peace process is a fourth element.

Senator Inhofe: Very good. The Chairman, in his opening statement talked about -- in fact, he quoted, "Conditions on the ground, not arbitrary timetables, will guide our strategy from now on."

Does either one of you want to take a stab at further defining conditions?

Secretary Mattis: Senator, first of all, that the populations centers and the bulk of the Afghan people are protected from the depredations of the terrorists. And that denies them the very platforms they need, if they want to conduct attacks against us, our allies, that sort of thing. Furthermore, we are going to have to see a country that is able to provide government services. There has been pretty much a wholesale swap out of many of the old leaders in various ministries, to include the military leaders today, across-the-board from the commander of the Army on down.

These are post-9/11-proven people. In other words, we are getting people in now who are not colored with some of the old ways of doing business that have bedeviled us for so long.
Further, we are going to see, in terms of the Afghan military, we are going to see more effective operations in the field, such as we are seeing right now for the first time in the war, with all the corps on offensive strikes going against Taliban and the other terrorists in the country.

This will drive them toward the reconciliation, Afghan-led, Afghan-owned reconciliation, that will end this war.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Chairman McCain: Senator Shaheen.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you both for being here.

I guess I am still not clear, based on Chairman McCain’s questions that he raised, that I understand how this strategy is going to succeed where our past efforts have not.

So can you give me a very succinct response to that, in the way that you gave Senator Inhofe the response to why it matters?

Secretary Mattis: Senator Shaheen, what we have right now is the ability to make the Afghan military, which has been through some very tough times, make them more effective in the field.

In other words, when they go into the fight, no longer will they worry about that high ground. Having fought in mountainous country, it is unpleasant to have the enemy
above you. NATO airstrikes overhead denies the enemy ever
having the high ground, in terms of the dominating terrain.

That is a tactical effect that will make the Afghan
Army bolder, and it will give them more opportunities
militarily to take the fight to the enemy.

And that would be the way, as we take the fight to the
enemy, we convince the Taliban, you are not going to be able
to win this by killing.

Senator Shaheen: What was the strategy behind dropping
the MOP bomb last April? And was it successful?

Secretary Mattis: Ma'am, that was not a strategy.
Senator, that was a tactical event in the field. It was to
collapse tunnels that troops did not want to go into, for
obvious reasons. They wanted to make it an unfair fight.

Senator Shaheen: Was it successful?
Secretary Mattis: For the immediate tactical effect,
yes, it was. But it was not a strategic act. It was a
tactical decision by a commander in the field, who did not
want to put his troops into a position that a bomb could
take care of.

Senator Shaheen: You have said, and others have as
well, that this war will not be won on the battlefield, that
it will be won because there is a peaceful -- this is my
analysis, based on what that means -- that it will be
determined by a peaceful agreement between the Taliban and
1 the Afghans. And I assume other players in the region would
2 need to be part of that.
3
4 So I know that proactively going after the Taliban is
designed to try to bring them to the table. But again, do
5 we think that just because there is now air cover for the
troops, the Afghan Army, that that is going to be enough to
6 bring them to the table?
7
8 And I guess the second part of that question is, I
9 assume that the United States would be part of any agreement
there, and given what Libya and Ukraine and other countries
have seen with respect to our changing our commitments
around their weapons, why would the Taliban think that they
can negotiate with the U.S. at the table in a way that would
provide certainty about what the future might hold?
10
11 General Dunford: Senator, if I could take the first
12 part of the question.
13
14 Senator Shaheen: Please.
15
16 General Dunford: For many years, to include the years
that I was in Afghanistan, there was a decidedly short-term
view. And one thing that was really evident to me was
hedging behavior by the Afghan people, by the Taliban, by
regional actors, because there was always a sense that the
United States was going to pull out in 12 months. In fact,
in Afghanistan, it was known as the Y2K effect. At the end
of every year, the expectation was that Afghanistan was
going to be confronted with an enemy with no support.

And the Taliban, frankly, fed that message to their fighters, and that is how they motivated their people year after year. It was, "One more year in the fight, and then we are going to defeat the coalition. They are going to leave Afghanistan."

I think one of the more significant things about the conditions-based approach here is that the Taliban, and we have already started to see this in the intelligence, the Taliban no longer have a short-term horizon to motivate their people. In fact, the impact, I think, has been fairly significant.

Will that be sufficient to bring though the table? I don't know, but we have not, to this point, presented the Taliban with a conditions-based approach that extends the horizon out for our commitment, makes an enduring commitment, and causes Taliban leadership now to approach their subordinates with that context.

Secretary Mattis: Very quickly, Senator, the polling the Chairman indicated shows that the overwhelming bulk of the Afghan people do not buy the Taliban's outcome. They don't agree with it. They don't agree that girls don't go to school. They don't agree that everyone has to act in a certain way.

And based on that and having seen the Afghan forces put
up with very severe casualties, fortunately going down now, and still holding the line, we now see a regenerated sense that they can push the Taliban into a position where they can have no hope of winning.

So it goes right back to what has been established long ago, where this military campaign has to lead to. They stop killing people; they live by the Constitution; and they break with international terrorists.

That is a pretty low bar, and we intend to peel off a fair number, as they see they have no hope of military victory.

Senator Shaheen: My time is up, thank you.

Chairman McCain: Senator Fischer?

Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Mattis, when General Nicholson testified in February, he and I discussed the fact that the boots on the ground limitation forced him to hire contractors to maintain helicopters, because U.S. personnel would have counted against the troop cap. This hurt unit readiness, and it also cost the government tens of millions of dollars, in his estimate.

Under the new approach, are we fixing issues like this? Will we be adding U.S. personnel in a way that allows us to reduce our reliance on these contractors and also help us save money?
Secretary Mattis: It will, Senator Fischer. The challenge is, how do we get the right balance on this?

I agree with how General Nicholson characterized that problem to you in his testimony. It is one of the reasons that I decided to add the reinforcements. Although the bulk of them will go to advise and assist, some are going to fill in those gaps.

We actually did not have a wise allocation of unit strength as we broke it apart to send it in for those troop cap reasons. So it is something we have to address, and I believe I have the ability to do so now.

Senator Fischer: When you say you believe you have the ability --

Secretary Mattis: I have to look at it, Senator, and make certain. We know that we can solve a lot of it. We know that much. But I have to look at the tentacles of a policy decision that has been in place a long time.

But I am very much aligned with General Nicholson. What General Nicholson said I think was accurate, and your concern, I share.

Senator Fischer: Are we still looking at a boots-on-the-ground limitation in Afghanistan? Did the President raise the cap? Or did he do away with it altogether?

Secretary Mattis: No, the President gave me more flexibility to deal with this issue, and he has shown
himself open, when I go in to talk with him, to my
recommendations.

As you know, this was a rather hard-fought effort, as
the President challenged every assumption to address some of
the concerns that have been brought up already this morning.

So he is open to me going back in. But right now, I
think I have what I need going in to carry out the strategy
as it is outlined. If not, I will go back in.

Senator Fischer: Okay. Over the last few years, we
have seen a decrease in our combat air operations in
Afghanistan. From 2010 to 2015, we saw the total sorties
conducted against enemy targets decrease by 84 percent in a
span of only 5 years.

During the previous administration, this was coupled
with, I felt, very restrictive rules of engagement, and that
focused on returning fire rather than allowing commanders to
proactively attack those Taliban targets. In contrast, the
air campaign against ISIS has reached record levels with
over 21,000 sorties flown in 2016.

The use of American air power helped stem further
inroads by ISIS, and I think it was used successfully in
locations such as Sinjar and Ramadi.

Are we looking at something similar, this aggressive
action and use of air power, as a new strategy in
Afghanistan?
Secretary Mattis: It is embedded in the revised strategy, absolutely. In 2017, as you noted, we have had more airstrikes than any year since 2012. So already, you see some of the results of releasing our military from, for example, a proximity requirement. How close was the enemy to the Afghan or the U.S.-advised Special Forces? That is no longer the case, for example. So these kind of restrictions that did not allow us to employ the air power fully have been removed, yes.

That said, we will never fight at any time, especially in these wars among innocent people, without doing everything humanly possible to protect the innocent that the enemy purposely jeopardizes by fighting from in amongst them. That is something we will always take as an absolute, in terms of how we conduct our tactical events on the battlefield.

Senator Fischer: And, General Dunford, you spoke in your opening comments about implementing strategy, and you spoke about support for President Ghani and also to improve the Afghan Air Force. Do you see a mission of the Afghan Air Force to work in conjunction with our Air Force, but also in the future being able to take on those capabilities on their own without us?

General Dunford: Senator, absolutely. And right now, both Afghan capability and U.S. capability are being
employed in support of the Afghans in an integrated way.

Long term, and that is about 6 or 7 years from now, we will completely have transformed the Afghan Air Force.

A key piece of that is the transition from Mi-17 helicopters to UH-60 helicopters, which includes an attack variant. We have, over the past 2 years, fielded the A-29, which is a fixed-wing, light-attack aircraft, as well as MD-530s, which are a smaller helicopter providing the attack.

The Afghan Special Operations mission wing is probably indicative of where we believe the Air Force can go. That has been proven to be a very, very effective capability supporting Afghan Special Operations forces. And we expect similar progress to be made in the Afghan Air Force.

But it is come a long way over the past 2, 2.5 years. And again, over the next 6 or 7 years, we expect the Afghan Air Force to be able to provide the support the Afghans need.

Senator Fischer: My time is up. Thank you, gentlemen, for your service.

Chairman McCain: Senator Gillibrand?

Senator Gillibrand: Thank you both for being here, and thank you for your service.

