HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON
UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND AND
UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND
IN REVIEW OF THE DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST
FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021
AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

Thursday, January 30, 2020

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 8:59 a.m. in Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. James M. Inhofe, presiding.
Committee Members Present: Senators Inhofe, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Perdue, Cramer, McSally, Blackburn, Hawley, Reed, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Kaine, King, Peters, Manchin, and Jones.
OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES M. INHOFE, U.S. SENATOR FROM OKLAHOMA

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Rounds says it is time we start, and so we are going to start.

Good morning. The committee today has received testimony from SOUTHCOM and AFRICOM. This is a very significant meeting because in my narrow view we have the two comms that never were adequately resourced -- I really believe that -- compared to the threat that we are facing.

We have two great heroes here. We have General Steve Townsend, Commander of the USAFRICOM and Admiral Craig Faller, Commander of SOUTHCOM.

This committee’s top priority is to ensure the effective implementation of the National Defense Strategy. That is this. And we have been adhering to this to the letter in a very bipartisan way.

We identified the competition with China and Russia. That is where the problem is. That is something that people were not really sensitive to until we came out with this document. China’s and Russia’s growing influence is not limited to Europe and the Indo-Pacific, and both countries clearly view Africa and Latin America as critical battlefields to fulfill their global ambitions and challenge the United States.

This is particularly evident in Africa. Over the last
20 years, I have conducted -- I think we are over about 160 African country visits working with that continent. I can tell you that it is no coincidence that China established the first overseas military base in Djibouti. You know, that is the first time. They have always done it in their own city limits before, but now it is Djibouti. Now they are as far south in Africa as Tanzania and all over the country. I visited Djibouti last February and saw firsthand what they are doing there, and they are active there.

Elsewhere China is using cash and debt to trap the countries and to force them to put their infrastructure and potentially their sovereignty on sale.

At the same time, Russia is using its military, mercenaries, and weapons sales to buy influence, exploit Africa’s natural resources, and to prop up leaders sympathetic to Russian interests and hostile to the United States.

While the NDS states that competition with Russia and China should be DOD’s top priority, it makes clear that we must maintain pressure on radical terrorist groups like al Qaeda and ISIS.

Today more than a dozen terrorist groups with ties to al Qaeda and ISIS are operating across Africa. Many of these groups have ambition to attack Americans and our partners. Without sustained pressure, the threat posed by
these groups will grow.

In SOUTHCOM’s area of responsibility, China and Russia are pursuing a similar strategy by using economic and military means to expand their access and influence right here in our own hemisphere.

China has increased its naval deployments to the region by 70 percent over the last 5 years, and Chinese companies currently have over 50 active port projects in this region and there are more on the planning board.

Russia props up oppressive regimes in places like Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua that are hostile to the United States. They are also deploying advanced military assets to the region, including strategic bombers and warships.

At the same time, much of the drugs that are poisoning the American cities are coming from Latin America. These drugs are trafficked by illicit networks.

And I would say in my opening statement that in both of these comms, I have been pretty outspoken as a conservative but one who has really been concerned because they do not seem to get the attention that some of the other comms do. I mean, you know, if you look at Africa, you have a total of 6,000 people there, but how much are you going to get accomplished with 6,000 people? You look at CENTCOM. What is that? 75,000. And PACOM is even bigger than that.

So if the object here and people are talking about on
the subject that is taking place is to reduce and to reposition people, you are talking about the two areas where there are not enough people to reposition. And that is a narrow view, but that is mine.

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

Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And I welcome our witnesses.

But first let me extend my condolences to the families of the brave Americans who were killed in action in the attack on the Kenyan airbase earlier this month, as well as those who are recovering from those wounds, and also extend my condolences to the families of the two airmen who were recently killed in Afghanistan.

Again, thank you to the witnesses for appearing here today. Both of you are leading commands during challenging times, and we thank you for your continued service. Please also extend our gratitude to the service men and women who under your command continue their outstanding service to the nation.

There is currently an effort underway to review U.S. force posture around the globe in an effort to ensure the Department of Defense funding and forces are allocated in line with the National Defense Strategy. We understand that AFRICOM is the first combatant command to go through the review process and that SOUTHCOM will shortly follow.

While it is wise and in fact necessary to take a hard look and methodological look at our investments in military activities around the globe, it would be strategically
unwise to disengage from either Africa or Latin America in an effort to generate small, near-term budgetary gains. Given the relatively small number of forces under consideration, such a move would not generate the type of savings necessary for meaningful NDS investments and would likely come at a much higher cost in terms of increased long-term security risks.

Our competitors recognize that investing in Africa and Latin America is in their long-term interests, as evidenced by Chinese and Russian military and economic activity that continues to grow across these continents year by year. General Townsend and Admiral Faller, I look forward to hearing your assessments regarding where and how U.S. interests are best served in the AFRICOM and SOUTHCOM areas of operation, including where we may be able to gain efficiencies without undue risk to the U.S. interests, and where you believe it would be strategically responsible to do so.

As you both note in your testimony, Latin America and Africa are beset by a vicious cycle of challenges that our competitors are seeking to leverage to their advantage. Countries with weak democratic institutions and rampant corruption are being overtly wooed by Chinese and Russian investments and covertly manipulated through information operations and a flood of disinformation. We are not only
competing globally for influence and access, we must also work to ensure that new forms of military and economic colonialism do not take root in those regions. I am especially concerned about Chinese economic intentions and whether our partner countries are positioned to defend themselves against China’s predatory lending practices.

As you well know, the problems we face and the security solutions required are multidimensional. They do not lend themselves to geographic or bureaucratic boundaries and require well-resourced and well-integrated whole-of-government solutions. Continuing to restrict development aid, rebuff partners and allies, and constrain multilateral efforts, as the administration has repeatedly endeavored to do, all but ensures that present challenges in places like Latin America and Africa will continue to expand and travel to America’s doorstep. I will be interested in your views on the importance of investing in diplomacy and development to foster long-term stability in these regions, as well as your assessment of the impact of significant force reductions on the interagency and international partners we coordinate with and depend upon to advance our objectives.

Gentlemen, thank you for your service and thank you for your testimony.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed.

We will go ahead and start with opening statements, and
we will start with you, General Townsend. Your statement will be made a part of the record. You may proceed.
STATEMENT OF GENERAL STEPHEN J. TOWNSEND, USA,

COMMANDER, UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND

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

It is a privilege to be a part of and to lead America’s finest men and women at U.S. Africa Command, an exceptional team dedicated to protecting America and advancing her interests on the African continent.

I would like to take a moment to honor the memories of three exceptional Americans, U.S. Army Specialist Henry Mayfield, Jr.; Mr. Bruce Triplet; and Mr. Dustin Harrison who lost their lives in the service of our nation on January 5th in Manda Bay, Kenya. To their families, our thoughts and prayers are with you. Your loved ones died while protecting the American people from the very real threat of al Qaeda and al Shabaab terrorist groups.

I am here this morning with my battle buddy, shipmate, and friend, Admiral Craig Faller, to discuss shared challenges and opportunities in both our areas of responsibility while we further readiness of the joint force and our ability to fight across the globe.

AFRICOM is critical to maintaining this ability as Africa overwatches a global crossroads with strategic
chokepoints and sea lines of communication that are essential to global commerce and critical to U.S. operations in the world. Our future security and prosperity rest on this strategic access in times of crisis and ensuring these waters remain free, open, and secure.

USAFRICOM is engaged in an ongoing blank slate review. In concert with the Department of Defense, we have developed a prioritized list of objectives and actions to protect the homeland and secure our strategic interests in Africa while ensuring the American taxpayers’ investments are in the right areas.

Africa is key terrain for competition with China and Russia who are aggressively using economic and military means to expand their access and influence. I believe Africa offers America a competitive edge over China and Russia, and we should take advantage of it.

We will grow more efficient to contribute to higher defense priorities and refocus resources to global power competition, but we cannot take pressure off major terrorist groups like al Qaeda and ISIS. These groups and many others remain an inconvenient reality in Africa. While we should not try to confront each one, we should remain resolute in confronting those who threaten Americans and the American homeland like al Shabaab, the largest and most violent of al Qaeda’s branches. Today AFRICOM does that with a light and
relatively low cost footprint by supporting African and international partners who are leading these efforts.

In my first 6 months of command, I learned that small investments, a few troops, and a few bucks can go a long way and make a real difference in Africa. Our whole-of-government and partner-centric approach acts as a force multiplier to address Africa’s many complex challenges. What AFRICOM accomplishes with a few people and a few dollars on a continent three and a half times the size of the continental United States is a bargain for the American taxpayer and low cost insurance for America in that region.

A secure and stable Africa remains an enduring American interest. USAFRICOM stands ready to protect and advance American interests and respond to crises in Africa.

Again, thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for your continued support to our armed forces. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Townsend follows:]
Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, General Townsend.

Admiral Faller?
STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL CRAIG S. FALLER, USN, COMMANDER,
UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND

Admiral Faller: Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, Senators, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am honored to be here with my shipmate and good friend, General Steve Townsend.

We also thank you for the steadfast support you provide to our men and women every day at SOUTHCOM, and I am truly grateful for the honor and opportunity to lead them.

I am with Ambassador Jean Manes, our civilian deputy commander, former U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador; and Sergeant Major Zickefoose, Command Sergeant Major for SOUTHCOM, two of the eyes and ears of our command.

The western hemisphere is our shared home. It is our neighborhood and we are connected to the nations there in every domain, sea, air, space, land, cyber, and most importantly, culturally and with values. Over the last year, I have had the opportunity to visit our partners and see firsthand the opportunities and challenges that directly impact the security of our hemisphere.

I have come to describe the challenges of a vicious circle of threats that deliberately erodes the security and stability of this region and the United States of America. This vicious circle is framed by systemic issues of young democracies, with weak institutions, rampant corruption,
exploited by transnational criminal organizations often
better funded than the security organizations they face,
external state actors that do not share those values, China,
Russia, and Iran, and violent extremist organizations. They
are trying to advance their interests at the expense of U.S.
and partner nation security.

