HEARING TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATION OF:

LIEUTENANT GENERAL AUSTIN S. MILLER, USA

TO BE GENERAL AND COMMANDER,

RESOLUTE SUPPORT MISSION,

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION/

COMMANDER, UNITED STATES FORCES-AFGHANISTAN

Tuesday, June 19, 2018

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:31 a.m. in Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. James M. Inhofe, presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES M. INHOFE, U.S. SENATOR FROM OKLAHOMA

Senator Inhofe: The meeting will come to order.

And Senator Reed and I talked this over and we thought, before our opening statements, we would like to hear the introduction of our witness by Senator Burr. Senator Burr?
STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD BURR, U.S. SENATOR FROM NORTH CAROLINA

Senator Burr: Mr. Chairman, thank you. Vice Chairman, thank you. And to all of my colleagues, I realize that this is not normal for the committee to have a uniformed individual introduced, but I felt compelled to offer him. General Miller was nice enough to honor me with accepting that.

This nominee really needs no introduction because I think for most of you, you have either met him or you have read about his career. But there are a few things that I feel are important to highlight to members.

For Senator Reed and myself, we are delighted to see another West Point graduate that really does deserve the attention that this nominee has gotten.

I am not going to cover everything because most of you know it, but not only is he a proud West Point graduate, he served in the 82nd Airborne. He has had multiple combat tours, multiple awards and commendations. My committee, the Intelligence Committee, has worked closely with General Miller since 2016 when he became Commander of JSOC, and I can tell every member here he has been responsive, thorough, and honest.

But what I really wanted to come before you to tell you is that this is a man that has earned the respect of his
superiors and his subordinates. Without question, when you
go to Fort Bragg today and you talk to those soldiers,
regardless of whether they are inside a wire inside Fort
Bragg, they all know Lieutenant General Miller. He has
earned the respect of his troops. He has done it from the
time he left West Point. He has performed in a commanding
role in some of the most difficult situations in the world,
and he has been deployed into a combat zone multiple times.

Our soldiers are taught to follow leaders, and there is
a reason that the troops under him follow him. Scott Miller
is a tremendous leader. He is the right man at the right
time to carry out a difficult mission in Afghanistan. His
intellect, his honesty, and his intelligence and his
experience make him the appropriate choice. So I hope that
this committee will act expeditiously on his nomination.

But I will end in this. He is a great father and he is
a great man. This is the full package of everything we look
for when we look at somebody that we want to put that star
on their shoulder and ask them to represent our kids and our
grandchildren’s future.

I thank you for the opportunity to be here. I hope and
I pray that we can do this as expeditiously as possible. I
thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Burr. That is an
excellent introduction. And you are welcome to stay and
come up here at the table if you would like for this or you can be relieved.

Senator Burr: Mr. Chairman, I think I will go back to the padded room with no windows.

[Laughter.]

Senator Inhofe: That is good.

Senator Burr: Thank you.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Burr.

The committee meets today to review the nomination of the next commander for both the U.S. Forces-Afghanistan and NATO Resolute Support Mission.

We welcome Lieutenant General Austin Scott Miller, Commander of the Joint Special Operations Command.

In order to exercise its legislative oversight responsibilities, it is important that the committee and other appropriate committees of Congress are able to receive testimony and briefings. Please answer the following questions. These are the required questions. You just answer yes or no audibly, if you would please.

Have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest?

General Miller: I have, Senator.

Senator Inhofe: Do you agree, when asked, to give your personal views even if those views differ from the administration in power?
General Miller: I do, Senator.

Senator Inhofe: Have you assumed any duties or undertaken any actions which would appear to presume the outcome of the confirmation process?

General Miller: I have not, Senator.

Senator Inhofe: Will you ensure your staff complies with deadlines established for requested communications, including questions for the record in hearings?

General Miller: I will, Senator.

Senator Inhofe: Will you cooperate in providing witnesses and briefers in response to congressional requests?

General Miller: I will, Senator.

Senator Inhofe: Will those witnesses be protected from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

General Miller: Yes, sir, they will.

Senator Inhofe: Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify upon request before this committee?

General Miller: I do, Senator.

Senator Inhofe: And do agree to provide documents, including copies of electronic forms of communications, in a timely manner when requested by a duly constituted committee or to consult with the committee regarding the basis of any good faith delay or denial in providing such documents?

General Miller: I do, Senator.
Senator Inhofe: General Miller, we are grateful for your decades of service to our country and your leadership. And I have to say I agree with the comments of Senator Burr. I think he described you very well.

You have been nominated to lead the forces fighting our nation’s longest war. We look forward to hearing your views.

This is really a significant post. Since 2001, U.S. forces have battled terrorist groups to secure our nation from attack and ensure Afghanistan is never again a terrorist safe haven. In that time, we have decimated Al Qaeda and driven the Taliban from power, providing the opportunity for a freely elected Afghan government to take root and grow.

And yet, major challenges remain. As the Taliban insurgency spreads violence and chaos around the country and new groups like ISIS-K are terrorizing the Afghan people, the administration’s South Asia strategy reemphasized America’s commitment to Afghanistan and reversed the previous administration’s policy of announcing a timeline for withdrawal.

I was just in Afghanistan visiting our troops and General Nicholson last month. After speaking with him, it is clear that we have made progress under the new approach. Still, we need to remain clear-eyed about Pakistan’s
continued support for the Taliban insurgency. General
Miller, you are uniquely qualified to lead the renewal
effort in Afghanistan with your service in Special Ops and
your most recent assignment as the commander of the Joint
Special Operations Command. This committee looks forward to
hearing how you would address the challenges that you face
today.

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

Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Inhofe. Let me join you in welcoming General Miller, as well as his daughter Sarah and son Austin, who has just joined the 82nd. Thank you both for your commitment and service in support of your father.

General, thank you for your continued service to the nation and thank also, as I said, your family for their tremendous support. And as Senator Burr indicated, we do have things in common. We were both runts at West Point who became grunts, and so I appreciate your service very much.

Much of your career has involved the mission in Afghanistan. In addition to several deployments, you have served as commander of the Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command in Afghanistan and as the director of the Pakistan-Afghanistan Coordination Center on the Joint Staff.

General Miller, if confirmed, you will take command at a critical time. It has been nearly 10 months since the President’s South Asia strategy was announced. In support of the strategy, the administration has increased the number of U.S. troops on the ground primarily to advise and enable the Afghan Security Forces, made adjustments to the rules of engagement, and sought to keep pressure on the Taliban
throughout the winter months.

Despite these changes, the lead inspector general for overseas contingency operations recently reported that available metrics showed few signs of progress, and the intelligence community assess that the overall situation in Afghanistan will probably deteriorate modestly this year due to persistent political instability, sustained attacks by the Taliban-led insurgency, unsteady Afghan National Security Forces performance, and chronic financial shortfalls. General Miller, I am interested in your thoughts on the security situation in Afghanistan, particularly how we ensure we are making measurable progress in our efforts to train, advise, and assist the Afghan Security Forces.

In addition to the advisory mission in Afghanistan, our forces are engaged in a counterterrorism operation against foreign terrorist organizations, namely al Qaeda and the ISIS-Khorasan group. Despite concerted efforts to disrupt and destroy these networks, these groups remain resilient and have retained the ability to conduct high profile attacks against innocent civilians throughout the country. I look forward to your assessment of the threats emanating from Afghanistan and Pakistan and your expectations for the counterterrorism mission under your command.

