

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATIONS OF:
GENERAL ROBERT B. ABRAMS, USA, FOR REAPPOINTMENT
TO THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO BE COMMANDER,
UNITED NATIONS COMMAND, COMBINED FORCES
COMMAND, AND UNITED STATES FORCES KOREA; AND VICE
ADMIRAL CRAIG S. FALLER, USN, TO BE ADMIRAL AND
COMMANDER, UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND

Tuesday, September 25, 2018

Washington, D.C.

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GENERAL ROBERT B. ABRAMS, USA, FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE
GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO BE COMMANDER, UNITED NATIONS
COMMAND, COMBINED FORCES COMMAND, AND UNITED STATES FORCES
KOREA; AND VICE ADMIRAL CRAIG S. FALLER, USN, TO BE ADMIRAL
AND COMMANDER, UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND

Tuesday, September 25, 2018

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m., in
Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. James M.
Inhofe, chairman of the committee, presiding.

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

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

3 Chairman Inhofe: The meeting will come to order.

4 Senator Reed and I agree on something that we've talked
5 about for a long period of time. That is, where we're going
6 to have a meeting that starts at 9:30 or 10 o'clock or 11
7 o'clock, we're going to start. And it's been our experience
8 in the past, and it was my experience in the past, when I
9 had several years of chairing the Environment and Public
10 Works Committee, that, once all the members realize we're
11 going to start on time, they get here on time. So, we're --
12 everyone's busy. We understand that.

13 So, anyway, we are -- first of all, this is a -- we
14 want, again, to make our statement, the love that we have
15 for John McCain, the years that we served under him in this
16 committee, we're -- we will miss him sorely, but it's
17 something that we have great memories, and they will stay
18 with us forever.

19 The committee meets today to review the nomination of
20 General Robert Abrams to be Commander of the United States
21 -- United Nations Command, the Combined Forces Command, U.S.
22 Forces Korea; and the Vice -- and of Vice Admiral Craig
23 Faller to be Commander, United States Southern Command.

24 Of course, we know today would not be possible without
25 the support and sacrifice of your families, so it's been our

1 tradition for a long period of time to have you make the
2 proper recognitions, if you've -- so desire to do that.

3 In order to exercise the oversight responsibilities, we
4 do have to ask you the eight questions. So, if you would
5 audibly respond, each one of you, to each question. And, if
6 you don't, I'll remind you.

7 First, have you adhered to applicable laws and
8 regulations governing conflicts of interest?

9 [Both witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

10 Chairman Inhofe: Do you agree, when asked, to give
11 your personal views, even if those views differ from the
12 administration who's in power?

13 [Both witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

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

17 [Both witnesses answered in the negative.]

18 Chairman Inhofe: Will you ensure your staff complies
19 with deadlines established for requested communications,
20 including questions for the recording record in hearings?

21 [Both witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

22 Chairman Inhofe: And will you cooperate in providing
23 witnesses and briefers in response to congressional
24 requests?

25 [Both witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

1 Chairman Inhofe: Will those witnesses be protected
2 from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

3 [Both witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

4 Chairman Inhofe: And do you agree, if confirmed, to
5 appear and testify, upon request, before this committee?

6 [Both witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

7 Chairman Inhofe: And, lastly, do you agree to provide
8 documents, including copies of electronic forms of
9 communication, in a timely manner when requested by a duly-
10 constituted committee, or to consult with these committees
11 regarding the basis for any good-faith delay or denial in
12 providing such information?

13 [Both witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

14 Chairman Inhofe: Okay, good.

15 We thank both of you for your decades of service and
16 the personal relations that we've had, the four -- the three
17 of us, along with the other members of this committee.

18 Admiral Faller, you have been nominated to lead the
19 forces in Southern Command at a time of increasing regional
20 concerns, with instability on the rise and Venezuela
21 potentially on the brink of collapse. The National Defense
22 Strategy identifies protecting the homeland and sustaining
23 American advantages in the western hemisphere as key
24 priorities. You will be on the front lines of that work,
25 combating illicit networks smuggling drugs, people, weapons,

1 and money that will be even more difficult in a theater that
2 lacks sufficient resourcing.

3 And, General Abrams, you have been nominated to lead
4 our forces in Korea at a time of critical importance to our
5 national security when it comes to North Korea. I support
6 President Trump's efforts to solve this problem
7 diplomatically. All Americans should hope that we can find
8 peaceful solutions on the Korean Peninsula and never have to
9 face the prospect of war with North Korea. Any such
10 solution will require close cooperation with our allies,
11 South Korea, and we must be cautious and deliberate so that
12 we can ensure our alliance is maintained and strengthened.

13 One of the things that's going to happen today, we're
14 going to be waiting for a quorum, because we have a long
15 list of confirmations to do. So, I would hope that some of
16 you who are here now will remain until we can get a quorum.

17 Senator Reed.

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

3 Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

4 Let me begin by joining you in recognizing the historic
5 service of Chairman John McCain in so many different
6 dimensions for the Nation, and salute you and welcome you,
7 Mr. Chairman, as this is your first official hearing as the
8 chairman of the committee. I look forward to working with
9 you, very, very much so.

10 I also want to recognize Senator Kyl, one of our new
11 members. A lot of potential. I think you --

12 [Laughter.]

13 Chairman Inhofe: You can barely see him down at the
14 end, down there.

15 Senator Reed: I think I -- I have good feelings about
16 you, Senator. I think you'll get this pretty quickly. So,
17 welcome.

18 General Abrams, General Faller, you've been nominated
19 for extraordinarily important jobs to -- in the service to
20 the Nation. Let me welcome you and your families. General
21 Abrams, your wife, Connie, your sister, Jeanne, and brother-
22 in-law, John, also your nephews, Frank and Nathan, and
23 Nathan's children, Natalie and Nathaniel. And, Admiral
24 Faller, welcome, to your wife, Martha, and your father,
25 Henry. Welcome.

1 General Abrams, while tensions on the Korean Peninsula
2 have been reduced since the Singapore Summit, the situation
3 remains precarious and dangerous. Despite President Trump's
4 assertions to the contrary, there remains a significant
5 military threat to the United States and its allies because
6 of the regime's array of nuclear, conventional, biological,
7 and chemical weapons. I am greatly disappointed that the
8 momentum of the maximum-pressure campaign has been lost and
9 we have seen no developments on denuclearization since the
10 Singapore Summit.

11 I'm greatly concerned about the readiness of our troops
12 and those of our allies because of the cancellation of the
13 joint military exercises. Suspending the exercises was a
14 substantial concession on our part, and I have not seen a
15 corresponding substantial concession from the North Koreans.
16 President Trump's characterization of the exercise as
17 "provocative war games" was unfortunate, because it has fed
18 into the narrative of North Korea.

19 General Abrams, I'd like to hear your views regarding
20 the military situation on the Peninsula and how you
21 anticipate maintaining the readiness of the joint forces at
22 the same time that these negotiations are taking place.

23 Finally, I am concerned that there is a widening gap
24 between us and our ally, the Republic of Korea. The
25 Republic of Korea and North Korea have recently concluded

1 three inter-Korean summits, and both sides have stated their
2 desire for a peace treaty. It is unclear how these
3 developments will affect our longstanding and critical
4 military alliance with the Republic of Korea. For example,
5 many experts have expressed concerns that a peace treaty may
6 call into question the need for U.S. troops on the Korean
7 Peninsula. Clearly, given the threats so posed by North
8 Korea to the United States and South Korea and Japan, the
9 presence of our troops and the strength of our alliance
10 remains critical, and will remain critical for years to
11 come.

12 General Abrams, I look forward to hearing from you on
13 how you intend to maintain and deepen our military alliance
14 with our ally, the Republic of Korea, given the diplomatic
15 developments that have occurred.

16 Admiral Faller, you will be facing a different set of
17 challenges with a much smaller pool of resources, given our
18 focus on near-peer competition with Russia and China. At
19 the same time, the issue sets that you face are no less
20 challenging or compelling, especially given the current
21 opioid crisis in the United States. You will play a
22 critical role in a whole-of-government effort to curb the
23 influence of life-threatening narcotics into the United
24 States.

25 Venezuela poses a significant challenge and threat to

1 the region. In addition to creating refugee crises in
2 neighboring countries like Colombia and Peru, which have
3 taken a significant toll on the civilian infrastructure and
4 social services, Venezuela is fueling the narcotics trade
5 and exporting corruption and illicit funds to its neighbors.
6 There are reports of some of these illicit funds are going
7 to terrorist organizations, thereby undermining the
8 significant progress that countries like Colombia have made
9 in rooting out the FARC and the ELN.

10 Admiral Faller, I look forward to hearing from you on
11 you intend to help Venezuela's neighbors deal with this
12 ongoing crisis.

13 Also, Admiral Faller, I'd like to hear from you on how
14 you plan to coordinate with the Central Command and Indo-
15 Pacific Command to ensure that we are engaging in a global
16 strategy to counter the efforts of Russia and China to
17 undermine our influence and stability in the region.

18 And finally, Admiral Faller, I know you're prepared to
19 address comments that have raised recently in the press,
20 which I think are important to get before the committee.

21 Gentlemen, thank you for your decades of service to our
22 Nation. I look forward to your testimony.

23 Thank you.

24 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed.

25 And let's start with you, General Abrams. And each one

1 of you will have an opening statement. As you well know,
2 your entire statement will be made a part of the record.

3 And you are recognized.

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1 STATEMENT OF GENERAL ROBERT B. ABRAMS, USA, NOMINEE
2 FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO BE
3 COMMANDER, UNITED NATIONS COMMAND, COMBINED FORCES COMMAND,
4 AND UNITED STATES FORCES KOREA

5 General Abrams: Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member
6 Reed and members of the committee, good morning, and thank
7 you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

8 Mr. Chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to
9 offer my condolences to you and the committee on the passing
10 of your colleague, Senator John McCain. But, I also want to
11 recognize and acknowledge your tremendous leadership of this
12 committee. You have long been a staunch supporter of those
13 of us in uniform, and I'm humbled to appear before you and
14 to serve the Nation alongside you and this entire committee.

15 I'm honored to be selected by the President and
16 Secretary Mattis and General Dunford to serve as the
17 Commander, United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command,
18 and United States Forces Korea. I am grateful for their
19 trust and confidence in me for this very important triple-
20 hatted position.

21 I would also like to recognize General Vince Brooks,
22 the current UNC, CFC, and USFK Commander, and his wife,
23 Carole, for their dedicated service to the Nation.

24 I'm joined here today by my wife, Connie, also an Army
25 brat, who, for the last 26-plus years, has been side by side

1 with her soldier supporting troops and families everywhere
2 we've been stationed. She's been my partner and best friend
3 in this career of service in both peace and war. If
4 confirmed, Connie will make her 17th move, and I am grateful
5 for her unconditional support.

6 Connie and I are proud to be joined today by several
7 members of our family, Mr. Chairman: my sister, Jeanne, and
8 her husband, John Daley; my nephew, Frank Bradley, from New
9 York City; my nephew, Nathan Naylor, and his two children,
10 Natalie and Nathaniel. I am touched by their presence and
11 proud of each of them and those parts and generations of our
12 family that they represent. Our son and daughter could not
13 join us today, but we know that they are here in spirit.

14 Mr. Chairman and committee members, this is a critical
15 time on the Korean Peninsula, and, in fact, for all of
16 Northeast Asia. The strategic importance of the Pacific
17 region has grown over the past decade. The foundation for
18 success in Northeast Asia is largely due to the
19 extraordinary relationships we have built over time with the
20 United Nations sending states and our Indo-Pacific
21 neighbors, particularly Japan and the Republic of Korea. If
22 confirmed, I will continue to cultivate those meaningful
23 relationships.

24 Our strong combined military power with the Republic of
25 Korea has sustained armistice conditions for 65 years and

1 supported our diplomatic and economic efforts today. If
2 confirmed, I will maintain the readiness and fight-tonight
3 capability of the Republic of Korea/United States combined
4 forces and UNC multinational forces in order to maintain
5 credible deterrence and to preserve options for our elected
6 leaders.

7 I endorse the four longstanding UNC/CFC/USFK
8 priorities: sustaining and strengthening the alliance,
9 maintaining the armistice, transforming the alliance, and
10 sustaining the force. I believe these priorities remain
11 relevant. But, if confirmed, I will, as any new commander
12 would, make my own assessment on the way forward, and I will
13 keep this committee informed of my conclusions.

