

Stenographic Transcript  
Before the

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

## **UNITED STATES SENATE**

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE UNITED STATES  
STRATEGY IN AFGHANISTAN

Tuesday, February 11, 2020

Washington, D.C.

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1 HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON  
2 THE UNITED STATES STRATEGY IN AFGHANISTAN

3  
4 Tuesday, February 11, 2020

5  
6 U.S. Senate  
7 Committee on Armed Services  
8 Washington, D.C.  
9

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

13 Members Present: Senators Inhofe [presiding], Wicker,  
14 Fischer, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Sullivan, Perdue, Cramer,  
15 Blackburn, Hawley, Reed, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal,  
16 Kaine, King, Heinrich, Peters, Manchin, Duckworth, and  
17 Jones.  
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1           OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES M. INHOFE, U.S.

2           SENATOR FROM OKLAHOMA

3           Chairman Inhofe: Our meeting will come to order.

4           We meet today to receive testimonies of the United  
5           States Strategy in Afghanistan.

6           We welcome our witnesses. And we know them well:

7           General Jack Keane, a four-star general who completed over  
8           37 years of public service culminating in the appointment  
9           of -- as Acting Chief of Staff and Vice Chief of the Army;  
10          Dr. Colin Jackson, who served as Deputy Assistant Secretary  
11          of Defense, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Central Asia -- he's  
12          been everywhere; General Kimberly Field, who served as a  
13          Senior Advisor to the Commander of Operations Resolute  
14          Support in '18 and '19.

15          The United States engaged in Afghanistan following the  
16          al-Qaeda September 11th, 2001, attacks on the homeland,  
17          attacks planned and executed from a Taliban-controlled and  
18          al-Qaeda-occupied safe haven in Afghanistan. Eighteen  
19          years later, the United States and our partners continue to  
20          fight terrorists in Afghanistan who aspire to attack the  
21          United States and the West. The Taliban, though not in  
22          control, remain a dangerous insurgency supporting  
23          terrorists with international ambitions; al-Qaeda, through  
24          weakened and still -- though weakens and -- but still  
25          active; and ISIS is trying to plant roots in Afghanistan.

1 For this reason, many Americans, including some of my  
2 colleagues, ask, "Why are we -- the U.S. troops still  
3 there?" I'd like to offer a couple of reasons for that:

4 First, this hearing comes at an inflection point in  
5 our Afghanistan strategy. Under President Trump, we have  
6 tried to negotiate with the Taliban to reduce violence.  
7 I'm confident President Trump will only accept a good deal,  
8 one that preserves the counterterrorism capability and  
9 includes the Afghan government. But, the success of these  
10 negotiations depends on keeping military pressure on the  
11 Taliban. If we suddenly drawn down troops in Afghanistan,  
12 it would give the Taliban exactly what they want, and it  
13 would be free. There would be no deal at all.

14 Second, while the U.S. military posture has been  
15 drastically reduced in the last 18 years, the goal for our  
16 military engagement has not, to prevent another 9/11  
17 attack. I believe a precipitous withdrawal would give  
18 terrorist groups in Afghanistan free rein to regroup tired  
19 forces, plot against American interests, and execute  
20 terrorist attacks.

21 Our -- I hope our witnesses will address the  
22 opportunities that we can still seize in Afghanistan, and  
23 the risk that a sudden withdrawal might entail. And that's  
24 what this hearing is all about.

25 Senator Reed.

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

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

5 I would, first, like to take a moment to extend my  
6 condolences to the U.S. and Afghan service members involved  
7 in the attack over the weekend, and their families. And  
8 our thoughts are with you, as well as all those who are  
9 currently serving in harm's way in the defense of the  
10 country.

11 Thank you, to our witnesses, for appearing today to  
12 discuss the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan. You each bring a  
13 wealth of experience and unique perspectives on our efforts  
14 in the region. Collectively, you have been involved at  
15 nearly every level and every phase of our engagement in  
16 Afghanistan, from individual deployments to senior-level  
17 civilian roles, to advising and engaging with leaders at  
18 the highest levels of our national security apparatus. I  
19 hope you will draw on your years of experience, as well as  
20 your positions as independent experts, to share your views  
21 on the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan.

22 We would appreciate your views on where you believe  
23 we're currently getting it right and should continue U.S.  
24 investments, as well as where we may have gone astray and  
25 need a course correction.