Though the security projections for 2018 are
pessimistic, there are a few notable bright spots that also bear highlighting. The Afghan Security Forces continue to employ their most effective fighting units, specifically the special operations and air forces, and are committed to the effort to recruit and train additional forces in both categories. Over the recent Eid holiday, the Afghan Government and the Taliban completed a successful 3-day ceasefire, the first national level ceasefire the Taliban has agreed to since 2001. Additionally, grassroots level peace efforts, including peace marches and sit-ins, have spread to over half the provinces in Afghanistan over the past few months.

We have heard from the administration that the South Asia strategy is integrated and whole-of-government. However, many questions remain regarding the way in which progress on the battlefield will be translated into progress towards a political solution. Absent the diplomatic effort that is empowered with appropriate resources and staffing to engage with Afghan counterparts and critical regional players, any security gains will be fleeting.

General Miller, these are just a few of the challenges you will confront, if confirmed. Again, I thank you for your willingness to serve in this critical position. And as reflected by many people I know in the military, you are one of the most extraordinary general officers that we have in
the uniform of the United States. Thank you.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed.

General Miller, we will be anxious to hear your opening statement. You can take whatever time you would like. However, your entire statement will be made a part of the record. You might start off by introducing your family, and you are recognized.
STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL AUSTIN S. MILLER, USA
TO BE GENERAL AND COMMANDER, RESOLUTE SUPPORT MISSION, NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION/COMMANDER, UNITED STATES FORCES-AFGHANISTAN

General Miller: Senator, thank you for that. I will recognize the family, of course.

I would like to thank Senator Burr for that humbling introduction.

Senator Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished members of the committee, it is a privilege to appear before you today. I appreciate the opportunity to answer your questions regarding my nomination as Commander of Resolute Support and U.S. Forces Afghanistan.

And I know we all feel the absence of Senator McCain today, a true American hero.

But I would also like to thank the President and Secretary Mattis and Chairman Dunford for their trust in me -- they have placed in me with this nomination. If confirmed, it would be my honor to follow my friend, General Mick Nicholson, who is doing an outstanding job in this critical position.

Both my children and my sister’s family are here with me today. My son, Lieutenant Austin Miller, currently serving with the 82nd Airborne Division.

Senator Inhofe: And how long has he been in this
position?

General Miller: Senator, he has been in the position about 4 months now.

Senator Inhofe: Okay.

General Miller: He is not tenured quite yet. A little bit more to go.

And my daughter Sarah, who just recently graduated from Fordham this past May and who is intending to pursue a career in law.

I am proud of both of them and honored to have them with me here today.

Before I go on, I would like to thank the soldiers, the sailors, the airmen, and the marines and civil servants whom I have had the honor to serve. Their selfless service to our country and to each other is a testament of the strength of our Department and our nation.

Most importantly, I wanted to remember and honor those who have fallen. They and their families have made the ultimate sacrifice.

I also wanted to recognize our Afghan coalition partners. 39 countries recognize the common threat posed by ISIS and al Qaeda. We fight together today against a common enemy to keep our country safe, and if confirmed, it will be my privilege to fight alongside them again.

I have learned a lot in the last 17 years. I have
I learned there are groups that want nothing more than to harm Americans. I have learned these groups thrive in ungoverned spaces. And I have also learned when we maintain pressure on them abroad, they struggle to organize and build the necessary means to attack us.

I understand our core goal in Afghanistan is to ensure terrorists can never again use Afghanistan as a safe haven to threaten the United States or other members of the international community. I believe military pressure is necessary to create the conditions for political reconciliation. As we enable the Afghans to build military capacity, they are better able to deny safe haven to terrorists.

I know and appreciate the tremendous cost committed to this mission. If confirmed, I will be a vigorous steward of the people, the resources I am entrusted with. Corruption and incompetence are corrosive to our mission, and fighting them will always be a constant focus of mine.

The military component of this is only one aspect of the administration’s conditions-based strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia. It is necessary to provide space for political progress. If confirmed, I look forward to working alongside my friend, Ambassador John Bass, and other intergovernmental partners whose experience in those trusted relations is going to be vital to our shared
mission.

I have had the honor of serving more than 20 years in my career in special operations. I know the values of working with reliable partners. I learned problems are best addressed by seeking insights and advice from a wide pool of talent, not just those in uniform, but those throughout our government, as well as our international partners. And I have learned to maximize the resources I have been entrusted with to achieve effects. I have seen firsthand the terrorist threats coming from Afghanistan, and I know what is at stake. If confirmed, it would be my distinct honor to serve in this position.

Thank you for the opportunity. Sir, I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Miller follows:]
Senator Inhofe: Thank you, General Miller.

Our two core military missions in Afghanistan are counterterrorism and to train, advise, and assist the Afghan Security Forces.

In late August, the Trump administration released the South Asia strategy reemphasizing America’s commitment to Afghanistan and bolstering American security. The strategy is conditions-based and reversed the previous administration’s policy of artificial timelines for withdrawal, and it made changes to the rules of engagement, including those of the use of air power to strike enemy targets throughout the country.

This new rules of engagement has allowed for targeting of illicit narcotics and severely hampered the flow of funding and is impacting the Taliban. Currently, there are approximately 16,000 U.S. personnel serving in the country.

Both General Nicholson and Ambassador Bass, who recently appeared before this committee, have said that the new strategy is impacting the Taliban on multiple fronts. In the past, the Taliban simply had to sit back and wait us out. With this new strategy, I would like to have in your view, has that changed the thinking of the Taliban, and if so, how?

General Miller: Senator, I go back to, as you mentioned, the vital national interest. It is the
counterterrorism piece. Certainly the Taliban create the
conditions for the ungoverned spaces.

As far as the changing of the thinking of the Taliban, I am following the progress from a distance. If confirmed, that would be something that I would go over and make an assessment. I do note, as highlighted earlier, the recent ceasefire over Eid, one by the government and one by the Taliban. So if nothing else, we have seen some change from that regard. But clearly the conditions-based strategy has taken time off the table at the present.

Senator Inhofe: Okay. What about resources? You have had a chance to look and see the resources available to carry out your mission. What is your response in terms of are they adequate, as far as you see right now?

General Miller: Senator, where I sit today in Joint Special Operations Command, it gives me a unique look at certainly the resources that are applied against the counterterrorist fight. So I do see those.

As for other resources, my instincts say they are about right, but at the same time, if confirmed, I would like to go over and just look at that and come back to you with a better assessment of that.

Senator Inhofe: Take some time to get used to where we are.

Just for a minute, let us talk about the SFAB
activities that are going on. We have some six. I guess
one of those is to the reserves. So we are looking at five
SFABs which concentrate on the NCOs and the officers, and
that is going to be predicated on the assumption that the
Afghans have adequate resources to carry out missions as
instructed and participate in by these officers and NCOs.
How do you think that is going to work? Do you see the
cooperation of the Afghans at this time to be adequate to
carry out those missions?

General Miller: Senator, I have seen the SFABs only
from a distance. I had an opportunity to meet with their
commander. I do know it is very high quality soldiers,
officers, and noncommissioned officers as part of the SFAB.
What I would go back to is my personal experience with
advising and assisting, which as you mentioned, is a
critical component of our train, advise, and assist. I have
seen it work. I have seen it work with the Afghan Special
Security Forces, primarily with the commandos, but also with
the police. That combination is a powerful combination, and
it has a chance to increase their capabilities, their reach
-- the Afghans' reach in intelligence and operations. So I
am confident that this is going in the right direction.