I want to associate my remarks with that of Chairman McCain's, in terms of the Afghanistan strategy. We know from President Trump that he has an unspecified increase of
3,000 more troops, but most that we know really has come
to remarks and statements by Afghan President Ghani rather
than our own leaders. And I am very concerned that the
American people cannot make good decisions about our
continued investment in this 16-year conflict when they are
not told the full extent of our commitment and the number of
servicemembers we are sending.

Do I have your commitment to be honest with the
American people about the numbers of American troops we are
sending over and what their missions will be?

Secretary Mattis: No, ma'am, if it involves telling
the enemy something that will help them. Yes, ma'am, yes,
Senator, in any terms of honesty with this committee in
private, at any time in closed hearing, we will get as
specific as you wish. No reservations at all in private.

In talking with the American people, we will tell them
we are adding the troops. We will give approximate numbers.
We are not hiding this. But I would rather not say the
specific capabilities or the specific numbers or the
location on a battlefield they are going out of the
confidentiality we --

Senator Gillibrand: I did not ask about any of those
details. I asked you about the troop numbers and our
mission.

Secretary Mattis: We will keep this committee fully
informed, as we have in closed hearings, right down to
specifics of troop numbers. I think it is better in public
we stay in general terms. We have said it is over 3,000, so
it is that not we are hiding the trend that we are going in,
but I think the specifics are best shared with you alone.

Senator Gillibrand: General Dunford?

General Dunford: Yes, I would associate myself with
the comments of the Secretary, Senator Gillibrand. Thanks.

Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

I would now like to talk about the Iran deal. In his
address to the U.N. General Assembly, President Trump said
that the Iran deal was one of the worst and most one-sided
transactions the United States has ever entered into.

It is no secret that the administration's considering
not re-certifying to Congress on October 15th, despite this
administration twice certifying that Iran is in compliance
with the agreement, and the IAEA having reported eight times
that Iran is in compliance.

In fact, General Dunford, in your recent renomination
hearing, you responded to a question about the
administration's possible intention to walk away from the
Iran nuclear agreement by saying that it, quote, "would have
an impact on others' willingness to sign agreements."

The other parties to the agreement have made it clear
that they believe Iran is in compliance and that they would
not support efforts to renegotiate the agreement. This includes our closest European allies such as the UK, France, and Germany, as well as countries we need to work with on other areas of conflict, Russia and China.

One of the reasons why I supported the JCPOA was because I believed that the terms of agreement gave us much greater transparency. We would know where their mines are, their mills, all of their production capabilities and sourcing.

So I thought that intelligence was very important. And both our military leaders at the time and our intelligence leaders at the time said that that was so. My view is, without this agreement, we will lose that transparency.

What is your view on that assessment, General Dunford?

General Dunford: Senator, the agreement, right now, what I testified to last week was that Iran is not in material breach of the agreement, and I do believe the agreement to date has delayed the development of a nuclear capability by Iran.

Senator Gillibrand: How might either the premature end of this agreement or U.S. unilateral withdrawal impact our insight into Iran's activities, Secretary Mattis?

Secretary Mattis: I did not hear that, Senator.

Senator Gillibrand: How would either a premature ending of the agreement or a U.S. unilateral withdrawal
impact our insight into Iran's activities?

Secretary Mattis: Senator, as I understand it, right now, and I have been dealing with the President and the Secretary of State on this, it is, right now, being considered in terms of the security of the United States.

By "it," I mean we are talking about the law that has passed up here where we have to certify, plus the agreement. These are two separate -- you can talk about the conditions under one of those and not walk away from the other one of those, if you see what I am -- they are two different pieces.

And that is under consideration right now, about how we deal with both the legal requirement from the Congress, as well as the international agreement.

Senator Gillibrand: General Dunford, you said that we should focus leveraging our partners that were part of the agreement to deal with those challenges that we know Iran possesses, whether the terrorist threat or the maritime threat, and so forth.

Secretary Mattis, do you agree with that assessment by General Dunford?

Secretary Mattis: In general terms, I do. The amount of misconduct, I would call it, internationally, whether it be with ballistic missiles, rhetoric, support to terrorists, threats to our friends, Arab and Israel, in the region, by Iran are areas where they are open to a great deal, I think,
of censure by the international community. And we are not
naive about their agreement on the nuclear issue, and we are
being very alert to any cheating on that right now.

Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Reed: [Presiding.] On behalf of Chairman
McCain, Senator Wicker, please.

Senator Wicker: Thank you, Senator Reed.

General Dunford, we have heard it said that America's
losing the war in Afghanistan. Is that true?

General Dunford: Senator, what we have said is that we
are not winning, and it is at a stalemate. And that is my
assessment of where we are right now. We are not at a point
where we can bring a successful political solution to the
war.

Senator Wicker: If the American leadership, including
people in this room, including the Pentagon and the
executive branch, if we decide to win this conflict in
Afghanistan, is there any reason at all why we should not be
able to do so?

General Dunford: At the end of the day, Senator, I
think it is going to require the Afghan people to actually
develop the peace process that will bring an end to the war.

What I believe the United States can do, in conjunction
with our coalition partners, is provide the Afghan
Government and the Afghan Security Forces the support they
need to bring an end to the war.

Senator Wicker: And is there any reason why we cannot
provide that support?

General Dunford: Senator, I do not believe there is
any reason why we cannot provide that support, and I think
the new strategy that we are here to discuss with you here
this morning provides the Afghan Government and the Afghan
Security Forces with that level of support to bring this to
a successful completion.

Senator Wicker: Okay. And this has been alluded to,
and you mentioned the Afghan people, is there any lack of
resolve on the part of the Afghan people, including their
hearts and minds, that would be a stumbling block to us
being successful in this new strategy?

General Dunford: I do not believe so, Senator. It is
very clear to me, from my personal experience as well as
recent polling, that the Afghan people do, in fact, want a
better life for themselves. They do reject the ideas of the
Taliban.

And from an individual soldier perspective, I think the
one thing we can all say is that the Afghan forces have been
incredibly resilient and demonstrated the will to fight over
the last couple years under the most extraordinary
conditions.
Senator Wicker: They certainly have always demonstrated a willingness to fight.

Are we viewed as an invading force?

General Dunford: Senator, I think anything but an invading force. Consistently, the Afghan people have requested us to be there. Our presence is favorable across the country. Again, in polling, typically somewhere between 70 percent to 80 percent of the Afghan people want support of the international community, led by the United States.

We have made it clear that our objectives are to support an Afghan-led peace process, to support Afghan Security Forces bringing security to their country. So I think there are very, very few people who would consider us an invading force inside of Afghanistan. The vast majority are very happy that we are there helping them to bring peace and security to their country.

Senator Wicker: And in regard to the new strategy, the new plan, and the new emphasis on America doing its part to get the job done, how do our troops feel about that, up and down the rank and file, General?

General Dunford: Senator, I think if you speak to any young man and woman who has served inside of Afghanistan, they want to get the mission done. They want to accomplish the mission.

Secretary Mattis has just recently come back from
Afghanistan last week. All they want to know is, what is the mission? And they want to have the wherewithal to accomplish that mission. And that is exactly what we are trying to provide to them.

Senator Wicker: I am not at all surprised by your answer.

Mr. Secretary, let me just ask you briefly about NATO. You met with Secretary General Stoltenberg recently. NATO allies have made significant contributions.

How are we doing with upping the involvement of NATO? And are you satisfied with our progress so far?

Secretary Mattis: I need to get to NATO now that we have the strategy in hand, now that the Secretary General and I have gone to Afghanistan, and sit down with my counterparts. I will do that in November.

We are already in contact with them. I believe from 15 NATO nations, or partner nations fighting under NATO's flag -- for example, like Australia, Georgia -- I believe we will see, at least from 15 nations right now, additional troops put in there. There could be more than that. Those are just the ones I have indications, right now, that they are going to up their game.

Senator Wicker: What is their stake in all this?

Secretary Mattis: Sir, if anything, they are even more vulnerable than the United States is in terms of
transnational terrorists operating out of Afghanistan
gainst the European continent, so they have a lot at stake
here. But I think all the nations from South Asia, India,
and certainly China, have a stake in this. Europe does.
This is a transnational problem, Senator.

Senator Wicker: Thank you. Let me just tell both of
you, I appreciate your work. And I, for one, support you.
And I just want you to tell us what you need, and we will
try to get it for you.

Secretary Mattis: Thank you.

Senator Wicker: Thank you.

Senator Reed: Thank you, Senator.

On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator King, please.

Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Mattis, a very quick, short-answer question.

Do you believe it is in our national security interests
at the present time to remain in the JCPOA? That is a yes-
or-no question.

Secretary Mattis: Yes, Senator, I do.

Senator King: Thank you.

You may have noticed that I was talking to Chairman
McCain as he was leaving. I am also on the Intelligence
Committee, and I hear varying analyses of the status of
Afghanistan from the military and from the civilian
intelligence agencies. In September of 1963, President
Kennedy sent a famous mission to Vietnam of Victor Krulak and Joseph Mendenhall. Krulak was a Marine general.

Mendenhall was with the Foreign Service.

They came back and gave wildly different accounts of what was going on in Vietnam. Krulak was very optimistic about the progress. Mendenhall was very pessimistic.

Kennedy's famous comment was: Did you two guys visit the same country?

I believe it would be important and helpful to this committee, because the facts are so important when we are talking about American lives and treasure, to have a closed briefing, I suggested this to the chairman, with DIA, CIA, NSA, all of the intelligence community, to get a real status of what is really happening on the ground to be sure that, in fact, it is winnable, I guess, and that we do have the ability to make progress.

As you all know, the Afghan Government has lost 15 percent of their territory in the last year, and people in Maine say, is this winnable?

General Dunford, I know of no one who knows more about Afghanistan than you do. Is it winnable? And what does winning look like?