14 If confirmed, I look forward to teaming with Ambassador
15 Harris, who brings notable depth of experience to the
16 position, to do my best on behalf of our Nation and the
17 Republic of Korea during this unprecedented time of change
18 and opportunity. I recognize my personal and professional
19 responsibility to provide my best military judgment and
20 candid military advice. And, if confirmed, I will do both.

21 I'm honored to have another opportunity to command and
22 the privilege to lead the finest our Nation has to offer,
23 and their counterparts from the Republic of Korea and our
24 United Nations sending states. And, if confirmed, I pledge
25 to give them my very best effort every day.

1 Again, thank you, Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed,
2 and members of the committee, for your support to our Armed
3 Forces and for this opportunity. I look forward to your
4 questions.

5 [The prepared statement of General Abrams follows:]

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1 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you --

2 General Abrams: Thank you.

3 Chairman Inhofe: -- General Abrams.

4 Admiral Faller.

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1 STATEMENT OF VICE ADMIRAL CRAIG S. FALLER, USN,
2 NOMINEE TO BE ADMIRAL AND COMMANDER, UNITED STATES SOUTHERN
3 COMMAND

4 Admiral Faller: Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed,
5 members of the committee, I am humbled to testify before you
6 today. I want to personally thank the President, Secretary
7 Mattis, and Chairman Dunford for supporting my nomination.

8 I am honored to testify alongside General Abrams. And
9 I, too, want to recognize the legacy and service of Senator
10 McCain.

11 My desire to serve began at home, with the support and
12 encouragement of my mom and my dad. And I know my mom would
13 be proud if she was here today and still with us. My dad,
14 himself an Army vet, is here. And thank you, Dad. We also
15 have a family connection to Latin America. My wife's
16 father, Leonel, is from Brazil. Now a proud U.S. citizen,
17 he raised a family of six here in the U.S., earned a
18 master's in chemistry, and, at 90, is still as passionate
19 about life as ever. He could not be here today.

20 I especially want to recognize my wife, Martha, who has
21 been -- we have been devoted to each other for 34 years.
22 She's my best friend. She has been both steadfast and
23 passionate in her support of my service, our family, and our
24 country, and military families.

25 I also want to thank my daughters, Jessica and Abby,

1 who could not be here today, but I want to personally thank
2 them for their service, sacrifice, many moves, and long
3 deployments apart. Thank you, Jessica and Abby.

4 I want to extend a special thank you to all the men and
5 women who have served with me. Their inspiration,
6 sacrifice, and support have enabled me to continue serving
7 our military and Nation. I am humbled, thankful, and truly
8 grateful.

9 We're fortunate to live in the western hemisphere,
10 interconnected by a bridge of common cultural bonds, shared
11 values, and, with a few rough exceptions, strong democratic
12 principles, a hemisphere that shines, is a beacon of
13 opportunity in a world awash in complexity and rapid change.
14 During recent travels to the region with the Secretary of
15 Defense, I saw firsthand the opportunity in willing
16 partners, like Colombia, Chile, Brazil, and Argentina. The
17 2018 National Defense Strategy sets clear guidance. We will
18 field a more lethal and ready force. We will build new and
19 stronger partnerships. And we will scrupulously account for
20 every resource the Congress has authorized and appropriated.

21 Multiple challenges must be dealt with aggressively,
22 from the return of great-power competition with Russia and
23 China to threat networks of criminals and violent extremists
24 that traffic in terror, drugs, weapons, humans, illegal
25 immigrants, and illicit goods that undermine both our

1 sovereignty and security here at home and those of our
2 partners.

3 Nationally, the 72,000 drug-related deaths last year is
4 a crisis. And, if confirmed as SOUTHCOM Commander, I will
5 remain committed to doing our part to deny, degrade, and
6 destroy this scourge. Let there be no doubt, we, as a
7 military, must compete and win. There is no other choice
8 for our Nation's security. Teamwork wins. Just as nations
9 with allies and partners thrive, our combatant commands must
10 work together with all parts of the DOD team, our
11 interagency partners, and Congress. My aim is to strengthen
12 and enhance those relations and our teamwork.

13 My plain and simple message to our friends in the
14 region is, "The United States is a reliable and trustworthy
15 security partner. Our commitment is unwavering. The United
16 States is your security partner of choice. We offer
17 unmatched military education, training, and equipment, with
18 U.S. ingenuity, technology, and experience to back it up.
19 International Military Education and Training, IMET, along
20 with foreign military sales and building partner capacity
21 authorities, are strategic game-changers. We are your
22 reliable security partner. And with ever-present threats to
23 our homeland, teamwork is more important than ever."

24 We compete best with the power of our ideas and ideals,
25 our inspiration, our education, and our commitment. Latin

1 America and the Caribbean are not our backyard. It's our
2 shared neighborhood. And, like the neighborhood of Fryburg,
3 Pennsylvania, where I grew up, good neighbors respect each
4 other's sovereignty, treat each other as equal partners,
5 with respect, and commit to a strong neighborhood watch. If
6 confirmed, I assure you I will commit all my energy to
7 ensuring the United States Southern Command is ready to do
8 its parts to seed opportunity and manage challenges.

9 Chairman, Ranking Member Reed, members of the
10 committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify
11 before this committee. And I look forward to your
12 questions.

13 [The prepared statement of Admiral Faller follows:]

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1 Chairman Inhofe: Well, thank you, Admiral Faller.

2 General Abrams, the -- it's been pretty scary, since
3 North Korea started making its advancements in 2017. I look
4 over and I see Senator Kyl. And during the 5 years and -- 5
5 years and 8 months you were out of this party -- out of the
6 committee and out of the Senate, what we've seen, the number
7 of -- the activities that are taking place from North Korea,
8 they've conducted 13 successful ballistic missile launches.
9 And the scariest one was on November the 28th of 2017, one
10 that demonstrated clearly that they had the range that we
11 had hoped that they would not have. So, we have now -- it's
12 a different situation than we've had for a lot of years.
13 They have achieved some successes, in their eyes, that are
14 pretty scary to us. And, while the testing has paused,
15 North Korea's nuclear and missile programs have matured.
16 Its missiles can now reach the entire United States with a
17 nuclear payload. And that's pretty serious.

18 After a period of increased tensions, the Singapore
19 Summit was a step in the right direction. Recent meetings
20 with President Moon and Kim Jong Un have shown that there's
21 really progress. The fact that they just had their meeting
22 together in North Korea, and they are now talking about
23 doing it again in South Korea, that's something we would not
24 have anticipated, even a year ago. So, we've made a lot of
25 progress in that respect. So, why don't you tell us -- I

1 think this is a good hearing -- General Abrams, your
2 assessment of the current security situation on the
3 Peninsula? The fact that we've now had the meetings that I
4 addressed, and we've also had a presence in both North and
5 South meeting together, what's your feeling about that?

6 General Abrams: Chairman, the situation on the
7 Peninsula today, as you have just described, I would
8 describe as a temporary pause and a general feeling of
9 detente, if you will, on the Peninsula. It's been over 300
10 days, as you noted, since the last major provocation from
11 the DPRK. And, since then, there's been significant
12 dialogue at multiple levels, to include, not well reported,
13 but mil-to-mil communications between U.N. Command and the
14 DPRK at senior officer level, the first time in 11 years.
15 So, I would share your characterization that all of the
16 current steps that are ongoing are significant, and we
17 should take them at face value.

18 Having said that, you also mentioned that there still
19 remains a significant asymmetric and intercontinental threat
20 from the DPRK, as well as they maintain, still, the fourth-
21 largest conventional army in the world, and none of their
22 posture has changed. So, my view is that we should remain
23 clear-eyed about the situation on the ground and allow
24 diplomacy to continue to work.

25 Chairman Inhofe: Well, I appreciate that.

1 Oh, okay, I've been informed we do have a quorum. We
2 have -- we'll interrupt this for just a moment, here.

3 Since a quorum is now present, I ask committee to
4 consider nominations of Mr. Alan Shaffer to be Deputy Under
5 Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, Ms.
6 Veronica Daigle to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for
7 Readiness, Honorable Robert H. McMahon to be Assistant
8 Secretary of Defense for Sustainment, Dr. E. Casey Wardyaski
9 to be Assistant Secretary of the Army in Manpower and
10 Reserves, and Mr. Alex Beehler to be Assistant Secretary of
11 the Army for Energy Installation. They've been before this
12 committee, and we've had a chance to discuss it.

13 Is there a motion to favorably report this list of five
14 pending civilian nominations to the Senate?

15 Senator Reed: So move.

16 Chairman Inhofe: Is there a second?

17 Senator Shaheen: Second.

18 Chairman Inhofe: There's a motion and second. All in
19 favor, say aye.

20 [A chorus of ayes.]

21 Chairman Inhofe: Opposed, no.

22 [No response.]

23 Chairman Inhofe: It is approved.

24 I would also ask the committee to consider a list of
25 2,781 pending military nominations. All of these

1 nominations have been before the committee the required in
2 length of time.

3 Is there a motion to favorably report this list of
4 2,781 --

5 Senator Reed: So move.

6 Chairman Inhofe: -- pending military nominations?

7 There's a motion. And second?

8 Senator Shaheen: Second.

9 Chairman Inhofe: Those in favor, say aye.

10 [A chorus of ayes.]

11 Chairman Inhofe: Opposed, no.

12 [No response.]

13 Chairman Inhofe: The ayes have it.

14 Now, Mr. Faller, I've -- one of the things that I
15 wanted to get to during my time here was to look a little
16 bit at China. You know, it's -- I know that you're
17 concerned about the Southern Command. You've got your work
18 cut out for you there. But, if you look all over -- and we
19 were in the South China Sea, so we -- we're very familiar
20 with what China is doing right now. It's interpreted by our
21 allies in that area as, "They are preparing for World War
22 III." We see, in areas in Africa, Djibouti, they're
23 starting to build -- in fact, that's the first time that
24 China, outside of its own territory, has built a military
25 operation. And the same -- now they're moving down into

1 Tanzania and some of the other areas. Now, you're seeing
2 the same thing happen, I assume, in the Southern Command.
3 My concern is that the programs that I know that you are --
4 I've talked to you in my office -- that you're very
5 favorably inclined toward, one of them being the IMET
6 program, we're see -- and foreign military investments,
7 foreign military sales, and all those programs. But, the
8 IMET program is one that's been very successful all over the
9 world, and it's one that China has now figured out. In the
10 case of Africa, they've had a meeting where they had 53 of
11 the presidents of the 54 countries in Africa actually
12 meeting there on a new type of an IMET program that would
13 bring their allegiance away from us, which has been so
14 successful. I'd like to have you share with us, first of
15 all, your feeling about these programs, why they're
16 significant, and what -- and is China doing the same thing
17 in the area that you're going to be in as they are in the
18 rest of the world?

19 Admiral Faller: Senator, the 2018 National Defense
20 Strategy calls out China as a strategic competitor. As
21 Secretary of Defense recently commented, we continue to see
22 both Russia and China try to shape a world consistent with
23 their authoritarian world view. We see that in the Southern
24 Command and -- area of responsibility, where China's moving
25 in with low-interest loans, with strings attached, for

1 ports. The Panama Canal, for example. The program that you
2 speak of, sir, IMET, is one of our best tools to build long-
3 term trust with officers at all levels, to bring students to
4 the United States to educate them in our military doctrine,
5 our tactics, and really do an indepth study together. I --
6 during a recent trip, some of the leaders I met were
7 graduates of our War College, and they --

8 Chairman Inhofe: Sure.

9 Admiral Faller: -- are lifelong friends of the U.S.
10 So, the best way to counter this competition was the power
11 of our education and our ideas, Senator.

12 Chairman Inhofe: Yeah. And it really is a concern to
13 me, because everywhere I go, everywhere the world, you run
14 into people who are results of the IMET program. And it
15 seems like China has not been that active, but they are
16 right now, and I anticipate you're going to see that in your
17 command, also.

18 Senator Reed.

19 Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

20 And, Admiral Faller, the Navy has been dealing with the
21 fallout and consequences of the Glenn Defense Marine (Asia)
22 case for many years now. There are certain allegations that
23 have arisen with respect to your participation. But, my
24 understanding is that you -- they've all been fully
25 investigated by the FBI and by the Department of Defense,

1 the Navy Criminal Investigation Services. You've been
2 exonerated from any culpability. And also, I don't believe
3 -- and you can confirm this -- that you've received, in any
4 way, any type of gift or services from GDMA or any type of
5 -- provided them any type of benefit. Is that correct?

