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

Chairman Inhofe: The meeting will come to order.

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

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

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

Of course, we know today would not be possible without the support and sacrifice of your families, so it's been our
tradition for a long period of time to have you make the
proper recognitions, if you've -- so desire to do that.

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

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

[Both witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

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

[Both witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

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

[Both witnesses answered in the negative.]

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

[Both witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

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

[Both witnesses answered in the affirmative.]
Chairman Inhofe: Will those witnesses be protected from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

[Both witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

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

[Both witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

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

[Both witnesses answered in the affirmative.]

Chairman Inhofe: Okay, good.

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

Admiral Faller, you have been nominated to lead the forces in Southern Command at a time of increasing regional concerns, with instability on the rise and Venezuela potentially on the brink of collapse. The National Defense Strategy identifies protecting the homeland and sustaining American advantages in the western hemisphere as key priorities. You will be on the front lines of that work, combating illicit networks smuggling drugs, people, weapons,
and money that will be even more difficult in a theater that lacks sufficient resourcing.

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

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

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

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

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

[Laughter.]

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

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

General Abrams, General Faller, you've been nominated for extraordinarily important jobs to -- in the service to the Nation. Let me welcome you and your families. General Abrams, your wife, Connie, your sister, Jeanne, and brother-in-law, John, also your nephews, Frank and Nathan, and Nathan's children, Natalie and Nathaniel. And, Admiral Faller, welcome, to your wife, Martha, and your father, Henry. Welcome.
General Abrams, while tensions on the Korean Peninsula have been reduced since the Singapore Summit, the situation remains precarious and dangerous. Despite President Trump's assertions to the contrary, there remains a significant military threat to the United States and its allies because of the regime's array of nuclear, conventional, biological, and chemical weapons. I am greatly disappointed that the momentum of the maximum-pressure campaign has been lost and we have seen no developments on denuclearization since the Singapore Summit.

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

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

Finally, I am concerned that there is a widening gap between us and our ally, the Republic of Korea. The Republic of Korea and North Korea have recently concluded
three inter-Korean summits, and both sides have stated their
desire for a peace treaty. It is unclear how these
developments will affect our longstanding and critical
military alliance with the Republic of Korea. For example,
many experts have expressed concerns that a peace treaty may
call into question the need for U.S. troops on the Korean
Peninsula. Clearly, given the threats so posed by North
Korea to the United States and South Korea and Japan, the
presence of our troops and the strength of our alliance
remains critical, and will remain critical for years to
come.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed.

And let's start with you, General Abrams. And each one
of you will have an opening statement. As you well know, your entire statement will be made a part of the record. And you are recognized.
STATEMENT OF GENERAL ROBERT B. ABRAMS, USA, NOMINEE
FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO BE
COMMANDER, UNITED NATIONS COMMAND, COMBINED FORCES COMMAND,
AND UNITED STATES FORCES KOREA

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

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

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

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

I'm joined here today by my wife, Connie, also an Army
brat, who, for the last 26-plus years, has been side by side
with her soldier supporting troops and families everywhere
we've been stationed. She's been my partner and best friend
in this career of service in both peace and war. If
confirmed, Connie will make her 17th move, and I am grateful
for her unconditional support.

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

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

Our strong combined military power with the Republic of
Korea has sustained armistice conditions for 65 years and
supported our diplomatic and economic efforts today. If confirmed, I will maintain the readiness and fight-tonight capability of the Republic of Korea/United States combined forces and UNC multinational forces in order to maintain credible deterrence and to preserve options for our elected leaders.

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

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

I'm honored to have another opportunity to command and the privilege to lead the finest our Nation has to offer, and their counterparts from the Republic of Korea and our United Nations sending states. And, if confirmed, I pledge to give them my very best effort every day.
Again, thank you, Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, and members of the committee, for your support to our Armed Forces and for this opportunity. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Abrams follows:]
Chairman Inhofe: Thank you --

General Abrams: Thank you.

Chairman Inhofe: -- General Abrams.

Admiral Faller.
STATEMENT OF VICE ADMIRAL CRAIG S. FALLER, USN,

NOMINEE TO BE ADMIRAL AND COMMANDER, UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Multiple challenges must be dealt with aggressively, from the return of great-power competition with Russia and China to threat networks of criminals and violent extremists that traffic in terror, drugs, weapons, humans, illegal immigrants, and illicit goods that undermine both our
sovereignty and security here at home and those of our partners.