In fact, the aha for me over the last year is the
extent to which China is aggressively pursuing its interests
right here in our neighborhood. This vicious circle can be
seen most acutely in the tragedy that is Venezuela. The
human suffering of this once thriving democracy has driven 5
million people to flee to neighboring countries like
Colombia, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Argentina, Chile, and more.
These countries are dealing with this and the strains to
their health care, education, and social services are
palatable. Colombia alone spent $2.5 billion, a significant
part of their GDP, over the last 2 years just to support the
migrants. While Russia, Cuba, and China prop up this
illegitimate Maduro dictatorship, the democracies of the
world look for a way to get the Venezuelan people what they
deserve, a free and prosperous Venezuela.

The only way to attack this vicious circle is as a
team. In this neighborhood, a little goes a long way, and
our partners are willing to contribute. But we need the
right and focused, persistent military presence which might
take the form of security force assisted brigades or small
teams of special operation forces or marines to conduct
specialized training or our National Guard forces forging
long-term relations via the State Partnership Program or our
maritime forces where presence at sea establishes sea
control and attacks these transnational criminal
organizations, as we have recently done with the deployment
of littoral combat ship USS Detroit.

Deployments like the United States naval ship Comfort
show the best outstretched hand of America, and that mission
treated over 70,000 patients and extended our enduring
promise as a trusted partner to the neighborhood.

Security cooperation is a critical tool in a region
with willing partners who thrive given the opportunity.
International military education and training, IMET, as a
small investment, yields long-term returns. It builds
lasting trusted relationships. As I speak, half of our
nation’s chiefs of defense are graduates of IMET programs.

Finally, our people, our greatest asset. Joint
Interagency Task Force South, JIATF-South in Key West, our
southernmost base in the continental United States, holds
significant strategic value in defending against a wide
range of threats to U.S. national security. We are taking
steps to improve the resiliencies of that headquarters
building and to improve the quality of life of our military
and civilian personnel who struggle in one of the country’s most expensive economies.

At our headquarters in Miami, we are also working to address the cost of living and housing concerns that create hardships for our families.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Reed, thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. The SOUTHCOM team appreciates the support of Congress, and you continue to place trust and honor in us and we will not let you down.

I look forward to your questions.

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

The comments I made in an opening statement I am very sincere about because a lot of people do not realize, when they look at all of the comms that we have around, did we ever have the right resources relative to the threats that are posed. And so I am going to ask you each the same question, which I have worded very carefully because we hear from so many people who are not aware of the threat to our national security that you would find in SOUTHCOM and in Africa. Why does it really matter in terms of our national security?

And I am going to start with you, Admiral Faller. You have touched on it. I know you believe in it, but the question would be, why should the American people care what China and Russia are doing in Africa and Latin America? And specifically, how does what they are doing threaten our national security? I know the President is very interested in this. He wants to make sure that we do not have resources in places that do not have a direct threat on our national security. I would like to have you restate what the direct threat is out there to our national security.

Admiral Faller: Senator, this region matters. It is the cultural values. It is the extensive interaction we have in trade. We have a positive trade balance with the region, but that is eroding. And we are the number one
trading partner. China is fast catching us in that regard.

Panama Canal, strategic access. Two-thirds of the traffic that goes through that has an economic direct tie to the United States.

I look around the region and I see China working on multiple port deals, IT infrastructure, dams, mining, logging, fishing, including significant illegal fishing, illegal mining and illegal logging. And I look at the port access that they are pursuing in El Salvador, Jamaica, Bahamas. I ask myself the question why would China want to buy an island and lock up a 99-year lease for most of the coast of El Salvador, right here within a 2-hour flight of the continental United States. They are trying to achieve positional advantage right here in our neighborhood and that is alarming and concerning to me. It drives a sense of urgency with which I look at this competition.

Chairman Inhofe: You know, the terrorists that are out there -- we are not really talking about just locally there, even in El Salvador and the rest. You are the door to this country, right through your area, and I think you have stated that very well.

And the same thing to you, General Townsend. I may not have mentioned this in the opening statement, but if you are looking for places to save, I cannot see that you would find it there. I mean, you have a total of what? 6,000–6,500
people in the whole continent. Of that, most of those,
4,000 of those, are in Djibouti. Of course, they have other
missions outside of the continent of Africa.

But when you go to West Africa, you have only got what?
1,200-1,300 people. So it is not like the other comms with
75,000, 80,000, and 100,000 people if what you are trying to
accomplish is to reduce our footprint around the world.

So specifically in Africa, talking about how that
directly affects our national security.

General Townsend: Thank you, Chairman.

So you asked why should America care about Africa. For
a lot of the same reasons that Admiral Faller talked about
America caring about South America, although it is a little
bit more geographically distant.

The strategic access that America needs to the African
continent rests on the fact that it is that global
crossroads I talked about in my opening statement. There
are also tremendous natural resources there, to include rare
earth minerals that America needs. There is also a
burgeoning population there, and there is good and bad news
with that. It is a tremendous potential opportunity for the
future, also significant risk. I think that in the past
maybe we have been able to pay less attention to Africa and
it would be okay for America. I do not believe that is the
case for the future.
As far as the threats go that you asked about, China and Russia are every bit as busy in Africa today and for the same reasons that Admiral Faller talked about them being busy in South America. They are acting on their own behalf for positional advantage and Russia, in particular, pursuing extractive ventures. So China and Russia are seeking to counter the strategic access that we need for American security and American prosperity.

Secondly, the violent extremist organizations that are on the continent both in the east and in the west. Some of those groups threaten the American homeland today. Some of them will potentially be a threat in the future years.

Chairman Inhofe: I appreciate that. And I am glad you mentioned in your opening statement the IMET program because China realizes what we have done with that program, how well that has served us. And so they are now emulating that. They actually had a meeting in Beijing with -- I think they had all 52 countries represented there, talking about how they were going to expand that program, put more money in it. You are watching that, I am sure, very carefully throughout your whole area.

General Townsend: Yes, Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Okay, good.

Senator Reed?

Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.
And thank you again, General Townsend and Admiral Faller.

I think it could be safely said that both of your COCOMs are conducting economy of force operations. Is that right, General Townsend?

General Townsend: That is what we are doing, both of us.

Senator Reed: Admiral Faller?

Admiral Faller: We are at a very low level of force.

Yes, sir.

Senator Reed: And we have to do that, but we have to do it smartly and wisely and that means cooperation and collaboration across our government and also collaboration with other governments.

And, General Townsend, the French are now conducting significant operations in the Sahel part of Africa. If we drew down, what signal would that send and what practical consequences might that have for their cooperation in the fight?

General Townsend: Senator Reed, so as you pointed out, the French are the lead international partner in the Sahel region of West Africa. They have about 4,500 troops there that are engaged in active operations every day to counter the threat that is there. The threat comes from both al Qaeda groups and ISIS groups there. That threat is very
serious and that threat is on the advance, and I think the
French would say -- in fact, they have said publicly
recently -- that their efforts are not having the desired
effect that they need. We are supporting both the French
and the larger international effort there.

There is a significant European effort there. Our
position, the position of the Department of Defense, is that
the Europeans need to step up and do more in the Sahel to
help the French. The French are calling on Europe to step
up and do more. I absolutely think that is the right thing
to do. But as we see the violent extremists advancing, if
we were to withdraw support from the French precipitously,
then that would not go in a good direction. So I think what
we have to do is we have got to synchronize our support and
the removal of support, if we decide to do that, with the
arrival of European support. But there is a chance there
that the French can offset that.

Senator Reed: What you are saying is it would not be
particularly coherent if we are telling the EU to step up
support of France as we reduce our support.

General Townsend: I think there is certainly a timing
issue there, Senator, absolutely.

Senator Reed: And, Admiral Faller, following up the
point that the chairman made, which I think is an excellent
point, programs like IMET are just absolutely critical, and
in your AO, China is aggressively pursuing these IMET options. You indicated that in certain countries -- I think it was El Salvador -- there is one IMET slot that the U.S. offers and 50 that the Chinese offer. Is that --

Admiral Faller: Recently an example was provided along those lines where they have come in analyzing how many folks we were sending to Carlisle, and they were going five times over that to their war college in China, which they have copied from our program and translated it into Spanish. We talked to the students that come back from that to get a sense for the quality and the approach. It is all based off of the U.S. doctrine.

Senator Reed: It has to be pointed out that the IMET program is funded by the Department of State. So one of the critical programs we are talking about is not within DOD, which again suggests that this whole-of-government approach -- we have to look not just at funding for your COCOM but are we putting the money in the State Department? Are we putting money into AID? Are we putting money into various programs that will allow you to conduct a much more efficient economy of force operation? Is that fair?

Admiral Faller: That is an accurate statement. We really depend on that IMET, Senator.

Senator Reed: And going back to Africa, General Townsend, you indicated that the extremist threat is all
through the continent, but my sense is that al Shabaab and
others are still contemplating projecting power outside of
Africa, which is a much more critical threat to the United
States. Is that fair?

General Townsend: Senator, that is accurate.

Senator Reed: And so we are going to continue to focus
on that threat to the United States particularly.

General Townsend: I believe we should.

Senator Reed: Finally, I think again the issue here is
maintaining appropriate force and also maintaining the
coordination with our government and with our allies. You
are pursuing that, and I think you should continue to do so.

Thank you.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed.

Senator Rounds?

Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, first of all, thank you for your service to
our country.

I would like to begin by just talking a little bit
about the disinformation and influence operations which
Russia has used successfully in a number of different
instances, but specifically what plans and actions that you
have and your team have created to address the technological
advances and the changing character of war to assure that
America maintains a strategic advantage in your areas of
operation.