Senator Inhofe: Well, that is good. And I am
confident that you are going to be confirmed too. So I
would just like to have you, once you are on the job and
looking to see how -- it is a concept. It is good I think, but it has not had time to be proven to the extent in the environment you are going to be working in. So we will need to have report-backs on that.

General Miller: Yes, Senator.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you so much.

Senator Reed?

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

General Miller, again I shared the chairman’s confidence in your skill and your ability and your leadership.

The military efforts are designed to be the forcing process for diplomatic and political issues. I mean, ultimately that is what is going to resolve the situation. There is an election that is pending in Afghanistan, political reconciliation. The ceasefire at Eid was a good sign but I think a very transitory sign.

You will be part of a team, but one of the things I just want to ask you about is that we had previously a special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. That has been eliminated. So who is the lead beyond the Ambassador in Afghanistan? Who is the lead diplomat that is going to work with you and the Ambassador to get this political situation in hand?

General Miller: Sir, today I am tracking that
Ambassador Alice Wells is the lead working very specifically in the reconciliation arena for the State Department.

Senator Reed: She is the acting Assistant Secretary of South and Central Asia, and she has a range of tasks. But she could be there or not there in the next few months or weeks. Again, together with military leadership that is consistent and very capable, we need diplomatic leadership too. And that message I hope you will carry back.

The other area of concern immediately outside of Afghanistan is Pakistan. Can you give us a sense now from your great experience in the region as to where we are with regard to Pakistan and how effective they will be in assisting our efforts?

General Miller: Senator, as I look at Afghanistan -- and I have looked at it for quite a number of years -- it is obviously a very tough neighborhood with some tough neighbors. As I look at Pakistan, Pakistan must be part of the solution, and we should have high expectations that they are part of the solution, not just diplomatically but from a security standpoint as well.

Senator Reed: Do you think they are part of the solution yet? They seem to be contradictory in what they do.

General Miller: Senator, again, I see similar behavior, contradictory. But as we go forward, as we work
through the South Asia strategy, not just from a military standpoint, but from a diplomatic standpoint, again I go back to I believe we ought to have very, very high expectations of them.

Senator Reed: With respect to the military forces of Afghanistan, their special operations troops have done remarkably well and they are very well trained. You are trying to increase the number of special operations troops, as well as the air force. Do you see those as the two key elements of power that the Afghan Government can wield to, if not win, at least to push back the Taliban?

General Miller: Senator, I do. And if confirmed, I would like to go forward, take some time to make an assessment. I have personal experience with the ground forces, limited experience with the air forces, but that would be an area I would like to assess and report back.

Senator Reed: With respect to our operations in Afghanistan, there was a great deal more transparency with respect to the effect of our operations. So recently we were releasing data about airstrikes, the targets, and any collateral damage. We still do that in CENTCOM overall with respect to operations in Iraq and Syria, but within that Afghan command, we stopped that with the notion that we were giving too much information to our opponents.

What is your view on the detail of information that
should be released?

General Miller: Senator, if confirmed, first off, I am committed to being very transparent with this committee as required. As for details that are on hold, I would need to go forward and understand why we are holding back that information.

Senator Reed: Thank you.

Again, good luck, sir. And thank you for your service and thank you for Austin’s service and thank you for Sarah’s service too.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed.

Senator Wicker?

Senator Wicker: General, thank you for your service. We are eager to get reports about how things are going over there, and so there is a little disadvantage in doing so because you have not actually been over there in this new capacity.

But let me ask you your assessment of this Eid’s ceasefire that you mentioned. It was supposed to last 3 days, and the Afghan Government then agreed to a unilateral 10-day extension. This was widely criticized in some sectors of Afghanistan. Some members of parliament had some critical things to say about that. And there are reports of Reuters that this led to Taliban fighters walking freely into government-controlled areas.
So can you enlighten us a little more, based on what you have heard, about how this worked and whether the 10-day unilateral extension might have been a disadvantage for the government?

General Miller: Senator, as I look at this, first and foremost, anything that lowers the violence for any period of time is a positive. There is goodness that comes out of there. It means people are talking. And this campaign will not be resolved by military means alone. Even as we disrupt the threats to our nation, there has to be a political realignment that takes place there.

I am working off of open source reporting as well. I understand we just started the 10-day period. And what I will be looking forward trying to understand is what are the violence levels. Do the violence levels spike or do they stay at a lower historical period over the next 10 days while the government is in a self-declared ceasefire.

Senator Wicker: Well, when you came by my office the other day -- and I appreciate that visit -- I told you I might ask you about MRAPs. And I do not know if you had a chance to look into this. But I think we can both agree that MRAPs provide more protection to ground forces than the lighter skinned Humvees. We agree on that, do we not?

General Miller: Sir, we agree.

Senator Wicker: And also, it has come to my attention
that Afghans have requested approximately 730 MRAPs, and we, the United States, actually has hundreds of excess MRAPs in mothballs that are ready for refurbishment.

Have you had a chance in the days since you dropped by the office and today’s hearing to look further into that, and can you comment for us?

General Miller: Sir, my comments would be I did took into it, and what I found out is the Afghans do have a number of MRAPs. What I do not know and would have to wait, if confirmed, to go forward and look at it to see how they are utilizing them and how they are maintaining them and what is the long-term sustainability of those. But that would be something I --

Senator Wicker: So you found out that they do have a number of them. Were you able to confirm that instead of the 730 that they requested, that they are having to use the lighter skinned Humvees instead?

General Miller: Senator, I do not have that information. Again, I am aware that they have been issued a number of armored vehicles to include MRAPs. And that would be one, if okay with you, to come back to you and get you the exact facts on that.

Senator Wicker: Okay.

Let me just ask you then in closing to react to a statement that Senator Reed made about the lack of progress
over the last several months in terms of our effort. Is that your assessment also that our progress has been somewhat flat? It has not gone backwards, but we are not really getting where we need to be.

General Miller: Senator, I have seen the SIGAR reporting as well as the Resolute Support and the State Department reporting. There is a difference of opinion there.

As we look at progress, first and foremost, I go back to the core objective, and that is al Qaeda, ISIS, preventing sanctuary, preventing external operations. So there is progress there.

As it relates to advising and assisting the Afghans to harden, fill in some of that space against the Taliban, I would need to go forward and make an assessment of where we stand there.

Senator Wicker: Thank you. Appreciate it.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Wicker.

Senator Peters?

Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, General Miller, again thank you for your long career of service to our country.

General Miller, when President Trump announced his strategy for Afghanistan last August, he made clear that the U.S. military would be taking a goal-oriented approach and
moving away from timetables, as I know you are well aware. The President said that conditions on the ground, not arbitrary timetables, will guide our strategy.

But I am concerned that for too long we have not clarified what our metrics are for success in Afghanistan, and as a result, we have allowed our strategy to drift over the years. When we do have metrics, I think it is questionable whether or not we are achieving those. The previous question, you were not sure we were drifting backwards or there were some other opinions that we are moving forward. So it is somewhat of a debate.

So it is one thing not to let our enemies know our plans. I get that. I think we all get that. But I do not think it is an excuse to not make some tough decisions about our national security. And as you can imagine, my constituents ask me what our return on investment has been in Afghanistan. A common question that I get, in fact, at town halls that I hold, is why are we investing in infrastructure in Afghanistan when we have significant needs right here in the United States?

