

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

NOMINATION

Tuesday, June 19, 2018

Washington, D.C.

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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

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

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

Committee Members Present: Senators Inhofe [presiding], Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Sullivan, Graham, Sasse, Scott, Reed, McCaskill, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Donnelly, Hirono, Kaine, King, Heinrich, Warren, and Peters.

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

3 Senator Inhofe: The meeting will come to order.

4 And Senator Reed and I talked this over and we thought,
5 before our opening statements, we would like to hear the
6 introduction of our witness by Senator Burr. Senator Burr?

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD BURR, U.S. SENATOR FROM
2 NORTH CAROLINA

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

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

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

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

24 But what I really wanted to come before you to tell you
25 is that this is a man that has earned the respect of his

1 superiors and his subordinates. Without question, when you
2 go to Fort Bragg today and you talk to those soldiers,
3 regardless of whether they are inside a wire inside Fort
4 Bragg, they all know Lieutenant General Miller. He has
5 earned the respect of his troops. He has done it from the
6 time he left West Point. He has performed in a commanding
7 role in some of the most difficult situations in the world,
8 and he has been deployed into a combat zone multiple times.

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

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

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

24 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Burr. That is an
25 excellent introduction. And you are welcome to stay and

1 come up here at the table if you would like for this or you
2 can be relieved.

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

5 [Laughter.]

6 Senator Inhofe: That is good.

7 Senator Burr: Thank you.

8 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Burr.

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

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

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

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

22 General Miller: I have, Senator.

23 Senator Inhofe: Do you agree, when asked, to give your
24 personal views even if those views differ from the
25 administration in power?

1 General Miller: I do, Senator.

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

5 General Miller: I have not, Senator.

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

9 General Miller: I will, Senator.

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

13 General Miller: I will, Senator.

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

16 General Miller: Yes, sir, they will.

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

19 General Miller: I do, Senator.

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

25 General Miller: I do, Senator.

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

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

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

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

22 I was just in Afghanistan visiting our troops and
23 General Nicholson last month. After speaking with him, it
24 is clear that we have made progress under the new approach.
25 Still, we need to remain clear-eyed about Pakistan's

1 continued support for the Taliban insurgency. General
2 Miller, you are uniquely qualified to lead the renewal
3 effort in Afghanistan with your service in Special Ops and
4 your most recent assignment as the commander of the Joint
5 Special Operations Command. This committee looks forward to
6 hearing how you would address the challenges that you face
7 today.

8 Senator Reed?

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

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

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

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

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

1 throughout the winter months.

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

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

25 Though the security projections for 2018 are

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

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

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

1 the uniform of the United States. Thank you.

2 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed.

3 General Miller, we will be anxious to hear your opening
4 statement. You can take whatever time you would like.

5 However, your entire statement will be made a part of the
6 record. You might start off by introducing your family, and
7 you are recognized.

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1 STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL AUSTIN S. MILLER, USA
2 TO BE GENERAL AND COMMANDER, RESOLUTE SUPPORT MISSION, NORTH
3 ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION/COMMANDER, UNITED STATES
4 FORCES-AFGHANISTAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 Senator Inhofe: And how long has he been in this

1 position?

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

4 Senator Inhofe: Okay.

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 I have learned a lot in the last 17 years. I have

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

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

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

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

1 mission.

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

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

15 [The prepared statement of General Miller follows:]

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1 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, General Miller.

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

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

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

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

24 General Miller: Senator, I go back to, as you
25 mentioned, the vital national interest. It is the

1 counterterrorism piece. Certainly the Taliban create the
2 conditions for the ungoverned spaces.

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

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

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

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

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

25 Just for a minute, let us talk about the SFAB

1 activities that are going on. We have some six. I guess
2 one of those is to the reserves. So we are looking at five
3 SFABs which concentrate on the NCOs and the officers, and
4 that is going to be predicated on the assumption that the
5 Afghans have adequate resources to carry out missions as
6 instructed and participate in by these officers and NCOs.
7 How do you think that is going to work? Do you see the
8 cooperation of the Afghans at this time to be adequate to
9 carry out those missions?

10 General Miller: Senator, I have seen the SFABs only
11 from a distance. I had an opportunity to meet with their
12 commander. I do know it is very high quality soldiers,
13 officers, and noncommissioned officers as part of the SFAB.