    Admiral Faller: The disinformation campaign that Russia has been on is truly about, in all instances, painting the United States in an inaccurate light. One example is reporting that I was on the border of Venezuela about to lead an invasion force. Another example was they twisted it just enough in an article in RT to say that I had said something that was at odds with the Vice President of the United States, which was complete baloney. Their largest by volume, outside of the Russian language, effort in social media is in Spanish. And you have to ask what is the national interest of Russia in that disinformation here in our neighborhood and around the world, and it is concerning to us.

    We have countered within our means in information operations, military information, and support a strong relationship with the State Department and alignment in messaging, information with some increased authorities in cyber to go after them and put the truth out and try to make a dent in that space. But more needs to be done clearly, and more should be done to take advantage of machine learning and those types of skills that the Department has embarked on to really get after to thwart their disinformation campaigns.

    Senator Rounds: General Townsend?
General Townsend: Senator, not unlike SOUTHCOM, we see the same kind of disinformation campaigns and not just from Russia but from other actors such as Iran. Recently Iran announced that I was killed at the engagement at Manda Bay. I am glad to hear that is exaggerated.

There is fairly low-tech warfare in Africa overall, but we do see armed UAVs, unmanned vehicles armed, now being provided by multiple actors, China, Turkey, et cetera. We also see sophisticated air defense systems. We also see technologies that have I think even greater impacts like the Chinese smart city technologies where they are coming in and, in the interest of public safety and security, they are offering to equip African cities with camera systems, surveillance systems all over, facial recognition technologies. And of course, we know that all of those systems are reporting back to China first before they report to the African country where they are established. So I think that the growth of high-tech is a concern certainly in Africa.

Senator Rounds: Thank you.

I think part of the challenge we have is sharing that, look, the propaganda has never really quit from our adversaries. They understand its value. They are very good at it. They simply advance to using social media and other means in which to really bend things their direction. In
doing so, they influence individuals who really in many cases share the same values that we share in this country.

The IMET program has been mentioned several times here, and I think it is critical that we continue to be able to have communications and relationships with what is in many cases perhaps one of the most stable parts of any one of these nations’ governments and that is their military. While their civilian leaders come and go, in many cases they have a stable force of professionals. And the question is, do they find and do they understand the way that we do business to be appropriate and a better way than what our adversaries offer them?

I would just like to once again offer each of you the opportunity to talk a little bit about IMET at this time in which I think some people question whether or not it is a valid program and how critical it is and how inexpensive it is for us to continue to have that relationship with the militaries from the different countries.

Admiral Faller: The value is in the building of trust. You get to know your shipmate, your battle buddy. You share experience and doctrine. A recent example. In El Salvador, the new president came in, favorable connections to the United States, appointed a new chief of defense and minister of defense. The minister of defense is a Naval War College grad. The chief of defense is an Army War College grad.
You can sit down around a roundtable and have a serious conversation without stilted talking points about the real challenges and opportunities and the complexity of making progress. That is just one of many examples I could cite, Senator.

Senator Rounds: Thank you.

General Townsend: Senator, just like Admiral Faller has explained, IMET is invaluable to us. I think it is a long-term way to influence a government and a military by training those people who grew up to be the chief of defense, and that same kind of thing is found in Africa as well.

I think they seek out -- the United States is their preferred partner for a number of reasons, not the least of which is our competence and capability but also our values. That is part of that. And I think that is a strong thing that is imparted through IMET.

Senator Rounds: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Shaheen?

Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Townsend, Admiral Faller, let me begin by adding my condolences to those that have been expressed already for the service members lost in the month of January. I want to particularly call out Captain Ryan
Phanouf from Hudson, New Hampshire who was an airman lost in Afghanistan earlier this week. I know that all of New Hampshire mourns his loss and the loss of everyone and sends condolences to all of the families. So thank you.

I want to begin, Admiral Faller, with where we are with drug interdiction. When you were here last year, we talked about the drug interdiction efforts which are still so important to States like New Hampshire where we have a huge opioid epidemic still and are seeing heroin now coming into the country. So can you talk about what progress has been made and the role that the USS Detroit has played in improving interdiction efforts?

Admiral Faller: Senator, as we have discussed, the deaths due to the narcotics overdoses, drugs -- it is too many and it is a national security challenge. And those pathways that they come through just as easily are used by terrorists and other illicit materials. And we cannot do enough to get after that challenge right here in our neighborhood and how it erodes communities across the country.

Over the past year, we have focused on building our partners to get them more into the game. 50 percent of our interdictions last year were partner-enabled, and nations like Colombia have stepped up to lead their own exercises and operations, recently an Orion operation where we had
many metric tons which was lives saved here. 18 nations participated, Colombian led, and all we did with the U.S. was participate. That is a key effort, and we have got to do more there.

In our own efforts, intelligence sharing is key -- human intelligence and intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance from platforms. We need more intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. And our human efforts were funded, but they were funded above our core budget in an unfunded requirement. So a key area to look at and how do we get more efficient, but also apply leverage there.

And then finally in our platforms, we depend on ships. At the end of the day, it has got to be a Coast Guard cutter. And our Coast Guard performed brilliantly, supplying more ships than they had even promised through the allocation process. And our Navy stepped up this year with the USS Detroit. We need more ships. We think the number of Navy ships would be about three to sustain the presence and pressure. The pressure matters on these nations, and that pressure has got to be at the source in coca eradication and at the street here in the U.S. Colombia has made progress at that source site, eradicated cocaine with the Colombian chief of defense on the Ecuador border. They have made progress, and the result has been that deaths are down but still too many. And we had almost a record year in
Senator Shaheen: Good. Well, thank you for those efforts, and we hope that we can continue to do more to support them.

This question is really for both of you. We have now, for the last 2 and a half years, had the Women, Peace, and Security Act in effect. DOD has made significant progress in implementing that. We just put $4 million for gender advisors into the 2020 defense budget.

Can you talk about the successes that you have seen both in SOUTHCOM and AFRICOM because of the effort to better integrate women and be able to appeal to those women in Africa, the women in Latin America who we need to address if we are going to be successful?

General Townsend: Thanks, Senator. So you asked me about Women, Peace, and Security at my confirmation hearing 6 months ago, and I told you I did not know much about it but I would look into it. And I was able to actually attend one of these forums.

So at AFRICOM, Women, Peace, and Security is integrated into every event that we do. And we see some advantages here. It is not just about promoting the role of women in the armed forces, but it has an impact across their societies as well. So it is integral to everything we do, and we have had a communications symposium, which I was
fortunate enough to attend. We have a female intel officer
training program. And there is a seminar that is about to
kick off in a Flintlock exercise that we are about to start.
Those are just some examples. And we try to integrate some
of that into every event.

Senator Shaheen: Good. Thank you.

Admiral Faller: Similarly we integrate it in every
event, Senator. Recently Ambassador Manes and I were in
Colombia. We did a roundtable with some key women warriors
from the Colombian Army. We had the chief of defense from
Colombia, their chief of their army, their chief of the air
force. In that audience of women -- there were about 50 of
them -- were nine command sergeant majors. And I will tell
you what. They were getting after it, and it was
motivating. Afterwards, the chief of the Colombian Army
came and said, hey, can you do some more of that with us
because it really brings out the competitive spirit. The
reason why? We are better when we are integrated and stronger
when we are integrated.

Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you both very much. I
think it is a very important model for us to show to the
rest of the world, particularly in developing countries in
Africa and Latin America.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Ernst?

Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
And I would second that. Thank you, Senator Shaheen for those words.

Gentlemen, thank you very much for being here today. We truly appreciate your efforts in some challenging regions that often are not hitting the headlines of our newspapers every day. So thanks to you, thanks for your teams.

Sergeant Major, good luck to you on retirement. I still think Nebraska or Iowa is a great place to go.

Admiral Faller, thank you for sitting down with me the other day. I really do appreciate that. We had a great discussion.

And I would like to go a little more into IMET. You have heard a number of my colleagues just talking about how important it is. We had an Emerging Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee hearing just a while back, and you were able to visit with us about the importance of IMET at that particular subcommittee meeting. And it has been in the press a lot lately. We all acknowledge that we can do better in vetting. But strategically can you talk to what that means for our partners strategically and what it does to assist not only those countries but the United States as well?

Admiral Faller: The United States military education system is our strength. Like the education system in our country, our training education is sought after and valued,
and it builds stronger partners that know and trust us, and the relationships that go with that last a lifetime.

Just an example of that comes up time and time again. I have a Colombian brigadier general who is a full director of our exercise division at headquarters. He is a graduate of Leavenworth, Carlisle, the PathFinder School, the Advanced Army Armor School, and the Ranger School. He is an honor grad at Ranger School. And the Colombians value that as do our partner nations.

And so we can use more IMET. Our budget is about $10 million a year for 28 democratic countries. Secretary of Defense Esper visited SOUTHCOM last week. A priority of his is to seek more money. He is seeking a 50 percent increase in the IMET budget. We could spend that 50 percent increase in IMET next year in our schoolhouses at the Western Hemisphere Institute for security at Fort Benning, game-changer, the Inter-American Air Force Academy in Texas. These are schoolhouses that we do not think a lot about, in addition to Carlisle and Newport, Maxwell with the Air Force and the Marine Corps university. But all these schoolhouses work together to make a difference in strengthening the hemispheric security.

Senator Ernst: Thank you.

Yes, General Townsend.

General Townsend: Senator, I could not say it any
better than Admiral Faller just did.

Senator Ernst: Thank you. No, I do appreciate that.

And of course, our State Partnership Programs as well. Iowa is partnered with Kosovo, and I know a number of those officers that I worked with a decade ago -- I have seen them rise through the ranks and we continue to stay in close contact. But those partnerships are very, very valuable.

So thank you.

Admiral Faller, I want to talk a little bit about the integration of missions that we see between SOUTHCOM and NORTHCOM. Obviously, there has been a lot of attention on our southern border and what has continued to happen with drug cartels. Whether it is weapons crossing the border, whether it is the drugs that Senator Shaheen just talked about, all of that is very concerning.