1           General Keane, you have been critical of the recent  
2 effort to sit down with the Taliban, and said you are not  
3 optimistic for a peace settlement between the Taliban and  
4 Afghan government. I'm interested to hear your thoughts on  
5 what should be done differently, given the recognition that  
6 this conflict will only come to a conclusion, likely,  
7 through some type of diplomatic settlement.

8           Dr. Jackson, in 2017 you described U.S. efforts in  
9 Afghanistan as a tragedy and said that U.S. plans have  
10 seldom corresponded to problems on the ground. I'm  
11 interested to hear your assessment of the extent to which  
12 we have addressed this issue and whether there's more that  
13 should be done to ensure our strategy is aligned with our  
14 efforts on the ground.

15           And, General Field, you have the most recent in-  
16 theater experience. I am interested to hear your views on  
17 how the military mission in Afghanistan has been adapted to  
18 support our diplomatic efforts with the Taliban, how we are  
19 measuring progress in this -- that mission, and whether we  
20 are effectively balancing interest in reducing troop levels  
21 with the desire to maintain leverage in negotiations.

22           I would also like to hear the panel's views on the  
23 importance of integrating all the tools of national power  
24 in Afghanistan. As former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs  
25 Admiral Mike Mullen reinforced this week, this is a moment

1 when more investment in diplomacy and development is  
2 needed, not less. Therefore, I was disappointed to see, as  
3 just one example, that the administration intends to cut  
4 all financial support to the American University to  
5 Afghanistan, one of the only independent, coeducational  
6 universities in Afghanistan. For years, the University has  
7 been a vital part of developing a next generation of Afghan  
8 leaders who will be essential to Afghanistan's long-term  
9 security and stability.

10 While this hearing is meant to be mainly prospective,  
11 I would be remiss if I did not mention the recent  
12 publication of a series of documents by the Washington  
13 Post, including interviews with over 400 government  
14 officials, looking back across the conflict in Afghanistan.  
15 The documents and the Washington Post stories that  
16 accompanied their release argue that U.S. efforts in  
17 Afghanistan routinely suffered from poor planning, a  
18 mismatch between stated strategy and the resources  
19 allocated, and bureaucratic infighting that jeopardized the  
20 whole-of-government effort. While some have taken issue  
21 with the Post's reporting, particularly the contention that  
22 there was a purposeful attempt spanning multiple  
23 administrations to deceive Congress and the American  
24 people, the documents highlight the need to persistently  
25 debate, study, and question our efforts in Afghanistan. We

1 owe our troops and front-line civilians a strategy that is  
2 worthy of their sacrifice, and one that will finally bring  
3 a sustainable end to this conflict.

4 It is in this spirit that the Chairman and I sought to  
5 resume the past practice of holding an Afghan-specific open  
6 posture hearing. And I've been disappointed that efforts  
7 with the Department of Defense to schedule this hearing  
8 have yet proven to be successful. I believe it is an  
9 important part of the full transparency and candor that are  
10 due the American people.

11 And, with that, let me thank you again, Mr. Chairman.

12 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed.

13 We'll do our usual opening statements. And I had -- I  
14 think it's the first time we've ever had a request for an  
15 additional one-and-a-half minutes. General Keane, I think  
16 that's -- that's intriguing.

17 [Laughter.]

18 Chairman Inhofe: Well, we talked it over, and we  
19 voted. It was close.

20 [Laughter.]

21 Chairman Inhofe: But, you get your one-and-a-half  
22 minutes extra time.

23 Senator Reed: I think you broke the tie.

24 [Laughter.]

25 Chairman Inhofe: Yeah, I was the tiebreaker, you're



1 right. Yeah, we'll look forward to hearing from you. And  
2 you are recognized first.

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1           STATEMENT OF GENERAL JOHN M. KEANE, USA (RET.),  
2 CHAIRMAN, INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF WAR, FORMER VICE CHIEF  
3 OF STAFF, U.S. ARMY

4           General Keane: Thank you, Chairman Inhofe, Ranking  
5 Member Reed, and distinguished members of the committee,  
6 for inviting me to testify today. I'm honored to be here  
7 with such respected and qualified colleagues.

8           I want to thank the committee for your support of the  
9 defense buildup these last 3 years and your National  
10 Defense Authorization Acts. I was appointed by this  
11 committee -- specifically, the late Chairman, Senator John  
12 McCain -- to the Congressional Committee on the National  
13 Defense Strategy. As you know, as reflected in our report,  
14 we were alarmed by how much the U.S. military capability  
15 had fallen behind in providing an adequate deterrent to  
16 Russia and China. You have put the United States military  
17 on a path to a much-needed recovery.