General Dunford: Senator, if you define winning as making sure we do not have another attack on the homeland from the terrorist organizations that operate in South Asia,
and of the 90 that we recognize, international terrorist
groups, 18 to 20 of them operate in South Asia, so if
winning includes keeping them from attacking us, we can do
that.

If winning includes getting the Afghan forces to the
point where they can provide security for their country with
a minimum amount of international support, we can do that.

If winning includes meeting President Ghani's goals for
security of the population in key economic areas, we can do
that.

And if winning includes convincing the Taliban that
they cannot win in the battlefield and they are going to
have to enter an Afghan-led peace process, we can do that as
well.

So those would be my elements of what winning looks
like, Senator.

Senator King: That is a good answer, and I appreciate
that.

Is there any evidence that the Taliban is interested in
a political settlement? Are there any contacts? Are there
any feelers? Are there any discussions that indicate that?

I am having trouble understanding why they would want
to settle now when they seem to be gaining ground, and we
have 8,000 people there, and we used to have 100,000, why
would they now say, "Well, I guess it is time to negotiate"?
General Dunford: Senator, over the years, there have always been small groups of individuals interested in reconciliation.

I think the framework, to date, has always been the idea that you would bring in the entire organization, not peel off smaller units, number one. I think President Ghani has taken a different approach to the Taliban, and we saw that he has already had some success in peeling some groups off.

But the other issue is the calculus of the Taliban and what their horizon was. And I think the Taliban have always thought that the international community would lose the will to fight. This being a clash of wills, they always assumed the international coalition would quit, and that would allow them to be successful on the battlefield.

I think the most important thing, both from a NATO and a U.S. perspective, the most important thing that has been said over the past few months is that this will be conditions-based, and there is no time horizon for this. And I think that will fundamentally change the calculus of the Taliban.

And I think what President Ghani will attempt to do is begin to peel off elements of the Taliban over time who realize that actually achieving their political objectives on the battlefield is fruitless.
Senator King: I agree that the change from calendar-based to conditions-based was very important. There were a lot of us who advocated for that over the last several years. I think that is of critical importance.

Final question, I get this in Maine. The safe-haven argument, isn't that an all-purpose argument? I mean, we have parts of Syria that are uncontrolled, parts of Iraq, North Africa, there are all kinds of places that are potentially safe havens.

My concern is that the safe-haven argument is the domino theory argument of our generation that is a kind of all-purpose argument that would justify intervention in practically any place in the world.

Secretary Mattis?

Secretary Mattis: Senator, I think that the problems that grow out of ungoverned spaces do not remain in ungoverned spaces, so that opens the door for your very point.

Senator King: I appreciate that, but there are a lot of ungoverned spaces.

Secretary Mattis: Yes, and so our approach to this is by, with, and through allies, not to take all this on ourselves.

I can show you in private, sir, how we look at, if we add this many American forces, what is the ratio for the
others. If it is anything below about 1 to about 70, in
some cases 1 to 250 -- one American troop gets 250 from
coalition or host nation, depending on what the situation is
-- then I would probably be very reluctant to go that way.

There is a way for us to lead without carrying the full
burden on the American taxpayer, the American Armed Forces.

Senator King: I understand and appreciate that is
exactly the strategy that you are following.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Mattis: Thank you.

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

Senator Rounds: Thank you, sir.

Gentlemen, let me begin by just thanking you both for
your service. We have a great deal of respect for both of
you, and we appreciate the opportunity to ask some specific
questions.

I think Senator King started this out by asking for a
yes or no answer from Secretary Mattis, and I would like to
go just a step further than that.

With regard to the JCPOA, there is a logic that you
have used to determine that it is appropriate to stay within
it. Could you share with us the logic that you use in
determining that the JCPOA is advantageous to us to stay
there at this time? Could you share that with the American
Secretary Mattis: Absolutely, Senator. And thank you.

The point I would make is, if we can confirm that Iran is living by the agreement, if we can determine that this is in our best interests, then, clearly, we should stay with it. I believe, at this point in time, absent indications to the contrary, it is something the President should consider staying with.

There is another requirement. We certify that it is in our best interest, and it goes into a broader definition of national security, broadening beyond the issue, the agreement itself. That means the President has to consider more broadly things that rightly fall under his portfolio of looking out for the American people in areas that go beyond the specific letters of the JCPOA.

In that regard, I support the rigorous review that he has got going on right now.

Senator Rounds: Thank you, sir. Let me talk about Pakistan for just a second.

President Trump has stated that Pakistan is a large part of the new Afghan strategy. In the past, our relationship with Pakistan was transactional in nature. Right now, how would you categorize Pakistan, an ally against terrorism, a supporter of our efforts in Afghanistan, or an indifferent business partner?
Secretary Mattis: Senator, Pakistan has a convoluted history with terrorism. There can be little doubt that there have been terrorist groups that have used Pakistan as a haven for attacks outwardly, and not just toward Afghanistan. We have seen the attacks on India as well. At the same time, probably few nations, perhaps none, have lost as many troops fighting terrorists as they have.

So you have this dichotomy there, and I believe that by working with the regional allies and partners we have, and working with our international partners, there is a way to bring a whole-of-government approach to this to deal firmly with this, to try to move it back into a positive direction between the NATO allies and Pakistan, and remove the safe havens.

Senator Rounds: General Dunford, with regard to the strategies being used in Afghanistan today, the chairman made it clear that there needs to be a dialogue here with regard to strategies. Could you share a little bit any concerns that you may have as to how you share the strategies, the limitations that you feel are placed upon you with regard to sharing strategies versus simply telling the world what our plans are and allowing our adversaries an advantage in doing so? Would you share with us a little bit your thoughts with regard to what you can share, what you cannot, and how you are going to deal with that?
General Dunford: Senator, I can. I think that is a fair question.

I think, first of all, we should be able to communicate clearly the ends of the strategy, if you think of a strategy as ends, ways, and means, what we want to do, how we want to do it, and then the means necessary to do it. So if those are the three elements of strategy, I think we need to be very clear and upfront with the American people in public about what the ends of our strategy are. Of that, there is no doubt.

In terms of the means necessary, in the aggregate, I think we should be very upfront in terms of how much money it is going to cost and, generally speaking, what the resource capabilities are required to be successful.

I think it is in the middle, which is the how we plan to implement the strategy, where many of the things that we would want to do would be best left classified and discussed in a closed hearing, so that the Congress can provide oversight but our adversaries do not find us to be predictable.

Senator Rounds: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Senator Peters: Thank you, Senator Reed.
And thank you for your testimony here today. And thank you to both of you for your incredible service to your country. We all appreciate that.

Before I ask a couple questions related to Afghanistan, I would like to follow up on a question that was asked by Senator Reed. And I think it is particularly important considering last week, General Dunford, when asked about the principal threats to our country from a national security perspective, you put the threat from North Korea as number one, at least in the short term. We talked about longer term challenges that we will have as a country, but at least in the immediate term, North Korea is something that we need to be focused on.

And that is why I would like to go back to these tweets made by the President, which I will read directly, that came out just Sunday.

"I told Rex Tillerson, our wonderful Secretary of State, that he is wasting his time trying to negotiate with Little Rocket Man." And then he followed that up with, "Save your energy Rex, we will do what has to be done!"

which is a striking statement. In fact, I think most folks who saw those tweets, particularly folks in the foreign policy community, thought that, basically, the President was pulling the rug out from underneath Secretary Tillerson.

And he is our chief diplomat, somebody who is entrusted to
find diplomatic solutions to difficult situations.

So, General Mattis, I have incredible respect for you as a student of history. You have followed developments throughout our history and have analyzed those and thought very carefully about those. Have you ever seen another time in history, or is there another example that you can think of, where a President would actually pull the rug out from under their Secretary of State as they are about to embark on some very delicate negotiations, or perhaps diplomatic efforts to deal with a situation as important as nuclear weapons?

Secretary Mattis: Senator, I think that President Trump dispatching Secretary Tillerson to Beijing to deal with PRC, with China on this issue, shows the level of attention and his intent to work with other nations diplomatically, by dispatching, I agree, our top diplomat to Beijing to do that very thing.

I believe that Secretary Tillerson's remarks about probing North Korea to see if they are ready to talk is what the President was referring to, not the diplomatic effort, writ large.

Senator Peters: So the tweet that says, "Save your energy Rex, we'll do what has to be done!" is that something you agree with?

Secretary Mattis: I believe, again, that what he was
saying was the press had characterized it that Secretary Tillerson was looking to talk right now. Secretary Tillerson said he is not. He is probing to see if they are ready to talk productively. And I think it was that nuance that was lost there, Senator.

Senator Peters: Very good.

General Dunford, in your hearing last week, you mentioned a long-term security concern would be the rise of China as one that we have to be focused on, and thinking very carefully how we deal with that.

Secretary Mattis, you talked about the Thucydides Trap and how we need to avoid that as well in our relations with China going forward.

So my question related to Afghanistan is that, we are well aware that the "One Belt, One Road" strategy seeks to secure China's control over both the continental and the maritime interests, in their eventual hope, I think, of dominating Eurasia and exploiting natural resources there, things that are certainly at odds with U.S. policy.

So my question to both of you is, what role do you see China playing in Afghanistan, and particularly related to their "One Belt, One Road" strategy, things that we should be looking at in terms of our dealings in Afghanistan?

Secretary Mattis: Senator, regarding "One Belt, One Road," I think in a globalized world, there are many belts
and many roads, and no one nation should put itself into a position of dictating "One Belt, One Road."

That said, the "One Belt, One Road" also goes through disputed territory, and I think that in itself shows the vulnerability of trying to establish that sort of a dictate.