6 Admiral Faller: Senator, that is correct. After a
7 lengthy and thorough investigation by several different law
8 enforcement organizations, I was cleared of all wrongdoing.
9 I've never solicited, accepted, or asked for a gift from
10 Glenn Marine Defense. And every decision I made, event I
11 attended, I had ethics counselor review. And I believe,
12 Senator, all that information was available for my
13 confirmation to vice admiral, sir.

14 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Admiral.

15 And one of the questions we had in our discussion is
16 the fact that your command is probably the least resourced
17 major command and with an incredible range of issues. You
18 spoke about them: the opioid crisis, the disruption, the
19 behaviors in places like Venezuela, where there's a
20 dictator, places like Guatemala, where we're seeing their
21 president reject international controls and intimidate the
22 people. Can you give me, very briefly, what your, like, top
23 three priorities as you assume command?

24 Admiral Faller: Senator, if confirmed, the top
25 priority is to build stronger partnerships and look for

1 opportunity for new partnerships regionally. And to build
2 up on that, it's all, my view, about people-to-people trust.
3 So, getting down there, getting -- being present within the
4 Command. And I think we have the talent, from what I
5 understand, and the people to do that. And we build on that
6 with education. We build on that with exercises. The
7 Command does have a very robust exercise program. We build
8 on that with, where appropriate, building partner capacities
9 through some of our authorities with -- that Congress has
10 granted, counternarcotics. And then we look at what assets
11 we need both for the exercises, Senator, and for getting
12 after the challenges, like interdicting drugs. And I am
13 aware that some of the resource challenges the Command have,
14 if confirmed, that will be one of my top priorities, to
15 assess what we need. I'll come back to the chain of
16 command, and I'll be very vocal and strident about asking
17 for more if I think that's going to make an impact, Senator.

18 Senator Reed: Thank you, sir.

19 General Abrams, you have a range of challenges and a
20 very difficult situation. One of the issues -- and there
21 are so many -- is that the Republic of Korea is developing a
22 relationship with the Democratic Republic of Korea -- and
23 that's kind of an oxymoronic statement -- which is slightly
24 different than ours. In the past, my recollection has been,
25 we've been sort of shoulder to shoulder with the South

1 Koreans, and we've taken the lead. They seem to be moving
2 away. Is -- how is that going to complicate your position?
3 Or is it going to complicate your position?

4 General Abrams: Senator, I think that my assessment
5 is, the relationship between the U.S. military and the
6 Republic of Korea military is as strong, if not stronger,
7 than it's ever been in its 68-year history. I think the
8 relationship -- the strength of the alliance, which is
9 described by everyone as ironclad, is unshakeable. It's
10 withstood, you know, unbelievable number of provocations and
11 aggressive behavior and crises over the last 65 years. It
12 has been baptized in fire and blood. And it remains
13 ironclad. So, I have no concerns about the future of our
14 relationship.

15 Senator Reed: Do you think it's critical that we
16 resume military exercises? I think the next major one is
17 scheduled for this spring.

18 General Abrams: Senator, exercises -- I believe that
19 exercises in training are routine activities of militaries
20 across the world to maintain the readiness of their force,
21 in accordance with their national defense strategies. The
22 exercises that are scheduled for this spring, the major
23 exercises, to the best of my knowledge, they are proceeding
24 with planning. That is a future decision to be made by
25 alliance leaders.

1 Senator Reed: Thank you very much.

2 Gentlemen, I, again, thank you for your service to the
3 Nation, and you have been given challenging job, and you
4 have the skills to deal with them.

5 Thank you.

6 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed.

7 Senator Cotton.

8 Senator Cotton: Gentlemen, thank you very much for
9 your appearance, for your many years of service to our
10 country. Congratulations on your nominations.

11 General Abrams, the administration is currently engaged
12 in negotiations with North Korea to try to denuclearize the
13 Korean Peninsula. I have every confidence in Secretary
14 Pompeo's ability to achieve a good deal for the United
15 States, if there is a good deal to be had. However, we
16 cannot simply hope that we'll achieve a good deal, and we
17 must be prepared to handle the consequences of no deal, one
18 of which is North Korea's growing missile and nuclear
19 threat. The recently passed defense bill fully authorized
20 284-and-a-half-million dollars in urgent unfunded requests
21 for a -- for the Missile Defense Agency for missile defenses
22 on the Korean Peninsula. We also directed the Department of
23 Defense to develop new boost-phase intercept systems and
24 space-based intercept defense capabilities. The Department
25 is investing \$500 million in enhancing missile defense on

1 the Korean Peninsula over the next 3 years. Could you
2 explain why these efforts are necessary and warranted in the
3 current threat environment we face on the Korean Peninsula?

4 General Abrams: Senator, as the Chairman and Ranking
5 Member mentioned earlier, there still remains -- despite all
6 of the ongoing diplomatic efforts, which we all applaud,
7 there still remains a significant conventional and strategic
8 capability on behalf of the DPRK. I believe that one of the
9 contributors, enabling efforts that supported us to get to
10 this diplomatic point is with a strong deterrent, and a
11 integrated and advanced missile defense capability as part
12 of that deterrent.

13 Senator Cotton: What's your opinion on the prospects
14 in the near term for boost-phase intercept systems?

15 General Abrams: Senator, I think that is a capability
16 that we need. It's something that I believe is
17 technologically feasible. And we're appreciative of the
18 Congress's investment and direction in -- or the resources
19 put in that direction.

20 Senator Cotton: Good. I'm very glad to hear that.
21 Boost-phase intercept is simply a term for hitting the
22 missile when it's still on the launching pad. That's
23 better, because it's moving very slow and it's got a very
24 big heat signature when all the fire comes out of it. And
25 maybe most importantly, it's over the bad guys' territory,

1 not over our territory or our allies' territory. Some of
2 the deployments we've seen of our traditional missile
3 defense systems on the Korean Peninsula have generated some
4 political controversy in the Republic of Korea. Can you
5 talk about those controversies and how you and Admiral
6 Harris, who's our Ambassador there, will help manage that?

7 General Abrams: Senator, the recent deployment, in the
8 last year, of the Theater High-Altitude Air Defense System
9 did cause some political consternations in the Republic of
10 Korea, and, in fact, in the region. There's been a very
11 open and transparent communication strategy by both General
12 Brooks and the country team. And the Republic of Korea and
13 their people, their military, have been assured of the exact
14 capabilities and limitations of those systems. And I
15 believe, at this point, things have settled down to an
16 appropriate level.

17 Senator Cotton: And by "concerns in the region," I'm
18 going to presume you mean in Beijing, which thinks that
19 those systems could just as easily collect information on or
20 hit a Chinese missile. I'll trust that's what you mean.

21 General Abrams: Senator, I was inferring to the
22 Chinese and their stated concerns, although I would not
23 agree with the characterization that you gave them.

24 Senator Cotton: Yeah. There have been reports
25 recently in the media about challenges in the logistics of

1 trying to evacuate noncombatants from the Korean Peninsula,
2 in the event of a military conflict. Could you speak to
3 those reports and the challenges that we might face in
4 trying to evacuate civilians and noncombatants from the
5 Korean Peninsula?

6 General Abrams: Senator, there -- the noncombatant
7 evacuation plan has been in existence for a number of years.
8 It's the topic of at least a couple of exercises biannually,
9 and it is something that is rehearsed frequently at various
10 levels. But, we ought to be clear about this. This is a
11 wicked problem, and it's not just American citizens, it's a
12 large number of citizens from other countries, to include
13 China. So, it is a challenge, but it is one that I have
14 great faith and confidence that Commander INDOPACOM and
15 Commander USFK have an appropriate plan to deal with.

16 Senator Cotton: One way to mitigate that challenge
17 would be to return to what Korea used to be, which would be
18 an unaccompanied tour in which spouses and dependent
19 children were not deployed with our soldiers there. Should
20 we at least keep that as an option as we move ahead?

21 General Abrams: Senator, I think we should keep all
22 options on the table, but those options should be informed
23 by an on-the-ground assessment of the situation and the risk
24 for those family members.

25 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

1 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Cotton.

2 Senator Shaheen.

3 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 Congratulations, to both of you. Thank you, to you and
5 your families, for your many years of service.

6 Admiral Faller, I want to begin with you, picking up on
7 something that Senator Reed mentioned in his opening
8 statement about the opioid epidemic that we have in the
9 United States, which has dramatically affected New
10 Hampshire, where we have the second-highest rate of opioid
11 overdoses in the country. When your predecessor, who I
12 assume would be your predecessor, Admiral Kurt Tidd, came
13 before this committee for a posture hearing in February, he
14 answered, in response to a question that I asked him, that,
15 of the known tracks that we're aware of -- and we think we
16 have a pretty good handle -- we're only able to intercept
17 about 25 percent of those people bringing drugs into the
18 United States. I think we would all agree that's a very
19 troubling figure. So, as you look at this challenge of
20 interdicting drug-running into the United States, where does
21 it fall in your priority of things that you will have to do?

22 Admiral Faller: Senator, the drug interdiction is a --
23 the drug problem here in the United States is a crisis,
24 indeed, and it's a -- going to -- it will be a top priority
25 at Southern Command. The same routes that smugglers and

1 illicit networks bring the drugs in can bring any number of
2 other threats to our homeland in. And homeland defense is
3 our number-one mission as a combatant commander. And so, it
4 is the top priority. It's a top priority to work within our
5 interagency, our whole of government, and with our partners
6 in NORTHCOM. Most of the drugs come through the Central
7 American region, then up through the -- our southern border.

8 And so, if confirmed, I will be unabashed about coming
9 forward, asking for what resources I think I need. Those
10 statistics are what I've studied, ma'am, and we need to look
11 where we can improve and tighten this noose around the
12 scourge.

13 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you. I hope you will
14 come forward with requests for additional resources, because
15 it's very clear from your -- the two previous commanders
16 there, that this has been an issue, getting the resources
17 that are needed.

18 I want to follow up again on another statement that
19 Admiral Tidd made in that posture hearing, where he talked
20 about the challenge from Russia in Latin America. And he
21 said that Russia's attempting to falsely shape Latin
22 America's information environment through its dedicated
23 Spanish-language RT and Sputnik news channels. And you
24 acknowledge that we need to improve our efforts to address
25 Russian disinformation in the region in your advance policy

1 question. So, what -- can you be more specific about what
2 you think we can do to address that disinformation campaign?

3 Admiral Faller: Senator, first thing we need to do is,
4 we have to be the best reliable partner. And that just is
5 being there every day and answering our partners' needs.
6 Partnerships are two-way streets, so there has to be in --
7 something in it for the United States, in terms of securing
8 our homeland. That has to be part of the equation. A lot
9 of this is an intelligence effort, Senator, where we,
10 through our embassies and our downrange partners, illuminate
11 the concern, bring forward, in classified setting, what we
12 can, and then, where we can, we bring it out into the open
13 and we allow our public to know the truth. Just this
14 morning, I was looking online and saw an RT interview with
15 one of the presidents of Latin America, and it was just full
16 of fiction that would be troubling to anyone. And,
17 unfortunately, some people find that believable, ma'am.

18 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you. I think this is a
19 very important area to prioritize, so I'm glad to hear that
20 you agree with that.

21 General Abrams, you've already referenced the -- in
22 questioning, the suspension of our military exercises with
23 North Korea. Can you assess what the impact has been of the
24 suspension of those exercises on the readiness of our
25 forces?

1 General Abrams: Senator, I think that the suspension
2 of the exercise this past August and September I would say
3 was prudent risk if we're willing to make the effort to
4 change the relationship with the DPRK. Something has to
5 adjust, in my view, to be able to start to build trust and
6 confidence as we move forward in the relationship. I think
7 that there was certainly degradation to the readiness of the
8 force for the combined forces. That's a key exercise to
9 maintain continuity and to continue to practice our
10 interoperability. And so, there was a slight degradation.
11 But, I have great confidence that General Brooks and the
12 team there have instituted a mitigation plan to be able to
13 sustain that until the next series of exercises are planned.