18           As a very late addition to this panel, let me  
19 apologize for not providing a written statement to you in  
20 advance. This is a first for me in 19-and-a-half years of  
21 congressional testimony, and it's why I asked for an extra  
22 minute and a half.

23           What I would like to do briefly this morning is so set  
24 the strategic framework for Afghanistan, and also what is a  
25 reasonable path forward. I have had discussions, for well

1 over a year now, with senior U.S. and Afghanistan  
2 government officials, to include the President of the  
3 United States; the President in Afghanistan; Ambassador Zal  
4 Khalilzad, on more than one occasion, our chief negotiator  
5 with the Taliban; General Scott Miller, our on-scene  
6 commander; the Chief of Staff of the Pakistani military,  
7 General Bajwa; and I have sources that have close ties to  
8 the Taliban leadership, who are not connected to U.S. or  
9 Afghanistan intelligence services.

10 Let me state up front that Afghanistan remains today,  
11 despite 18 years of protracted involvement, despite U.S.  
12 policies that directly contributed to the length of this  
13 involvement, that Afghanistan is a vital national security  
14 interest; specifically, the security of the homeland and  
15 the security of the American people. Central and South  
16 Asia remains the epicenter of radical Islamic terrorism.  
17 Afghanistan, a mountainous, landlocked, tribal country, is  
18 ideally suited for a terrorist safe haven or sanctuary. It  
19 is why UBL -- Osama bin Laden -- chose that site, invited  
20 by the Haqqani family back in the mid-1990s. It is why the  
21 al-Qaeda leadership remains in close proximity today across  
22 the border in Pakistan and their fighters maintain a modest  
23 presence in Afghanistan. They welcome the opportunity to  
24 return.

25 ISIS has a growing presence in Afghanistan, so much so

1 that the Taliban recognized that they cannot drive them  
2 out. The reality is that, for 18-plus years, the U.S.-NATO  
3 commitment, along with the Afghan National Security Forces,  
4 have prevented another catastrophic attack on the homeland  
5 or in Europe. It remains the essential objective of the  
6 mission in Afghanistan. Moreover, from covert bases in  
7 Afghanistan, we have killed al-Qaeda leaders in Pakistan,  
8 to include Osama bin Laden in 2011, and denied them safe  
9 havens in Afghanistan due to the presence of U.S., NATO,  
10 and Afghan National Security Forces.

11 What is the path ahead? Well, first of all, U.S.  
12 troop presence will likely be reduced in the near term to  
13 8,600, an agreement -- and also the possibility of an  
14 agreement with the Taliban, with conditions based on  
15 reduction in violence, peace negotiations with the Afghan  
16 government, and an open public break with the al-Qaeda.

17 General Scott Miller, one of our very best commanders  
18 in Afghanistan who is due to brief you next month, was  
19 working on reducing U.S. troop presence before negotiations  
20 began with the Taliban. He concluded, after he took  
21 command and did his assessment, that he had more troops  
22 than are required to do the mission. In other words, the  
23 troop reduction that we will undergo to 8600 is an  
24 acceptable risk, in the mind of the commander in charge.

25 Second, we need to reduce the financial burden on the

1 United States. Currently, it's around \$45.5 billion, from  
2 a high -- down from a high of 110 billion in 2010 during  
3 the Afghan surge. Let's get it down -- it's possible -- to  
4 only below 30 billion initially, and eventually below that.  
5 Not just because of the troop reductions, but by reductions  
6 also in contractors who represent a \$27 billion cost of the  
7 45 billion. Ashraf Ghani, who I've spoken to on more than  
8 one occasion, if he forms the new government, wants to  
9 reduce the U.S. burden of \$5 billion to the Afghan National  
10 Security Forces. He wants to provide more funds himself.  
11 He thinks he can do that. And he's had negotiations with  
12 the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and a couple of  
13 others, to assist in the financing.

14 Third, after a new Afghan government is formed, the  
15 United States should publicly support the constitutional  
16 democracy -- the constitutional democratic order. Recall  
17 that 92.8 percent of the people in Afghanistan wanted these  
18 elections to take place. That is a remarkable statement on  
19 their behalf. And recall that every single year for 18  
20 years, the Afghan people have rejected the Taliban, to the  
21 tune of 85 percent of that population. They represent the  
22 most unpopular insurgency in the history of insurgencies  
23 since we've been tracking them. And we need to ask the  
24 Afghan leadership to lay out a concrete plan for taking  
25 full responsibility for securing their country and paying

1 for it with less U.S. resources, and ask the new president  
2 to come to the White House and brief our President on it.