14 What I would go back to is my personal experience with
15 advising and assisting, which as you mentioned, is a
16 critical component of our train, advise, and assist. I have
17 seen it work. I have seen it work with the Afghan Special
18 Security Forces, primarily with the commandos, but also with
19 the police. That combination is a powerful combination, and
20 it has a chance to increase their capabilities, their reach
21 -- the Afghans' reach in intelligence and operations. So I
22 am confident that this is going in the right direction.

23 Senator Inhofe: Well, that is good. And I am
24 confident that you are going to be confirmed too. So I
25 would just like to have you, once you are on the job and

1 looking to see how -- it is a concept. It is good I think,
2 but it has not had time to be proven to the extent in the
3 environment you are going to be working in. So we will need
4 to have report-backs on that.

5 General Miller: Yes, Senator.

6 Senator Inhofe: Thank you so much.

7 Senator Reed?

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

9 General Miller, again I shared the chairman's
10 confidence in your skill and your ability and your
11 leadership.

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

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

25 General Miller: Sir, today I am tracking that

1 Ambassador Alice Wells is the lead working very specifically
2 in the reconciliation arena for the State Department.

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

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

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

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

24 General Miller: Senator, again, I see similar
25 behavior, contradictory. But as we go forward, as we work

1 through the South Asia strategy, not just from a military
2 standpoint, but from a diplomatic standpoint, again I go
3 back to I believe we ought to have very, very high
4 expectations of them.

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

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

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

25 What is your view on the detail of information that

1 should be released?

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

7 Senator Reed: Thank you.

8 Again, good luck, sir. And thank you for your service
9 and thank you for Austin's service and thank you for Sarah's
10 service too.

11 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed.

12 Senator Wicker?

13 Senator Wicker: General, thank you for your service.

14 We are eager to get reports about how things are going
15 over there, and so there is a little disadvantage in doing
16 so because you have not actually been over there in this new
17 capacity.

18 But let me ask you your assessment of this Eid's
19 ceasefire that you mentioned. It was supposed to last 3
20 days, and the Afghan Government then agreed to a unilateral
21 10-day extension. This was widely criticized in some
22 sectors of Afghanistan. Some members of parliament had some
23 critical things to say about that. And there are reports of
24 Reuters that this led to Taliban fighters walking freely
25 into government-controlled areas.

1 So can you enlighten us a little more, based on what
2 you have heard, about how this worked and whether the 10-day
3 unilateral extension might have been a disadvantage for the
4 government?

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

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

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

24 General Miller: Sir, we agree.

25 Senator Wicker: And also, it has come to my attention

1 that Afghans have requested approximately 730 MRAPs, and we,
2 the United States, actually has hundreds of excess MRAPs in
3 mothballs that are ready for refurbishment.

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

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

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

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

23 Senator Wicker: Okay.

24 Let me just ask you then in closing to react to a
25 statement that Senator Reed made about the lack of progress

1 over the last several months in terms of our effort. Is
2 that your assessment also that our progress has been
3 somewhat flat? It has not gone backwards, but we are not
4 really getting where we need to be.

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

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

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

17 Senator Wicker: Thank you. Appreciate it.

18 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Wicker.

19 Senator Peters?

20 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

23 General Miller, when President Trump announced his
24 strategy for Afghanistan last August, he made clear that the
25 U.S. military would be taking a goal-oriented approach and

1 moving away from timetables, as I know you are well aware.
2 The President said that conditions on the ground, not
3 arbitrary timetables, will guide our strategy.

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

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

21 It is important to remember that over \$125 billion has
22 been spent on relief and reconstruction alone in
23 Afghanistan. That is more than what the United States spent
24 on the Marshall Plan to rebuild Western Europe after World
25 War II when accounting for inflation.

1 So I know our general objective has been to set up an
2 Afghan Government capable of running their own country and
3 providing security necessary to not allow terrorist
4 operations, but after spending more than we did to set up
5 Europe after the devastating effects of World War II and 17
6 years have elapsed, tell me what you think we need to be
7 doing differently that we have not done for the past 17
8 years.

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

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

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

23 My experience -- and I have watched this war with high
24 troop levels. I was present during the surge of 130,000. I
25 know we have reduced costs over time by bringing the force

1 levels down, as well as the resources for the mission.