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

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

We compete best with the power of our ideas and ideals, our inspiration, our education, and our commitment.
America and the Caribbean are not our backyard. It's our shared neighborhood. And, like the neighborhood of Fryburg, Pennsylvania, where I grew up, good neighbors respect each other's sovereignty, treat each other as equal partners, with respect, and commit to a strong neighborhood watch. If confirmed, I assure you I will commit all my energy to ensuring the United States Southern Command is ready to do its parts to seed opportunity and manage challenges.

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

[The prepared statement of Admiral Faller follows:]
Chairman Inhofe: Well, thank you, Admiral Faller.

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

After a period of increased tensions, the Singapore Summit was a step in the right direction. Recent meetings with President Moon and Kim Jong Un have shown that there's really progress. The fact that they just had their meeting together in North Korea, and they are now talking about doing it again in South Korea, that's something we would not have anticipated, even a year ago. So, we've made a lot of progress in that respect. So, why don't you tell us -- I
I think this is a good hearing -- General Abrams, your assessment of the current security situation on the Peninsula? The fact that we've now had the meetings that I addressed, and we've also had a presence in both North and South meeting together, what's your feeling about that?

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

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

Chairman Inhofe: Well, I appreciate that.
Oh, okay, I've been informed we do have a quorum. We have -- we'll interrupt this for just a moment, here.

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

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

Senator Reed: So move.

Chairman Inhofe: Is there a second?

Senator Shaheen: Second.

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

[A chorus of ayes.]

Chairman Inhofe: Opposed, no.

[No response.]

Chairman Inhofe: It is approved.

I would also ask the committee to consider a list of 2,781 pending military nominations. All of these
nominations have been before the committee the required in
length of time.

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

Senator Reed: So move.

Chairman Inhofe: -- pending military nominations?

There's a motion. And second?

Senator Shaheen: Second.

Chairman Inhofe: Those in favor, say aye.

[A chorus of ayes.]

Chairman Inhofe: Opposed, no.

[No response.]

Chairman Inhofe: The ayes have it.

Now, Mr. Faller, I've -- one of the things that I
wanted to get to during my time here was to look a little
bit at China. You know, it's -- I know that you're
concerned about the Southern Command. You've got your work
cut out for you there. But, if you look all over -- and we
were in the South China Sea, so we -- we're very familiar
with what China is doing right now. It's interpreted by our
allies in that area as, "They are preparing for World War
III." We see, in areas in Africa, Djibouti, they're
starting to build -- in fact, that's the first time that
China, outside of its own territory, has built a military
operation. And the same -- now they're moving down into
Tanzania and some of the other areas. Now, you're seeing the same thing happen, I assume, in the Southern Command. My concern is that the programs that I know that you are -- I've talked to you in my office -- that you're very favorably inclined toward, one of them being the IMET program, we're see -- and foreign military investments, foreign military sales, and all those programs. But, the IMET program is one that's been very successful all over the world, and it's one that China has now figured out. In the case of Africa, they've had a meeting where they had 53 of the presidents of the 54 countries in Africa actually meeting there on a new type of an IMET program that would bring their allegiance away from us, which has been so successful. I'd like to have you share with us, first of all, your feeling about these programs, why they're significant, and what -- and is China doing the same thing in the area that you're going to be in as they are in the rest of the world?

Admiral Faller: Senator, the 2018 National Defense Strategy calls out China as a strategic competitor. As Secretary of Defense recently commented, we continue to see both Russia and China try to shape a world consistent with their authoritarian world view. We see that in the Southern Command and -- area of responsibility, where China's moving in with low-interest loans, with strings attached, for
ports. The Panama Canal, for example. The program that you
speak of, sir, IMET, is one of our best tools to build long-
term trust with officers at all levels, to bring students to
the United States to educate them in our military doctrine,
our tactics, and really do an indepth study together. I --
during a recent trip, some of the leaders I met were
graduates of our War College, and they --

Chairman Inhofe: Sure.

Admiral Faller: -- are lifelong friends of the U.S.