14 Senator Shaheen: Have you seen that mitigation plan?

15 General Abrams: Senator, I have. I have seen some of
16 the mitigation plan. It includes participation at a smaller
17 level of staff exercises that would not be of the same
18 scale, scope, and volume in the information domain as, say,
19 Ulchi-Focus Guardian.

20 Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

21 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

23 Senator Rounds.

24 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 General Abrams, I appreciated your comments earlier

1 with regard to your family's involvement, and the fact that
2 it truly is a family affair. I would also like to extend
3 our condolences to you and to your family on the loss of
4 your brother, John, who was also a general officer, as well,
5 and for his service to our country.

6 General Abrams, your background would suggest very
7 clearly that you have an understanding of what the needs are
8 within the confines of the Korean Peninsula, specifically
9 with regard to the conventional and strategic forces. But,
10 I'd like to focus a little bit on some of the other issues
11 that are there right now and that we see as challenges.
12 Specifically, the -- and part of this may very well have to
13 be answered in a classified setting, but I'm going to ask it
14 anyway, and you can tell me -- number one, with regard to
15 chemical weapons, what is the current situation on the
16 Peninsula with regard to the use of chemical weapons by the
17 North Koreans and their capabilities? And, second of all,
18 do we have the capabilities to respond to such threats? And
19 the second part of this has to do with the cyberthreats that
20 we know North Korea is capable of doing. And are we capable
21 of responding to those threats in both the tactical settings
22 and also in the strategic settings on the Peninsula?

23 Senator, first, thank you for the mention of my
24 brother.

25 On nuclear -- or, correction, chemical and biological

1 weapons, I think it's safe to say the use, or not use, by
2 the DPRK is completely unpredictable. And there would be no
3 way of gauging when or if they might even use it in case of
4 conflict. Our role as military members is to be prepared
5 for all possibilities in all contingencies. So, to your
6 second question, "Are we prepared, and do we have the right
7 capabilities today in U.S. Forces Korea?" the answer is yes.
8 This is a -- an environment that the forces on the Peninsula
9 train extensively, and they have adequate capability on the
10 ground now to deal with the initial -- if there was an
11 initial use.

12 More importantly, the predominance of the forces, if
13 required for a war on the Korea Peninsula, will come from
14 the continental United States, and a good chunk of them from
15 the U.S. Army. This has been a point of emphasis of
16 training in a chemical and biological environment. We've
17 been on a full-court press in this domain for the last 3
18 years, and I'm happy to report that our readiness and our
19 preparedness for operating in that environment is much
20 higher.

21 Senator Rounds: Would it be fair to say, sir -- and I
22 apologize for interrupting, but would it be fair to say that
23 there would still be an anticipation of civilian casualties
24 in the case of a chemical or biological attack by the North
25 Koreans?

1 Senator Rounds: Absolutely.

2 Senator Rounds: Okay. And, at this point, we do not
3 have plans that would allow us to protect those civilians
4 from such an attack.

5 General Abrams: Senator, our -- we will, of course,
6 provide as much support and capability to protect civilian
7 lives in addition to the military lives that might be
8 affected by such an attack.

9 Senator Rounds: To the best of our ability.

10 General Abrams: To the best of our ability within our
11 capacity.

12 Senator Rounds: But, the expectation is, within our
13 capacity, it would be extremely difficult to protect that
14 population from a biological or chemical attack by the North
15 Koreans.

16 General Abrams: That is accurate.

17 Senator Rounds: Okay.

18 Let's go on to cyber.

19 General Abrams: Senator, if I have it right -- and
20 please correct me -- yes, the DPRK has a significant and
21 capable cyberforce that is capable of worldwide operations.
22 To your specific question about our capabilities, we -- I
23 believe that we lead the world in our militarized cyber
24 capability. And the recent elevation of CYBERCOM to a
25 combatant command status only continues to solidify its

1 capabilities, both defensive and offensive. And I have
2 every expectation that General Nakasone and his team will be
3 able to provide the necessary capabilities -- cyber
4 capabilities, should there be a conflict on the Peninsula.

5 Senator Rounds: Thank you.

6 Admiral Faller, first of all, thank you, to you and to
7 your family, for your service. I understand your father was
8 also a lieutenant in the Army in the early 1960s. Thank
9 you, sir, for your service.

10 Admiral Faller, one real quick question, and that is,
11 with regard to the need for partnerships, can you tell us,
12 in your opinion, the status of our ability to be a good
13 partner in SOCOM? How are we today, and where do we need
14 the improvement?

15 Admiral Faller: Senator, just having returned from a
16 trip with the Secretary of Defense to SOUTHCOM and into the
17 Latin America region and visited with countries -- Chile,
18 Colombia, Brazil, and Argentina -- these countries want to
19 partner with us, they value our training and education above
20 any other partner, and they value our equipment, our gear,
21 our exercises, and our expertise. So, I think we have a
22 strong foundation to continue to build on and make it even
23 stronger. A number of these countries have gone through
24 democratic transitions, but the mil-to-mil relations have
25 stayed rock solid. I think that is the best way to counter

1 Russia and China and the global threats we face.

2 Senator Rounds: Thank you.

3 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Rounds.

5 Senator Peters.

6 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 And thank you, gentlemen, for your long service to our
8 country.

9 General Abrams, as you know -- and you and I have
10 talked about -- I recently returned from South Korea, where
11 I met with U.S. Korea forces for an update of what is
12 happening on the Peninsula. And the one thing that I was
13 really struck by were the significant logistics challenges
14 that we will face, should a conflict arise there. You've
15 already addressed some of those challenges, in terms of
16 moving personnel out of Korea, folks who are noncombatants,
17 but it's also civilians that are in Seoul, which is ranged
18 by a tremendous amount of artillery, and you'd have millions
19 of people moving south at the same time we're trying to move
20 north and flow materials into the north. You've also
21 mentioned that much of the Army's fighting power in a --
22 what could be a sustained conflict would come from the
23 continental United States, which is a long ways from Korea.
24 So, if you could talk a little bit about your understanding
25 of the logistics presence on the Peninsula and how we move

1 material into the Peninsula, should a conflict occur, and
2 how your past assignments are going to contribute to your
3 ability to handle what is a significant challenge.

4 General Abrams: Senator, to your first question, we
5 have made -- the Department has made significant investment
6 in forward-posturing of supplies and materiel and munitions
7 over the course of the last 18 months, to levels that we had
8 not seen previously, to better what we call "set the
9 theater" in accordance with General Brooks's priorities.
10 And those have -- those are now at the appropriate level,
11 when, in the past, they may not have always been at the
12 appropriate level.

13 The -- as you got to see while you were there, this is
14 a monumental effort, to be able to receive, stage, and
15 prepare for onward movement of the forces and supply. The
16 way we mitigate that, the way the Peninsula mitigates that
17 is, we do that with pre-positioned equipment, so we have
18 equipment on the Peninsula within certain capabilities as
19 prepare to draw so we can actually fly people in to draw
20 that equipment to be prepared to use, and then the
21 remainder, of course, will come by ship. And that is a
22 well-thought-out, well-developed, integrated plan that we
23 have rehearsed to be able to respond in an appropriate time
24 to meet General Brooks's timelines to get the materiel,
25 soldiers, airmen, marines, et cetera, into theater, in

1 accordance with his timeline.

2 Senator Peters: Well, thank you, General. And you
3 mentioned the importance of rehearsal, that you actually
4 have to walk through these plans -- not just put them on
5 paper, but walk through them. And that leads me to just a
6 -- this question, which you've already addressed a couple of
7 aspects of it to a couple of my colleagues, related to the
8 exercises. And certainly, you said, there is a mitigation
9 plan with some staff-level exercises, tabletop exercises,
10 but I know you realize that a large-scale exercise is really
11 necessary in order to fully rehearse these plans. So, my
12 question is, How long and how many cycles of exercises can
13 be skipped before you really start seeing a significant
14 decline in readiness?

15 General Abrams: Senator, that's hard to judge. And,
16 to be honest, if confirmed, this will be one of my top
17 priorities when I get on the ground, on the Pen, to do my
18 own personal assessment. I know, from my 36-plus years of
19 service, about what the shelf life is of readiness of our
20 forces to be able to conduct certain activities, but I need
21 to apply that judgment based on what I assess when I get on
22 the ground.

23 Senator Peters: General, the other key takeaway that I
24 had from my trip to South Korea was the importance of, not
25 just a bilateral relationship with South Korea, but are the

1 multilateral cooperation that we see from a lot of joint
2 partners on the Peninsula. In fact, when I was meeting with
3 the United Nations Command at Camp Bonifas, I saw 16 flags
4 flying from 16 nations that were there with us. In fact, I
5 was briefed by Lieutenant General Eyre, a Canadian general,
6 which was the first non-U.S. general officer to serve as the
7 Deputy Commander of the United Nations Command. So, my
8 question to you is -- and I know this was something General
9 Brooks invested your -- what -- who may be your predecessor
10 -- invested a great deal of effort in strengthening. My
11 question to you is -- if you could comment on your
12 understanding of the role for allies, neutral states in the
13 Peninsula, and how do you see the -- our continuing
14 developing -- our continuation of that relationship with
15 them?

16 General Abrams: Senator, first, let me say that I
17 fully endorse all of General Brooks' and his immediate
18 predecessor's efforts to revitalize U.N. Command. U.N.
19 Command is a statement by the international community of
20 support to the armistice conditions on the Peninsula. And I
21 consider it vital to be able to sustain the current
22 armistice conditions until such time that it needs to
23 change.

24 Senator Peters: Great. Thank you, General.

25 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Peters.

1 Let's see. Senator Perdue.

2 Senator Perdue: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 I want to thank both of you gentlemen for your lifetime
4 of service and your families' dedication to our country.

5 General Abrams, I was just over, earlier this year,
6 meeting with General Brooks, meeting with defectors from
7 North Korea, and I was struck by the posture that we've had
8 for a long time with our ROK partners. Our agreement works
9 under a special measures agreement, as I understand it,
10 where they currently are paying about 50 percent of our
11 residence presence in the Peninsula. They put about a half
12 a billion dollars a year into that, and they put \$10 billion
13 into Camp Humphreys. They are -- we are now entering into a
14 conversation -- that expires, I believe, this year, and so
15 we're in a conversation with them right now about that
16 accord. How do you see their level of support? And do you
17 support the conversation that we're beginning to have with
18 them about their participation in our operational costs?
19 These are activities that we use the soldiers for while
20 we're there.

21 General Abrams: Senator, I think the special measures
22 agreement that you're referring to has been adequate since
23 its inception in about 1990. It's gone through nine
24 different iterations. We're on our -- we're in the middle
25 of negotiations for agreement number 10. You mentioned the

1 operational support is one of the new categories. I think
2 it would be probably inappropriate right now for me to
3 comment in the middle of negotiations that they hope to
4 close out in the next 30 days. But, I endorse the Command's
5 position that that should be included.

6 Senator Perdue: Do you also support, or are you
7 concerned about, their current announced reduction of
8 outposts across the DMZ, and also about -- I think they're
9 talking about something like a 20-percent reduction in their
10 personnel, in their military, at a very time when we're
11 trying to establish these negotiations with North Korea and
12 determine what our future posture is under our new NDS?

13 General Abrams: Senator, if I can, I'd like to split
14 that into two separate issues. So, the first one, with
15 regards to discussions of reduction of guard posts, that was
16 a part of the discussion most recently between the Minister
17 of Defense of the Republic of Korea and his counterpart in
18 the DPRK. All activities with regards to the demilitarized
19 zone are under the purview of U.N. Command. So, while they
20 may continue to dialogue, all of that will have to be
21 brokered and adjudicated and observed and enforced by U.N.
22 Command, led by General Brooks, and the multinational forces
23 there, with 17 sending stations.

24 On the second part of your question, with regards to
25 some reductions they're making, this is part of President

1 Moon's defense reform 2.0. It does include some reduction
2 of capability, but also includes a 8.7 percent increase in
3 defense spending. So, this year they'll be at 2.7 percent
4 of their GDP, which is the highest of any treaty ally of the
5 United States, sir.

6 Senator Perdue: Thank you.

7 Admiral Faller, you've already mentioned or commented
8 on the drug interdiction issue. I won't repeat that. But,
9 I would just make a comment that, with 70,000 deaths a year
10 from drug overdoses, if a state player sent a couple of
11 cruise missiles to a couple of our cities and they took out
12 70,000 of our citizens, I think we would have a pretty
13 strong reaction to that. So, you have an ally, here -- and,
14 I know, in other members up here -- to get you resourced to
15 the things that General Kelly and General -- and Admiral
16 Tidd have already told us that you need.