As far as Afghanistan goes, as we try to separate out variables where in some areas we work with China on DPRK, for example. Terrorism, I think there are areas where we can find common ground with China when it comes to counterterrorism, and we should exercise those areas pretty fully. But we should be under no illusions. There are areas where also strategically we need to confront China where we think it is unproductive, the direction they are going in.

General Dunford: Senator, I also believe there are many areas of divergence, certainly, between us and China, but there are some areas of convergence. And I think Afghanistan is one of those where there is some potential.

China is threatened by a specific terrorist organization that operates out of Afghanistan. They have worked to develop a relationship with the Afghan Government. The Afghan Government welcomes any support that the Chinese might provide.

And so I view that we can isolate some of the broader areas where we have divergence and actually find China
potentially a helpful partner in Afghanistan, particularly with the development funds that are going to be necessary. And the United States certainly is not going to be in a position to provide those funds by itself.

Senator Peters: Thank you.

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

Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here today, and for your continued communication with Congress on the complicated issue of Afghanistan and many, many other issues facing our Nation.

A collaborative effort is absolutely necessary to guarantee both policy and posture are properly supporting our national defense, and, gentlemen, I appreciate you working with us to get both of these right for the American people. So I commend you on that.

Now, Secretary Mattis, some have criticized the administration's strategy as one that defers the responsibility of Congress to the Pentagon and leaves the American people in the dark. And, sir, to that, I disagree. To the contrary, I think that it keeps the enemy in the dark.

And I will agree with Senator McCain on this point, that it does require Congress to exercise our responsibility
to represent our constituents.

So, Mr. Secretary, what is your plan to keep Congress informed as we move through the new strategy in Afghanistan? We want to make sure that we are able to inform the American people as representatives of our States. But what would your plan be, and what would that look like moving forward?

Secretary Mattis: Well, Senator, first, I fully endorse the closest possible collaboration and the absolute openness. Sometimes, it will have to be in a closed hearing, because it will be that sensitive, in terms of its details. But I fully endorse it.

The plan would be to maintain constant collaboration and have people up here on the Hill, whether they be in your offices briefing you, or in hearings, or in any other venue that you think most fruitful. And I have been committed to this since I was confirmed.

I have had a few challenges in filling my jobs in the Pentagon, which have impacted my ability to send up here the right, high-ranking people who can address things at the level that you would expect. But as those jobs get filled, I think this will get even easier. But until then, it is my responsibility to keep you fully informed, and I will do so.

Senator Ernst: Thank you, I appreciate it. And thank you for making that distinction, too.

And we need to understand here in the Senate that there
are many positions that still need to be filled. So thank you for that gentle reminder.

And then furthermore, do we have your commitment that you will give our counsel its due regard as you evaluate the success of your strategy?

Secretary Mattis: Not only give it due regard, Senator, I need it. This is not a job that can be done by any one person, least of all in our form of government. But your input, especially this committee's input, is welcome.

Senator Ernst: Thank you. And we must exercise our oversight, but I agree 100 percent with you, Secretary, that the details of the plans should not be open to public and for public dissemination, so thank you for that.

I am, however, excited about the new strategy. You mentioned different ways, General Dunford, in which we will execute this new strategy. A couple of those things, train, advise, and assist at the tactical level, of the conventional forces, rather than at the higher level. I think that is really great. It has worked for the Special Operations forces in Afghanistan. Good to see that.

And then also leveraging partners is exceptional. And one thing that we have not fully utilized in the past.

Last week, I met with 21 Afghan generals from the Afghan National Security Force, and they, too, were expressing unanimous support of the new strategy. And they
I have a lot of confidence in this new administration. And in addition to the U.S.-led security ops, we agree that an international effort must be utilized, supporting through NATO and other stakeholders like India, and knowing that India needs to be leveraged in the future as well.

So, Mr. Secretary, I know that you were in India. Can you explain to us what their role and how we can leverage them moving forward and that whole-of-government support, what does that look like? What do you envision?

Secretary Mattis: Senator Ernst, the Afghan people have come to have a deep and abiding affection for the Indian people. There is a collaboration there, based on a very generous and enduring Indian Government support for development, for hospitals, for schools, for roads, for all the sinews that pull a society together, especially one that has been shattered the way that the Afghan society has been since the Soviet invasion.

They are going to continue. I met with Prime Minister Modi, his Minister of Defense, and his National Security Adviser. They are committed to continuing and even broadening their development support and their support of the Afghan defense forces in terms of repair of their equipment, training their officers and NCOs in their Indian military schools, and training the medical doctors and the medics for the Afghan Army to take care of battlefield
casualties.

So I believe that Prime Minister Modi's efforts will actually be enhanced in the months and years ahead. Based on the sense that we are fully committed, he can now commit more himself to the stability and prosperity of South Asia. It is in all their best interests.

Senator Ernst: I appreciate that very much, and I do believe that this is up for regional partners to contribute as well. I am glad our administration is engaging them.

Thank you, gentlemen, very much for being here today.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator Reed: On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator Kaine.

Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thanks to the witnesses for your service.

Secretary Mattis, in your opening testimony, you talked about the R4+S, and I was just quickly scribbling, I think the fourth R was reconciliation.

One of the things that we have read in the paper recently is the administration trying to make a decision about the Taliban office that is open in Qatar, that was opened with support from the U.S. and Afghan Government to provide some channel for discussion. And there is a decision I guess being made within the administration about whether that office should be closed.
I understand no decision has been announced on that. I am kind of in the fight-and-talk camp, and I know that there is a fight-then-talk camp. But can you talk a little bit about at least when you think a decision might be made on that, or what the sort of equities are that the administration is grappling with on that question with the fourth R?

Secretary Mattis: I can, Senator. I think the decision will be made shortly. The equities is exactly the point. Do we have the right people in that office right now?

As you know, the enemy, under the increasing pressure they have been under, and the loss of some of their leadership, has become increasingly fractious. So in some ways, that is good. It means they are now doing more decentralized ops, because they cannot mount combined offenses. But politically, it makes it more problematic to try to find who actually speaks for the Taliban.

Secretary Tillerson and I have been in contact on this issue three times in the last 10 days. He is looking to make certain we have the right people, so it is just not an office in existence. It is an office that we can actually deal with.

So that is what is going on right now. No decision has been made. I anticipate one would be made soon, but we need
to get certain information to make the right decision.

Senator Kaine: One of the issues that I think has not been raised during the hearing today is this question of heroin production in Afghanistan, which is a pillar to the economy. It has been a source of financing for the Taliban. Are we making progress in that? I know it is very, very difficult. Heroin doesn't have to be refrigerated, and it doesn't rot, poppies don't, and other agricultural products have that problem. So it is hard to switch folks over to it.

But as long as heroin is raised, and it is a source of financing for the Taliban and other miscreants, I know it creates challenges for you. So could you share progress on that front?

Secretary Mattis: Yes, sir. The poppy is a very hardy crop, and it doesn't take a lot of tending. So in that growing season they have in that terrain, it is a strong crop.

In our counter-finance effort, which is very multifaceted, the counter-drug problem has got to be accounted for. In that regard, we are looking much more at going after the refining locations, the transportation hubs, the transporters, the people who make the money off it, because that is where the Taliban dun them. That is where they get their taxation income from.
So that is where we will go after in a more targeted way as part of the counter-finance campaign overall, which also includes counter-corruption, because, as you know, the money out of the poppy also fuels some of the corruption. So we will try to make this an integrated effort against the heroin production, sir.

Senator Kaine: And I know that there have been a couple of questions about Pakistan asked when I was out of the room. I was actually at the Foreign Relations hearing with the nominee to be Ambassador to India, Ken Juster, who was before the Foreign Relations Committee right now. We were talking about U.S.-India strong mil-to-mil cooperation, your visit that you testified to.

Two questions about Pakistan. How does it sit with the Pakistanis, the level of Indian investment in Afghanistan on the development projects you mentioned? And then second, a separate question on Pakistan, are you seeing the level of cooperation from the Pakistani military and Government in battling terrorism along the border with Afghanistan? Is it a safe haven for people to run over from Afghanistan, or is there cooperation there that enhances our efforts in Afghanistan? How would you grade that level of cooperation?

Secretary Mattis: On the Indian investments, sir, I think the Pakistanis look at it with a degree of skepticism, if not distrust. However, in most cases, they can see it is
going to roads, into hospitals. So it is hard to dispute the facts on the ground.

A point I would make about our South Asia strategy here is it is not an exclusive strategy. It is inclusive for anyone who wants to stop killing of innocent, of terrorism, and restore prosperity and stability. Pakistan need not feel like this is an anti-Pakistan strategy, nor is our relationship or Afghanistan's with India an anti-Pakistan collaboration. So it is not exclusive.

As far as cooperation on the border, we know the Pakistan Army has taken some pretty severe losses in those attacks, but let me ask the chairman to say a few words about actually how the cross-border counterterrorism campaign is going with the Pakistanis.

Senator Kaine: Thank you.

General Dunford: Senator, they have done a lot in the border area. And as Secretary Mattis has mentioned, they have suffered significant casualties.

In my judgment, what we need is an effective bilateral relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan to manage the border area. We have had a broad framework on that for about 3 or 4 years, and I do not think satisfactory progress has been made.

We were encouraged, just this week, with General Bajwa's visit to Afghanistan. He was in Kabul the day
before yesterday. He had very good meetings Afghan leadership. Our leadership was engaged in those meetings as well. There is at least a commitment now to address those issues and do better coordination along the border area.

When we were actually doing that, we had a better degree of cooperation along the border. We had better visibility. As we drew down the force, that was not replaced with effective Afghan-Pakistan cooperation.

But I think as you correctly point out, Senator, that has to be one of the key elements of our success moving forward. And again, I think the pressure we want to put on Pakistan is to move in that direction.