So, the best way to counter this competition was the power
of our education and our ideas, Senator.

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

Senator Reed.

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

And, Admiral Faller, the Navy has been dealing with the
fallout and consequences of the Glenn Defense Marine (Asia)
case for many years now. There are certain allegations that
have arisen with respect to your participation. But, my
understanding is that you -- they've all been fully
investigated by the FBI and by the Department of Defense,
the Navy Criminal Investigation Services. You've been
exonerated from any culpability. And also, I don't believe
-- and you can confirm this -- that you've received, in any
way, any type of gift or services from GDMA or any type of
-- provided them any type of benefit. Is that correct?

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

Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Admiral.

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

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

Senator Reed: Thank you, sir.

General Abrams, you have a range of challenges and a
very difficult situation. One of the issues -- and there
are so many -- is that the Republic of Korea is developing a
relationship with the Democratic Republic of Korea -- and
that's kind of an oxymoronic statement -- which is slightly
different than ours. In the past, my recollection has been,
we've been sort of shoulder to shoulder with the South
Koreans, and we've taken the lead. They seem to be moving away. Is -- how is that going to complicate your position? Or is it going to complicate your position?

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

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

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

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

Thank you.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed.

Senator Cotton.

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

General Abrams, the administration is currently engaged in negotiations with North Korea to try to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula. I have every confidence in Secretary Pompeo's ability to achieve a good deal for the United States, if there is a good deal to be had. However, we cannot simply hope that we'll achieve a good deal, and we must be prepared to handle the consequences of no deal, one of which is North Korea's growing missile and nuclear threat. The recently passed defense bill fully authorized 284-and-a-half-million dollars in urgent unfunded requests for the Missile Defense Agency for missile defenses on the Korean Peninsula. We also directed the Department of Defense to develop new boost-phase intercept systems and space-based intercept defense capabilities. The Department is investing $500 million in enhancing missile defense on
the Korean Peninsula over the next 3 years. Could you explain why these efforts are necessary and warranted in the current threat environment we face on the Korean Peninsula?

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

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

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

Senator Cotton: Good. I'm very glad to hear that.

Boost-phase intercept is simply a term for hitting the missile when it's still on the launching pad. That's better, because it's moving very slow and it's got a very big heat signature when all the fire comes out of it. And maybe most importantly, it's over the bad guys' territory,
not over our territory or our allies' territory. Some of
the deployments we've seen of our traditional missile
defense systems on the Korean Peninsula have generated some
political controversy in the Republic of Korea. Can you
talk about those controversies and how you and Admiral
Harris, who's our Ambassador there, will help manage that?

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

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

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

Senator Cotton: Yeah. There have been reports
recently in the media about challenges in the logistics of
trying to evacuate noncombatants from the Korean Peninsula, in the event of a military conflict. Could you speak to those reports and the challenges that we might face in trying to evacuate civilians and noncombatants from the Korean Peninsula?

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

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

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

Senator Cotton: Thank you.
Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Cotton.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

Admiral Faller: Senator, the drug interdiction is a -- the drug problem here in the United States is a crisis, indeed, and it's a -- going to -- it will be a top priority at Southern Command. The same routes that smugglers and
illicit networks bring the drugs in can bring any number of other threats to our homeland in. And homeland defense is our number-one mission as a combatant commander. And so, it is the top priority. It's a top priority to work within our interagency, our whole of government, and with our partners in NORTHCOM. Most of the drugs come through the Central American region, then up through the -- our southern border. And so, if confirmed, I will be unabashed about coming forward, asking for what resources I think I need. Those statistics are what I've studied, ma'am, and we need to look where we can improve and tighten this noose around the scourge.

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

I want to follow up again on another statement that Admiral Tidd made in that posture hearing, where he talked about the challenge from Russia in Latin America. And he said that Russia's attempting to falsely shape Latin America's information environment through its dedicated Spanish-language RT and Sputnik news channels. And you acknowledge that we need to improve our efforts to address Russian disinformation in the region in your advance policy
question. So, what -- can you be more specific about what you think we can do to address that disinformation campaign?