It is important to remember that over $125 billion has been spent on relief and reconstruction alone in Afghanistan. That is more than what the United States spent on the Marshall Plan to rebuild Western Europe after World War II when accounting for inflation.
So I know our general objective has been to set up an
Afghan Government capable of running their own country and
providing security necessary to not allow terrorist
operations, but after spending more than we did to set up
Europe after the devastating effects of World War II and 17
years have elapsed, tell me what you think we need to be
doing differently that we have not done for the past 17
years.

General Miller: Senator, I acknowledge 17 years is a
very long time. And as I look at the strategy today, I am
very focused on our vital national interests, as identified
in that strategy, which is the threat to U.S. citizens,
international partners that emanate from Afghanistan, again
very specifically ISIS and al Qaeda.

Overall objective. Certainly the ways involve a train
for the military component of this strategy, a train,
advise, and assist of Afghan forces -- that is army and
police -- that are able to then secure these areas so that
it lightens our touch.

And lastly, work towards a political solution here,
whether it is reconciliation or political realignment that
does take place.

My experience -- and I have watched this war with high
troop levels. I was present during the surge of 130,000. I
know we have reduced costs over time by bringing the force
levels down, as well as the resources for the mission.

Senator Peters: General, you talked about cost and
spending. I serve as the ranking member on the Federal
Spending Oversight Subcommittee, and last month, we had a
hearing on spending in Afghanistan. We heard testimony from
the special inspector general that spending of over $8
billion on counternarcotics programming and basically after
$8 billion of hard-earned taxpayer money, those programs, it
has been decided, just did not work because they were not
coordinated. They were poorly executed. We have also heard
that the incentives for narcotics production and conflict
dynamics just overwhelm anything that the United States can
do with these assistance programs, meaning it is
questionable that these programs were wise investments in
the first place. But certainly at some point after spending
$8 billion, someone should have spoken up. I know that is
not your fault. You were not there. This is not about
anything that you did in your role.

But I would like to hear from you and have some
assurances that you will do things differently, particularly
when it comes to maintaining accountability for hard-earned
money that is being spent in Afghanistan to make sure that
it is actually spent wisely and it is having an impact based
on objective metrics. How would you plan on doing that?

General Miller: Senator, first of all, in my present
duty and present and previous command positions, I view
myself as personally responsible, a good steward for the
taxpayer, for the resources that are allocated. And I thank
this committee very specifically for the support given over
the years.

If confirmed and I move forward, I would take that same
mantra forward with me. That goes there. Fraud, waste, and
abuse cannot be tolerated. Corruption cannot be tolerated.
Accountability has to be established. Working with SIGAR,
working with other auditing agencies to ensure that we
understand where money is flowing, where it is flowing where
it is useful and where it is flowing where it is useless.

Senator Peters: Thank you.
Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Peters.

Senator Ernst?

Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

General Miller, thank you. It was a pleasure meeting
with you last week. I appreciate your insight very much.
And I would like to thank your family as well for being here
today. Lieutenant Miller, Sarah, thank you for joining us
and thank you for supporting your father.

General, last year there was a very realistic chance
that all U.S. forces were going to be withdrawn from
Afghanistan. Can you briefly paint a picture of how
Afghanistan would look today if that had occurred?
General Miller: Senator, my personal opinion -- I am going to think echoed by others in the intel community -- is a precipitous and disorderly withdrawal -- we would have negative effects on protecting our vital national interests, which is to protect from attacks emanating from Afghanistan.

Senator Ernst: So you do agree, sir, that at some point we do need to find our way out of Afghanistan, but it needs to be done in a methodical order. Is that correct?

General Miller: That is correct, Senator.

Senator Ernst: Thank you very much.

You shared some very wise words with me last week, and you had stated the Afghan military and government must want to win more than us. Can you best explain how we work with the Afghans to make that happen?

General Miller: Senator, again, I have worked in Afghanistan with the Afghan partners, not the wider army but very specifically the special security forces, and I know they can fight. I know they fight and they can win.

As we go forward on what must be a sustainable effort, my look on this is, if confirmed, you put money where you know you will have results. And that speaks to not only on the military side but any other activities that are taking place.

Senator Ernst: And we also spoke a little bit about counter-drug operations and going after narcoterrorists in
Afghanistan. That is very important. As you know, it is vital that we do cut the terrorist funding streams and just as important as that, we stop the production of those narcotics in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, we are often using millions of dollars in bombs and putting troops in very dangerous situations to have very low impact on the actual drug revenue.

So how do you intend to quantify our counter-drug campaign, and what will you do and how will you view that as success?

General Miller: Senator, the military is certainly a supporting arm to any counternarcotics, counter-drug strategy. From a military perspective as we look at the insurgency, very much focused on revenues, which as you indicated, the opium trade does provide revenues for Taliban and actually likely fuels corruption, as well as other bad actors. The military focus today is focusing on the finances. How do you reduce the finance streams, which does include narcotics but also includes other illicit traffic, whether it be mining or taxation that takes place? And with any insurgency, you have to go after the finances.

Senator Ernst: Thank you. Of course, we have to do that.

I have a little bit of time left. But we do talk a lot about our troop numbers in Afghanistan, and we do not talk
enough about all of the air assets and the needs that come with them. Of course, we have to have the support force too. As you know, close air support, medevac platforms, and lift capabilities are equally as important.

Do you have any plans now to increase air assets in Afghanistan?

General Miller: Senator, if confirmed, that would be a place I would want to take a look. Agree with the size of the country and the places we need to be. Air assets are absolutely critical.

Senator Ernst: Thank you. I do want to give a shout out to our Iowa National Guard air assets that are serving in Afghanistan right now.

The medevac company -- when I visited them last November, they had just been in country a few weeks and they had done numerous, numerous evacuations and one mass casualty evac. So I appreciate that very much.

I do not have much time remaining. I will get questions to you. I do have a few other questions.

But I want to echo Senator Burr's sentiments that I do think you are well qualified. I look forward to having you confirmed quickly through the Armed Services Committee and on the floor of the Senate. My best wishes to you, General Miller. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.
Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Ernst.

Senator Warren?

Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Miller, thank you for being here and thank you for your willingness to take on this very, very difficult assignment. You have been nominated to be the 17th commander of NATO’s Afghanistan mission. Since 2007, you would be the ninth U.S. commander in the same mission. So you come from what is now a very long line of military leaders who acknowledge the real challenges but ultimately remain faithful to the idea that our strategy is working.

Unfortunately, you are not the first commander to come in here to express cautious optimism. In fact, I just started looking through some of the old documents. General Campbell said, I really do think that as people look back and as they say 2010 was the year in Afghanistan, I think that was a turning point.

Secretary Panetta. 2011 was a real turning point. It was the first time in 5 years that we saw a drop in the number of enemy attacks.

General Dempsey in 2014. The election seems to be a turning point and a confidence of the Afghanistan Security Forces.

General Nicholson in 2017. U.S. and Afghan forces have turned the corner.
General Miller, we have supposedly turned the corner so many times that it seems now we are going in circles. So let me just ask you, do you envision turning another corner during your tenure as commander? After 17 years of war, what are you going to do differently to bring this conflict to an end?

General Miller: Senator, first off, I acknowledge the 17 years. That is generational. And I have experience from 2001 until very recently. This young guy sitting behind me -- I never anticipated that his cohort would be in a position to deploy as I sat there in 2001 and looked at that. So I acknowledge that.