First few days, way too early to tell. But the first few days, particularly this recent visit by General Bajwa to Kabul, is encouraging.

Senator Kaine: Great. Thank you both very much.

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

Senator Perdue: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

General Dunford, how would you define victory now?

First of all, I applaud the regional strategy that the administration and you guys are authoring right now. I have espoused that for years, having some background in Pakistan.

The relationship between India, Pakistan, Afghanistan,
Russia, China is critical to the solution. Afghanistan, obviously.

But how would you now define, for the American people after 16 years, what is our current view of what victory looks like in Afghanistan?

General Dunford: Senator, I think it is probably four components.

The first is that we would defeat ISIS and Al Qaeda, those specific groups terrorist groups. And then prevent the other 18 groups that operate from South Asia from conducting an attack against the United States, the American people, or our partners.

I think the second component would be that the Afghan Security Forces, with a minimal amount of international support, can provide security inside of Afghanistan.

I think the third component would be supporting President Ghani's initiative to secure 80 percent of the population in the key economic centers within the next 4 years. He has outlined a plan to do that.

And I think the fourth element is supporting the reconciliation process, and specifically an Afghan-led peace process that allows people to solve their problems through that process as opposed to on the battlefield.

Those would be the four components that I believe, particularly as you look at it through the military
dimension, are necessary for us to be successful.

Senator Perdue: Including the Taliban in those negotiations? Is that correct?

General Dunford: That is correct, Senator. It would be an Afghan-led process, but include the Taliban so that they no longer address any grievances on the battlefield, but they are part of an Afghan peace process.

Senator Perdue: So from an expectations point of view, we have had soldiers, men and women in Japan, Germany for 70 years. The question is, is it reasonable to expect, under the first definition of victory about ISIS and the other 18 potential terrorist threats out there, is this a static point in time? Or is this a dynamic thing that we have to ensure over the future, really?

General Dunford: Senator, I believe we have enduring interests in South Asia, and those enduring interests are going to require, over time, a diplomatic presence, an economic presence, and a military presence.

I think the nature of that diplomatic, economic, and military commitment will change over time. So in that perspective, the military commitment that we have right now is a moment in a time. I expect that contribution, the military contribution, will decrease over time as the Afghan forces have stood up.

As I mentioned in my opening statement, I think we just
pulled off our advisory effort prematurely before the Afghans were capable of taking the fight on their own. In my judgment, it will be a few years. But in my judgment, the Afghans will get to the point where, with a much lower level of support, they will be capable of actually securing Afghanistan.

Senator Perdue: Thank you.

Secretary Mattis, I was just over in Afghanistan and Pakistan, spent the day with General Bajwa. We went up to the border area and so forth.

He intimated that he was willing to cooperate in joint efforts, and I noticed that he is there just this week, met President Ghani, who also was supportive of that idea.

That was back in July. I think time is of the essence here. I would really love to see more of that potential cross-border cooperation, particularly with Haqqani network.

My question relates to Russia. General Nicholson said, both on that trip and also in public, recently back in December 2016, Russia has overtly lent legitimacy to the Taliban by claiming that the Taliban is fighting ISIS. So it looks like we have a joint foe there.

The question I have is, Russia, China, and Pakistan just held a conference in December 2016 on Afghanistan, without inviting the Afghans or India, advocating for reconciliation with the Taliban, including the delisting of
Taliban leaders as terrorists.

What is Russia's endgame in Afghanistan today? And how do we counter it in the long-term strategy?

Secretary Mattis: Senator, I am concerned that Russia is not operating in its own best interest with what it is doing down in South Asia.

Secretary Tillerson is engaged with his counterpart in Moscow on this issue and will try to bring some strategic thought into this situation. But I can tell you that we have concerns about what Russia is doing. It may be no deeper than just, if there is an opportunity to poke us in the eye, they will do it, even if it is against their own interests.

But it defies logic that they would see any benefit to engaging the way they have with these other two countries, in light of the apparent support. And I cannot define that support right now. We are trying to get the intel on it and figure out why Russia is going this way.

As far as the other two, I think what we are seeing is Russia trying to be a player in terms of the South Asia outcomes. And I think it is much better we all work together on this, rather than exclusively.

Senator Perdue: Thank you, both. Thank you.

Senator Reed: On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator McCaskill, please.
Senator McCaskill: Thank you very much.

Thank you both so much for your hard work, and I think you both have incredible responsibilities and are handling it well.

I was concerned about SIGAR's high-risk report in January for Afghanistan. I know it will not surprise either of you to know, based on my history in this committee, that I was particularly concerned about the contract management identification.

We have more contractors on the ground in Afghanistan than we have active military, as you all are well aware. We are never going back to a time where we are not incredibly reliant on contractors. So I have been like a broken record, that we have to get this contract oversight right.

Now this report came out before the report that we learned about the $50 million that went to New Century Consulting to buy Porsches, Alfa Romeos, a Bentley, an Aston Martin, a Land Rover, prohibited weapons, as well as questionable unallowable expenses and $420,000 in salaries for spouses or significant others of the CFO and the CEO.

So I need to know what your sense is about this. And I need to know, who is supposed to be overseeing that contract? And what has happened to that person? Was that a COR that was overseeing this contract? Was it someone higher in the command that was overseeing this contract?
With this kind of contract, money going out the door, it just, after all the years we have worked on this with the Contracting Command -- and I know we have made progress, gentleman. I know we have. But when I see this, after all the work we have done on wartime contracting and cleaning it up, it just makes me depressed.

So can either of you shed any light on how we would have had an incident that, to me, shows a real backsliding, in terms of contract oversight?

Secretary Mattis: Senator, I have to look into the specifics that you are bringing up. But that said, we have made very clear that the contracting that is going on in Afghanistan must be focused on the combat capability that we are bringing there, that we are going to work with the international donors to address other aspects of development in the country. And I want a review board that is actively, perhaps with its own IG, going to be looking at each of these. And I want continuity of efforts on contracts. So people, once they sign a contract, are held accountable for the life of that contract.

And right now, I cannot assure you that I have that, but that is the direction that we are taking this.

General Dunford: Senator, if I could just follow up on the resources. We have worked very closely with the SIGAR.

And I think one of the positive changes that has taken place
over the last couple years is, as opposed to just providing a report, we have been really looking at lessons learned and try to incorporate those.

We tried a few years ago to move much of the money that we were providing to the Afghans on budget. That did not work out. And we have significantly reduced the amount of money on budget, meaning that we now are directly dispersing those funds, and we have direct oversight.

Secretary Mattis mentioned in his opening statement the compact that has been now signed between the Embassy and President Ghani as well, which has given us now visibility into the Afghan organizations as well.

One of the things that we did when we did a failure analysis for Secretary Mattis moving forward, so that we could answer the hard questions, which are the right questions, the hard questions about why are things going to be different moving forward is, we did failure analysis. And the corruption that we have seen, the contracting that we have seen, and the lack of visibility and transparency in the resources were clearly an issue.

In fact, I had the SIGAR over in my office as we were doing the failure analysis, and the SIGAR was actually a part of our team that put together the failure analysis for the Secretary.

So with your emphasis on the SIGAR over time, and the
SIGAR's corporate memory, I think we have done the best we can now moving forward to incorporate those lessons learned, and particularly in those areas where we are talking about a significant amount of money in taxpayer dollars.

Senator McCaskill: Well, you know, the culture in the military is that when there is a screw-up, somebody is held accountable. And who is held accountable is a big deal as to whether or not that screw-up occurs again. So I would really like a follow-up from both of you or from you, General Dunford, maybe directly, as to whose you-know-what is on the line for this contract and the excessive abuse that occurred in this particular contract, because picking out somebody to make an example of in this area makes a difference.

When we first started down this road, they were just handing a clipboard to somebody, the low man on the totem pole, and said, "Oh, you are supposed to overseeing contracts." And it was a joke, as you know, in Iraq in the early years, in terms of contract oversight.

So I need to know that somebody is held accountable for the Alfa Romeos, the Bentleys being bought in Afghanistan.

General Dunford: Senator, I am not familiar with the details of that contract, but we will certainly get that to you right away.

Senator McCaskill: Thank you.
Senator Reed: On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator Tillis, please.

Senator Tillis: Thank you, Senator Reed.

And, gentleman, thank you for being here and your continued service.

Secretary Mattis, I was here for your opening comments. And I liked the way that you framed it around the four Rs, and I think regionalize, realign, reinforce, they all make sense. I am more concerned with something that is foundational to ultimately being successful, and that is reconcile.

And there seems to be two pieces of that, that I would like for us to drill down on.

And, General Dunford, you as well.

When I was in Afghanistan last, there was a lot of optimism around some of the economic development that was going on in the country. They had a lot of work to do. But they were getting partners investing money there, and it was helping their underlying economy. There was optimism on the part of President Ghani, in terms of infrastructure projects.

So I would like to kind of get a status update on how those underpinnings are working. That is one piece.

I would like to know what, if any, insights we have into popular opinion about the four R strategy, and whether
or not we are seeing trending in the right direction among the Afghan people.

And then, finally, I would like to talk about what does the Taliban look like in a reconciled country. I mean, do they have a political role to play in the political process? What do you all envision as the steps toward successful reconciliation, which would actually have to deal with that?

Secretary Mattis: Senator Tillis, on the reconciliation effort, obviously, it is a fight-and-talk effort, but the underpinnings you accurately point out are what give people hope.

I think that progress and violence co-existing right now, what we need to do is expand the security envelope behind which much of this development progress, for which we have a large amount of international support, especially now that they see we are going to stay the course, that will be coming in.