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

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

General Abrams, you've already referenced the -- in questioning, the suspension of our military exercises with North Korea. Can you assess what the impact has been of the suspension of those exercises on the readiness of our forces?
General Abrams: Senator, I think that the suspension of the exercise this past August and September I would say was prudent risk if we're willing to make the effort to change the relationship with the DPRK. Something has to adjust, in my view, to be able to start to build trust and confidence as we move forward in the relationship. I think that there was certainly degradation to the readiness of the force for the combined forces. That's a key exercise to maintain continuity and to continue to practice our interoperability. And so, there was a slight degradation. But, I have great confidence that General Brooks and the team there have instituted a mitigation plan to be able to sustain that until the next series of exercises are planned.

Senator Shaheen: Have you seen that mitigation plan?

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

Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Senator Rounds.

Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Senator Rounds: To the best of our ability.

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

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

General Abrams: That is accurate.

Senator Rounds: Okay.

Let's go on to cyber.

General Abrams: Senator, if I have it right -- and please correct me -- yes, the DPRK has a significant and capable cyberforce that is capable of worldwide operations. To your specific question about our capabilities, we -- I believe that we lead the world in our militarized cyber capability. And the recent elevation of CYBERCOM to a combatant command status only continues to solidify its
capabilities, both defensive and offensive. And I have
every expectation that General Nakasone and his team will be
able to provide the necessary capabilities -- cyber
capabilities, should there be a conflict on the Peninsula.

Senator Rounds: Thank you.

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

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

Senator Rounds: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Rounds.

Senator Peters.

Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Senator Peters: General, the other key takeaway that I had from my trip to South Korea was the importance of, not just a bilateral relationship with South Korea, but are the
multilateral cooperation that we see from a lot of joint partners on the Peninsula. In fact, when I was meeting with the United Nations Command at Camp Bonifas, I saw 16 flags flying from 16 nations that were there with us. In fact, I was briefed by Lieutenant General Eyre, a Canadian general, which was the first non-U.S. general officer to serve as the Deputy Commander of the United Nations Command. So, my question to you is -- and I know this was something General Brooks invested your -- what -- who may be your predecessor -- invested a great deal of effort in strengthening. My question to you is -- if you could comment on your understanding of the role for allies, neutral states in the Peninsula, and how do you see the -- our continuing developing -- our continuation of that relationship with them?

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

Senator Peters: Great. Thank you, General.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Peters.
Let's see. Senator Perdue.

Senator Perdue: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

General Abrams: Senator, I think the special measures agreement that you're referring to has been adequate since its inception in about 1990. It's gone through nine different iterations. We're on our -- we're in the middle of negotiations for agreement number 10. You mentioned the
operational support is one of the new categories. I think it would be probably inappropriate right now for me to comment in the middle of negotiations that they hope to close out in the next 30 days. But, I endorse the Command's position that that should be included.

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

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

On the second part of your question, with regards to some reductions they're making, this is part of President
Moon's defense reform 2.0. It does include some reduction of capability, but also includes a 8.7 percent increase in defense spending. So, this year they'll be at 2.7 percent of their GDP, which is the highest of any treaty ally of the United States, sir.

Senator Perdue: Thank you.

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

I want to talk about Russia, China, and Iran, and the convergence of terrorism and the narco industry worldwide. China, right now, is going around the world investing in these ports. They're investing through loans -- proprietary loans. We just saw the foreclosure of one of those loans in Colombo, Sri Lanka. There are 31 of these around the continent of Africa. And we now see China making those same proprietary loans win infrastructure in Central America. We see Iran very active in the area, as well as Russia. In
your role as SOUTHCOM Commander, how would you advise us to think about that growing threat from these state players in our own backyard?

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

Senator Perdue: Thank you, sir.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Perdue.

Senator Warren.

Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral Faller, I had hoped to talk with you about the crisis in Venezuela today. Instead, I have to ask you about
yesterday's report in the Washington Post, which alleges that you were one of several officers investigated for your involvement with the defense contractor, Leonard Glenn Francis, who pled guilty to fraud and bribery in the largest corruption scandal in U.S. Navy history. Now, I understand there's been an investigation in the Justice Department and the Navy, and that this committee had this information. But, this is the first time I've heard about it. And so, I have some questions, here.

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

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

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

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

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

Senator Warren: No alarm bells.