I cannot guarantee you a timeline or an end date -- I know that going into this position -- or offer necessarily a turning point unless there is one, unless there is something to come back and report back that something has changed. And that is where I anticipate being.

I go back to the vital national interest of the United States of America, and I do know today from personal -- because of our forces there, I know that that is having an effect on elements that would attack the United States of America. It is disrupting.

The other piece is can we harden the Afghan Security Forces to close the distance and change the calculus on the ground now.
Senator Warren: Well, I appreciate that, General, but let me just push back just a little bit on this. Afghanistan is in crisis. The government is not gaining new territory. It lacks the support of its own people. It controls or influences only about two-thirds of the population. The Taliban has actually increased the population under its control since 2016. The Security Forces are sustaining unsustainable losses. According to UNICEF, nearly 50 percent of Afghan children are out of school. Food insecurity has spiked. Corruption is rampant. Let me see if I can frame the question differently. Even if U.S. forces could somehow stabilize the security situation, can we realistically expect a political settlement without addressing these underlying challenges?

General Miller: Senator, I admit from the military component as we support the political, the political speaks quite a lot to the reconciliation, the aspects of bringing the Afghans back together, and some of those underlying challenges will also have to be addressed.

Senator Warren: None of this is the fault of the brave men and women of the U.S. military. But I am afraid that we are asking our military to perform an impossible task. We have been in Afghanistan for 17 years. Our military cannot and should not be in Afghanistan forever. We need to make it clear to the Afghans that they need to secure enough of
their own country so that U.S. troops can come home as soon as possible. I appreciate your being here, but I am deeply concerned that we are just heading further and further down a path that does not have success at the end.

Thank you.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Warren.

Senator Perdue?

Senator Perdue: Thank you, General, for your service and your family’s service.

I share the concern of the Senator. But let me ask you a question. So we have been there a long time. You have been there. A lot of people have died there. It seems to me that the real question here is, are we going to get the Security Forces of Afghanistan hardened, as you call it, enough to stand on their own to where we can downsize our involvement there with some security that they will be able to withstand the Taliban onslaught? Would you agree with that?

General Miller: I do, Senator.

Senator Perdue: And so we have given them air power over the last year. We train their A-29 pilots in this country. We have given them a lot of support. And yet, when we cross the border into Pakistan, we see nothing has really changed much in the last year. I was in Pakistan last year with Senator McCain, and we met with General
Bajwa. We met with the head of their intelligence service. And then we went over and met with President Ghani the next day in Afghanistan and talked about cross-border joint operations. To your knowledge right now from open source and from your special operations background, have any of those joint operations actually been conducted yet?

General Miller: Senator, from my knowledge, there has been joint cooperation but not joint operations back and forth across each other’s borders.

Senator Perdue: So the solution here, it seems to me having had some personal experience in that region over the last 30 years, that the Pashtun problem, of which Haqqani and the Taliban are among the many tribes, is part of the problem and part of the potential solution. But right now, with the Haqqani Network being protected inside Pakistan, do you see any relief for this cross-border safe haven that the Taliban now continue to enjoy?

General Miller: Senator, that would be something I would have to go look at, if confirmed. I go back to what I think our larger expectations of Pakistan ought to be is that we ought to have high expectations of them to address the issues you are speaking about there.

Senator Perdue: So last year, when I visited General Nicholson over there, the objective, as he laid it out, and the plan for victory, as he called it -- and I have high
regard for General Nicholson. I think he has done a great
job there -- was to get the Taliban to the table. Are we
any closer to that today in your opinion than we were a year
ago? And what would you do as the new commander over there
to help achieve that mission if that continues to be our
objective?

General Miller: Senator, I am not aware, and that is
again just because I am not on the inside of getting them to
the table with the discussions that are taking place.

The military strategy directly in support of the
political objectives is in play. I see that shoring itself
up from a distance. And if confirmed, I look forward to
continuing that.

Senator Perdue: Sir, one last question briefly.

Last week, just last Friday as a matter of fact, we had
a report that the head of the Pakistani Taliban was actually
killed in a U.S. airstrike. I think you may have seen that
report, Mullah Fazlullah. But it heightens the opportunity
that these guys have to go across borders. But these high
value targets like that -- are they effective in terms of
reducing the strength and the power of the Taliban in their
ability to keep the government off balance and to continue
this turmoil that we talk about in Afghanistan?

General Miller: Senator, as you look at a CT strategy
as part of a larger campaign, certainly leadership strikes
are a pillar there. They are not decisive by themselves. It takes a much deeper disruption of a network and, as importantly, the political aspect to come in and solidify that, take a disrupt, and make it into a consolidation of gains.

Senator Perdue: Sir, it seems to me that one of the things that we do most harmful here in the United States Senate is to pass a continuing resolution that ties your hands from a finance point of view. What can we do, besides eliminating the use of continuing resolutions, to help you be successful in your mission as the new commander over there?

General Miller: Senator, first of all, I would like to thank this committee very specifically, but Congress in general for the support over the years. And I think I would take that question, look at things on the ground, if confirmed, and come back with specific areas of support.

Senator Perdue: I will look forward to that answer when I visit you over there. Thank you, sir.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Perdue.

Senator Blumenthal?

Senator Blumenthal: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I join my colleagues in thanking you and your family for your service and expressing my appreciation for your very candid visit with me recently.
When I asked you the question about what the end game is in Afghanistan, you very articulately made the point that we need to protect our nation and our national security from the use of that part of the world and specifically Afghanistan as a safe haven for terrorists to attack us. And perhaps for this committee and in a sense for the American people you could express that view because I think it would help in a sense further the understanding among members of this body and the American people about what our goals are there.

General Miller: Senator, thank you for that. Very clearly stated, this is about protecting U.S. citizens when you get right to the heart of the issue. U.S. citizens, other international partners are threatened by terrorism that emanates from Afghanistan. I look at these groups with my current capacity. So today I am thinking about Afghanistan, but I look at them across the globe in these two groups. Very specifically, it is transnational capabilities that allow it to project power. That is the interest that we are protecting.

It is not enough just to disrupt. It does require the political levers that come in. It does require work by the Afghans as well. The Afghans are part of the solution. The peace process -- it is Afghan-led, Afghan-owned. And those are the components that need to come together here to
achieve our core objective.

Senator Blumenthal: How significant in that peace process do you think the recent ceasefire was?

General Miller: Senator, again, I am a fan of anytime you can lower violence, that gives you a chance to talk. Specifically in Afghanistan my experience is, as long as you are talking, they are probably not shooting at you, and that is a good place to be there.

But I do not want to overstate it. I think it starts a conversation. I think what will really matter here now is the follow-through certainly by the Afghans, the Taliban, but also the international community and the coalition.

Senator Blumenthal: Speaking of that coalition, General, it is a coalition that involves our European allies. Correct?

General Miller: There are some of our European allies.

Yes, Senator.

Senator Blumenthal: And they have shed blood and made sacrifices side by side with us.

General Miller: That is correct, Senator.

Senator Blumenthal: Would you say that our national interest is well served by maintaining the close ties and friendships and alliances that we have with our European partners?

General Miller: Senator, I agree with that. And if
confirmed, that is one of my key responsibilities is
maintaining the cohesion of the coalition.