As far as the popular opinion, we track it through polls, not only our own polls, they involve polls taken by international organizations unaffiliated with us. We also have our own.

I would note that, in the last several weeks, one of the things we look at is property values in Kabul. And we just got the readout, and the property values have started going up since we have announced this strategy. In other
words, there is a certain amount of commitment now.

It is something we cannot control. That is why we look at it. This is objective data. This is not subject to subjective evaluation.

So as we look at this process going forward, we see the development funds coming in, largely from the international donors, that is going to help keep President Ghani's optimism fueled with startup kind of money.

We also have opportunities in the extraction industries, that, if we can get the security right in certain areas, that can start creating income for the government.

But overall, there appears to be a psychological impact already of what we have done by implementing this strategy. Too early to say that it is because of military success, although, like I mentioned, Senator, for the first time in 16 years, we have all six Afghan Army corps on the offensive at the same time.

Senator Tillis: General Dunford, anything to add?

General Dunford: Senator, the only thing I would say is, on the third question, which I think is really an important question, which is, what does reconciliation look like? At the end of the day, what we are helping to do is set the conditions where the Taliban believe they are going to have to come to the peace table in order to move forward.
And I think that question is uniquely capable of being answered by the Afghan people. I do not think we can actually impose that.

This is something that the Taliban, in the context of an Afghan-led peace process, are going to have to figure out, how do they incorporate into the political system inside of Afghanistan? And how do they move beyond seeking their political objectives by using violence?

Senator Tillis: Thank you.

And, General Mattis, I will not ask you to, or I should say, Secretary Mattis, I will not ask you to cover it now in my remaining time, but I would be interested in any information that gives me a sense of the popular opinion trending, what we have seen maybe before we announced the strategy, afterwards. And that is something that I think is a really good indicator for how well we are doing, because we only succeed if we win the hearts and minds. Reconciliation only succeeds if we continue to make positive progress at the same time we are fighting.

Thank you very much.

Thank you, Senator Reed.

Senator Reed: Thank you.

On behalf of the chairman, Senator Donnelly, please.

Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank you both for your service, for
everything you have done for our country.

Going back to Afghanistan, and I apologize if this has been asked, does it ever change if Pakistan does not end safe havens? Does it ever change?

I mean, we can continue to put more people in, have less people there, do this, do that. Does it ever stabilize, if that step doesn't occur?

Secretary Mattis: I think it would be highly difficult to sustain any stabilization in South Asia, not just in Afghanistan, but certainly anywhere around Pakistan, India, unless safe havens are removed.

Senator Donnelly: Well, let me follow up with this, then, Mr. Secretary. We have tried for a long time, had meeting after meeting with the Pakistan Government. And I would like both of you to answer this.

What does change their mind, in regard to the safe haven policy? How do you ever move that ball?

Secretary Mattis: I think being very clear and firm in what we expect, and using all aspects of the government to bring about that change, working internationally. The reason we started with a regional strategy, we did not start with Afghanistan then work outwardly, was to make certain we began with a recognition of the role of India, of Russia, of China, of Pakistan.

Senator Donnelly: What carrot or stick, for want of a
better term, moves the Pakistan Government to change?

Secretary Mattis: There are a number of lines of
effort being put together now in the Secretary of Treasury's
Office, Secretary of State's Office, my own office, the
intel agencies. We are also working with Secretary General
Stoltenberg to ensure that NATO's equities are brought to
bear.

Certainly, India has a role to play as a neighbor, and
potentially is a very strong economic benefit to Pakistan,
if Pakistan can find a way to carry out its international
responsibilities and end any kind of safe haven inside their
country.

So there is a great deal that Pakistan can benefit,
economically, diplomatically, financially, for its
government, economically for its people, by finally sensing
that the tide has shifted against this.

Senator Donnelly: General Dunford, is it your sense
that the ISI is still helping the Taliban?

General Dunford: Senator, I think it is clear to me
that the ISI has connections with terrorist groups.

And if I could just follow up on something Secretary
Mattis said, I think over the last several years, we have
had a bilateral approach in trying to effect a change in
Pakistan's behavior. And if you think about the coalition,
we still have 39 nations that are part of the coalition in
Afghanistan and many other interested nations.

So the answer to your question, what one thing might change Pakistan? I do not think there is one thing that would change Pakistan, but I find it hard to imagine that we cannot get more cooperation, if we can fully leverage the multilateral approach with 39 nations that are part of the coalition in Afghanistan, with the other nations now, to include China and India that are not in the coalition, but clearly have vital national interests inside of South Asia.

If we can have a diplomatic and economic effort that harnesses all of that potential multilaterally, it seems to me that we have a much better chance than we have had to date with a bilateral approach.

Senator Donnelly: If I could switch to North Korea for a minute, and this is obviously speculation, but what do you think gets Kim Jong Un to put a halt? What do you think he is looking for, in terms of either a decision to make a halt because he feels threatened and/or a decision to halt because he feels maybe there is a path forward here?

General Dunford: Senator, if you walk back and you say, what is he doing and why? I think the intel community assesses, and I agree, that Kim Jong Un is on the path he is on right now because he believes that is necessary to enhance the survival of his regime. So he views the possession of ballistic missiles and nuclear capability as
inextricably linked to regime survival.

What I think Kim Jong Un needs to realize is, he cannot survive with ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons because the international community will not allow him to survive.

And I think if there was one area that has been identified by many people as maybe being the one that would most profoundly change his behavior, it would be the loss of oil. And we have seen in the past, when the oil has been cut off, there has been a change in Kim Jong Un's behavior.

The fact is, he needs economic resources external to the country to survive. I think when he starts to have the risk calculation of the path he is on and actually the regime surviving, because of economic resources necessary for it to survive, that is the best potential, which is why I think we should support Secretary Tillerson's current path of diplomatic and economic pressure to convince him that being a part of the international community and a key component of Secretary Tillerson's plan has been the prospect of North Korea entering back into the community of nations and addressing their economic challenges.

When he views the chances of doing that are more important than the path that he is on, I think that there is a potential for change.

And again, we are prepared with a military option, should that fail. But I think we are all, at this point,
doing what we can to make sure the economic and diplomatic
pressure campaign gets a full opportunity to succeed.

Senator Donnelly: I want to thank you both for your
service to the country.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Reed: Thank you very much.

On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator Sullivan, please.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, gentleman, thank you for the testimony.

I want to echo what a number of my colleagues have
mentioned. I think it gives the American people a lot of
comfort to see the two of you leading on our military and
Department of Defense efforts. I just want to applaud you
for all you are doing and the focus you are giving to some
of these really important national security issues in what
are clearly challenging times.

One area where I do not think you have gotten enough
compliments for what you have done is the ISIS strategy.
You came in, a new strategy, a serious strategy, started to
implement it. And we are not there yet, but I think it is
clearly working. It is clearly reversing what had been a
losing battle.

And maybe I can ask you to just initially comment on
that, because I think the American people are not fully
aware that they are completely on the defensive now, in my
view, in large measure to your leadership, your strategy, and, of course, to the troops who are executing that.

Secretary Mattis, care to comment on that, sir?

Secretary Mattis: Senator, the troops have done a yeoman's job out there in enlisting other forces to work alongside us. It has been a very complex battlefield, as you know.

But right now, ISIS is seeing its fundraising and its recruiting dry up because of what we have done to them on the battlefield. That said, they remain a threat, and we are taking no sense of complacency here. And it is still a full-fledged fight.

Senator Sullivan: Let me ask next, now you have put together another strategy. I think a lot of us view it in a similarly positive manner. You talk a lot about the regional strategy. I think that is actually really important, with regard to Afghanistan and your focus, which I think is actually critically important on India. It matters not only to Afghanistan, but to other challenges that we are seeing throughout the country.

I think they can be an incredibly important strategic partner of ours. We share similar values, the oldest, largest democracies in the world working together.

Can you give me a sense, Mr. Secretary, on your recent trip, not only with regard to the importance that India
could play with regard to our Afghanistan policy, but other challenges, say, China's aggressive actions in the South China Sea, and the rise of China, and maybe looking at India as a partner on some of those key issues where our interests align?

Secretary Mattis: Senator, your point about where our interests align is very, very indicative of the current situation we find ourselves in.

What we have right now, Senator, it is a strategic convergence, a generational opportunity, between the two largest democracies in the world to work together based on those shared interests of peace, of prosperity, of stability in the region.

And India's coming into its own. It is going to be a global player. And I think this is quite right, as Prime Minister Modi takes them forward, economically, to a much higher level of living for his people, to a bigger role in the world. And that role, from our perspective, is a wholly positive one right now.

And I think we are natural partners, India and the United States, and we recognize each other's sovereignty. We have respect for each other. But we also see the opportunity we are presented with right now.

Senator Sullivan: So it is safe to say your meetings went well in India recently?
Secretary Mattis: The meetings could not have gone better, Senator.

Senator Sullivan: Great. Let me turn to North Korea, like a number of my colleagues. A lot of concern on that.

I, for one, very much appreciate your regular briefings that you have had with this committee. I think they have been constructive. I think they are helping bring both members, Democrats and Republicans, into trying to help with regard to that.

The policy strategy, a very challenging national security issue, as we all know.

The main effort, then, continues to be diplomacy? I know you have been asked this a number of times, but I just want to reiterate that, a simple yes or no answer on that.

Secretary Mattis: It is diplomatically led, Senator, by Secretary Tillerson. There are economic sanctions that you have seen demonstrated by the unanimous U.N. Security Council resolutions.

How often do we find Russia, China, the United States, France, others, all voting as one? It shows the degree of acceptance that this is an international threat and people are working together, imperfectly, but working together to try to address it.

And we will continue to maintain a Department of Defense that looks toward the defense of our people and the
defense of our allies with military options on the table.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

And, Mr. Chairman, if I may, just one final quick question?