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

Senator Warren: No --

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

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

The other thing that strikes me about this specific dinner and others that have been reported in the media is
the detail about the scantily-clad women and prostitutes at these parties. You know, there's even a picture in the Washington Post story to go along with this. Is it now, or was it then, common for senior Navy officers to attend events at which prostitutes and women in scantily-clad outfits were expected to provide entertainment?

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

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

Admiral Faller: No --

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

Admiral Faller: Senator, that -- there is a picture.
And it's nothing more, Senator.

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

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

Senator Warren: Well, I just have to say, Admiral Faller, this is a question of judgment, and it not only troubles me the decision you made back then to attend such a
party, it troubles me that today you seem to think that that
decision --

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Warren --

Senator Warren: -- was justified.

Chairman Inhofe: -- your time is expired.

Senator Kyl.

Senator Kyl: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

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

General Abrams: Senator, the -- that program is alive
and well. As you know, it's grown over time since its
inception, you know, well over -- almost 20 years ago, under
President Bush. So, it is -- it continues to provide a very
strong combined multinational capability to accomplish the
tasks that you laid out.

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

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

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

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

Admiral Faller, you spoke about the drug interdiction
mission of the U.S. Navy, and, in particular, with regard to
the area of the world in which you're going to have to be
dealing. We have a lot of other agencies -- U.S. government
agencies that have missions in this regard. Could you be a little bit more specific about the way that the U.S. Navy complements these issues or the areas in which it has a primary responsibility?

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

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

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

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

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

Senator Kyl: Appreciate that. Thank you.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Kyl.

Senator Donnelly.
Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, to the witnesses.

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

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

Senator Donnelly: Admiral, one of the things that we're seeing is that Fentanyl is responsible for a huge portion of this, because it's ten times more powerful than heroin, it's cheap, it's synthetic. What's happening is, it's coming from China. They're sending, basically, the components to your command, into Mexico, where it's being
put together and then being shipped up to my State and to other States. Do you have any specific plans in regards to this Fentanyl distribution system that we're seeing? Because what's happening is, one time with that, and people are killed. Just one time. And so, we've seen, in some cases, the overall amount of drugs out there coming down a little bit, but the Fentanyl is so powerful that it kills people almost instantly. And so, we need you to quarterback a game plan in your region specifically regarding Fentanyl, as well.

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

Senator Donnelly: Do you need more resources? Because, at times, we've had generals and admirals testifying that -- they said they were able to interdict 25 percent of the drugs coming in. And I asked, "Well, did you
know about a lot more of them?" And it's, "Yes, but we
didn't have the resources to run that number higher." Do
you need more resources to be able to catch more of these
drugs coming in? Because, in terms of threats to our young
people, this is bigger than car crashes, this is bigger than
anything else that's out there.

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

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

General Abrams, I want to ask you about the Korean
Peninsula. There was recently a report in a South Korean
newspaper that said if the suspension of major military
exercises continued, in just 2 years, because of routine rotations, the majority of officers in U.S.-South Korean Combined Command would have little to zero experience in conducting joint exercises. Do you agree with that assessment? And has the cancellation of these exercises impacted our readiness and ability to fight tonight?

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

Having said that, if confirmed, this will be one of my top priorities, to go and conduct a personal assessment of the readiness of the force and the actual true warfighting capability of the combined forces. And I'll be prepared to provide my best military advice back to the Chairman and the Secretary, in terms of the best way forward.
Senator Donnelly: Well, your Command has always been laser-focused on "fight tonight," and that is the major concern I have with this. When does prudent risk become "no longer ready to fight tonight"?

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Donnelly.

Senator Ernst.

Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

Admiral Faller: Senator, that is correct.

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

Admiral Faller: I will, Senator.
Senator Ernst: Admiral, I look forward to confirming you.

Admiral Faller: Thank you.

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

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

General Abrams: Senator, I think there are a number of things that we can do and we should continue to do. The relationship, as you mentioned, there are historical differences between those two countries, but, militarily, there's really been a wake-up call, if you will, over the last year of provocations prior -- you know, 300 days ago, after the last missile launch, that really galvanized the military-to-military relationship between Japan and Korea. And, if confirmed, I will continue. I have a relationship
with the Chief of Land Forces, the Chief of Staff of their Army for Japan, and I will certainly cultivate a very close working relationship with both the ROK Chairman and the ROK Chief of Staff of the Army, once he is announced. And, if confirmed, I'd get in position. So, I think I'm in a position to be able to do that.