2 Senator Peters: General, you talked about cost and
3 spending. I serve as the ranking member on the Federal
4 Spending Oversight Subcommittee, and last month, we had a
5 hearing on spending in Afghanistan. We heard testimony from
6 the special inspector general that spending of over \$8
7 billion on counternarcotics programming and basically after
8 \$8 billion of hard-earned taxpayer money, those programs, it
9 has been decided, just did not work because they were not
10 coordinated. They were poorly executed. We have also heard
11 that the incentives for narcotics production and conflict
12 dynamics just overwhelm anything that the United States can
13 do with these assistance programs, meaning it is
14 questionable that these programs were wise investments in
15 the first place. But certainly at some point after spending
16 \$8 billion, someone should have spoken up. I know that is
17 not your fault. You were not there. This is not about
18 anything that you did in your role.

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

25 General Miller: Senator, first of all, in my present

1 duty and present and previous command positions, I view
2 myself as personally responsible, a good steward for the
3 taxpayer, for the resources that are allocated. And I thank
4 this committee very specifically for the support given over
5 the years.

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

13 Senator Peters: Thank you.

14 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Peters.

15 Senator Ernst?

16 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

22 General, last year there was a very realistic chance
23 that all U.S. forces were going to be withdrawn from
24 Afghanistan. Can you briefly paint a picture of how
25 Afghanistan would look today if that had occurred?

1 General Miller: Senator, my personal opinion -- I am
2 going to think echoed by others in the intel community -- is
3 a precipitous and disorderly withdrawal -- we would have
4 negative effects on protecting our vital national interests,
5 which is to protect from attacks emanating from Afghanistan.

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

9 General Miller: That is correct, Senator.

10 Senator Ernst: Thank you very much.

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

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

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

24 Senator Ernst: And we also spoke a little bit about
25 counter-drug operations and going after narcoterrorists in

1 Afghanistan. That is very important. As you know, it is
2 vital that we do cut the terrorist funding streams and just
3 as important as that, we stop the production of those
4 narcotics in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, we are often using
5 millions of dollars in bombs and putting troops in very
6 dangerous situations to have very low impact on the actual
7 drug revenue.

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

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

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

24 I have a little bit of time left. But we do talk a lot
25 about our troop numbers in Afghanistan, and we do not talk

1 enough about all of the air assets and the needs that come
2 with them. Of course, we have to have the support force
3 too. As you know, close air support, medevac platforms, and
4 lift capabilities are equally as important.

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

1 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Ernst.

2 Senator Warren?

3 Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

12 Unfortunately, you are not the first commander to come
13 in here to express cautious optimism. In fact, I just
14 started looking through some of the old documents.

15 General Campbell said, I really do think that as people
16 look back and as they say 2010 was the year in Afghanistan,
17 I think that was a turning point.

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

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

24 General Nicholson in 2017. U.S. and Afghan forces have
25 turned the corner.

1 General Miller, we have supposedly turned the corner so
2 many times that it seems now we are going in circles. So
3 let me just ask you, do you envision turning another corner
4 during your tenure as commander? After 17 years of war,
5 what are you going to do differently to bring this conflict
6 to an end?

7 General Miller: Senator, first off, I acknowledge the
8 17 years. That is generational. And I have experience from
9 2001 until very recently. This young guy sitting behind me
10 -- I never anticipated that his cohort would be in a
11 position to deploy as I sat there in 2001 and looked at
12 that. So I acknowledge that.

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

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

23 The other piece is can we harden the Afghan Security
24 Forces to close the distance and change the calculus on the
25 ground now.

1 Senator Warren: Well, I appreciate that, General, but
2 let me just push back just a little bit on this.
3 Afghanistan is in crisis. The government is not gaining new
4 territory. It lacks the support of its own people. It
5 controls or influences only about two-thirds of the
6 population. The Taliban has actually increased the
7 population under its control since 2016. The Security
8 Forces are sustaining unsustainable losses. According to
9 UNICEF, nearly 50 percent of Afghan children are out of
10 school. Food insecurity has spiked. Corruption is rampant.

11 Let me see if I can frame the question differently.
12 Even if U.S. forces could somehow stabilize the security
13 situation, can we realistically expect a political
14 settlement without addressing these underlying challenges?

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

20 Senator Warren: None of this is the fault of the brave
21 men and women of the U.S. military. But I am afraid that we
22 are asking our military to perform an impossible task. We
23 have been in Afghanistan for 17 years. Our military cannot
24 and should not be in Afghanistan forever. We need to make
25 it clear to the Afghans that they need to secure enough of

1 their own country so that U.S. troops can come home as soon
2 as possible. I appreciate your being here, but I am deeply
3 concerned that we are just heading further and further down
4 a path that does not have success at the end.