On part of our strategy, it has become apparent that the President and the two of you and others have been talking about how critical missile defense is as a key element of our strategy, not just dealing with North Korea, but rogue nations like Iran.

As you know, in the NDAA, we had a number of provisions to advance our Nation's missile defense. I know that the administration's looking at additional measures. Could you describe those, General or Mr. Secretary, both, in terms of what you want to do, how we could be supportive?

I think one of the breakthroughs that you saw in the NDAA this year is missile defense is no longer a partisan issue. It is being viewed very much as a bipartisan issue, and I think that is important.

I think you will get a lot of support for what you want to be doing on missile defense. We just need to know exactly what you want to be doing to advance it in the near term, which I think we need to do more to advance it in the near term.

Secretary Mattis: Senator, we have enjoyed bipartisan support up here on the Hill. You will notice that the
budget for this has increased in the out-years, in the years ahead. We are optimistic we will get a budget by December. That will help.

But also, the reprogramming approved by the Senate and the House here allowed us basically $440 million more in fiscal year 2017 dollars to reprogram to buy more of the ground-based interceptors, increase the number of sensors. And the emphasis in the near term is exactly where you indicated, and you will see it reflected in the budgets that we submit for your consideration in the future.

Senator Sullivan: Great. Thank you, gentleman. Appreciate it.

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

Senator Blumenthal: Thank you very much, Senator Reed. Thank you both for your service. You have been thanked many, many times by this committee, and you certainly deserve those thanks and much more.

I know you have been asked about Russian activity in Afghanistan, Mr. Secretary, and you observed that they are acting against their own self-interest. And I know also that when you visited Afghanistan last week, you criticized both Russia and Iran. Could you talk a bit about Iran's activity in Afghanistan, which seems as malevolent and potentially pernicious as Russia's?
Secretary Mattis: Sir, Iran has, over many years, played a very complex role and, at times, one that is hard to figure out. They have had their own diplomats killed by Taliban in the past. And yet, they have also supported the Taliban at times with small amounts of money dribbled in, or weapons, and this sort of thing.

The bottom line is, I think Iran thrives where there is chaos. And you will see that in Syria. You will see it in Lebanon. You see it with what they have tried to do in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. You see it in Yemen.

And the only consistent theme I can see on Iran is they seem to go where they can create trouble and destabilize countries in the region. It is not in their best interests. We all can see that. I think an objective appraisal would say that that is not in Iran's best interests. But for some reason, they insist on doing it.

Senator Blumenthal: Why do you think it is not in their best interests?

Secretary Mattis: Because if you are looking out for the best interests of your people, as a nation-state, and if you are not just acting like a revolutionary cause in order to stay in power, then you want peace because you are not going to have the kind of economic advantages for your people, you are not going to have the kind of diplomatic engagements with your people that represents their best
1 interests.
2 But I think that to those in power right now, holding
3 the real power in Tehran, they want to play the role of a
4 revolutionary power to stay in power.
5 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you for that answer, Mr.
6 Secretary.
7 I want to shift to Puerto Rico, if I may. I want to
8 begin by expressing my thanks to the men and women under
9 your command who are providing essential assistance in
10 Puerto Rico.
11 There are about 6,400 American military members there
12 now, including members of the Connecticut National Guard,
13 whom I saw off just a few days ago. They are deployed in
14 relief efforts that impose considerable hardship on them and
15 some risk as well.
16 So I think they are to be thanked. And my hope is that
17 there will be more of them because more are needed, as well
18 as logistical support, helicopters, and other kinds of
19 equipment there.
20 The military, essentially, is the only potential
21 resource and asset in Puerto Rico that can provide the
22 transportation and restoration of power and so forth.
23 I met yesterday with members of the Department of
24 Defense, along with FEMA, at the FEMA Headquarters. A
25 number of my colleagues and I went there at the invitation
of the administrator of FEMA.

And what impressed me is the, very bluntly, need for additional troops and resources there from the Department of Defense in order to fill the gap, and the disconnect between the supplies that are in the ports and the airports and the people in the cities and interior that need those food, medicine, water, and other essential supplies.

So I think there is any opportunity and an obligation for greater Department of Defense involvement.

General Dunford, you may recall when I asked you about this topic, you said, I am quoting, "If there is more that needs to be done, I can assure you that Secretary Mattis has placed Puerto Rico as a priority for all of us. And General Robinson is in constant contact with FEMA, as well as with officials in Puerto Rico, to make sure the department is leaning forward and providing all the support they need," end quote.

I hope that commitment is continuing, and I hope that the Department of Defense will have a plan going forward, because as of yesterday when I met with FEMA officials, they could not assure me that there is a plan for the Department of Defense involvement and for longer term recovery on the island.

So I thank you for the contribution that has been made so far, and I hope that there will be a plan and a
commitment of resources going forward.

Secretary Mattis: Senator, I assure you this is all-hands-on-deck. There is no delay. When a request comes in, it is approved the moment it hits the Pentagon.

We have over 10,000 troops there. We had two ships pre-positioned. There are now six ships there. Comfort will arrive today or tomorrow.

And we had to reopen the airports themselves, which is part of the restraint on how many aircraft we could get in. There was a logistics effort simply to open the door for them to get in. So you bring in a few people, get things opened up and keep expanding.

But there is no lack of resources, sir. We are ready to go, even to the point that it is going to impact the deployments, perhaps, of some of these troops overseas next year, because we have interrupted their preparation.

That is okay. When it is helping fellow Americans, especially, although we also help some of the other small countries that were hard hit, but when it comes to helping Americans, it is all-hands-on-deck, and we do not have a problem from volunteers from the various National Guards and certainly every unit, every ship is learning forward for a mission like this.

Senator Blumenthal: I have no question, sir, about your commitment and General Dunford's. What concerns me is
that waiting for requests from the local leadership without
a larger plan from the Department of Defense may create gaps
or disconnects.

And I hope that the President, when he is visiting
today, will ask for a plan, as a result of this trip. And I
know that you have a commitment to develop one.

Secretary Mattis: We are in support of FEMA, sir, and
that is why we pre-positioned ships and troops, so, even
before they asked for it, they were ready. It was not a
matter of calling up some people. We have continued calling
up some, but we had people ready to go as fast as they were
asked for.

Senator Blumenthal: Thank you.

General Dunford: Senator, one change that has taken
place since we spoke last week is Lieutenant General
Buchanan, who is the component commander for the Army forces
in Northern Command, arrived on the ground with a very
capable staff.

And when we spoke last, the Secretary alluded to it, it
was about opening the ports and opening the airfields. The
focus now is on distribution. That is what you spoke about.
It is the large stockpiles of supplies and so forth that are
going to the country, but not necessarily out to where the
people are.

And I can assure that today, General Robinson's
command, but more particularly, General Buchanan, who is on the ground in Puerto Rico, they do have a plan to support the distribution of those supplies, and that is their focus.

And then when the Secretary spoke about the Comfort arriving, that will be over 200 more hospital beds that will be available to the people of Puerto Rico tomorrow.

Senator Blumenthal: Thank you very much.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

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

Senator Heinrich: I want to start by just thanking both of you for your attention on Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. It was clear early on with the radars down, in particular, at all those air fields, there were certain things DOD does particularly well and needed to do in order to get those bottlenecks out of the way. So we very much appreciate that focus.

I want to go back to Iran and the line of questioning that Senator King had, and start with just asking, if Iran maintains its compliance with the JCPOA, but Congress votes to reimpose sanctions anyway, would we, as the U.S., be in violation of our obligations under the JCPOA under that scenario?

Secretary Mattis: Senator, I do not know. I would have to look at what the conditions specifically would call
for under the JCPOA and what, in particular, we would not be
willing to do.

Congress has a role to play in this. We see it as
distinct but integral. In other words, we look at this
problem set as having two distinct aspects, the JCPOA itself
and the congressional action. And I would have to compare
the details on that, Senator.

Senator Heinrich: One of the reasons why I ask is
because the scenario I am worried about is if we
unilaterally withdraw from the JCPOA, I am concerned about a
scenario where Iran gets to keep its sanctions relief, but
where we lose key enforcement and intelligence advantages.
Is there a scenario where those things come to pass
that could possibly be in our national security interest?
Because if we are not careful, we could end up with the
worst of both worlds, right?

Secretary Mattis: Well, if it is mishandled, yes,
Senator, that could happen.

As you know, it is still under consideration in the
executive branch and a decision has not been made.

Senator Heinrich: I would just urge you to consider
that, because if we end up in a situation where we are not
able to reinstate the sanctions that were multilateral, but
we also lose our ability to effectively enforce the nuclear
agreement, we have sort of lost on both sides of the ledger.
That would be a very unfortunate for our national security. I want to go back to Afghanistan for a moment. I think it is clear that a very concise, clear strategy is essential, both for a positive end-state in Afghanistan, but also absolutely key for our troop morale. And I think it has been challenging, with a conflict that is gone on for 16 years, and a positive end-state in many ways still over the horizon, to maintain troop morale.

How do you describe troop morale in Afghanistan, at the moment?

Secretary Mattis: Senator, I was just there a couple days ago, and I got on board the aircraft after our last stop with Secretary General Stoltenberg. And here is an outside observer looking at probably a dozen different Nations' forces, our own being dominant, of course, of the groups that he saw. And he said, I am amazed at how high the morale is, that they have such a strong sense of purpose.

And I think it humbles all of us to think, after 16 years -- I personally landed in Afghanistan in November 2001.

Senator Heinrich: I remember.