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

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

General Abrams: Well, we -- Senator, we have -- there are a number of exercises that we're already participating in together, and have encouraged the participation both ways, where we've had, for the first time ever, Japanese self-defense forces on the Pen participating in an exercise, very small scale, and vice versa. And we'll continue to look for opportunities to bring those two together as part of exercises and training that we do back here in the United States. As you know, we have a very robust training program
up at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, with America's First Corps, and we have a close relationships with both, and we can look for opportunities to do that there.

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

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

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

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

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

Senator King.

Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

Senator King: Yes. Can you --

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

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

General Abrams: Senator, as I understand it, the -- a designation of a peace treaty between the South Korea and North Korea would be a direct agreement between those two countries that would not obviate the armistice that's in -- that's laid out in U.N. Security Council Resolution 84,
signed in 1953. It would not obviate that. And so, there
is no direct linkage between what those two countries may,
and the armistice.

Senator King: Thank you.

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

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

Senator King: Thank you.

Admiral Faller, I want to -- I want you to do -- to
expunge a phrase from your Lexicon, "whole of government."
Every time I hear that phrase around here, what it really
means to me is "none of government," because nobody is
responsible. In your -- in this area of drugs, as everybody
has pointed out, it's a devastating attack on our country.
Four people have died this morning since we've been talking,
of an overdose, in America. If that were a terrorist
tack, we'd be turning ourselves inside-out to focus our
resources to recover it. The problem is, in the region that
you're about to assume command, you've got the Navy, the
Coast Guard, intelligence assets, and a group of other
countries. It seems to me there has be some centralized
authority so that somebody's responsible for this. And I
hope that this will be beyond a priority for you. This is a
crisis. It's a crisis in every one of our States. We're
losing one person a day in Maine. And it's going to take
more than a kind of amorphous "whole of government." And
I've been to the Command Center in Florida. It's going to
take some delegated authority and a structure. And you --
you're a military man. You know that you need a chain of
command and somebody that's in charge. Can you talk to me
about working toward that end?

Admiral Faller: Senator, having someone in charge and
being able to hold someone accountable is fundamental. I'm
a product of the -- of Admiral Rickover training in the
nuclear Navy, and I know full well the need to have the
ability to look around the table and point at somebody and
hold them accountable and ultimately fire them if the
decision -- if there are not results. And so, we have to
look to where we can get results. We have to -- I think we
have to approach this problem set as if there's a seam out
there. And we should never feel comfortable that we haven't
found that seam, whether it's a information seam,
intelligence seam, authority seam. And then we have to take
that from source to --

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

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

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator King.
Senator Tillis.

Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

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

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

General Abrams: Senator, thank you.

Last 3 years, we've seen, through -- with the commitment and support of funding from the Congress of the United States, we've been made -- been able to make enormous improvements in the warfighting readiness of our Army, and specifically those in Forces Command and, I'd also say, across all three components, in the regular Army, the Army National Guard, and the U.S. Army Reserve. As you know, I have training and readiness oversight of the Guard and the Reserve. So, from, you know, individual qualifications through company live-fire, through improvement up through brigade combat team live-fire, a number of emergency deployment readiness exercises that have tested our
strategic agility getting to and from exercises, from our
supply accountability, the readiness rates of our fleets --
for the first time in 8 years, our helicopters are now
routinely meeting our Department of the Army minimum
maintenance standards. We're seeing great improvements
across the board. Our nondeployable readiness rates of our
soldiers has plummeted from 17 percent, and this month we're
at about 8.2 percent across the Command. So, we've seen
enormous effort by everyone to adopt a sort of a mentality
change that we previously had during -- as we were a
rotational Army to Iraq, Afghanistan, to a force that is
postured to be ready to respond, in accordance with the
National Defense Strategy, quickly and rapidly. And that
requires us to maintain a high level of readiness.