Senator Blumenthal: And it is hard to compartmentalize
those alliances and friendships to the battlefield. They
really extend to a variety of other areas and spaces where
we share common interests and where we should be cooperating
and expressing the ties that have bound us for literally
decades and centuries and in other wars where we have shed
blood and made sacrifices together. I feel very strongly
that we need to be mindful about those alliances, and your
service and the coalition that you will lead I think is
better served by keeping our allies and our friends close
rather than alienating them. I do not know whether you
agree.

General Miller: Senator, I agree, and if confirmed,
you can have the utmost confidence that will be key for me
to maintain the cohesion of that coalition.

Senator Blumenthal: I assume also that you believe
that Pakistan, as some of my colleagues have mentioned, has
to be part of this overall solution as well.

General Miller: Senator, I do. And to just to go a
little further, I think the neighbors in the region, which
speaks to the regionalization of the strategy, have a
responsibility and an interest in a stable Afghanistan.

Senator Blumenthal: Thank you very much.
Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.

Senator Graham?

Senator Graham: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, how many years have you spent in Afghanistan since 9/11?

General Miller: Senator, I am counting 3 and a half to 4 years.

Senator Graham: So you understand the area pretty well?

General Miller: Senator, the more I stay there, sometimes the more difficult it becomes to understand. I think I recognize what I do not understand at this stage of my career.

Senator Graham: Have you been wounded twice?

General Miller: I have, Senator.

Senator Graham: Where were you wounded at?

General Miller: Senator, first in Mogadishu in 1993 and then a follow-on 10 years later in Iraq.

Senator Graham: General Nicholson has done a superb job. I just want to thank him and his family for their contribution. I think you are a worthy successor.

We have a conditions-based withdrawal policy. Is that correct?

General Miller: That is correct, Senator.
Senator Graham: Did you support sending more forces to Afghanistan? Do you support the current number?

General Miller: I do, Senator, but I would actually, if confirmed, like to, one, look at it on the ground.

Senator Graham: Would you tell us if you thought you needed more?

General Miller: I would, Senator.

Senator Graham: What would happen if we withdrew in 6 months?

General Miller: Senator, I think a disorderly and precipitous withdrawal would have negative effects on U.S. national security.

Senator Graham: Describe those effects briefly.

General Miller: Senator, I would be concerned about ISIS and al Qaeda’s ability to emerge and project external operations, one, because I know they want to and I know they are constantly looking for that opportunity.

Senator Graham: Do you think it would be any different than Iraq when we left too soon?

General Miller: Senator, from my viewpoint, I think it would be similar.

Senator Graham: In terms of the rise of ISIS and other radical Islamic groups, do we have a plan to deal with them?

General Miller: Senator, I do think we have a plan.

Senator Graham: Do you have the authorities to engage
General Miller: Senator, especially in my current job, I have the authorities to engage the enemy.

Senator Graham: When did that change?

General Miller: Senator, in the 2016 time frame discussion -- and a lot of this was lowering of authorities as opposed to creating new authorities -- it was bringing them down to a lower level.

Senator Graham: What is your biggest challenge in Afghanistan, as you see it?

General Miller: Senator, as I look at Afghanistan, the biggest challenge is neighbors, again bringing that neighborhood to a place where they are helpful. Certainly the security situation is something -- bringing violence down is a continuing challenge and continuing to advise and assist. But I go back to the most important thing we are doing is disrupting the terrorist threat that emanates from Afghanistan.

Senator Graham: In the last year, has Pakistan gotten better or worse or about the same when it comes to helping our efforts in Afghanistan?

General Miller: Senator, I do not know the answer fully to that question. My assessment is that they need to be. We should have high expectations of them. But I am not able to judge the better or worse at this stage.
Senator Graham: So we have been there a long time. Do you agree with me that history will judge not when we left but what we left behind?

General Miller: I do, Senator.

Senator Graham: Do you believe it is possible to leave a secure and stable Afghanistan behind one day?

General Miller: I do, Senator.

Senator Graham: What does winning look like?

General Miller: Senator, I would describe winning, first and foremost, protecting, safeguarding U.S. vital national interests so long as they remain those interests. I have described it previously as a hardened Afghanistan Security Force, but I guess more detail would be a security force that I know does exist out there with capability to take care of these threats and to project not only their security but their governance and then ultimately it is a political reconciliation or realignment.

Senator Graham: What does losing look like from an American point of view?

General Miller: Senator, I would see an attack, a catastrophic attack, against the United States or our allies. That would be a negative.

Senator Graham: How likely is that if we leave too soon?

General Miller: Senator, my opinion is if we leave too
soon, there is a threat in Afghanistan.

Senator Graham: A real threat?

General Miller: Yes, Senator, a real threat.

Senator Graham: Thank you very much for your service and good luck.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Graham.

Senator King?

Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to follow up on Senator Graham’s usual good questions.

The question I am struggling with is that the fundamental premise of our presence in Afghanistan now for 17 years is the safe haven argument, that Afghanistan is a safe haven. It was a safe haven for al Qaeda at the time of September 11th. The question is what makes Afghanistan so peculiarly safe as opposed to Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Africa, Syria. I am genuinely trying to understand why all the blood and treasure goes into one country if the enemy can simply set up a tent city in the middle of the Sahel or somewhere in Pakistan or somewhere in Iran. Do you see where I am going? Why is it Afghanistan is the center? You are talking about a mobile enemy. Most of the people that plotted September 11th were not from Afghanistan. They just used the land. Help me out here.

General Miller: Senator, with Afghanistan, obviously
an ungoverned space, not the only ungoverned space and not the only place very specifically that ISIS and al Qaeda operate from -- there are other locations as well. In Afghanistan, as we discuss it today, one of the unique pieces is Afghanistan has a functioning government. So I would go to that direction. Al Qaeda, ISIS, dangerous in Afghanistan, transnational in nature, communicating outside of the conflict zone and not dissimilar to other places around the world which my particular command were able to attempt to address those threats as well.

Senator King: Well, I understand your answer, but I really do not. Again, you say Afghanistan has a functioning government which seems to be losing ground, but there are ungoverned areas. Are there areas where there is a sympathetic government to terrorists, Yemen -- I mean, I just listed them. I just wonder if we are not concentrating all of our fire power on the place that bred September 11th and a lot of blood and treasure, as I said. I do not know how we are going to change the dynamic there. We had 110,000 troops there. Now we have 15,000. What is going to be different? I was following up I thought Senator Warren’s questions going back in history where your predecessors have all said we are at a turning point. Nothing seems to change. And what is going to change in the next 2 years or 3 years?
And by the way, I am not questioning your leadership whatsoever. I certainly plan to vote to confirm you. I think you are the right guy in the right job at the right time. Your record is impeccable. I am talking more about national policy. You happen to be the guy sitting in the witness seat.

But what do you see as changing that will change the dynamic? Because it seems to be going in a negative direction in terms of land controlled, decline in the size of the Afghan Security Forces, political instability within the government in Afghanistan. How do we make a change in that dynamic?

General Miller: Senator, as I look through and think back based on your question and reflect what has changed, again I was there in 2001 when we probably had about 1,000 U.S. boots on the ground maybe, maybe even a little less than that, with other coalition partners. I was there in 2009 and 2010 when the U.S. military, as well as other NATO forces surged, and there were over 130,000 U.S. forces in the period where we took the brunt of U.S. casualties as well as NATO casualties.

As I came back in 2013–2014, what had changed then was an Afghan-led effort, Afghan forces to the fore, Afghan forces leading the security charge and wanting to do that. As a matter of fact, their senior leadership wanted to
ensure they were in the front.