5 Thank you.

6 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Warren.

7 Senator Perdue?

8 Senator Perdue: Thank you, General, for your service
9 and your family's service.

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

19 General Miller: I do, Senator.

20 Senator Perdue: And so we have given them air power
21 over the last year. We train their A-29 pilots in this
22 country. We have given them a lot of support. And yet,
23 when we cross the border into Pakistan, we see nothing has
24 really changed much in the last year. I was in Pakistan
25 last year with Senator McCain, and we met with General

1 Bajwa. We met with the head of their intelligence service.
2 And then we went over and met with President Ghani the next
3 day in Afghanistan and talked about cross-border joint
4 operations. To your knowledge right now from open source
5 and from your special operations background, have any of
6 those joint operations actually been conducted yet?

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

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

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

23 Senator Perdue: So last year, when I visited General
24 Nicholson over there, the objective, as he laid it out, and
25 the plan for victory, as he called it -- and I have high

1 regard for General Nicholson. I think he has done a great
2 job there -- was to get the Taliban to the table. Are we
3 any closer to that today in your opinion than we were a year
4 ago? And what would you do as the new commander over there
5 to help achieve that mission if that continues to be our
6 objective?

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

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

14 Senator Perdue: Sir, one last question briefly.

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

24 General Miller: Senator, as you look at a CT strategy
25 as part of a larger campaign, certainly leadership strikes

1 are a pillar there. They are not decisive by themselves.
2 It takes a much deeper disruption of a network and, as
3 importantly, the political aspect to come in and solidify
4 that, take a disrupt, and make it into a consolidation of
5 gains.

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

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

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

20 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Perdue.

21 Senator Blumenthal?

22 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 I join my colleagues in thanking you and your family
24 for your service and expressing my appreciation for your
25 very candid visit with me recently.

1 When I asked you the question about what the end game
2 is in Afghanistan, you very articulately made the point that
3 we need to protect our nation and our national security from
4 the use of that part of the world and specifically
5 Afghanistan as a safe haven for terrorists to attack us.
6 And perhaps for this committee and in a sense for the
7 American people you could express that view because I think
8 it would help in a sense further the understanding among
9 members of this body and the American people about what our
10 goals are there.

11 General Miller: Senator, thank you for that.

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

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

1 achieve our core objective.

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

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

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

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

16 General Miller: There are some of our European allies.
17 Yes, Senator.

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

20 General Miller: That is correct, Senator.

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

25 General Miller: Senator, I agree with that. And if

1 confirmed, that is one of my key responsibilities is
2 maintaining the cohesion of the coalition.

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

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

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

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

25 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you very much.

1 Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

2 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.

3 Senator Graham?

4 Senator Graham: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

7 General Miller: Senator, I am counting 3 and a half to
8 4 years.

9 Senator Graham: So you understand the area pretty
10 well?

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

15 Senator Graham: Have you been wounded twice?

16 General Miller: I have, Senator.

17 Senator Graham: Where were you wounded at?

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

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

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

25 General Miller: That is correct, Senator.

1 Senator Graham: Did you support sending more forces to
2 Afghanistan? Do you support the current number?

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

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

7 General Miller: I would, Senator.

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

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

13 Senator Graham: Describe those effects briefly.

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

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

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

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

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

25 Senator Graham: Do you have the authorities to engage

1 the enemy?

2 General Miller: Senator, especially in my current job,
3 I have the authorities to engage the enemy.

4 Senator Graham: When did that change?

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

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

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

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

22 General Miller: Senator, I do not know the answer
23 fully to that question. My assessment is that they need to
24 be. We should have high expectations of them. But I am not
25 able to judge the better or worse at this stage.

1 Senator Graham: So we have been there a long time. Do
2 you agree with me that history will judge not when we left
3 but what we left behind?

4 General Miller: I do, Senator.

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

7 General Miller: I do, Senator.

8 Senator Graham: What does winning look like?

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

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

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

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

25 General Miller: Senator, my opinion is if we leave too

1 soon, there is a threat in Afghanistan.

2 Senator Graham: A real threat?

3 General Miller: Yes, Senator, a real threat.

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

6 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Graham.

7 Senator King?

8 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 I would like to follow up on Senator Graham's usual
10 good questions.