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

Senator Tillis: Admiral Faller, I just want to
associate myself with the comments by Senator Ernst on the
matter that was brought up by Senator Warren. I'm -- I
chair the Personnel Subcommittee, so I review a lot of these
cases, and it seems to me you did it right by the book, in
terms of consulting with the ethics and legal counsel to
determine the appropriateness of whether or not you should
attend the event. And I think that revisiting that would be
a waste of time here, because I'm looking forward to your
next command that I'm confident you're going to be in charge
of.

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

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

Admiral Faller: Senator, sequestration was corrosive
and impacted every aspect of our readiness and our
operations, from people who had to write contracts multiple
times to bridge short-term funding gaps, to the uncertainty
that it left in our families, to the uncertainty with our
civilian workforce, our military workforce, "Is this the
employer of choice that we want to be a part of? Do I know
if I'm going to have a job? Am I going to get a pay raise?
Am I going to be able to come to work?" This is not the
world-class military confidence organization that we want to
have --

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

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

Senator Tillis: And, General Abrams?

General Abrams: Senator, I would characterize it as
devastating. I assumed command 2 years after the government
shut down in 2013, and we were still digging out of the
hole, a very deep hole. And it took us until mid of 2016,
where I could come back and look the Chief and the Secretary
of the Army in the eye and say, "We're on the right track, and we can sleep better at night with the readiness of the force." It will be absolutely devastating.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Tillis.

Senator Nelson.

Senator Nelson: Good morning, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you.

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

Admiral Faller: Senator, the drug crisis is a national crisis and will be a top priority. The -- one of my first tasks will be to assess what needs I have. Admiral Tidd's been quite clear that he could use more ships and more ships as platforms for the law enforcement interdiction. If -- when I assess that, if that to be the case, I'll come back to the chain of command and will be unapologetic about asking for more and being transparent with the Congress.
Senator Nelson: Well, you'll find that the cooperation between the Navy and the Coast Guard, the Coast Guard being the law enforcement agency that actually boards the drug-runners, et cetera, that cooperation has been absolutely stellar. But, the fact is, if you have more platforms in the AOR, it's going to be easier, then, to direct the Coast Guard to those ships. So, I want to help you on that.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Nelson.

Senator Sullivan.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Sullivan, yes.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

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

Senator Sullivan: Well, when Senator King talks about "one throat to choke" with regard to Fentanyl, I think, in a
lot of ways, it is China. So, can I get your commitment, when you're working on this issue, to make sure, whole of government, that we are much more aggressive going to the Chinese, saying, "Stop it. Stop it," right? "Xi Jinping, you could stop this. You're killing our people. Stop it." Shouldn't that -- isn't that what we should be doing with China in -- as it relates to Fentanyl?

Admiral Faller: Senator, you have my commitment to.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

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

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

Senator Sullivan: And I just -- but, I'm -- I have a
bunch of questions here. I've got about 2 and a half
minutes, so --

General Abrams: I'll be really quick.

Senator Sullivan: Personal opinion. Disastrous?

Really bad?

General Abrams: I think --

Senator Sullivan: Good?

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

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

General Abrams: -- a hypothetical --

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

General Abrams: So, I think we should assess the risk.

We need to look at a timeframe by which this decision has
to be made. It has to be well-informed, holistically, not
only by the --

Senator Sullivan: Well, that --

General Abrams: -- threat that --

Senator Sullivan: -- all right.

General Abrams: -- we face --

Senator Sullivan: General, I'm -- I need to get a
little bit more granular, here. Let's say next year the
President says, "We're going to remove all forces -- U.S.
forces off the Korean Peninsula." What would be the
tactical and strategic effects of that, in your personal opinion?

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

Senator Sullivan: It's not that --

General Abrams: -- can't be --

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

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

Senator Sullivan: General, you might have --

General Abrams: -- that we have there today.

Senator Sullivan: -- you might be asked your professional military opinion in the next 2 years on whether we should do this. Let me give you just where it could be very -- if Kim Jong Un offers a deal to remove illegally obtained ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons, illegal, for lawfully deployed U.S. forces on the Korean Peninsula, do you think that would be a smart decision? Do you think, tactically and strategically, that would be good for what's going on on the Korean Peninsula? It would be good for our posture, not just on the Korean Peninsula, but in the region?
General Abrams: Tactically -- so, I'll split this into two -- tactically, without any mention of any change in his conventional capability, I'd say that there would be a significant amount of risk, tactically, if we were to do that. Strategically, there would have to be a whole lot more discussion about what additional capabilities we'd be willing to bear --

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

General Abrams: To which part, Senator?