Secretary Mattis: And after 16 years, it reminds us we have a national treasure in the U.S. military, that these young patriots, young people -- anyone who thinks we have a
problem with the younger generation hasn't seen these lads
and lasses in action. They are phenomenal. They look past
the hot, political rhetoric, and say, "Give me the job.
Give me the authority. And let me go at it. Give me what I
need."

And there is a commitment out there that humbles me to
this day.

Senator Heinrich: I couldn't agree more with your
sentiment, with regard to the quality of people serving in
our military today, and that certainly has been my
experience, both here and overseas in places like
Afghanistan and, unfortunately, a number of other places, as
well.

I want to ask, what is the current price tag for
security in Afghanistan? Are we still, roughly, spending
about $5 billion a year, General Dunford?

General Dunford: Senator, we are spending about $12.5
billion, and $1.1 is the cost of the uplift that we have
just proposed.

Senator Heinrich: I think it was General Nicholson who
testified at one point that roughly 10 percent of our total
allocations for security were picked up by the Afghan
Government. Should we expect to be paying that in
perpetuity? Is there any end in sight? What is the limit
of our involvement?
General Dunford: Senator, where that figure comes from, there is about -- $5 billion a year is what it takes to sustain the Afghan forces, and the international community coalition has paid about -- $5 billion for the Afghan forces, specifically. The $12 billion was the cost of the entire operation --

Senator Heinrich: The entire operation.

General Dunford: -- that I spoke about earlier. The Afghan forces, specifically, is $5 billion.

But $1 billion is paid by our international partners, members of NATO and so forth. And $500 million is paid for by the Afghan Government.

We would expect that that figure will increase over time, and the Afghans will become more self-sufficient.

Right now, the Afghans have commitments from the international community and the United States, as a result of a NATO summit, until 2020. So after that, there is going to have to be a plan for sustaining the Afghan Security Forces.

Senator Heinrich: Thank you both.

Senator Reed: On behalf of the chairman, Senator Nelson?

Senator Nelson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, gentleman. And I certainly want to echo, it took the United States military getting into Puerto
Rico, and you all are doing the job.

If you could, for me, just clarify the numbers? We called the Pentagon last night. They said 1,100 in Puerto Rico. We called the National Guard last night. They said 3,300. And you have just said 10,000.

So some clarification on the numbers would be most appreciated.

But the fact is that you are doing the job. And it is too bad that it took until late last week to get General Buchanan in place, because once he got in place, things started to improve. So thank you very much for that.

So just at your convenience, General Dunford, give us some clarity on the numbers. If you have them now, fine, otherwise --

General Dunford: Senator, we do. Secretary Mattis, and I both have the numbers. We do have over 10,000 on the ground right now. That is about just short of 4,000 in the Active component and almost 7,000 members of the National Guard.

And that includes almost all the troops that are currently supporting both operations in the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. As you know, because of the multiple storms happening in sequence, we do not have forces specifically assigned, but they are providing support throughout the area.
Senator Nelson: Okay. That is clearly the step in the right direction. I give you all the accolades that you are due, because that is what it took to get the distribution out into the interior of the island.

Since the purpose of this hearing is Afghanistan, I wanted to ask you, Pakistan is sometimes friendly and sometimes it is not, when it comes to Afghanistan. And the President has said he is going to put significant new pressure on Pakistan.

Can you explain that to the committee, what he meant?

Secretary Mattis: I can, Senator Nelson. The pressure will be -- let's put it in optimistic terms -- so that they can see where their interests converge with the international community at stopping terrorism.

And again, they have lost probably more troops than any other single country in the fight against terrorism. At the same time, we seen havens left to the terrorists' own devices. We have seen the Government of Pakistan come down on terrorism while ISI appears to run its own foreign policy.

So what we are going to do is, working with the international community and the South Asia neighboring nations, plus China, Russia, looking for common ground with all of these nations, and the 39 troop-contributing nations that include NATO, plus NATO's partners, we are going to
work to have a very firm list of what has got to change.

And then using diplomatic and economic means, having venues where we share the way ahead with each other, we are going to try to get this to a productive outcome.

Right now, based on a very recent visit by the Army chief of staff from Pakistan, there is actually optimism in Kabul that his visit presages a new chapter.

I am in the "we'll see" mode. But we intend to bring all the effort we can, in a whole-of-government, international-framed way, to Islamabad and show them how to get out of the situation they are currently in.

Senator Nelson: Thank you.

Senator Reed: On behalf of the chairman, Senator Warren, please.

Senator Warren: Thank you, Ranking Member Reed.

And thank you, Secretary Mattis and General Dunford, for your work and for being here.

In August, the President released his new Afghan strategy, and a key part of it seems to be the idea that the U.S. will use all of its tools, military, economic and diplomatic, to get the Taliban to the negotiating table.

In fact, the Pentagon's release says, and I want to quote it, "We will bolster the fighting strength of government forces to convince the Taliban they cannot win on the battlefield. This will set conditions for the ultimate
goal of our strategy: a peace settlement between the
Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban that protects our
interests."

Now, for some of us, this strategy seems like déjà vu all over again. So I just have a straightforward question on this.

Secretary Mattis, can you explain to me how you will "convince the Taliban they cannot win on the battlefield," when 16 years of evidence suggests otherwise?

Secretary Mattis: Well, the point we are making is, ma'am, that the change to a conditions-based means we set the conditions, we bolster -- they used the word that you just quoted there -- we bolster the Afghan fighting forces' capability so that the Taliban find they cannot kill their way to power, is the bottom line.

It is going to be a fight. We have already seen difficulties in the Taliban's campaign. For example, they are still trying to take down provincial and district centers. They have been unable to do so. For the first time in 16 years, six Afghan Army corps are on the offensive. We have never had all six of them work at the same time.

So you see that is the way we drive the enemy to the understanding they cannot wait us out. Before, they could wait us out. They always knew what the timeline was for
withdrawal. They kept sensing we were leaving.

Senator Warren: We have had multiple strategies where people come in and tell us, "We are using a different military strategy. We are using a different military strategy. And this time, it is going to work." I do not think I could count how many times that has happened in 16 years.

But the part you are focused on now is that part right at the end that says they cannot wait us out. And that is what bothers me, because what it seems to be saying is that the Trump administration's plan to force the Taliban to the negotiating table is to say we are willing to continue to fight the Afghan war forever.

And that just can't be right. It can't.

Secretary Mattis: Well, we are not fighting the Afghan war, ma'am. Again, we are not going to supplant or substitute our troops for the 320,000 Afghan troops, whose, fortunately, their casualties are going down now, while the Taliban's are going up. We are going to assist them in fighting this war.

And we are not going to put a timeline on it, that the Taliban then gets hope that we can wait them out.

Senator Warren: But with respect, Mr. Secretary, you are talking about having our troops in Afghanistan, in harm's way, forever. And that can't be right. You are
saying that is the key to this.

Secretary Mattis: But the point is not forever, because we are saying you can't wait us out now.

Now the way you win this, it is a matter of will. It is not -- certainly, we may have advisers there 10 years from now, but the Taliban will not be the enemy they are.

Pulling out, I am convinced, would imperil the people of Massachusetts and California.

Senator Warren: I understand that that is your position on this. But I am very concerned that the central change seems to be, "We will wait them out," which is an open-ended commitment that sounds a lot like the word forever to me.

Let me ask you about one other thing from that statement. The statement says that we are going to have a negotiated settlement that "protects our interests."

Can you just say a word, Mr. Secretary, about what that means?

Secretary Mattis: That means that transnational attacks on the United States would not occur. That is in our interests, we don't not be attacked, as we saw coming out of that area on 9/11.

And furthermore, the way you do that is helping the Afghan people to have Security Forces that defends them, so they do not have these kinds of attacks germinating in their
mountains coming against New York City.

Senator Warren: And we are going to do this through negotiations.

Secretary Mattis, we have now been in Afghanistan for 16 years. Two thousand three hundred and eighty-six brave Americans have died. More than 20,000 have been wounded. More than 100,000 Afghans have been killed. We have spent nearly a trillion dollars.

And after all of that, the Afghan forces still lack the ability to stand on their own. The government controls less than 60 percent of their territory. They control only a third of their population.

The U.N. reported that opium production in Afghanistan rose 43 percent last year alone. Endemic corruption continues with no signs of diminishing. Fewer than half of Afghans support the Afghan Unity Government.

I understand the need to prevent Afghanistan from once again becoming a safe haven for terrorist groups. And I very much appreciate the work you are doing and your coming here today, Mr. Secretary.

But as best I can tell, this new strategy is just more of the same, except we have removed the timetables because we have little hope of success within any identified time period.

Secretary Mattis: Senator, we have removed the
timetable that gave hope to the Taliban. At the same time, we are going to give support and advice and assistance at a level in the Afghan military that, for all the casualties they took, they were not as effective as they could have been.

So by making them more effective, the Afghan military will worsen the situation the Taliban face, and we will be ready to talk at any point. But it is the same conditions that Secretary Clinton established for the Taliban: stop killing people, stop supporting international terrorists, and live by the Constitution.

That is a pretty low bar that we are driving toward. It will be an Afghan-led reconciliation, is where we are going.

Senator Warren: And I just say with respect, yes, it is a very low bar that we are driving toward. And we are losing.

Secretary Mattis: I would disagree with the last point, ma'am.

Senator Warren: Well, all I know is to look at the numbers. And the drug trade is up. Corruption is up. There is no support for the government. And more and more people keep dying.

And we keep hearing our generals come in here and tell us over and over, "Just give us one more military plan, and
It is just hard to buy that. And it is hard to buy it on behalf of the people who put their lives at-risk.

Secretary Mattis: Sure.

Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Senator Reed: Thank you, Senator Warren.

Gentleman, thank you for your testimony and for your service. And on behalf of Chairman McCain, I will adjourn the hearing. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 12:34 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]