17 I want to talk about Russia, China, and Iran, and the
18 convergence of terrorism and the narco industry worldwide.
19 China, right now, is going around the world investing in
20 these ports. They're investing through loans -- proprietary
21 loans. We just saw the foreclosure of one of those loans in
22 Colombo, Sri Lanka. There are 31 of these around the
23 continent of Africa. And we now see China making those same
24 proprietary loans win infrastructure in Central America. We
25 see Iran very active in the area, as well as Russia. In

1 your role as SOUTHCOM Commander, how would you advise us to
2 think about that growing threat from these state players in
3 our own backyard?

4 Admiral Faller: Senator, China and Russia are global
5 competitors and a global threat. They're -- as Secretary of
6 Defense recently stated, they are bent on imposing their
7 authoritarian ways, and it's important that we look at that
8 globally. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs is -- as a
9 global integrator, has instituted global campaign plans,
10 where the COCOMs work hand-in-glove together to devise plans
11 to counter those in real time, in the information space and
12 in the intelligence space. And it's an intelligence-driven
13 operation now. So, as -- much as I answered to Senator
14 Shaheen, illuminating where we can, where we can declassify
15 that, where we can share that with our partners, where we
16 can point out to our partners the unhelpful influence that
17 some of their activity is having on their own sovereignty,
18 that's how I'd handle it, sir.

19 Senator Perdue: Thank you, sir.

20 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

21 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Perdue.

22 Senator Warren.

23 Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Admiral Faller, I had hoped to talk with you about the
25 crisis in Venezuela today. Instead, I have to ask you about

1 yesterday's report in the Washington Post, which alleges
2 that you were one of several officers investigated for your
3 involvement with the defense contractor, Leonard Glenn
4 Francis, who pled guilty to fraud and bribery in the largest
5 corruption scandal in U.S. Navy history. Now, I understand
6 there's been an investigation in the Justice Department and
7 the Navy, and that this committee had this information.
8 But, this is the first time I've heard about it. And so, I
9 have some questions, here.

10 According to the Post, you attended one of Mr.
11 Francis's pay-to-play parties in December 2004, and accepted
12 other gifts from him. This is how the Post describes the
13 party. You and your fellow officers were, quote, "invited
14 to a free feast on the 56th floor of a luxury hotel," where
15 you savored cocktails, cigars, and courses of caviar, black
16 truffles, and lobster thermidor while mingling with, quote,
17 "attractive young women dressed as Santa's little helpers
18 wearing red hats, black boots, and skimpy Yuletide
19 costumes," and that you were allegedly offered a prostitute.

20 Now, I know that both the Department of Justice and the
21 U.S. Navy cleared you of wrongdoing, and that your superior
22 supposedly signed off on the 2004 dinner, but I just have to
23 say, this does not pass the smell test for me. So, let me
24 start with this. As the commanding officer of the USS
25 Shiloh, had you undergone ethics training at the time of

1 this dinner?

2 Admiral Faller: Senator, we had undergone ethics
3 training. The dinner and its invitation were reviewed by an
4 ethics --

5 Senator Warren: And there was nothing about this
6 dinner that set off any alarm bells in your mind, that it
7 either might not meet ethical standards or at least give the
8 appearance of impropriety from the outside?

9 Admiral Faller: Senator, it did not. It was nothing
10 --

11 Senator Warren: No alarm bells.

12 Admiral Faller: -- nothing unprofessional or untoward
13 that I witnessed at the dinner. The ethics counselor
14 actually attended the dinner. The --

15 Senator Warren: No --

16 Admiral Faller: -- day after the dinner, we got
17 underway for tsunami relief, where we participated --

18 Senator Warren: I'm asking this question because this
19 committee is looking at a position to confirm you to that
20 requires good judgment. And I know that this was many years
21 ago, but it seems to me you didn't display good judgment at
22 the time, and it doesn't sound like you see anything wrong
23 with the decision you made back then.

24 The other thing that strikes me about this specific
25 dinner and others that have been reported in the media is

1 the detail about the scantily-clad women and prostitutes at
2 these parties. You know, there's even a picture in the
3 Washington Post story to go along with this. Is it now, or
4 was it then, common for senior Navy officers to attend
5 events at which prostitutes and women in scantily-clad
6 outfits were expected to provide entertainment?

7 Admiral Faller: Senator, every decision I've made in
8 my nearly four decades of service has been -- tried to be
9 through the best ethical lens, with ethics counselor. One
10 of the benchmarks I use is, Would my wife of 34 years or my
11 two grown daughters, if they were present or watching me or
12 saw it on video, would they be embarrassed or would I have
13 discredited them? And I can look you in the eye, and the
14 committee, and say that I believe I've passed that
15 benchmark.

16 Senator Warren: I appreciate that, Admiral. But, if I
17 could just ask you to answer my question, which is, Is it
18 now, or was it then, common for senior Navy officers to
19 attend events at which prostitutes and women in scantily-
20 clad -- -clad outfits were expected to provide
21 entertainment?

22 Admiral Faller: No --

23 Senator Warren: It's a pretty straight -- you're
24 saying no. So, this was an unusual dinner in that respect.

25 Admiral Faller: Senator, that -- there is a picture.

1 And it's nothing more, Senator.

2 Senator Warren: Now, you understand why I'm asking
3 this, Admiral Faller. Events that feature women as objects
4 of entertainment contribute to a culture that does not
5 respect women. Given the persistently high rates of sexual
6 harassment and assault in the Navy, across the military
7 services, and, frankly, around this country, it is long past
8 time that we have a conversation about exactly these kinds
9 of events. You have been nominated to serve as the four-
10 star combatant commander to the U.S. Southern Command.
11 You'll have many women officers under your command. What do
12 you say to women officers when they see that this is the
13 kind of event you have attended?

14 Admiral Faller: Senator, I have always had the utmost
15 respect for all servicemen and -women. That particular
16 event referenced by the Washington Post, there were female
17 officers present, and one from my ship, I would say, as I
18 have always said, that very much respect. And that's how
19 I've tried to operate. And I believe that would bear out.
20 And I'm appreciative that the Secretary of Defense has --
21 and I'm humbled that the Secretary of Defense is supporting
22 my nomination.

23 Senator Warren: Well, I just have to say, Admiral
24 Faller, this is a question of judgment, and it not only
25 troubles me the decision you made back then to attend such a

1 party, it troubles me that today you seem to think that that
2 decision --

3 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Warren --

4 Senator Warren: -- was justified.

5 Chairman Inhofe: -- your time is expired.

6 Senator Kyl.

7 Senator Kyl: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 First of all, gentlemen, thank you very much for your
9 service.

10 This is my first hearing of the Senate Armed Services
11 Committee, replacing my friend and colleague, John McCain.
12 I served on the House Armed Services Committee when I was a
13 young person, but it's my honor today to, in this first
14 hearing, hear from both of you, officers of exceptional
15 ability, who have been offered new opportunities to serve
16 our country.

17 Let me start, General Abrams, with a question for you,
18 sir. One of the programs to limit North Korea's ability to
19 proliferate weapons and to generate cash for its purposes
20 working around sanctions is the Proliferation Security
21 Initiative, which attempts to interdict illicit transport of
22 contraband and weaponry. What is the status of this
23 program? And what do we need to do to strengthen it?

24 General Abrams: Senator, the -- that program is alive
25 and well. As you know, it's grown over time since its

1 inception, you know, well over -- almost 20 years ago, under
2 President Bush. So, it is -- it continues to provide a very
3 strong combined multinational capability to accomplish the
4 tasks that you laid out.

5 I think what we should do, going forward, is continue
6 to encourage more nations to undertake and participate in
7 additional training and integration exercises to give them
8 the capability and confidence to fully fulfill their
9 requirements under that initiative.

10 Senator Kyl: Can you cite any recent examples of
11 successes or -- either successful interdiction or turning
12 away shipments that were bound for someplace that were
13 inappropriate?

14 General Abrams: Senator, there is countless examples
15 of success stories that are going on right now in the
16 INDOPACOM area of operations, with a multitude of nations
17 that are signators to that agreement. And they're having
18 great success.

19 Senator Kyl: General, that's very good to hear. And
20 if there are other things that the committee needs to do to
21 support that initiative, I hope you'll let us know.

22 Admiral Faller, you spoke about the drug interdiction
23 mission of the U.S. Navy, and, in particular, with regard to
24 the area of the world in which you're going to have to be
25 dealing. We have a lot of other agencies -- U.S. government

1 agencies that have missions in this regard. Could you be a
2 little bit more specific about the way that the U.S. Navy
3 complements these issues or the areas in which it has a
4 primary responsibility?

5 Admiral Faller: Senator, Joint Interagency Task Force
6 South, which is located in Key West, is the principal arm
7 for Southern Command that gets after this problem set. The
8 Navy works for them in the detection, monitoring, and
9 interdiction phase, with law enforcement doing the actual
10 interdiction. So, it -- and every agency that is involved
11 in the drug -- anti-drug program has representatives there
12 in Key West and also in Miami. So, it truly is a whole-of-
13 government interagency team effort and -- that -- last year
14 was a record number of interdictions for the Joint
15 Interagency Task Force. Of course, with the supply being
16 what it is, that's -- doesn't begin to put a dent into the
17 overall problem set. So, it's both a supply-demand problem
18 and a whole-of-government problem to get after it.

19 Senator Kyl: But, as to the -- excuse me -- but, as to
20 the Navy's specific missions, could you be just a little bit
21 more elucidating as to what those are?

22 Admiral Faller: Senator, the Navy has -- does
23 detection and monitoring -- aerial detection and monitoring
24 with P-8s, P-3s, and ship assets, when available. The Coast
25 Guard is a big player in this. The Coast Guard has the bulk

1 of the assets for the detection, monitoring, and
2 interdiction.

3 Senator Kyl: General Abrams, let me ask you a question
4 that plays a little bit off of what Senator Cotton was
5 asking you about earlier, and that relates to missile
6 defense. What additional theater missile defense
7 capabilities do you believe are necessary to effectively
8 defend our forces and -- Korean and other forces in the
9 Peninsula, and also installations of Japan, as well as the
10 population centers in Korea?

11 General Abrams: Senator, we have -- the Department has
12 made significant investment in ballistic missile defense
13 capability in both the Peninsula and in Japan to protect
14 those key installations and population centers, et cetera.
15 What we need is an integrated -- some additional capability
16 to better integrate our air and missile defense command.
17 And, as was previously mentioned, we're grateful for the
18 continued support from the Congress. That has been
19 resourced. It was submitted as a joint operational needs
20 statement. It's been approved. And once that's fielded,
21 that will be a significant additional capability to better
22 protect our people and the people of both Korea and Japan.

23 Senator Kyl: Appreciate that. Thank you.

24 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Kyl.

25 Senator Donnelly.

1 Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 Thank you, to the witnesses.

3 Admiral Faller, earlier this year, the Center for
4 Disease Control reported overdose deaths in my home State of
5 Indiana increased by 28 percent from July '16 to July '17,
6 over 1700 young men and women. Only six States had a larger
7 percentage increase. This is a national epidemic that gets
8 worse, and not better. And so, I'm asking you, How do you
9 prioritize the opioid crisis in your combatant command
10 priorities?

11 Admiral Faller: Senator, it is a national crisis. And
12 it will be a top priority, and is a top priority, for
13 Southern Command. The same pathways that are bringing in
14 heroin, cocaine, and other opioids can bring in terrorists.
15 And we have to get after those networks. We have to get
16 after the sources of drugs, interdict the drugs, and work
17 together as a whole-of-government interagency to find better
18 ways and identify seams and gaps in assets and authorities,
19 where we can stop the supply.

20 Senator Donnelly: Admiral, one of the things that
21 we're seeing is that Fentanyl is responsible for a huge
22 portion of this, because it's ten times more powerful than
23 heroin, it's cheap, it's synthetic. What's happening is,
24 it's coming from China. They're sending, basically, the
25 components to your command, into Mexico, where it's being

1 put together and then being shipped up to my State and to
2 other States. Do you have any specific plans in regards to
3 this Fentanyl distribution system that we're seeing?
4 Because what's happening is, one time with that, and people
5 are killed. Just one time. And so, we've seen, in some
6 cases, the overall amount of drugs out there coming down a
7 little bit, but the Fentanyl is so powerful that it kills
8 people almost instantly. And so, we need you to quarterback
9 a game plan in your region specifically regarding Fentanyl,
10 as well.