11 The question I am struggling with is that the
12 fundamental premise of our presence in Afghanistan now for
13 17 years is the safe haven argument, that Afghanistan is a
14 safe haven. It was a safe haven for al Qaeda at the time of
15 September 11th. The question is what makes Afghanistan so
16 peculiarly safe as opposed to Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Africa,
17 Syria. I am genuinely trying to understand why all the
18 blood and treasure goes into one country if the enemy can
19 simply set up a tent city in the middle of the Sahel or
20 somewhere in Pakistan or somewhere in Iran. Do you see
21 where I am going? Why is it Afghanistan is the center? You
22 are talking about a mobile enemy. Most of the people that
23 plotted September 11th were not from Afghanistan. They just
24 used the land. Help me out here.

25 General Miller: Senator, with Afghanistan, obviously

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

11 Senator King: Well, I understand your answer, but I
12 really do not. Again, you say Afghanistan has a functioning
13 government which seems to be losing ground, but there are
14 ungoverned areas. Are there areas where there is a
15 sympathetic government to terrorists, Yemen -- I mean, I
16 just listed them. I just wonder if we are not concentrating
17 all of our fire power on the place that bred September 11th
18 and a lot of blood and treasure, as I said. I do not know
19 how we are going to change the dynamic there. We had
20 110,000 troops there. Now we have 15,000. What is going to
21 be different? I was following up I thought Senator Warren's
22 questions going back in history where your predecessors have
23 all said we are at a turning point. Nothing seems to
24 change. And what is going to change in the next 2 years or
25 3 years?

1 And by the way, I am not questioning your leadership
2 whatsoever. I certainly plan to vote to confirm you. I
3 think you are the right guy in the right job at the right
4 time. Your record is impeccable. I am talking more about
5 national policy. You happen to be the guy sitting in the
6 witness seat.

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

13 General Miller: Senator, as I look through and think
14 back based on your question and reflect what has changed,
15 again I was there in 2001 when we probably had about 1,000
16 U.S. boots on the ground maybe, maybe even a little less
17 than that, with other coalition partners. I was there in
18 2009 and 2010 when the U.S. military, as well as other NATO
19 forces surged, and there were over 130,000 U.S. forces in
20 the period where we took the brunt of U.S. casualties as
21 well as NATO casualties.

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

1 ensure they were in the front.

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

8 Senator King: And I understand that.

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

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

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

25 Senator King: Well, I really appreciate your

1 thoughtful and your willingness to take on this very
2 difficult assignment. We will certainly try to provide you
3 with what you tell us you need. Thank you.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator King.

6 Senator Cotton?

7 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

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

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

23 General Miller: That is correct, Senator.

24 Senator Cotton: Is it still true that Afghanistan in
25 its border area with Pakistan has the highest concentration

1 of foreign terrorist organizations anywhere in the world?

2 General Miller: That is correct, Senator.

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

8 General Miller: Yes, Senator. That is correct.

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

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

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

15 General Miller: Senator, I did not.

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

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

22 Senator Cotton: Well, since you raise that, let us
23 talk about Lieutenant Miller there for a second. If
24 Lieutenant Miller does his job well and stays as a platoon
25 leader at the 82nd Airborne into next year, 2019, he is

1 going to have a private report to his platoon in all
2 likelihood who was born after the 9/11 attacks. That is a
3 pretty shocking fact. Is it not?

4 General Miller: Yes, Senator.

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

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

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

24 General Miller: That is correct, Senator.

25 Senator Cotton: A couple weeks ago, unfortunately an

1 American soldier was killed, Staff Sergeant Alex Conrad. He
2 was killed in a very poor, troubled, war-torn country. It
3 was not Afghanistan, though. It was Somalia. And Captain
4 Miller served in Somalia 25 years ago. Is that not right?

5 General Miller: That is correct, Senator.

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

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

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

15 General Miller: That is correct, Senator.

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

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

23 Senator Cotton: And we all wish that they were not
24 there and we all wish they did not want to try to kill us in
25 the United States. But they are there and that is why we

1 have troops there still. And I commend you and I commend
2 your son and every other soldier, sailor, airman, and marine
3 that we have that are continuing to carry on this fight for
4 17 years in Afghanistan to keep this country safe. It is
5 something that probably none of them want to do. They all
6 wish like you had wished in 2001 that they were not having
7 to do it. But as you say, if we precipitously withdraw,
8 then the only thing that is going to happen in Afghanistan
9 is they are going to start plotting to attack us again here
10 in our home.

11 Thank you and Godspeed in Afghanistan.

12 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Cotton.