But what I would like to focus on in just the minute and a half that I have left is also the issue of human trafficking. So not only do we have illegal drug trade wreaking havoc across Iowa, a lot of our rural communities, but Iowa wrestles a lot with the serious problem of human trafficking. And the Polaris Project in 2016 dubbed Des Moines, Iowa as one of the top 100 human trafficking sites in the United States. And that is not something we are proud of.

So could you describe the resourcing and coordination
challenges that exist when you are trying to address the threat between these different areas of responsibility between SOUTHCOM and NORTHCOM?

Admiral Faller: SOUTHCOM and NORTHCOM work very closely together. General O’Shaughnessy and I traveled to Mexico City. We sat down with the head of their army and their navy to talk about how do we improve information sharing, how do we get after these ungoverned spaces that are spawning instability into North America and beyond and South America, Latin America, the Caribbean, and how do we help the Mexicans share information with Guatemala. It was a very productive meeting. We came up with tangible steps to do that.

Then we went to Guatemala City the next day and had that same level of conversation with those nations to try to forge more coordination. At the heart of getting after these wicked problems that create instability here, including the human trafficking, is sharing intelligence, building trust, breaking down barriers, understanding and then ensuring that the right agency, law enforcement agency, other agencies, have the information they need to make an impact. And so that is a key element of what we are doing as we move ahead. Then we take that into exercise program which is also a similar element.

We are adequately resourced to do this, but we are
carefully looking at how we can become more efficient as we move forward.

Senator Ernst: Very good. Well, please let us know if there is anything additional that we as Congress can help with.

Gentlemen, thank you very, very much for your service to our country. Thank you.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Kaine?

Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our witnesses.

I want to add my comments of support for the families of Colonel Voss and Captain Phanouf. Colonel Voss, though a Guam resident, was based out of Joint Base Langley in Virginia. And thinking about his family and all those that you mentioned.

Admiral Faller, I want to start with you on Venezuela. There is an article that was in the “Wall Street Journal” a couple of days ago that I would like to put into the record.

[The information follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]
Senator Kaine: And the title of it is unnecessarily provocatively. The title is “How Putin Outfoxed Trump in Venezuela.” I do not think the title is a fair characterization. I think the article, though, is very, very good.

And basically if I were going to title the article, I would title it how the U.S. underestimated the difficulty of what we were trying to do in Venezuela. I think the U.S. has done a number of good things. I think the Trump administration has. I could pick a few faults, but generally done good. But the core of the article is how we really underestimated how hard it would be.

And I just remember this last year when we were talking about it here and in the Foreign Relations Committee, there were sort of some real blue skies scenarios that were being painted by the administration about how Maduro is about to collapse. And I went to Colombia and visited in Colombia, then went to the border in Cucuta in March, and everything I was hearing from the Colombians and everybody down there is this is not easy. It is going to be really, really hard. They were exactly right about how difficult it was going to be. And here on Capitol Hill we were getting blue skies scenarios from the administration about the imminent collapse of the Maduro government. And we just got it wrong. On the intel side, we just got it wrong.
And one of the things that is galling in the article is one of the reasons it is so hard is not just our adversaries. Venezuela is propped up by Iran and Cuba and China and Russia. The UAE, Turkey, India, allies of ours have helped them evade U.S. sanctions and have helped propped them up, and they are one of the reasons why the Maduro government has had some lasting power.

And so I guess I just want to caution all of us on matters like this. These are tough situations, and we can do everything right and still find it very hard to accomplish what we want. And that is not our fault. But we need to be very wary of blue skies scenarios and being told we will support this person and things are likely to work out our way. We are in for the long haul in these situations.

And I will tell, Admiral Faller, I would love to talk to you further. We have done European Reassurance Initiatives and Asian Reassurance Initiatives. It might be time to do an Americas Reassurance Initiative. I do not really like the title because “reassurance” already sounds defensive like no, no, no, we are really interested in you. I do not know that we have to be defensive about it. But we need to have a comprehensive, whole-of-government diplomacy and military and economic trade focus on the Americas because while we are focusing elsewhere, I know where our
adversaries are focused. They are focusing on our own back
yard.

    General Townsend, I want to ask you a question. There
was a recent study of some challenges within the special
operations community, and while it was special operations
focused, a number of the areas of the study dealt with items
in AFRICOM. There is a comprehensive review that SOCOM put
out last week looking at a variety of cultural and ethical
challenges in the special operations forces, including some
that led to scandals. And many took place in AFRICOM.

    One of the themes was extremely high operational tempos
caused problems. And here was the finding, quote, a trend
of disaggregation at the individual and small team levels
risks employing forces where operational requirements
misalign with the four gen validation standards. I have
been on the committee 7 years. I think what that means is
we had forces deployed in teams and sizes that lacked the
oversight or the ability to do the missions they were
assigned.

    Now, I think the recommendations are largely for SOCOM,
but because SOCOM operates within combatant commands, what
responsibility do you think that the COCOMs have in making
sure that the forces that are provided to you are
appropriately resourced and led?

    General Townsend: Thanks, Senator.
I am familiar with the study, and I am familiar with the conclusions of it. And I agree with what that study talks about. And as you are aware, most of the forces operating on the African continent these days are special operating forces, not exclusively but a lot of them.

This phenomenon you mentioned correctly does not just apply to special operating forces. Over the course of this war, we have disaggregated formations time and time again and separated small teams from their higher echelons of command and leadership.

Senator Kaine: Some of the recommendations here or findings are a little bit like the study about the McCain and Fitzgerald instances in the Pacific. I mean, there are some similar challenges about high OPSTEMPO and other things leading to the problems.

General Townsend: Right. So I think at the COCOM level, we absolutely need to do whatever we can to keep teams together and not disaggregate them. I am a firm believer in this. I have been in a command that has had my team disaggregated and scattered all over. So I am believer in keeping team integrity in every task that we can.

Also, actually part of our blank slate review process that we are undergoing with the Department of Defense is to look at how we can reduce the operational tempo, particularly of SOF forces, but all forces, reduce their
operational tempo so it is not just about trying to redirect resources but it is to return some resources to home station. The SOF operational tempo is still stretched. Even though it is now reaching a dwell of about 1 year deployed for 2 years at home, the goal is 1 to 3, and there is still some work to be done there.

Senator Kaine: Thank you very much.

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator McSally?

Senator McSally: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Townsend, I represent Arizona, and on January 5th Dustin Harrison from Tucson was killed by al Shabaab terrorists at Manda Bay in Kenya. His wife Hope and his 2-year-old daughter Heaven are back home in Tucson grieving the loss of her husband and father.

Now, I was a part of the team to stand up AFRICOM as my last assignment in the military, one of the more challenging assignments I had. So I am aware of the challenges you have on the continent.

But some articles about the situation there was that it was a woefully undefended perimeter or surprisingly sparse security, given the level of assets, air assets and others, that you have there.

And I know an investigation is ongoing, and I do not want to put any more of our service men and women into harm’s
way. But what can you share about what is happening today
to make sure an attack like that is not happening or the
risk is not going to happen now and in the future? And what
can I share with Heaven and Hope to make sure that others
are not going to be in a similar risk?

General Townsend: Thanks, Senator.

As I mentioned in my opening statement, I also offer
our condolences. Those family members are in our thoughts
and prayers for our fallen comrades.

Also, thank you for pointing out there is an
investigation going on, so I do not want to get in front of
that. You know, you have worn a uniform so you know that
frequently what we think we know at the start of an event is
not what actually we discover after we have thoroughly
investigated it.

But there are some early conclusions. And I think it
is self-obvious we were not as prepared there in Manda Bay
as we needed to be. Al Shabaab managed to penetrate onto
that airfield. A lot of people do not know but the base
where our troops live is not where the airfield is. But
they were able to get access to that airfield, kill three
Americans, and destroy six aircraft there. So we were not
as prepared, and we are digging into that to find out why
that is the case.

But since that event, there are about 120 infantrymen
there on the ground now who are securing that place, and they have been working hard since 6 January to put in the appropriate level of defenses. So I am confident that by the time they are done, Manda Bay will be much more properly defended.

We are not just stopping there, though. We are looking across the continent because I think that we viewed and the Kenyans viewed Manda Bay as a safe area. The Kenyans have family housing there for their military. It is a resort area. So al Shabaab has shown their reach and the danger that they pose, and I think we need to take that seriously. And so I am looking with a clear eye at every location in Africa now.

Senator McSally: Great. Thank you.

I was at J-33 in that assignment running our counterterrorism operations. One of the challenges we had at the time -- this was back in 2007 to 2010 -- we saw al Shabaab growing. We saw the training camps. We were watching hundreds, thousands of fighters being trained. At the time, they were a lawful legitimate target, but the Obama administration felt like they were not a real problem or risk. So we could not take them out.

Last year, I think there were 67 strikes conducted in Somalia. Can you share what the impact of those strikes are, and is it whack-a-mole or what is the strategy here
going forward in order to address this growing terrorist threat in East Africa?

General Townsend: So there is an international effort there that supports the Somali Government.

Senator McSally: I know. We have been talking about that for a very long time.

General Townsend: Yes. And the Somali national army. And so our role is in support of that. So the two major tasks that we are doing is helping to train a specific part of the Somali national army, the Danab or special light infantry units, and we are also doing our counterterrorism strikes. They are meant to help the international effort and the Somali effort, but they are also meant to protect America.

I do not believe that it is whack-a-mole. What we do is we keep an eye on al Shabaab every day, and we are looking for ways to reduce their capacity wherever we can. And so that effort to disrupt and degrade al Shabaab and their leadership and their mid-level leadership and higher-level leadership is a critical part of what we are doing.

Senator McSally: Great. Thanks.