11 Admiral Faller: Senator, the -- a look at the defense
12 and depth of our southern approach, to further your football
13 analogy, is, the border is the goal line, my partner in
14 Northern Command is responsible for that goal line. And I
15 have the linebackers in the -- and the defensive backs, as
16 you look downrange. It has to be a team effort. And, as I
17 understand the problem set, where we block one pathway,
18 they'll find another. And so, it's an intelligence-driven
19 effort to constantly look for the sources. And so, you're
20 exactly right, Senator, and it's -- and we've got to get
21 after it.

22 Senator Donnelly: Do you need more resources?
23 Because, at times, we've had generals and admirals
24 testifying that -- they said they were able to interdict 25
25 percent of the drugs coming in. And I asked, "Well, did you

1 know about a lot more of them?" And it's, "Yes, but we
2 didn't have the resources to run that number higher." Do
3 you need more resources to be able to catch more of these
4 drugs coming in? Because, in terms of threats to our young
5 people, this is bigger than car crashes, this is bigger than
6 anything else that's out there.

7 Admiral Faller: Senator, I know that the Command has
8 consistently testified that they need resources to do this.
9 I -- one of my first priorities will be to assess where we
10 are in the resource shortage, and come back to my chain of
11 command and Congress, if necessary.

12 Senator Donnelly: It would really be important,
13 because, you know, naturally, I'd love to get 100 percent.
14 And, if it's a resource question to get 100 percent, it
15 would be some of the best resources we could spend, because
16 the people who would survive are our next teachers, our next
17 nurses, our next electricians, they're the heart and soul of
18 who we are. And so, I really look forward to you digging in
19 deep on this, and I know you will, that, when you talk about
20 saving lives, you'd be saving lives, not only every day, not
21 only every hour, but every couple of minutes is the
22 difference that this can make.

23 General Abrams, I want to ask you about the Korean
24 Peninsula. There was recently a report in a South Korean
25 newspaper that said if the suspension of major military

1 exercises continued, in just 2 years, because of routine
2 rotations, the majority of officers in U.S.-South Korean
3 Combined Command would have little to zero experience in
4 conducting joint exercises. Do you agree with that
5 assessment? And has the cancellation of these exercises
6 impacted our readiness and ability to fight tonight?

7 General Abrams: Senator, I think the temporary
8 suspension of exercises that were previously scheduled for
9 August and September were a prudent risk based on the
10 opportunity to open up additional diplomatic efforts and
11 negotiations between the United States and the DPRK. Going
12 forward, we know inherently, by not conducting training and
13 exercises, that there will be a degradation of readiness and
14 capability and interoperability of the combined forces. I
15 believe that there is a -- there have been -- there's
16 opportunities, and some of them are being executed, to
17 mitigate some of that risk, being executed by Combined
18 Forces Command, by participating in much smaller-scale,
19 different-scope staff exercises.

20 Having said that, if confirmed, this will be one of my
21 top priorities, to go and conduct a personal assessment of
22 the readiness of the force and the actual true warfighting
23 capability of the combined forces. And I'll be prepared to
24 provide my best military advice back to the Chairman and the
25 Secretary, in terms of the best way forward.

1 Senator Donnelly: Well, your Command has always been
2 laser-focused on "fight tonight," and that is the major
3 concern I have with this. When does prudent risk become "no
4 longer ready to fight tonight"?

5 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Donnelly.

7 Senator Ernst.

8 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 And, gentlemen, thank you very much for being here
10 today. We appreciate your leadership and your willingness
11 to continue serving our great military forces.

12 Admiral Faller, I'd like to start -- I'm going to pick
13 up where Senator Warren left off, because I think this is
14 very, very important. Here in the United States, I am very
15 glad that our individuals are not tried by media
16 personalities. The media doesn't control our justice
17 system. Now, is it correct that you were cleared of any
18 wrongdoing by the Department of Justice and the Department
19 of Defense?

20 Admiral Faller: Senator, that is correct.

21 Senator Ernst: Do you promise that you will foster a
22 climate of dignity and respect that your wife, your two
23 daughters, and the women in your command would be very proud
24 of?

25 Admiral Faller: I will, Senator.

1 Senator Ernst: Admiral, I look forward to confirming
2 you.

3 Admiral Faller: Thank you.

4 Senator Ernst: I would like to go on. General Abrams,
5 thank you so much. I've enjoyed working with you through
6 the years, and appreciate your wonderful leadership within
7 our service.

8 Moving on to the Peninsula, there are a number of
9 relationships that have been touched upon throughout the
10 course of the morning. One of those relationships that I
11 feel very important is that of South Korea and Japan. Now,
12 history has proven very difficult for these two countries
13 and our trilateral relationship. Is there more that we can
14 be doing to capitalize upon our relationship with those two
15 countries and help repair and move forward so that we can be
16 stronger together?

17 General Abrams: Senator, I think there are a number of
18 things that we can do and we should continue to do. The
19 relationship, as you mentioned, there are historical
20 differences between those two countries, but, militarily,
21 there's really been a wake-up call, if you will, over the
22 last year of provocations prior -- you know, 300 days ago,
23 after the last missile launch, that really galvanized the
24 military-to-military relationship between Japan and Korea.
25 And, if confirmed, I will continue. I have a relationship

1 with the Chief of Land Forces, the Chief of Staff of their
2 Army for Japan, and I will certainly cultivate a very close
3 working relationship with both the ROK Chairman and the ROK
4 Chief of Staff of the Army, once he is announced. And, if
5 confirmed, I'd get in position. So, I think I'm in a
6 position to be able to do that.

7 The relationship between the two countries, I think,
8 has grown closer, as well, because of their shared threat,
9 and they both have a similar interest in a positive outcome
10 of these ongoing negotiations. And, if confirmed, I'll
11 continue to support improvements between those two,
12 bilaterally, and us, trilaterally.

13 Senator Ernst: I appreciate that. Are there specific
14 steps that we can take, whether it is military exchanges,
15 education, training, other ways that we can really drill
16 down and force those relationships as --

17 General Abrams: Well, we -- Senator, we have -- there
18 are a number of exercises that we're already participating
19 in together, and have encouraged the participation both
20 ways, where we've had, for the first time ever, Japanese
21 self-defense forces on the Pen participating in an exercise,
22 very small scale, and vice versa. And we'll continue to
23 look for opportunities to bring those two together as part
24 of exercises and training that we do back here in the United
25 States. As you know, we have a very robust training program

1 up at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, with America's First Corps,
2 and we have a close relationships with both, and we can look
3 for opportunities to do that there.

4 Senator Ernst: Thank you. I appreciate that very
5 much.

6 Admiral Faller, we do have a difficult situation, of
7 course, in the -- in SOUTHCOM, with Venezuela. And we know
8 that times are tense there. And how does that affect, then,
9 the priorities that you see in SOUTHCOM, especially when it
10 comes to their neighbors with Brazil and Colombia?

11 Admiral Faller: Senator, the migrant situation, over 2
12 million migrants have fled the brutal Maduro regime, alone,
13 and that has spilled over into Brazil, Colombia, Peru,
14 Ecuador, and others, who have -- principally, Colombia and
15 Brazil have borne the brunt of this. That has then affected
16 their ability to go after the -- securing the -- and
17 eradicating cocaine. It's -- intensive effort to deal with
18 those migrants. It has affected their ability to ensure the
19 peace accords with the armed -- Revolutionary Armed Forces
20 of Colombia, the FARC. And so, it has strained their
21 militaries. And so, the military effort by the Southern
22 Command in support of diplomatic efforts to foster a
23 peaceful transition in Venezuela, but it's -- as you point
24 out, it's a disaster, and it's affecting the region. So,
25 our principal focus will be on our partners.

1 Senator Ernst: Okay. Outstanding.

2 Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Appreciate it.

3 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Ernst, for your
4 very appropriate comments.

5 Senator King.

6 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 General Abrams, a question that hasn't arisen is the
8 relationship between the denuclearization issue and the
9 movement from an armistice to a treaty. Are those two
10 issues interlinked, or is there an opportunity to move
11 toward a treaty between the North and -- or between the U.N.
12 and the North and the South without necessarily resolving
13 the denuclearization issue?

14 General Abrams: Senator, if I understand the question
15 correctly: Is there a direct linkage between
16 denuclearization and the armistice?

17 Senator King: Yes. Can you --

18 General Abrams: I want to make sure I have that right.

19 Senator King: -- can you have a treaty without
20 resolving the denuclearization issue? That's my question.

21 General Abrams: Senator, as I understand it, the -- a
22 designation of a peace treaty between the South Korea and
23 North Korea would be a direct agreement between those two
24 countries that would not obviate the armistice that's in --
25 that's laid out in U.N. Security Council Resolution 84,

1 signed in 1953. It would not obviate that. And so, there
2 is no direct linkage between what those two countries may,
3 and the armistice.

4 Senator King: Thank you.

5 You mentioned -- and just briefly, I think Senator
6 Perdue asked -- this defense reform 2.0 shows significant
7 reduction in troop levels, about 20 percent, but you
8 indicated an indication in expenditures. Are you
9 comfortable that this proposed change doesn't compromise the
10 security balance on the Peninsula?

11 General Abrams: Senator, the combined efforts that
12 they have to -- and where they're making those defense
13 investments will give them much, much better capability in
14 some advanced systems that will, together with continued
15 training and exercises, will be able to sustain at a level
16 that the risk is acceptable with regards to contingency
17 operations on the Peninsula.

18 Senator King: Thank you.

19 Admiral Faller, I want to -- I want you to do -- to
20 expunge a phrase from your Lexicon, "whole of government."
21 Every time I hear that phrase around here, what it really
22 means to me is "none of government," because nobody is
23 responsible. In your -- in this area of drugs, as everybody
24 has pointed out, it's a devastating attack on our country.
25 Four people have died this morning since we've been talking,

1 of an overdose, in America. If that were a terrorist
2 attack, we'd be turning ourselves inside-out to focus our
3 resources to recover it. The problem is, in the region that
4 you're about to assume command, you've got the Navy, the
5 Coast Guard, intelligence assets, and a group of other
6 countries. It seems to me there has be some centralized
7 authority so that somebody's responsible for this. And I
8 hope that this will be beyond a priority for you. This is a
9 crisis. It's a crisis in every one of our States. We're
10 losing one person a day in Maine. And it's going to take
11 more than a kind of amorphous "whole of government." And
12 I've been to the Command Center in Florida. It's going to
13 take some delegated authority and a structure. And you --
14 you're a military man. You know that you need a chain of
15 command and somebody that's in charge. Can you talk to me
16 about working toward that end?

17 Admiral Faller: Senator, having someone in charge and
18 being able to hold someone accountable is fundamental. I'm
19 a product of the -- of Admiral Rickover training in the
20 nuclear Navy, and I know full well the need to have the
21 ability to look around the table and point at somebody and
22 hold them accountable and ultimately fire them if the
23 decision -- if there are not results. And so, we have to
24 look to where we can get results. We have to -- I think we
25 have to approach this problem set as if there's a seam out

1 there. And we should never feel comfortable that we haven't
2 found that seam, whether it's a information seam,
3 intelligence seam, authority seam. And then we have to take
4 that from source to --

5 Senator King: Well, I want to amend one of the
6 comments that Senator Donnelly made. We're able to now
7 interdict, according to your predecessor's testimony, 25
8 percent of the drug shipments we know of. We have
9 intelligence. It's not 25 percent of what we may or may not
10 know. It's 25 percent of those that we know are happening.
11 And, to me, that's absolutely inexcusable. That is a
12 misallocation of resources.

13 What I would appreciate if you would think about as you
14 assume this Command, assuming you're confirmed, which I
15 believe you will be, of coming back to this committee or to
16 a group of committees or to the administration and
17 suggesting a command structure that will integrate in such a
18 way that there is a chain of command and there is someone in
19 authority. My homely way to put this is "one throat to
20 choke." We need somebody who's responsible for this so that
21 there is not a passing of the buck, and that we can -- I
22 deeply hope, when you come back to see us, it won't still be
23 a "25 percent of what we know of." There's no excuse for
24 that, given the magnitude of this crisis.

25 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator King.