13 Senator Scott?

14 Senator Scott: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

21 I think Senator Cotton, as well as Senator Warren, and
22 others have alluded to the question that I am going to ask
23 you that you seem to have the same very succinct answer to.
24 I want to give you a little more time to kind of unscramble
25 that egg a little bit for us.

1 17 years later, we still have more than 12,000 troops
2 still in Afghanistan. There is no question that there seems
3 to be a part of our national security priorities keeping our
4 men and women who served this nation so bravely and so well
5 still in Afghanistan.

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

13 General Miller: Senator, of the three groups you
14 named, Taliban, ISIS, and al Qaeda, I would put the Taliban
15 in a separate category, a threat to forces in Afghanistan.
16 And I would put ISIS and al Qaeda in a threat in an external
17 piece. You mentioned we discussed in the context of my
18 current work. I go back to I know these are
19 transnationalist groups. I know that they communicate
20 external to Afghanistan. They trade tactics, techniques,
21 and procedures. They share them. There is funding. There
22 is the media. There is inspiration that is driven out of
23 these two groups. So I see both of them as clear
24 transnational threats with the desire to attack the United
25 States or Western interests.

1 Senator Scott: And without our presence there, their
2 desire plus their capabilities would pose a real immediate
3 or imminent threat to the United States.

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

8 Senator Scott: Thank you, sir.

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

20 Given the extra resources needed to field the fifth
21 generation aircraft and next generation combat vehicles and
22 advanced technology weapons, those resources will have to
23 come from somewhere else. Does the National Defense
24 Strategy change how you think about training and employing
25 the forces you command today?

1 General Miller: Senator, yes, it does change. But I
2 will tell you it changes all the time. The men and women of
3 Joint Special Operations Command -- I would call them a full
4 spectrum organization or SOF writ large is full spectrum.
5 So while concentrating on violent extremist organizations
6 certainly since 2001 very directly, indirectly in other
7 cases, SOF is also preparing for other challenges, as
8 indicated in the National Defense Strategy.

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

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

1 for those.

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

8 Senator Scott: Good enough.

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

17 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Scott.

18 Senator Sullivan?

19 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

1 awards for valor. So I want to thank you for that. Like I
2 said, I want to thank your family as well.

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

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

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

23 When you look at the larger train, advise, and assist
24 with the other parts of the Afghan National Army and the
25 police in some cases, this is the piece that drives Afghan-

1 led. It is the security forces that extend the writ of the
2 government, if you will. It creates an environment. So the
3 train, advise, and assist is meant to enable those Afghan
4 forces to be successful.

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

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

18 General Miller: Senator, as I have watched CT
19 operations that are largely focused on kinetics, my personal
20 assessment is those are fleeting. They are disruptive but
21 not necessarily a decisive or enduring operation. The TAA,
22 the Afghans coming in behind, that is your reliable
23 partnership that starts driving towards what I would refer
24 to as a consolidation of gains which oftentimes are more
25 political than they are military.

1 Senator Sullivan: Can we ever secure our national
2 interests either from the train, advise, and assist or CT
3 perspective if there is a safe haven in Pakistan?

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

6 Senator Sullivan: So is that a no?

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

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

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

25 Can you talk about and maybe help us understand what

1 General Abizaid talked about, a generational fight that we
2 just need to be ready to deal with to keep our citizens
3 safe? As the JSOC Commander, in many ways you are the
4 leader of that battle and long war focus.

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

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

8 General Miller: We absolutely are.

9 Senator Sullivan: 17 years.

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

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

23 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

25 Senator Reed and I would entertain if someone who has

1 maybe one final question to ask. All right. Fine.

2 Senator Sullivan: I just have one follow-up to that.
3 I am here. Right? Might as well do it and it is important.

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

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

20 Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

21 Senator Inhofe: General Miller, I think you have
22 sensed that from both sides of the aisle during the course
23 of this meeting, there is obviously an expectation that you
24 will bring something in that is going to offer something
25 new. And I think you probably ought to, after you have been

1 on the job for a while after you are confirmed, come in and
2 give some new insights because to continue to do the same
3 thing that has led us into 17 years is not going to be
4 acceptable. And again, I would repeat what some others have
5 said that I think you are the right person. You have the
6 right background. So we will expect a major change from
7 you. And we thank you very much.

8 General Miller: Thank you, Senator.

9 Senator Inhofe: We are adjourned.

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

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