Admiral Faller, I am out of time, but I will submit some questions for the record specifically about the drug flow coming up from your AOR to our country through my State, Arizona, and the latest tactics that the cartels are
using and how we are countering them. But I will have to submit those for the record. Thanks.

    Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator King?

Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to talk in a few minutes about China and Russia and their activities both in Latin America and in Africa. But, Admiral Faller, since we have been sitting here, eight Americans have died of drug overdoses in the last hour, 67,000 people a year, one person a day in Maine.

What is going on with China and Russia are threats. They are indirect threats. They are important. But we are talking about Americans dying. And you and I have talked about this in the past. I have heard from you and from other national security officials that we are picking up -- we are interdicting about 25 percent of the drug shipments through the ocean to North America that we know of. 25 percent of what we know of. To me, we are talking about allocating resources around the world for all kinds of threats. This is a direct threat killing Americans that we do not have enough ships. I do not get it. When do we get to interdicting the ships that we know are carrying drugs into this country to kill our people?

Admiral Faller: It is a national security crisis.

Senator King: Absolutely.
Admiral Faller: It is actually worse statistics than you mentioned. We detect 25 percent. We are only interdicting 9 percent. And to interdict, we need greater partner capacity, as I mentioned in the answer to Senator Shaheen. We also need assets. At the end of the day, you have got to be on the field to compete. When the playing field is twice the size --

Senator King: Well, who do we need to talk to to get those assets? The Secretary of Defense, President, the Vice President, who? Where do we go? It is infuriating that we know what is coming. We know it out there, and the phrase I got was we have far more targets than we can action. That is a euphemism for we are woefully falling down on this responsibility.

Admiral Faller: The Coast Guard stepped up in a big way. Our U.S. Navy used to have readiness challenges that has them stretched globally, and that has impacted their force allocation to us.

Senator King: Is it people or ships? Do we just need more ships?

Admiral Faller: It is not just ships, Senator. We need the intelligence, so we need the intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance assets. We have about 20 percent of what our need is there. And then that then turns into the ability to interdict. We also need our steady
funding and our security cooperation so we can help our 
partner nations help themselves. So it is pulling this 
together in a full court press beyond ships that we can work 
together with partners and in our interagency and get the 
“W” back in front of whole-of-government, Senator.

Senator King: I appreciate that. And I know that you 
are working on this, but I just hope you will keep pressing. 
If you have to say there is this really obnoxious Senator 
that is on my back and I have got to do something, that is 
fine. I can fulfill that responsibility quite adequately. 

Let us talk about China for a minute. By the way, 
these charts to both of you are very helpful. It really 
graphically indicates what is going on.

It seems to me China is following sort of a two-track 
strategy in both Africa and South America. One is what I 
call debt imperialism. They are getting these small 
countries in debt to them, and then they have got their 
hooks into them. General, is that part of what you are 
seeing happening in Africa?

General Townsend: That is exactly what we are seeing. 
We are also seeing a new, more sophisticated development in 
that. So the debt trap diplomacy has now become known on 
the continent. Most African leaders are wise to it. 

Actually I would commend our State Department for helping 
get African leaders more savvy about what the Chinese are
doing with some of these debt trap loans. The Chinese are
adapting, though, and evolving their presentation, and they
are becoming more sophisticated about it. So I am a little
bit worried because they are getting smarter about it.

Senator King: Well, that is a concern. But the other
thing is sort of more direct. I think, Admiral Faller, you
used the word positional advantage. Just looking at your
chart, Jamaica, El Salvador, Ecuador, Chile, Belize ports.
Ports. I mean, that is a strategic advantage. Whatever
happened to the Monroe Doctrine? We are allowing an
adversary -- I will not say an enemy but an adversary -- to
establish significant positional advantage within our
hemisphere. Admiral?

Admiral Faller: Senator, it is not just the ports. It
is IT infrastructure. It is space stations. It is cyber.
It is safe cities, as General Townsend mentioned. And China
has figured out that the nations in Latin America and the
Caribbean are cash strapped, so instead of trying to do arms
sales, they are coming in with significant gifts. I could
cite $17 million in one country in South America, $20
million in a Caribbean nation. These are 1-year gifts of
trucks and boats and IT infrastructure, well beyond uniforms
and PME. And that is alarming to me as they build not just
debt but dependency, and we are trying to build trust and
teams.
Senator King: Maybe our motto should be beware of Chinese bearing gifts and telecommunications equipment.

Thank you very much, gentlemen. I appreciate your testimony.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Cramer?

Senator Cramer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank both of you, both for your service and you being here today.

I am going to ask each of you to elaborate on the topic that Admiral Faller just brought up in response to Senator King’s first question because each of you and/or your predecessors have commented of the challenge, given the mass geography that you are responsible for, each of you, the challenges in ISR, Admiral, that you just raised. Are you getting the assets that you have asked for? Are you getting the assets you need? If not, why not, if you know?

And then to putting a finer point perhaps or an additional point on that broader discussion that I want you to have with me. On December 20th with the signing of the NDAA, of course, we began the process of standing up the sixth military branch in Space Force. And whether in ISR or whatever, but Space Force seems to me to fit right into this. And what I am wondering about is -- I know it is early, but time is short -- have you been invited into the discussion or inserted yourself into the discussion of how
to best man, train, equip a Space Force to assist you? And
then maybe you can elaborate a little bit on your partner
countries and what role, if any, they could play. And I
would ask, Admiral, to go first and then General Townsend.

Admiral Faller: Intelligence, surveillance, and
reconnaissance is a key part of our intelligence picture,
and there is a global demand and we are short in this
hemisphere. I mentioned we were meeting 20 percent of our
goal. A good chunk of that 20 percent is using the
Department of Homeland Security Customs Protection and
Border -- CBP assets. So it is a team effort. The DOD
portion of that is probably closer to about 8 percent. And
so it is key. We recognize the global challenges and we do
the best we can with what we have. I think there are some
advances in machine learning and artificial intelligence
that we can use and should pursue, and we are going to work
that.

With respect to Space Force, we have excellent
coordination with General Raymond and his team. And it is a
key interest like cyber in every nation that we deal with.
Fundamental to this is information sharing into the space
realm and space agreements that we are working with nations
like Brazil, Chile, and other countries that will help
counter China’s efforts in that realm and continue to ensure
that we have positional advantage. We cannot work fast
enough in that arena, Senator, but we are working on it as hard as we can.

    Senator Cramer: Thank you.

    General Townsend: Senator, on your question about resources, I would say that my command, with one exception, is pretty adequately resourced for the tasks we are given to do today. As small as those resources are, I think it is adequate with the exception of ISR that you mentioned, and I know that every combatant commander that sits here in front of you will say the exact same thing. Admiral Faller briefed his level of resourcing. We are at about 25 percent of our known validated requirement for ISR.

    You mentioned the Space Force. So interestingly enough, I just met with General Raymond yesterday. We were discussing about the development of his new force. And we are in constant contact with Space Force and Space Command. They have recently deployed some folks to our headquarters to assist us with space.

    Everything we do, of course, on the continent has ties to space, and not only on our side but on our adversaries’ side as well. I recently got a briefing the Chinese have somewhere between 13 and 16 pieces, facilities, space facilities on the African continent and the Russians have five or six. So they are also investing heavily in space infrastructure on the African continent.
Senator Cramer: Thank you both, and with that, I yield my time.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Peters?

Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, gentlemen, thank you for your ongoing service as well.

You both highlighted in your written testimony the National Guard State Partnership Program and how that works to ensure bonds both at junior levels and senior levels with militaries in your region. In the last 4 years, the Michigan National Guard has completed 19 events with Liberia, one of their State Partnership counterparts, and they have also planned another 20 events coming up in this next fiscal year.

I had the opportunity to see some of that firsthand in 2017 when I was in Liberia, and I know that the partnership certainly helps build relationships in West Africa as well as other places around the world.

So my question to both of you is, how are you leveraging State Partnership Programs in your area of responsibility? And when I look at the amount of money we are spending, roughly $3 million in each of your areas, maybe you can give us a sense of what you are doing. Is that adequate resourcing? And if not, what would be adequate and what would you do with it? General Townsend?
General Townsend: Thanks, Senator.

The State Partnership Program is a fantastic resource for us, and I did not have a good appreciation for it until I took this job. And one of the first conferences I went to, all of the -- at the time -- 14 partnerships were present with their National Guard partners from the United States. It is very responsive. It is very flexible. What I like about it is the States and the countries do a lot of things sort of below the radar, and it is a constant kind of presence.

We now have 15 partnerships in Africa. We have just added Rwanda and Nebraska. That is the new one, and the next one in the queue we are working up towards is Ethiopia. These countries want these partnerships. They talk to their counterparts on the continent that have them, and they realize the value of it. So I cannot say enough good about the State Partnership Program.

Senator Peters: Are they resourced enough?

General Townsend: You mentioned we have $2.9 million, about $3 million that you mentioned. I think they are probably adequate right now. What I have not done is I have not done an analysis to see if we add Ethiopia, do we get more money, or is that another mouth to feed from the same $2.9 million. I got to look into that. I do not know the answer to that, and I will get back to you on that.
Senator Peters: Great. Thank you.

Admiral Faller?

Admiral Faller: Similar extremely positive experience. It is a habitual relationship that aligns itself very well, and the year and after year builds friendships. The training that is provided, the equipment. Most of our exercise support for our major exercises comes from State Partnerships, and that is something that we depend on as our force provider. So it is a game-changer for us. We added Brazil and New York this year, and it was a big deal for the Brazilians and the New York National Guard.

In terms of the funding levels, we are seeking to get guard partner reps established in every embassy as part of our embassy country teams. And we are working through the funding with respect to that. We think there is an opportunity for some additional State partners within our headquarters to augment our force and to increase the understanding of how we can leverage partner expertise. Cyber is a particular area where some States are excellent in cyber. How do we better leverage that? So I would have to get back to you on a level of funding, and so I will take that for the record.