1 Senator Tillis.

2 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

3 Gentlemen, thank you for being here and for your years
4 of service.

5 General Abrams, thank you for your hospitality in my
6 visits down to Fort Bragg, and to your wife, Connie.

7 I -- before I move on to a question about your future
8 commands -- and I look forward to supporting both your
9 nominations -- I'd like for you to maybe give me a review of
10 how you think FORCECOM is doing, what positive progress you
11 made over the time you were there, and what open switches
12 are there that you hope your successor pays attention to.

13 General Abrams: Senator, thank you.

14 Last 3 years, we've seen, through -- with the
15 commitment and support of funding from the Congress of the
16 United States, we've been made -- been able to make enormous
17 improvements in the warfighting readiness of our Army, and
18 specifically those in Forces Command and, I'd also say,
19 across all three components, in the regular Army, the Army
20 National Guard, and the U.S. Army Reserve. As you know, I
21 have training and readiness oversight of the Guard and the
22 Reserve. So, from, you know, individual qualifications
23 through company live-fire, through improvement up through
24 brigade combat team live-fire, a number of emergency
25 deployment readiness exercises that have tested our

1 strategic agility getting to and from exercises, from our
2 supply accountability, the readiness rates of our fleets --
3 for the first time in 8 years, our helicopters are now
4 routinely meeting our Department of the Army minimum
5 maintenance standards. We're seeing great improvements
6 across the board. Our nondeployable readiness rates of our
7 soldiers has plummeted from 17 percent, and this month we're
8 at about 8.2 percent across the Command. So, we've seen
9 enormous effort by everyone to adopt a sort of a mentality
10 change that we previously had during -- as we were a
11 rotational Army to Iraq, Afghanistan, to a force that is
12 postured to be ready to respond, in accordance with the
13 National Defense Strategy, quickly and rapidly. And that
14 requires us to maintain a high level of readiness.

15 So, I think my successor will have plenty of
16 opportunity to continue to follow through. If you use a
17 golf analogy, I've struck the ball, now it's up to him with
18 the followthrough to make sure that we get the ball well
19 down the fairway and we have a sense of permanency in the
20 high level of readiness of the force.

21 Senator Tillis: Admiral Faller, I just want to
22 associate myself with the comments by Senator Ernst on the
23 matter that was brought up by Senator Warren. I'm -- I
24 chair the Personnel Subcommittee, so I review a lot of these
25 cases, and it seems to me you did it right by the book, in

1 terms of consulting with the ethics and legal counsel to
2 determine the appropriateness of whether or not you should
3 attend the event. And I think that revisiting that would be
4 a waste of time here, because I'm looking forward to your
5 next command that I'm confident you're going to be in charge
6 of.

7 It was about 2 years ago, 2 and a half years ago, I had
8 my first briefing on SOUTHCOM from General Kelly at the
9 time, and he said the thing that he found the most maddening
10 about this job is, because of your limited assets, the
11 number of movements into this country, that you just simply
12 couldn't -- you couldn't pursue. You either didn't have
13 assets in the right place or you had other priorities. So,
14 I want to maybe leave the remaining time for both of you to
15 answer this question. We may be lulled into a false of
16 security right now, because we've plussed-up spending for a
17 2-year period. But, we know that's not going to be there in
18 2 years. So, if you're confronted with sequestration, tell
19 me what your greatest concerns are, going into your new
20 commands, and what effect that could potentially have on you
21 to do your job.

22 We'll start with Admiral Faller, then we'll move to --
23 or -- Senator -- General Abrams.

24 Admiral Faller: Senator, sequestration was corrosive
25 and impacted every aspect of our readiness and our

1 operations, from people who had to write contracts multiple
2 times to bridge short-term funding gaps, to the uncertainty
3 that it left in our families, to the uncertainty with our
4 civilian workforce, our military workforce, "Is this the
5 employer of choice that we want to be a part of? Do I know
6 if I'm going to have a job? Am I going to get a pay raise?
7 Am I going to be able to come to work?" This is not the
8 world-class military confidence organization that we want to
9 have --

10 Senator Tillis: So, is it fair to say that, if you
11 were confronted with that, then you would be so far away
12 from what Senator King and Senator Donnelly -- what we'd be
13 doing is degrading what is already an unacceptable -- I
14 mean, you're doing the best you can with the resources you
15 have, but isn't it fair to say that we, in Congress, if we
16 do not properly resource you, that you're not going to do
17 better, you may even do worse?

18 Admiral Faller: Senator, that's fair to say. Yes,
19 sir.

20 Senator Tillis: And, General Abrams?

21 General Abrams: Senator, I would characterize it as
22 devastating. I assumed command 2 years after the government
23 shut down in 2013, and we were still digging out of the
24 hole, a very deep hole. And it took us until mid of 2016,
25 where I could come back and look the Chief and the Secretary

1 of the Army in the eye and say, "We're on the right track,
2 and we can sleep better at night with the readiness of the
3 force." It will be absolutely devastating.

4 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Tillis.

5 Senator Nelson.

6 Senator Nelson: Good morning, Mr. Chairman.

7 Gentlemen, thank you.

8 Admiral, I've been with your previous -- your
9 predecessors many times, all over the AOR, and the whole
10 orchestration on interdiction of the drugs is done in a
11 joint command center in Key West, JIATF. They've had
12 tremendous success. All the agencies of government are
13 represented there. But, it has been hit-and-miss if you, as
14 the commander, don't have enough assets. Same thing with
15 the Coast Guard admiral who is the head of JIATF if he
16 doesn't have enough assets to interdict more of the drug
17 shipments. You want to give me your perspective on that?

18 Admiral Faller: Senator, the drug crisis is a national
19 crisis and will be a top priority. The -- one of my first
20 tasks will be to assess what needs I have. Admiral Tidd's
21 been quite clear that he could use more ships and more ships
22 as platforms for the law enforcement interdiction. If --
23 when I assess that, if that to be the case, I'll come back
24 to the chain of command and will be unapologetic about
25 asking for more and being transparent with the Congress

1 about the same.

2 Senator Nelson: Well, you'll find that the cooperation
3 between the Navy and the Coast Guard, the Coast Guard being
4 the law enforcement agency that actually boards the drug-
5 runners, et cetera, that cooperation has been absolutely
6 stellar. But, the fact is, if you have more platforms in
7 the AOR, it's going to be easier, then, to direct the Coast
8 Guard to those ships. So, I want to help you on that.

9 Tell me, What do you think that -- is the proper role
10 of SOUTHCOM in supporting the Venezuelan people now, in this
11 time of exceptional chaos?

12 Admiral Faller: Senator, the Southern Command is
13 focused on supporting our partners: Brazil, Colombia, those
14 that have been most affected by the migrants, the spillover
15 of some 1-million-plus in Colombia. Recently visited
16 Colombia with the Secretary of Defense. President Duque is
17 keenly aware and sharply focused on all his security
18 challenges. And this is at the top of that list. As a
19 result of the Colombian government's request, we intend to
20 deploy the hospital ship, Comfort. It will be underway
21 shortly -- it was delayed because of the hurricane -- to the
22 region to help our partners offset some of the impacts of
23 this, particularly with the medical care that's been
24 required and the strain that's placed in the resources.

25 Senator Nelson: And how about Nicaragua?

1 Admiral Faller: Sir, Nicaragua is another challenge.
2 The one set that I studied has upward of 500,000 migrants
3 being in Costa Rica by the end of this year. Similar
4 strains are being placed on the neighbors. Another brutal
5 regime that is all about its own authoritative power, not
6 about its own citizens. So, we are partner -- we -- if
7 confirmed, we'll look to partner, and continue partnering,
8 where we can, and to support the USAID and the State
9 Department in their efforts.

10 Senator Nelson: Isn't it interesting, in your AOR, we
11 have three exceptionally totalitarian regimes: Cuba,
12 Venezuela, and Nicaragua? So, you're going to have your
13 hands full, Admiral.

14 Admiral, you've got one of the most extensive AORs, and
15 there are going to be a lot of needs. I'm assuming that,
16 since you are one of the top advisors to General Mattis, as
17 the Secretary, that you have such a relationship with him
18 that, when you need something, you -- although going through
19 the chain of the command, but he's going to listen to any
20 requests by you. Are you ready to speak out very clearly
21 what you need in order to accomplish your mission?

22 Admiral Faller: I am, Senator. And Secretary Mattis
23 is -- one of his fundamentals is problem definition. One of
24 his reasons for traveling to the region recently was to get
25 an eyes-on assessment of the challenges that we face.

1 Senator Nelson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Nelson.

3 Senator Sullivan.

4 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 Chairman Inhofe: Sullivan, yes.

6 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 And, gentlemen, congratulations, and thanks for your
8 service, to you and your families. It's decades that you've
9 been serving our Nation, and we very much appreciate it.

10 Admiral, I want to -- I just want to touch on this
11 issue that you're seeing from a bunch of Senators on the
12 drugs and opioids; and Fentanyl, in particular. It's one
13 thing that we look to countries that are sending Fentanyl,
14 like Mexico, that might not be able to control a lot of what
15 goes on in the country. It's another thing to look at
16 China. Isn't it true, do you think -- I mean, you have a
17 lot of experience. You were in China with Secretary Mattis
18 recently. Couldn't China stop this tomorrow if Xi Jinping
19 just ordered to quit sending Fentanyl, which is killing our
20 citizens? Couldn't they stop it tomorrow?

21 Admiral Faller: Senator, my understanding is that
22 there are ways that China could be more helpful and get
23 after this.

24 Senator Sullivan: Well, when Senator King talks about
25 "one throat to choke" with regard to Fentanyl, I think, in a

1 lot of ways, it is China. So, can I get your commitment,
2 when you're working on this issue, to make sure, whole of
3 government, that we are much more aggressive going to the
4 Chinese, saying, "Stop it. Stop it," right? "Xi Jinping,
5 you could stop this. You're killing our people. Stop it."
6 Shouldn't that -- isn't that what we should be doing with
7 China in -- as it relates to Fentanyl?

8 Admiral Faller: Senator, you have my commitment to.

9 Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

10 General, I want to talk about the current strategy with
11 regard to North Korea. I think the Trump administration
12 comprehensive sanctions, serious military options,
13 bolstering missile defense, these are all things that I'm
14 fully supportive of. I think they've brought North Korea to
15 the table. But, I do want to dig into -- and I want to get
16 your personal opinion, not the administration's opinion on
17 what I see as a potential blindspot with regard to the
18 strategy. And that's a -- almost a rush -- and it might
19 even be from the President, himself -- to remove our forces
20 off the Korean Peninsula. There's been a lot of press
21 reports on this. So, what would be the tactical and
22 strategic effects of removing a large portion of U.S. forces
23 from the Korean Peninsula? Your personal opinion.

24 General Abrams: Senator, let me start by saying --

25 Senator Sullivan: And I just -- but, I'm -- I have a

1 bunch of questions here. I've got about 2 and a half
2 minutes, so --

3 General Abrams: I'll be really quick.

4 Senator Sullivan: Personal opinion. Disastrous?
5 Really bad?

6 General Abrams: I think --

7 Senator Sullivan: Good?

8 General Abrams: I think, when -- this is a
9 hypothetical, based upon --

10 Senator Sullivan: Yeah, but it's not --

11 General Abrams: -- a hypothetical --

12 Senator Sullivan: -- that hypothetical. The President
13 has talked about it.

14 General Abrams: So, I think we should assess the risk.
15 We need to look at a timeframe by which this decision has
16 to be made. It has to be well-informed, holistically, not
17 only by the --

18 Senator Sullivan: Well, that --

19 General Abrams: -- threat that --

20 Senator Sullivan: -- all right.

21 General Abrams: -- we face --

22 Senator Sullivan: General, I'm -- I need to get a
23 little bit more granular, here. Let's say next year the
24 President says, "We're going to remove all forces -- U.S.
25 forces off the Korean Peninsula." What would be the

1 tactical and strategic effects of that, in your personal
2 opinion?