We will have to go forward and take a look at this, if confirmed. But that is another adjustment. You see an even smaller number of U.S. and other coalition forces that are working to train, advise, and assist both institutionally and tactically. But this is, first and foremost, Afghan-led except where our national security interests are at risk.

Senator King: And I understand that.

One final question. Is the Taliban our enemy? Because, again, this whole thing is in the context of counterterrorism. Is the Taliban a terrorist organization? Are they more likely to tolerate and support and encourage the resurgence of ISIS or al Qaeda as opposed to the government? I am genuinely interested in the ideology of the Taliban. I cannot figure out who they are.

General Miller: Senator, from my perspective, the Taliban had previously hosted and tolerated al Qaeda. They have now said that that would not be part of their future policy, but that is statements by them. I do not have a judgment whether that is true or not.

They are the enemy of the Afghan people because they are fighting against the Afghans. What they are is they create the disorder in these spaces that now become ungoverned over time.

Senator King: Well, I really appreciate your
thoughtfulness and your willingness to take on this very
difficult assignment. We will certainly try to provide you
with what you tell us you need. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator King.

Senator Cotton?

Senator Cotton: Thank you.

General Miller, thank you very much for your
willingness to go to Afghanistan once again and for your
many years of service. We have many fine flag officers that
come in front of this committee, but few have displayed not
just the command excellence but the personal valor and
bravery you have on the battlefield. We all appreciate
that.

Let me continue down Senator King’s line of questioning
about why Afghanistan, why are we in Afghanistan 17 years
later. Why do not all the other places that are deeply
troubled and pose threats to us as well, like Syria, for
instance -- although we do have troops in Syria. But just
at the levels and the length of time. It is true that
Afghanistan is where we were attacked from on 9/11. Is that
right?

General Miller: That is correct, Senator.

Senator Cotton: Is it still true that Afghanistan in
its border area with Pakistan has the highest concentration
of foreign terrorist organizations anywhere in the world?

General Miller: That is correct, Senator.

Senator Cotton: It is also the case that we have a
troop presence that is established and that does many
important tasks in Afghanistan and that we would lose those
capabilities in the country if we were to, as you say,
precipitously withdraw?

General Miller: Yes, Senator. That is correct.

Senator Cotton: But 17 years is a long time. This
will make, you said, your fourth deployment?

General Miller: I counted in years about 4 years,
Senator.

Senator Cotton: Did you imagine in 2001 that you would
be deploying for a fourth year to Afghanistan in 2018?

General Miller: Senator, I did not.

Senator Cotton: Is that something you really would
have wanted to do in 2001?

General Miller: Senator, I actually recall
conversations of people who were out over Christmas in 2001
talking about they were doing this so their kids did not
have to.

Senator Cotton: Well, since you raise that, let us
talk about Lieutenant Miller there for a second. If
Lieutenant Miller does his job well and stays as a platoon
leader at the 82nd Airborne into next year, 2019, he is
going to have a private report to his platoon in all likelihood who was born after the 9/11 attacks. That is a pretty shocking fact. Is it not?

General Miller: Yes, Senator.

Senator Cotton: So we have taken on a lot of burden in Afghanistan. We have taken it on for a long time. Many Americans rightfully question why we have spent so much money there, why we have had so many of our sons and daughters killed there. Is the simple answer to those questions that Afghanistan is where they attacked us from and if we were to, as you say, precipitously withdraw, they would simply try to start attacking us again?

General Miller: Senator, I go back to that national interest, the vital national interest, which is the security of our country, the security of our citizens, as well as other international partners. That is why we are in Afghanistan.

Senator Cotton: And I wish that you and all those other lieutenants and captains who said in 2001 that they were there so their kids did not have to be there had that prediction come true, but it is simply not the case. The enemy is still there and the enemy still gets the vote. Right?

General Miller: That is correct, Senator.

Senator Cotton: A couple weeks ago, unfortunately an
American soldier was killed, Staff Sergeant Alex Conrad. He was killed in a very poor, troubled, war-torn country. It was not Afghanistan, though. It was Somalia. And Captain Miller served in Somalia 25 years ago. Is that not right?

General Miller: That is correct, Senator.

Senator Cotton: Did you have the same sentiment when you served in Somalia, that you were there, in part, so your children would not have to be there 25 years later?

General Miller: Senator, I think in 1993 I was not thinking in that direction. But to your point, yes.

Senator Cotton: But it is the truth that although not a continuous presence, for 25 years we have had a pretty regular presence in Somalia for many of those 25 years. Correct?

General Miller: That is correct, Senator.

Senator Cotton: And what do Somalia and Afghanistan have in common that has required us to have troops continually present since 2001 in Afghanistan and regularly present in Somalia since 1993?

General Miller: Senator, it is violent extremist organizations in this present day. We are speaking about al Shabaab and ISIS in Somalia.

Senator Cotton: And we all wish that they were not there and we all wish they did not want to try to kill us in the United States. But they are there and that is why we
have troops there still. And I commend you and I commend
your son and every other soldier, sailor, airman, and marine
that we have that are continuing to carry on this fight for
17 years in Afghanistan to keep this country safe. It is
something that probably none of them want to do. They all
wish like you had wished in 2001 that they were not having
to do it. But as you say, if we precipitously withdraw,
then the only thing that is going to happen in Afghanistan
is they are going to start plotting to attack us again here
in our home.

Thank you and Godspeed in Afghanistan.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Cotton.

Senator Scott?

Senator Scott: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, thank you for being here this morning, and
thank you for coming by my office last week and spending
some quality time. I think the time was well spent and I
certainly appreciate the time that we focused on your
current assignment and how well you have done this. And
thank you for your service to our country.

I think Senator Cotton, as well as Senator Warren, and
others have alluded to the question that I am going to ask
you that you seem to have the same very succinct answer to.
I want to give you a little more time to kind of unscramble
that egg a little bit for us.
17 years later, we still have more than 12,000 troops still in Afghanistan. There is no question that there seems to be a part of our national security priorities keeping our men and women who served this nation so bravely and so well still in Afghanistan.

So my question to you is, does ISIS or the Taliban or al Qaeda pose a threat to Americans here at home? And absent our presence in Afghanistan, would you say that the threat to the homeland goes up so significantly that it is worth having those troops in harm’s way there to keep us safe here at home? And beyond your yes, can you explain why?

General Miller: Senator, of the three groups you named, Taliban, ISIS, and al Qaeda, I would put the Taliban in a separate category, a threat to forces in Afghanistan. And I would put ISIS and al Qaeda in a threat in an external piece. You mentioned we discussed in the context of my current work. I go back to I know these are transnationalist groups. I know that they communicate external to Afghanistan. They trade tactics, techniques, and procedures. They share them. There is funding. There is the media. There is inspiration that is driven out of these two groups. So I see both of them as clear transnational threats with the desire to attack the United States or Western interests.
Senator Scott: And without our presence there, their desire plus their capabilities would pose a real immediate or imminent threat to the United States.

General Miller: Yes, Senator. There needs to be pressure on them, military pressure, as well as consolidation post military pressure to disrupt and start breaking them down.

Senator Scott: Thank you, sir.

I would like to take this opportunity to ask a question pertaining to your current position as Commander of the Joint Special Operations Command. The men and women you lead have been instrumental in killing or capturing terrorists on the battlefield who would like nothing better than to attack Americans, as you just suggested, here at home. However, the National Defense Strategy identifies the need to counter near-peer adversaries such as Russia and China. Although it does not specifically say so, one could argue that it means less emphasis on places like Afghanistan.