But the authorities piece is also an area too. So we can use the flexible authorities.

One quick story. Recently in Colombia and we have
Oklahoma. It is not a State partner of Colombia, but the Oklahoma Guard has surged ISR support for 6 months to help augment Colombia in getting after FARC dissidents, ELN, and narcotraffickers. Some tremendous successes with their MC-12’s with just 30 guardsmen and one contractor support. Lost cost, high payoff.

Senator Peters: Thank you.

I have a very limited time. So it will be just a quick answer from each of you.

We understand that climate change will have a significant impact on security issues across the planet. The Army War College just recently put out a report suggesting the challenges of climate change. In the brief time we have left, is there one specific concern related to climate change in your area that you think we should be focusing on. General, do you want to start?

General Townsend: Yes. I think probably the desertification that we see expanding south from the Sahara into the Sahel and water management I think. Water is going to be huge point of friction on the African continent in the future.

Admiral Faller: Recently in Central America -- and we look at the impact on changes in weather to the coffee and the white corn and things like that. So we are really focused on how do we work with whole-of-government to
support that stability necessary so people can stay home and find jobs.

Senator Peters: Thank you.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Tillis?

Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here.

I was struck by some of your comments. I think even Senator King’s comments led me to kind of aggregate. You accomplish so much with few people and few dollars. Admiral Faller, you said we do the best we can with what we have. I have heard “adequate” used several times and “probably adequate” used one time.

So when we have this discussion about why are you not doing more, I always wonder whether or not you all should just put a mirror down there and say because you are not giving us the resources to say “more than adequate,” thinking strategically, doing more, anticipating threats.

To a large extent, the graphics were great, but what we are trying to do is catch up with a pace in China and against China and in Africa and South America where it looks like we are losing. The gap is narrowing and some points we are trying to catch up. Is that an adequate statement?

Admiral Faller: We see our competitive advantage narrowing in this hemisphere, and we have got to maintain that competitive advantage and across all the elements of
national power focused in the military. So what does it take to do that? Certainly more efficient use of resources we have, leveraging other things. I mentioned artificial intelligence a couple times. But at the end of the day, any athletic competition I have ever been in or anything I have ever done takes a person to compete. So zero in any math equation is either zero or unsolvable. So we got to be present to make a difference.

Senator Tillis: General Townsend?

General Townsend: Senator, I think that our competitive advantage is not eroding. In some cases, they have an advantage. So there are some areas we are just not going to out-compete China in. One example is spending money in large amounts on the African continent to build infrastructure. We are not going to build bridges and dams and railroads and stadiums and palaces like they are doing. So we have to rely on our strengths. And I think our interagency and our military have a lot of those strengths. So I think that we also do not have to compete everywhere in Africa. We have to pick and choose where we are going to out-compete.

Senator Tillis: And if I have time, I am going to ask a little bit about that.

We all have to take a look at what is happening around the globe. When all of a sudden we see the threat of Iran
in the Middle East, we have to redeploy assets there. It has got to come from somewhere.

ISR is something that is desperately needed across the board. I have had several discussions with your predecessors, Admiral, and they say the thing that is most frustrating to them is they have enough intelligence to know there is a lot of stuff moving across the border killing American citizens and there is not a damn thing they can do about it. You just do not have the resources on the water, on the ground to do it.

And I really do believe if you take a look at the number of people who are dying from narcoterrorism, it is remarkable to me, the hundreds of people who die every day in this country. If that was a terrorist organization doing that anywhere in the world, we would stand up a capability and rain down hell on them. But it is happening every single day.

I want to ask you a question because I will run out of time. As you are looking north of your area of responsibility and then to the southern border of Mexico, how much better are we getting at securing that border so you are limiting the pathways that these drugs, guns, and victims of human trafficking? Are we starting to tighten and make any progress there within your area of responsibility? And any comments you can give on Mexico’s
contribution will be appreciated.

Admiral Faller: We certainly look at the security as a required zone defense. So border security is almost like a goal line stand. You need your linebackers and your halfbacks as you move down. So I think the pressure has worked. We have seen some positive indication.

But clearly, given the migrant caravans that have recently come up, the connection between those caravans and transnational criminal organizations and narcotrafficking and the political instability, clearly more needs to be done. And it is got to be those nations stepping up. The partners have to step up and our whole-of-government efforts sustained in a way. To get after sustainable security, it takes time to get some of these efforts up. We saw Ambassador Manes make progress in El Salvador, but it was sustained, whole-of-government efforts.

Senator Tillis: And finally, General Townsend, you wake up in the morning. What are the top three things that worry you most about your job?

General Townsend: I think the first one is another event like a Manda Bay, an attack where we are just not looking for it.

Then I think what al Shabaab might do next that we are not tracking on out of East Africa.

And then just making sure I can do right by the
soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines of AFRICOM.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Manchin?

Senator Manchin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all especially for your service, but thanks for being here to bring us up to speed.

Admiral Faller, I want to talk about Guantanamo just a little bit because we talked about the efficiencies and the things that you are trying to do there to get more accountability. My goodness, when it is costing $13 million per inmate -- $13 million -- what type of efficiencies do you think you can do to cut into that? And how can we better operate? And do you not think it is time we look at repositioning these prisoners that would be more cost effective to the American taxpayers? West Virginians could do a lot with that $13 million. I can assure you on that one. So any thoughts you might have on Guantanamo, what direction we should go, policy for the long term, and then short-term efficiencies?

Admiral Faller: Senator, the safe, humane, legal treatment of those detainees is a top mission of ours. We have got a significant guard force aligned to that mission set, some 1,800. As part of this combatant command zero slate review, we are going to take a hard look at if there is a better way, more efficient way to conduct that mission set. That review is ongoing. I will report out to the
Secretary of Defense soon.

Senator Manchin: Let me just ask this question, and I am sorry to interrupt you, sir.

But have you all looked to see if we are capable and able? I understand we have quite a few detainees in the United States prisons in some of our hardened facilities that would be more effective and efficient. The geopolitical ramifications of this thing -- we just got to get more cost effective here and do the common sense thing. I cannot explain this back home.

Admiral Faller: As we look at our review, we are looking at different models on what we can learn from. As to whether we would move that detention facility, that is a policy decision --

Senator Manchin: I understand. I understand that.

Admiral Faller: I just want to note, Senator, that we remind our team every day that the USS Cole, 9/11, and I know we are all deeply committed to ensuring that we do right by that. And the United States needs the capability to deal with --

Senator Manchin: How many new prisoners have you brought into Guantanamo this last year? How many new prisoners have you brought to Guantanamo?

Admiral Faller: Sir, we have currently 40 and that number has remained steady.
Senator Manchin: So we have not put any more there.

Admiral Faller: We are not increasing it.

Senator Manchin: We are not increasing at all. Where are we putting them, our combatants? When we capture these combatants, where do we put them?

Admiral Faller: The detainees that are being taken off the battlefield in other areas are being dealt with by separate different --

Senator Manchin: It is not $13 million a person you do not think. Do you?

Admiral Faller: I do not know the cost in other areas, sir.

Senator Manchin: I am sorry, sir, on that.

General Townsend, if I can go to you. Just give me a comparison of basically of where we are. Troop-wise I think we are up to 80,000 in the Middle East. Deployment -- we are up to 80,000.

General Townsend: I do not know the exact number.

Senator Manchin: Okay. In AFRICOM, where are you in AFRICOM?

General Townsend: Today on the continent we have about 5,100 U.S. service members and about 1,000 DOD civilians and contractors.

Senator Manchin: We can say it is quite disproportionate. Right? There is a difference. Extreme
organizations, Boko Haram, al Shabaab, al Qaeda, and many more. And basically the amount of manpower you have dealing with the influence of China now, you have got your hands full there and it looks like we are spread pretty darned thin not being able to stop this in Africa with what we see coming because it is not getting any less intense there and less violent and less threat to the United States of America, but most of everything we have is going towards the Middle East and also on fighting the drugs that are coming to this country, money going for different things besides the front line of defense so far as stopping the drugs coming into our country. Are you being hampered by the amount of resources you are able to call on?

General Townsend: Senator, as I mentioned previously, I think that the tasks we are given today -- we are adequately resourced with the exception of ISR. And I think that the defense-wide review that all of the combatant commands are participating --

Senator Manchin: So in order to do the mission, you think at 5,100-plus you are in good shape.

General Townsend: To do the tasks that we are assigned today. That is right. And I think the defense-wide review will potentially decrease the tasks that we have to do.

Senator Manchin: You think the tasks will change? It is very mobile what is happening --
General Townsend: The tasks we are assigned will change.

Senator Manchin: Yes. And by that, it could change as far as the demand on resources. Right? Thank you, sir.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Perdue?

Senator Perdue: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you both for your career and for your willingness to hang in there and take up these responsibilities.

As I see it, the world right now has four naval pinch points. You guys own two of them, Suez Canal and Panama Canal. The Malaccan Strait I would argue is one and now the South China Sea.

Let us talk about Suez just a minute. If you look at what Russia has done in Syria with Latakia and Tortus and now what they are talking about in Berbera down near Djibouti where we have a base and now the Chinese have a base there, it is pretty obvious that Russia is increasing their operational tempo in Africa.

General, tell me a little bit because one of the things I worry about most -- I have been listening to this stuff for a while here, and the thing that I see beginning to develop is the opportunity that Russia and China join together in an area where we are under-deployed and it creates a real strategic challenge for us. Russia and China are members of the Shanghai Cooperative Organization, along
with India and Pakistan, four nuclear powers. But Africa is
one of the few places where I can see, other than the
Arctic, that they have the potential to really come together
and create a real headache for us.

Would you share what Russia is doing in your AOR and
how we should be thinking about it as we look toward the
NDAA this next year?

General Townsend: Yes, Senator.

So we provided some handouts there --

Senator Perdue: They are very helpful.

General Townsend: -- to kind of lay out graphically
what Russia is doing, and you can see it is quite a bit.