3 General Abrams: I -- again, Senator, you're talking
4 about a hypothetical situation that --

5 Senator Sullivan: It's not that --

6 General Abrams: -- can't be --

7 Senator Sullivan: -- hypothetical. The President has
8 talked about it in the press.

9 General Abrams: Well, in a suggestion or a
10 hypothetical of that magnitude, it would be difficult to
11 boil it down to a yes-or-no question. When faced with the
12 threat --

13 Senator Sullivan: General, you might have --

14 General Abrams: -- that we have there today.

15 Senator Sullivan: -- you might be asked your
16 professional military opinion in the next 2 years on whether
17 we should do this. Let me give you just where it could be
18 very -- if Kim Jong Un offers a deal to remove illegally
19 obtained ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons, illegal,
20 for lawfully deployed U.S. forces on the Korean Peninsula,
21 do you think that would be a smart decision? Do you think,
22 tactically and strategically, that would be good for what's
23 going on on the Korean Peninsula? It would be good for our
24 posture, not just on the Korean Peninsula, but in the
25 region?

1 General Abrams: Tactically -- so, I'll split this into
2 two -- tactically, without any mention of any change in his
3 conventional capability, I'd say that there would be a
4 significant amount of risk, tactically, if we were to do
5 that. Strategically, there would have to be a whole lot
6 more discussion about what additional capabilities we'd be
7 willing to bear --

8 Senator Sullivan: How do you think Russia and China
9 would react to something like that?

10 General Abrams: To which part, Senator?

11 Senator Sullivan: To removing a significant or all our
12 troops from the Korean Peninsula.

13 General Abrams: I think that both of them would
14 strongly encourage it.

15 Senator Sullivan: They would strongly -- so, that
16 gives us an indication how that would relate to U.S.
17 strategic interests, doesn't it?

18 General Abrams: It does give an indication of that,
19 Senator.

20 Senator Sullivan: So, I -- I'd like to talk to you
21 more about this, General. I think it's a hugely important
22 issue. The Congress has weighed in on it in the NDAA that
23 the President signed this year. We essentially said, "Not
24 going to happen. We won't authorize it. We won't provide
25 funds for it." That kind of quid pro quo, illegal nukes for

1 lawfully deployed troops, I think there's bipartisan support
2 that we think it would be strategically disastrous. And the
3 fact that the administration seems to be toying with it is
4 very troubling. And the Congress doesn't support it. It's
5 in the law that they can't do it unless the Secretary of
6 Defense certifies that that would be in the national
7 interest of the United States and not undermine the security
8 of the United States and our allies in the region.

9 So, I think we need to have a further discussion on
10 that, because that -- it's going to be something you might
11 be asked about in the next 2 years, and it's enormously
12 important in -- with all due respect to the administration,
13 who I think's doing a great job, I think they have a
14 blindspot on this. And the rush to remove our forces is a
15 strategically misguided issue that would hurt us, tactically
16 and strategically, and our allies would wonder where U.S.
17 credibility went. So, I look forward to having a much more
18 detailed discussion with you on this before your
19 confirmation vote.

20 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

21 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

22 Senator Blumenthal.

23 Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

24 Thank you both for your service, and to your families,
25 as well.

1 General Abrams, I know you're very familiar with the
2 attacks on this country by North Korea, attacks in the cyber
3 domain. One of the most prominent occurred in May of 2017,
4 WannaCry, which was attributed to the North Korean entity
5 Lazarus Group. This cyberattack impacted 200,000 victims in
6 150 countries. I'm sure you're familiar with the details.
7 Would you agree with me that we need to do more to make
8 North Korea pay a price for this kind of cyberattack?

9 General Abrams: Senator, I think that we should
10 continue to remain vigilant and hold anyone who conducts
11 cyberattacks against our country accountable for their
12 actions.

13 Senator Blumenthal: Are we doing enough now to hold
14 North Korea accountable?

15 General Abrams: Senator, I'm unaware of the depth in a
16 classified -- or in an unclassified setting, of which I can
17 talk about this. But, in short, I believe we are.

18 Senator Blumenthal: You're unaware of the depth?

19 General Abrams: I can't really -- excuse me -- I can't
20 really go into it in an unclassified setting, but I am aware
21 of actions that we have taken to hold them accountable.

22 Senator Blumenthal: You think we're doing enough.

23 General Abrams: I think we are.

24 Senator Blumenthal: Well, I would like to hear more in
25 a classified setting, if that's where we can do it, because

1 if we were doing enough, they wouldn't continue to do it,
2 right?

3 General Abrams: Senator, I'm not a cyber expert. I
4 would defer to General Nakasone. But, I will tell you that
5 attribution and -- is becoming more and more challenging in
6 the cyber domain. So, what some report with great
7 assurances in being attributable to certain actors is not as
8 specific as it can be. And I'm happy to share with you, in
9 a classified setting, what I'm aware of.

10 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you.

11 Admiral, you've answered a number of questions about
12 the incident, questions from Senator Reed, Senator Tillis,
13 and others. I'm more interested in the role that women can
14 play in national security and conflict prevention and
15 resolution. If confirmed, will you continue the tradition
16 of your predecessor by engaging your gender advisor on
17 national security issues and seeking counsel to better
18 collect and share data to inform gender integration plans?

19 Admiral Faller: Senator, I will.

20 Senator Blumenthal: And I'm sure you're familiar with
21 the conference -- I think it was the second annual Women in
22 the Military Conference in Guatemala that SOUTHCOM hosted.
23 Talking about Guatemala for a moment, and Nicaragua and
24 other Central American countries, would you agree with me
25 that the situation for many people there, particularly for

1 women, has become intolerable in light of the gang violence
2 spawned by the drug trade that Senator Donnelly asked about
3 a little bit earlier?

4 Admiral Faller: Senator, there is a circle of despair
5 in those countries that has driven mass migration into the
6 United States. It has created violent conditions, where
7 citizens are making the choice of -- to take that very
8 hazardous journey to the United States versus staying in
9 their own country. And there is a strategy in place that
10 the Congress has funded and appropriated, the Central
11 American strategy. It's -- I -- as I assess it, it's just
12 getting started. Defense plays a piece of that. It is key
13 that we stay committed to that strategy to lower levels of
14 violence against women, men, children --

15 Senator Blumenthal: And many people are seeking asylum
16 in this country as a result of that violence, correct?

17 Admiral Faller: Senator, that is correct.

18 Senator Blumenthal: Let me ask you one last question
19 about Hezbollah in Central America. As you know, I asked
20 Admiral Tidd about SOUTHCOM actions to counter Hezbollah
21 influence in South American countries. And he categorized
22 Hezbollah as the -- as he put it, "the A team in the
23 southern hemisphere," given its criminal activities that
24 support terrorist activities abroad. Would you agree with
25 him?

1 Admiral Faller: Senator, I would. Iran is the number-
2 one state sponsor of terrorism around the world, and their
3 proxy, Lebanese Hezbollah, is actively fundraising illicitly
4 across the world, including Central America.

5 Senator Blumenthal: And we ought to do more to counter
6 it.

7 Admiral Faller: Yes, Senator.

8 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you.

9 Thank you very much.

10 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.

11 Senator McCaskill.

12 Senator McCaskill: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 First of all, thank to -- thanks, to both of you and
14 your families, for your service to this great Nation. It's
15 appreciated more than, probably, words can express.

16 I am interested to know, General Abrams, Do you agree
17 with the statement that it's very difficult, to impossible,
18 to neutralize the threat of North Korea without China's
19 help?

20 General Abrams: I would align -- Senator, I would
21 align myself with that statement.

22 Senator McCaskill: And isn't it true that we have had
23 an uptick in China assisting Kim Jong Un in North Korea
24 since the President declared the trade war against China?

25 General Abrams: Senator, I'm unaware, or maybe I

1 misunderstand your characterization of "uptick," but I will
2 say that China has generally been supportive of the most
3 recent U.N. Security Council sanctions against the DPRK.

4 Senator McCaskill: Well, I -- I'd like to know more
5 about that, because I have heard -- and maybe this is a
6 classified setting -- that, since the trade war has been
7 declared and escalated, that China has reversed some of its
8 stances on what they are doing to assist Kim Jong Un, in
9 terms of imports into North Korea, food assistance, that all
10 of that, where it was on a right -- a correct trajectory for
11 a period of time, now it has gone the other direction
12 because China is looking to cause pain to the United States
13 as a result of all the tariffs. Is that not your
14 understanding, or is that just something you don't feel like
15 you're in a position to fully comment on?

16 General Abrams: The latter. And, Senator, I'm happy
17 to take that for the record, and will follow up with you.

18 Senator McCaskill: Yeah.

19 [The information referred to follows:]

20 General Abrams: I'm probably two weeks dated from my
21 most recent update on their enforcement of Security Council
22 resolutions, so you may have later information than I do,
23 and I'm happy to follow up with you.

24 Senator McCaskill: Well, that would be terrific,
25 because I think it's something we really need to monitor.

1 You know, sometimes, as we know, China has the ability to
2 look globally, usually in their economic interests.

3 General Abrams: Absolutely.

4 Senator McCaskill: Sometimes more -- I mean, we have a
5 tendency, in this country, to look globally for our national
6 security interests and reinforcing our values of democracy,
7 freedom, and liberty; whereas, China, their eye towards
8 foreign nations generally brings them economic power. Is --
9 do you think that's a fair assessment of the difference
10 between China and the United States, in terms of their
11 footprint in the world?

12 General Abrams: I would align myself with that
13 characterization, Senator.

14 Senator McCaskill: Yeah.

15 General Abrams: Also, a complete disregard for human
16 rights on their part, and --

17 Senator McCaskill: Of course.

18 General Abrams: -- our embracement of --

19 Senator McCaskill: But, if you --

20 General Abrams: -- human rights.

21 Senator McCaskill: -- look at what they're doing in
22 the South China Sea, that has a whole lot to do with money
23 and controlling trade routes; whereas, you know -- and some
24 of their investments in various countries is about helping
25 those countries, but it also, ultimately, helps their bottom

1 line. I just -- I'm trying to make that point, because I
2 think sometimes we look at economic issues in a vacuum in
3 the United States of America and we discount the impact that
4 it can have on national security. And I think this is one
5 area where China can really, you know, stir the pot in ways
6 that is not helpful to our national security because of the
7 price we're trying to make them pay economically.

8 General -- Admiral Faller, I wanted to, first, briefly
9 talk to you about your support for the State Partnership
10 Programs. Our State National Guard has had a partner in the
11 Republic of Panama since 1996. We have had over 100
12 engagements with them over the years. We did 12 events in
13 2017, including things like dental -- helping with dental
14 services in remote areas, interoperability of their radio
15 systems. I could go through a long list of really positive
16 things that are going on because of these National Guard
17 partnerships. Do you have every intention -- this is the
18 25th year, this is the anniversary of the State Partnership
19 Program -- do you have every intention of continuing to
20 support that effort?

21 Admiral Faller: Senator, I agree that the State
22 Partnership Program is one of our powerful tools to build
23 partners, increase partner capacity, and, in turn,
24 strengthen our own defense. I will be a big supporter of
25 that program, and I'll work tirelessly to strengthen it.

1 Senator McCaskill: And, finally, I noticed that, when
2 Mr. Nelson asked you about Venezuela, you shifted to talk
3 about the assistance we're giving Colombia, in terms of the
4 migration of refugees from Venezuela. I want to ask you the
5 more difficult question and try to pin you down a little
6 bit. Do we have military planning going on for military
7 interventions in Venezuela at the current time?

8 Admiral Faller: Senator, the -- it's a diplomatic
9 solution, and we're in support of diplomats. I'm -- not
10 been briefed in on any planning that the Command is doing.
11 In my current role, we are not doing anything other than
12 normal prudent planning that a combatant command would do to
13 prepare for a range of contingencies.

14 Senator McCaskill: So, there's been no escalation, no
15 signal from the Commander in Chief or from the Secretary of
16 Defense or from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs that
17 SOUTHCOM should be making plans for potential surgical or
18 otherwise military intervention in this horrendous situation
19 in Venezuela?

20 Admiral Faller: Sir -- Senator, I'm --

21 Senator McCaskill: It's okay, you can call me "sir."
22 I get it. It's fine. Don't worry. No problem. I'm not
23 offended at all.

24 Admiral Faller: Senator, the -- there are -- nothing
25 on -- in the normal range of combatant command contingency

1 planning.

2 Senator McCaskill: Okay.

3 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator McCaskill.

5 Senator Reed, anything further?

6 Senator Reed: No, sir.

7 Chairman Inhofe: Well, let me thank you, General
8 Abrams, for your testimony, and, Admiral Faller, for your
9 tolerance. And I apologize to your family.

10 And we are adjourned.

11 [Whereupon, at 11:24 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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