Given the extra resources needed to field the fifth generation aircraft and next generation combat vehicles and advanced technology weapons, those resources will have to come from somewhere else. Does the National Defense Strategy change how you think about training and employing the forces you command today?
General Miller: Senator, yes, it does change. But I will tell you it changes all the time. The men and women of Joint Special Operations Command -- I would call them a full spectrum organization or SOF writ large is full spectrum. So while concentrating on violent extremist organizations certainly since 2001 very directly, indirectly in other cases, SOF is also preparing for other challenges, as indicated in the National Defense Strategy.

As for the resourcing, certainly you can expect from me -- what my leadership expects from me -- is best military advice on how the current fight ought to be resourced, and then I expect them to make the decisions based on a broader global look.

Senator Scott: Thank you, sir. I think you basically answered my second question. I will ask it anyway. Are you concerned at all that the National Defense Strategy will take resources away from the priorities in Afghanistan, and do you have the freedom and the flexibility to ask for the resources that you need once you are on the ground and having a new view? I think Senator Graham did a really good job of pointing out the fact that you spent about 4 years of your career in Afghanistan. So you have an understanding and appreciation of the terrain and the difficulties and the challenges that we face. But if you need more resources, I hope you will have the flexibility and the freedom to ask
for those.

General Miller: Senator, if confirmed, I am confident I have the flexibility and freedom to ask for those resources. I know my chain of command will listen to what would come from the ground up. I know they have been listening to General Nicholson over the past 2 and a half years as well.

Senator Scott: Good enough.

Let me just use my closing time that I actually do not have to say thank you for your service. It is certainly good to see your son behind you. It helps me understand and appreciate your sense of urgency as it relates to getting out of places that we do not need to be but also staying in those places if there is actually no other choice for us other than to be there or risk more lives here at home.

Thank you both for your service. God bless.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Scott.

Senator Sullivan?

Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, General, welcome. I am just very thankful that you are willing to take on the job. I want to thank your family as well. I think in terms of qualifications, you might be uniquely qualified for this task. We do not get many generals in front of this committee that not only have the experience you have but Purple Hearts and exceptional
awards for valor. So I want to thank you for that. Like I said, I want to thank your family as well.

Your JSOC command I think particularly is relevant for your next assignment. I certainly plan on supporting you fully. You are seeing the themes here about 17 years and a long time, many turning points, but really not at the turning points. The CT mission is critical. Pakistan is a safe haven. I think there have been a lot of good questions here.

I want to ask you maybe to take this opportunity to educate us and the American public, who have a lot of interest in this, on a couple of issues. Right now, you are going to be going into a broader mission that is focused on an advise and assist mission as part of Resolute Support, but also a CT mission. Can you explain the difference and then how these two are related? Because they are different but important.

General Miller: Senator, as I have talked or heard discussions on CT, counterinsurgency, and the rest, they are absolutely linked. And as part of the CT mission, the Afghans in some cases take the lead there as well. So that also has a train, advise, and assist component.

When you look at the larger train, advise, and assist with the other parts of the Afghan National Army and the police in some cases, this is the piece that drives Afghan-
led. It is the security forces that extend the writ of the
government, if you will. It creates an environment. So the
train, advise, and assist is meant to enable those Afghan
forces to be successful.

From a personal example, I mentioned earlier to the
committee I have not seen the special security forces lose.
I have seen them take hits. I have seen them bleed. I have
seen them take casualties, but they win their fights. They
win their fights. They are even better when they have the
right enabling support from us, and I anticipate that is the
same for the entire Afghan National Army.

Senator Sullivan: Can the CT mission be successful
without the train, advise, and assist mission? Are they
that interrelated? Or can we just say, hey, you know what,
we will just keep JSOC over there and a robust CT mission to
protect the homeland, but we are going to give up on the TAA
mission?

General Miller: Senator, as I have watched CT
operations that are largely focused on kinetics, my personal
assessment is those are fleeting. They are disruptive but
not necessarily a decisive or enduring operation. The TAA,
the Afghans coming in behind, that is your reliable
partnership that starts driving towards what I would refer
to as a consolidation of gains which oftentimes are more
political than they are military.
Senator Sullivan: Can we ever secure our national interests either from the train, advise, and assist or CT perspective if there is a safe haven in Pakistan?

General Miller: Senator, a safe haven makes this infinitely more difficult.

Senator Sullivan: So is that a no?

General Miller: We have to squeeze out safe havens if we are going to be successful here.

Senator Sullivan: You know, a former four-star Army general, who I think you and I both know well, General Abizaid talked many, many years ago about the long war. And a lot of the themes here really relate to this idea of the long war. We do not want to be there necessarily, but we also do not want to subject our citizens to the risks of a catastrophic attack on the homeland or American citizens. So we need to be forward deployed to be ready to take out these kind of threats.

Can you talk a little bit about that particularly from your JSOC mission? I agree with Senator Scott that we need to look at the JSOC breadth of mission, particularly with regard to the National Defense Strategy, but there are certain areas where that mission is critical. Afghanistan is one because of the violent extremist organizations that have a global reach.

Can you talk about and maybe help us understand what
General Abizaid talked about, a generational fight that we just need to be ready to deal with to keep our citizens safe? As the JSOC Commander, in many ways you are the leader of that battle and long war focus.

General Miller: Senator, I actually remember when General Abizaid used to talk about the long war.

Senator Sullivan: Well, we are in it. Are we not?

General Miller: We absolutely are.

Senator Sullivan: 17 years.

General Miller: And I think those who have been in it now recognize it has been generational.

There have been adjustments to it over time. As you look at the threat, Afghanistan is a prime example, and it comes back to the TAA. In years past, the United States would try to lead, do most of the fighting, and what you see now is the adjustment, which I know is broader than Afghanistan, where we enabled the local security forces to be able to take care of their problem. And that drives the TAA, knowing that you are not going to be able to sustain Americans or other NATO partners around the world doing unilateral operations. Better if done by local security forces. And that is the approach here.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

Senator Reed and I would entertain if someone who has
maybe one final question to ask. All right. Fine.

Senator Sullivan: I just have one follow-up to that.

I am here. Right? Might as well do it and it is important.

So how should the country think about the idea of the long war? You have been in charge of it. We are overseeing it. There is discomfort here 17 years in. But do we need to just have a different mindset the way General Abizaid talked about this 15 years ago?

General Miller: Senator, if it is helpful, as I work within my organizations and we discuss this, part of this is building the force for the long haul. Are you sustainable? If this is going to be an enduring -- and I am not talking specifically Afghanistan here -- how do you posture the force? How do you array the force? How do you get it set to handle the security challenges of the future here? And we have many discussions on that. A lot of the arrayal of our force is based just on that, as well as our interagency collaboration and cooperation and multinational engagement as well.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

Senator Inhofe: General Miller, I think you have sensed that from both sides of the aisle during the course of this meeting, there is obviously an expectation that you will bring something in that is going to offer something new. And I think you probably ought to, after you have been
on the job for a while after you are confirmed, come in and
give some new insights because to continue to do the same
thing that has led us into 17 years is not going to be
acceptable. And again, I would repeat what some others have
said that I think you are the right person. You have the
right background. So we will expect a major change from
you. And we thank you very much.

General Miller: Thank you, Senator.

Senator Inhofe: We are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:57 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]