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

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

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

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

Senator Sullivan: So, I -- I'd like to talk to you more about this, General. I think it's a hugely important issue. The Congress has weighed in on it in the NDAA that the President signed this year. We essentially said, "Not going to happen. We won't authorize it. We won't provide funds for it." That kind of quid pro quo, illegal nukes for
lawfully deployed troops, I think there's bipartisan support that we think it would be strategically disastrous. And the fact that the administration seems to be toying with it is very troubling. And the Congress doesn't support it. It's in the law that they can't do it unless the Secretary of Defense certifies that that would be in the national interest of the United States and not undermine the security of the United States and our allies in the region.

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

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

Senator Blumenthal.

Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

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

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

Senator Blumenthal: You're unaware of the depth?

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

Senator Blumenthal: You think we're doing enough.

General Abrams: I think we are.

Senator Blumenthal: Well, I would like to hear more in a classified setting, if that's where we can do it, because
if we were doing enough, they wouldn't continue to do it, right?

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

Senator Blumenthal: Thank you.

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

Admiral Faller: Senator, I will.

Senator Blumenthal: And I'm sure you're familiar with the conference -- I think it was the second annual Women in the Military Conference in Guatemala that SOUTHCOM hosted. Talking about Guatemala for a moment, and Nicaragua and other Central American countries, would you agree with me that the situation for many people there, particularly for
women, has become intolerable in light of the gang violence spawned by the drug trade that Senator Donnelly asked about a little bit earlier?

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

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

Admiral Faller: Senator, that is correct.

Senator Blumenthal: Let me ask you one last question about Hezbollah in Central America. As you know, I asked Admiral Tidd about SOUTHCOM actions to counter Hezbollah influence in South American countries. And he categorized Hezbollah as the -- as he put it, "the A team in the southern hemisphere," given its criminal activities that support terrorist activities abroad. Would you agree with him?
Admiral Faller: Senator, I would. Iran is the number-one state sponsor of terrorism around the world, and their proxy, Lebanese Hezbollah, is actively fundraising illicitly across the world, including Central America.

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

Admiral Faller: Yes, Senator.

Senator Blumenthal: Thank you.

Thank you very much.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.

Senator McCaskill.

Senator McCaskill: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

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

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

General Abrams: Senator, I'm unaware, or maybe I
misunderstand your characterization of "uptick," but I will say that China has generally been supportive of the most recent U.N. Security Council sanctions against the DPRK.

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

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

Senator McCaskill: Yeah.

[The information referred to follows:]

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

Senator McCaskill: Well, that would be terrific, because I think it's something we really need to monitor.
You know, sometimes, as we know, China has the ability to look globally, usually in their economic interests.

General Abrams: Absolutely.

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

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

Senator McCaskill: Yeah.

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

Senator McCaskill: Of course.

General Abrams: -- our embrace of --

Senator McCaskill: But, if you --


Senator McCaskill: -- look at what they're doing in the South China Sea, that has a whole lot to do with money and controlling trade routes; whereas, you know -- and some of their investments in various countries is about helping those countries, but it also, ultimately, helps their bottom
line. I just -- I'm trying to make that point, because I think sometimes we look at economic issues in a vacuum in the United States of America and we discount the impact that it can have on national security. And I think this is one area where China can really, you know, stir the pot in ways that is not helpful to our national security because of the price we're trying to make them pay economically.

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

Admiral Faller: Senator, I agree that the State Partnership Program is one of our powerful tools to build partners, increase partner capacity, and, in turn, strengthen our own defense. I will be a big supporter of that program, and I'll work tirelessly to strengthen it.
Senator McCaskill: And, finally, I noticed that, when Mr. Nelson asked you about Venezuela, you shifted to talk about the assistance we're giving Colombia, in terms of the migration of refugees from Venezuela. I want to ask you the more difficult question and try to pin you down a little bit. Do we have military planning going on for military interventions in Venezuela at the current time?

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

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

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

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

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

Senator McCaskill: Okay.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator McCaskill.

Senator Reed, anything further?

Senator Reed: No, sir.

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

And we are adjourned.

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