Senator Perdue: Yes, sir. Dramatically increased
would you not say over the last 3 years?

General Townsend: They have.

So I think Russia’s goals are predominantly for their
benefit for resource extraction. They also want to position
particularly in northern Africa, particularly in Libya.
They want a position on NATO’s southern flank there. They
also I think want to thwart what we are trying to do and
present themselves as a great power alternative to the
United States.

What I see them doing with China, though, we are not
really seeing a great level of cooperation with one recent
exception. There was an exercise a couple of months ago in
South Africa called Exercise Mosi where the South Africans, the Russians, and Chinese navies conducted an exercise on the very southern tip of the continent. That is the first visible sign of cooperation that we have seen. We are not seeing that in a great measure, but they are all over the continent and they are doing mostly resource extraction.

Senator Perdue: One of the things we do not talk about here -- and it is a follow-up real quick, and I need to get to Admiral Faller about South America with a couple of questions. But what are our NATO allies doing in Africa to help us stand up to the requirements that we are trying to fulfill in your AOR?

General Townsend: Senator, as you are aware, NATO itself is not greatly active, but --

Senator Perdue: I should have said the members of NATO.

General Townsend: Members of NATO are very involved. In fact, in West Africa, we are a tertiary supporter of the French, buttressed by several other European countries there. In East Africa in Somalia, it is the European Union that is keeping the AMISOM African forces in the field by paying for their sustainment in the field. So the European partners are doing quite a bit. I believe there is room for them to do more, and I think our government has recently called on the Europeans to do more. So has France by the
way.

Senator Perdue: I am really concerned. Your charts are great. $145 billion already invested in Africa and a plan to get to $250 billion in South America within the next 5 years by China alone. I think these numbers are correct. We put in $8 billion of aid into something called Power Africa, and I am making a point with this. And we attracted something like $46 billion of foreign direct investment to back that up. So we have employed over $50 billion with only $8 billion of our seed money in there. Leverage is a big part of this with our allies, and we have got to continue to do that. And you guys are right in the middle of that.

Admiral, with regard to South America, 56 ports they have already invested in. I am worried about two things right now directly. In Argentina, the Georgia National Guard is a partner down there, and you in our meeting yesterday talked about this a little bit. But tell us a little bit about China’s PLA managing that space station in Argentina. And then secondarily, what does the up-tempo mean in the Panama Canal Zone that China has really undertaken just in the last -- since you have taken over in that AOR?

Admiral Faller: As you state, beyond economic, China seeks to take their soft aims and turn them into hard power
targets. And it is in space. It is in cyber. It is in port access. It is in access -- generally, they signed into the previous Panama administration some 40 agreements for access, influence, including IT in Panama. Fortunately for us, the current team in Panama, the administration there, has changed policy and has recognized the threat that that could have on their sovereignty.

We look up into the Caribbean. In one Caribbean nation, China has built a road across the country, 1,200 acres of access granted for Chinese use. The equipment was brought in under dubious circumstances. They parked it right next to the embassy so we could be reminded of that. And now they get to collect the tolls for 50 years on that road.

And those are just three quick examples of what we see with Chinese influence.

I pivot and look into Venezuela where China, Russia, Cuba working alongside each other to block the forces and voices of democracy particularly in cyber.

Senator Perdue: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Jones?

Senator Jones: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, General and Admiral, for being here. I apologize for being late. Demands on our time these days are a little bit overwhelming.
General Townsend, first let me just say that I join my
colleagues in sending condolences to you and the families of
those killed and injured in the attack on Manda Bay. I
especially want to point out and send our condolences to the
family of Army Specialist Mitch Mayfield who was a valued
soldier in the 1st battalion of the 58th Aviation Regiment
out of Fort Rucker, Alabama. It is an amazing group down
there, and he was certainly part of that amazing group.

Admiral, I want to go back to something that I think
you may have touched on briefly with Senator Shaheen
concerning the USS Detroit and the littoral combat ships
that are being used around. That ship was not made in
Alabama, but we have a lot of the LCSs made down at Austal
down in Mobile that are employed around the world. And I
would like, if you could, tell me a little bit more about
how the LCS has been helpful in the operations in your area.
Is it possible to use or would you want additional LCSs or
other vessels like the EBF to help in your area of
expertise?

Admiral Faller: So our counternarcotics mission
demands platforms for end game work and with law enforcement
to take both the detainees we gain intel from and the drugs
off the streets here in the U.S. Detroit has had success in
that endeavor. They have an unmanned aerial vehicle Fire
Scout embarked along with a helicopter. That is a great
force package.

We have also used the Detroit in a freedom of navigation operation off the coast of Venezuela in waters that Venezuela claims that international law does not recognize. Detroit did a magnificent job sailing close to the coast of Venezuela and providing that intelligence and reporting back to us.

So the ships are multi-mission. The ships are capable. Unfortunately, we had a rocky start. I think the kinks are being worked out. The Detroit’s performance since November has been above standards in all manners of reliability, and we welcome the deployment of the next littoral combat ship to the region. We could use more of these ships. They are well suited for the kind of missions in this hemisphere.

Senator Jones: Great. Well, thank you very much.

And as a former U.S. attorney, I am acutely aware of the drug problem that we have in this country and the importation of drugs, and I would like to do all we can. I have been concerned about the administration’s diverting of some resources to what I think would be more appropriate for interdiction. But that is for another case, another discussion.

I believe Senator Kaine mentioned an American reassurance initiative, and I want to give you a chance to talk about that a little bit more, Admiral. There has been
discussion for years about developing a western hemisphere security initiative, but so far we have just not been able to get it down.

Can you tell us what the status of those conversations is and what impact that may or may not have on the future in your area?

Admiral Faller: Senator, proximity matters, and this is our neighborhood. And when you can fly to Central America shorter flights than Washington, D.C. from Miami, it is telling of how closely connected we are. And there have been doctrines over the years. We had the Good Neighbor Policy for FDR. We have had the Monroe Doctrine. I think there has been discussion by others, the think tanks, and Senator Kaine has mentioned it. I think there might be a big idea for this hemisphere where we pull together the whole-of-government efforts necessary to recognize that these interior lines, in military speak, this neighborhood matters. China and Russia certainly recognize that.

And to the extent that it takes resources, some of that resources is just our time and attention, and a little goes a long way. If it was a stock, it would have a great P/E ratio and you would want to invest in it for the future. And the investments we have made are sound. I think we need to stay the course and look to where we can smartly increase and focus those investments. And a big idea associated with
something like, as you mentioned, a western hemisphere initiative might be a great way to start.

Senator Jones: Great. Well, thank you, sir.

Now, I would like to encourage you to stay in touch with my office about it. We are right there in Alabama, right there on the Gulf of Mexico. So it is closer to us than a lot of folks. And my office is more than willing to help initiate those discussions or help develop those. So stay in touch and let us know.

So thank you very much to both of you for your service and for being here today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Hawley?

Senator Hawley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral, General, thank you for your service. Thank you for being here today.

Admiral, let me start with you. My State of Missouri has been deeply affected by the drugs coming into this country from Latin America. Your testimony has provided examples of certain Latin American countries who are stepping up their effort on the counternarcotics front.

I am interested in who is maybe not pulling their weight. Can you give us some examples of places where countries could be doing more but are not doing so, have refused to do so, whether that is the result of corruption
or other reasons?

Admiral Faller: These transnational criminal organizations -- $90 billion they took in last year to fuel instability across the region. They have ungoverned territory in countries across the region, and that bridges over into the NORTHCOM AOR. It is something we look at to the extent we influence and leverage and put pressure on our partners to do more.

Unfortunately, the worst offender of the whole lot is not a country that we can cooperate with right now, and that is Venezuela. And we look at Venezuela where the Maduro regime is being propped up by Cuba, Russia, and China and we see the narcotrafficking that has increased substantially in the air and over land from Colombia into Venezuela, and then it becomes extremely difficult to track as it leaves in commercial privatized shipping, private airplanes. And so we look at countries stepping up, and I think the international effort on pressure on Maduro and that illegitimate regime is a focus area where we can do more.

Within the Central American countries, I would call out Panama, the relationship the Missouri Guard has with them. They have stepped up. Costa Rica has stepped up. You have got another blight of no democracy in Nicaragua which is another problem site. El Salvador has done more. Guatemala has done more. Some others can do more. They are working
on it, but there is certainly more effect that we can have from some of our partners.

Senator Hawley: Thank you very much. That is very helpful.

General, let me turn to you. Secretary Esper has called on our European allies to do more in the Sahel, and he has said recently that additional contributions by European allies -- I am quoting him here -- could offset whatever changes we make as we consider next steps in Africa.

I am wondering if you agree with that first, and then I am going to ask you to elaborate. But do you agree with that statement from the Secretary?

General Townsend: I do agree with the statement that European contributions could in many ways offset what we are doing there.

Senator Hawley: Could you give us just on that point, General, some specific examples of ways that you think our NATO allies could contribute more in the Sahel than they currently are doing?

General Townsend: Well, sure. The French have called on their European neighbors to contribute more forces to the effort there trying to directly confront the violent extremist groups there in the Sahel, specifically Mali and Niger, Burkina Faso. And I think that is something they can
do and should do.

Also, we are providing some support that European countries have, specifically NATO allies, a capacity to do. Airlift is one thing we are supporting the French forces with. Air refueling for French fighter aircraft is another thing. And these are capacities that are resident in many European countries that they could provide. And I think our Department is going to lead an effort to try to get some European partners to do some of those things and offset the support we are providing right now.

I think they do not have the capacity to do some of the more technical types of support. We do some technical intelligence type of support that is fairly exquisite, and there are not a lot of countries that can do that at that same level. But they can mitigate a lot of the support that we provide.

Senator Hawley: Thank you very much.

General, let me ask you about China. I am very concerned by the PLA’s presence in Djibouti. Do you worry that the PLA could use its forces there to contest our ability to transit the Bab al Mandeb or adjacent waterways in a future crisis?

General Townsend: On a daily basis, I do not worry a great deal about the Chinese presence in Djibouti at their base, but the potential is there. So we keep an eye on it.
We are not blind to that. But there is a potential there in some future crisis that they could potentially use that base there to cause problems.

Senator Hawley: Let me just ask you, in your assessment what should we be doing now to assure our access to that maritime chokepoint in a future scenario?

General Townsend: I think we are doing that to a great extent and that is competing, making sure that those countries that are there, Djibouti being one of them, Somalia being another one -- those countries prefer the United States as a strategic partner. I am not saying that they should not interact with China or Russia at all, but what I want is at 2 o’clock in the morning when the Secretary of State calls a head of state in Africa and says America needs to come in tonight, they yes to us and they do not say yes to the Chinese or the Russians.

Senator Hawley: My time has expired.

Admiral, I want to ask you a few questions about the Chinese activity in your AOR. I will submit those for the record.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Gillibrand?

Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Townsend, General Esmail Qaani, who assumed the position as the head of Iran’s Qods Force after Soleimani’s
killing, has vowed to strike back at the United States and called on Hezbollah to exact further revenge. The Voice of America reported earlier this month that Iran may seek to strike back in Africa, citing the rise of Iranian military influence on the continent and the potential of softer targets.

What have you been doing to ensure the safety of our service members and American citizens in Africa? And second, how have plans to reduce U.S. forces in Africa accounted for the possible increase in future terrorist activity? How well equipped and trained are local forces in Africa?

General Townsend: Senator, to your first question, we are following those reports. There is intelligence reporting that comports with that. Both the Qods Force and Lebanese Hezbollah I think are looking for opportunities to strike back at America wherever, and we think one of those places is certainly Africa. We are watching and listening carefully for that. We are not taking any specific measures yet. We do not really have a good enough picture to take actions, but we are watching and listening for that.

Then on your second question, the quality of African security forces varies widely depending on where we are talking about in Africa. So some are exceptionally good and others are not so good. And the partners that we work with
-- we are trying to get them all to a level where they can
at least be self-sufficient would be the ideal, if they
could handle their own security threats on their own.

Senator Gillibrand: I took a Codel a few years ago and
we did stop in Chad to assess our support and how well they
were doing to support Nigeria. Do you have any thoughts
about how that relationship is developing? Is it moving
forward or has it retreated?

General Townsend: I think that relationship is pretty
sound. There is a multinational joint task force that
operates there. All of those countries around the Lake Chad
basin are operating there. Chad has recently redeployed
some forces from Nigeria, but that was part of a scheduled
move, not some sort of breakdown in the relationship or the
partnership there in the joint task force. So I think that
that group is functioning.

Senator Gillibrand: Okay.

Earlier this month, the al Shabaab launch an attack on
Manda airfield, killing an American service member and two
contractors. The “New York Times” reported that al Shabaab
used the attacks as a message to African forces that
American troops would abandon them just as they did with the
Syrian Kurds. At the same time, an African Center for
Strategic Studies report stated that the activity of
Africa’s extremist groups has doubled since 2013.
How has the decision to withdraw support from Syria impacted the resolve and trust of our African partners?

General Townsend: I do not know that our decision to withdraw from Syria has affected their calculus. That has not come up in any discussions I have had with African leaders. But the thing that they are always looking for is can we count on you as a partner. But I have not heard that they are looking towards our withdrawal from Syria as some indication.

Senator Gillibrand: Do you have any plans at this point or any strategies to reduce our forces in Africa? And what do you think the impact of those reductions could be on our counterterrorism efforts?

General Townsend: So we are engaged in this blank slate review process with the Department of Defense, and I think that is a necessary and a good process to do to make sure that our resources are always pointed at our highest priorities. We have made some presentations and recommendations to the Secretary of Defense. He is still in a decision cycle, and I do not want to get in front of his decision about what may happen with our troop presence on the continent.

I will say that there are threats to America that will emanate from the African continent, both global power and great power threats, as well as violent extremist
organizations.

Senator Gillibrand: A quick question in my remaining time on China. Both China and Russia have been making large economic investments in both Africa and Latin America in order to expand their influence around the globe. When we were in Africa, they were investing in Djibouti and doing a huge investment in the airfield there. This is yet another example of how the battle for world leadership in this century cannot be fought by just spending more money on weapons. Instead, we have to learn lessons from the failures in Iraq and Afghanistan and build lasting relationships and partnerships.

What role do your COCOMs play in any whole-of-government coordination aimed at aligning all of our levers of power towards a common goal in your respective AORs?

Admiral Faller: What you cited about China and Russia is so key, Senator. We are seeing it in Cuba, 90 miles from Key West where China and Russia are working alongside certainly not for U.S. national interests or for any partnerships in the hemisphere.

But our partnerships, our mil-to-mil partnerships, are key, and working with our partners to build strong institutions. It is these institutions that do the right thing and have trust and respect the rule of law and human rights. And we have a human rights office in SOUTHCOM that
we staff to work on these sorts of things that are part of professionalism and part of trust building.

General Townsend: Senator, I would just say our level of resourcing is such that if we want to get anything done for America on the African continent, we have to do it as a whole-of-government working with the Department of State and USAID. That is just in our DNA at AFRICOM how we operate every day.

Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Senator Cotton?

Senator Cotton: I want to talk about the biggest and the most important story in the world, the Wuhan coronavirus. This coronavirus is a catastrophe on the scale of Chernobyl for China, but actually it is probably worse than Chernobyl which was localized in its effect. The coronavirus could result in a global pandemic.

While you were all sleeping overnight, the number of diagnosed cases in China increased by 30 percent. Let me be clear. That is not new cases. That is just newly admitted cases. It is probably several orders of magnitude higher than that.

Also while you were sleeping, China now has its entire border with Russia closed, 2,600 miles. Russia has closed that border. El Al has shut down travel between Israel and China. Air France has shut down travel between China and
France, and that is in addition to all the other countries that have already shut down travel.

From what we know so far -- and there are still many unknowns -- this virus could have both a long incubation period, as much as 14 days, and individuals could be contagious while asymptomatic, which was not the case with SARS in 2003.

Furthermore, from some cases, it appears that the virus could be aerosolized, which means it does not require the kind of contact that you have with, say, a married couple kissing each other or a family living in close quarters in a hotel or apartment, but rather the distances we are all sitting apart right now.

Yet, China is still lying about all of this. They have been lying about it from the very beginning, and you do not need their history of lying about SARS in 2003, though it is relevant here. You just have to see what has happened over the last 2 months. We now know that the first case manifested no later than -- no later than -- December 1, even though China did not reveal it to the WHO until a month later on December 31st when they continued to hide it from their own citizens and they continued to say that it had been contained inside Wuhan. Today it is in every single province in China.

They also claimed for almost 2 months until earlier
this week that it had originated in a seafood market in
Wuhan, that locals had contracted it from animals in, say,
bat soup or snake tartare. That is not the case.

The Lancet published a study last weekend demonstrating
that of the original 40 cases, 14 of them had no contact
with the seafood market, including patient 0. As one
epidemiologist said, that virus went into the seafood market
before it came out of the seafood market.

We still do not know where it originated. It could
have been another seafood market. It could have been a
farm. It could have been a food processing company.

I would note that Wuhan also has China’s only biosafety
level 4 super laboratory that works with the world’s most
deadly pathogens to include, yes, coronavirus.

Now, look at China’s own actions. They have
quarantined 60 million people -- 60 million -- more than the
entire population of our west coast. They have shut down
schools indefinitely. Classes canceled nationwide
indefinitely. Hong Kong, a part of China, has basically
shut down all travel from the mainland.

That is why it is essential that we immediately stop
all travel on commercial aircraft between China and the
United States, making exceptions, of course, for American
citizens to come back as we just brought back yesterday,
allowing a central trade to flow as long as crews on ships
and aircraft are not allowed to go into the general population in America, and making exceptions, of course, for medical personnel to go into China to try to get a handle on this. It is essential that we take those steps and essential that we get to the bottom of China’s deceit and incompetence on this measure.

And, gentlemen, I raise this with you because you are responsible in your combatant commands for some countries that have the most fragile public institutions, to include the most fragile public health institutions, in the world. So I ask, even though as of this morning there are not yet confirmed cases of coronavirus in your combatant commands, though I suspect there will be soon, what is your assessment about the ability of the governments in your combatant commands to handle a potential global pandemic like this.

General Townsend?

General Townsend: Thanks, Senator.

So there are not that I am aware of any confirmed cases as you mentioned, but there are some suspected cases. The first report of a suspected case I heard of is in Djibouti, which you would imagine with the significant Chinese presence there.

So the capacity of African nations to deal with this problem varies widely. For example, in eastern Africa, central east Africa, they have been dealing with Ebola and
they have been dealing with Ebola largely on their own and
doing a pretty good job of it. So I think capacity there,
but anywhere else in Africa is probably not to that degree.

Senator Cotton: Admiral Faller?

Admiral Faller: The Venezuela crisis has already
strained the social services of many of the nations. As you
are aware, Senator, we had deployed the hospital ship
Comfort twice in 1 year to 12 different nations. In one 5-
day span, it can do the equivalent of a whole month for a
region of some of the major countries. So I would be
extremely concerned. Like General Townsend, the capacities
vary widely, but in many cases they are strained and to the
limit. I would be very concerned if we saw this spread.

Senator Cotton: Thank you.

As a defensive measure, I would just say again it is
essential that we shut down all commercial air travel
immediately between the United States and China. As an
offensive measure, because that probably will not stop it
entirely and because if it becomes a global pandemic, we
have to deal with countries with very limited capabilities
here, we need a Manhattan Project level effort to work with
our best research scientists and laboratories in this
country to develop a vaccine as quickly as possible.

[Whereupon, at 10:51 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]
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