3 And lastly, conduct an Afghanistan-Pakistan broader  
4 regional security pact designed to counter terrorism,  
5 bolster the region's ability to tackle terrorism without  
6 U.S. capabilities over time. The United States can broker  
7 this -- the U.N., or NATO. Commit the parties not to use  
8 terrorist proxies, not to -- to close safe havens, and to  
9 respect each other's sovereignty. Pakistan must stop the  
10 political, military, or materiel support to the Taliban  
11 conducted on Pakistani territory. The reward or payback is  
12 a free trade agreement and regional trade deals and  
13 economic investment with Pakistan.

14 In conclusion, listen, I share every member's --  
15 here's frustration with the length of U.S. involvement in  
16 Afghanistan, but it is important to remind ourself that  
17 this war with radical Islam came to us, and it is, at a  
18 minimum, a generational war, with no easy or quick  
19 solutions. Today, we are executing a very different model  
20 than what we used to begin our involvement in the 9/11  
21 wars. And, while radical Islam has spread and is still  
22 thriving in the world, to some 40 countries, the United  
23 States is only active in -- actively involved in those  
24 countries where America's national interest and the  
25 security of the homeland are at risk. As such, the model

1 is to assist the locals in host country in doing the  
2 fighting, with a modest amount of troops to support them,  
3 and also to provide airpower. So, in Syria, less than  
4 1,000 troops supporting 70,000 Syrians who are doing the  
5 fighting against ISIS. In Iraq, 5,000 troops supporting  
6 300,000 Iraqis who are doing the fighting against ISIS. In  
7 Afghanistan, it'll be 80,000 -- 8,600 supporting 300 local  
8 fighters doing the fighting against ISIS and the Taliban.  
9 This is a model that is working. Protecting the American  
10 people from ISIS and al-Qaeda, with a modest investment.

11 Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

12 [The prepared statement of General Keane follows]

13 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, General Keane.

2 Dr. Jackson.

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1           STATEMENT OF DR. COLIN F. JACKSON, PROFESSOR,  
2 STRATEGY AND POLICY DEPARTMENT, UNITED STATES NAVAL WAR  
3 COLLEGE, FORMER DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR  
4 AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN, AND CENTRAL ASIA

5           Dr. Jackson: Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed,  
6 distinguished members of the committee, thank you again for  
7 the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to  
8 discussing the challenges facing us in Afghanistan today.

9           My comments are strictly my own, not a reflection of  
10 the views of the administration, the Department of Defense,  
11 the Department of the Navy, or the United States Naval War  
12 College. I hope my testimony will shed some light on the  
13 connection between the South Asia Strategy, the  
14 opportunities, and the risks ahead.

15           I would echo General Keane's observation that the  
16 maturity and seriousness of this body -- and, I would also  
17 say, of the House Armed Services Committee -- was one of  
18 the most refreshing aspects of my service in government.  
19 This is an incredibly hard set of problems, and you have  
20 shown the maturity and the focus that has made this job  
21 that much easier.

22           I would ask to have my written testimony entered into  
23 the record. I'll just make my remarks brief.

24           I do think U.S. leaders today face two seemingly  
25 antithetical imperatives in Afghanistan. The first is the

1 entirely understandable desire to end a nearly-two-decade  
2 war. The costs of that war, human and financial, have far  
3 outstripped the expectations of leaders in 2001, and there  
4 are pressing priorities elsewhere. That said, the  
5 imperative of protecting the American homeland from  
6 terrorist attack remains unchanged.

7       We still, unfortunately, face a very real and  
8 substantial threat of external attack by Salafi and Jihadi  
9 movements emanating from South and Central Asia. We do not  
10 get to decide whether we have a substantial threat of  
11 terrorism emanating from the region. All we have is a  
12 decision of how to deal with that threat, the threat posed  
13 primarily by ISIS-Khorasan and al-Qaeda. Any responsible  
14 policy and strategy on Afghanistan must address both  
15 imperatives, not one. The salient question in 2020 is  
16 whether the U.S. political leadership of both parties has  
17 the patience and the foresight to see this campaign through  
18 to a favorable conclusion and avoid the temptation of a  
19 hasty peace.

20       By staying in Afghanistan for this long period of  
21 time, we have succeeded in preventing additional attacks on  
22 the American homeland. But, this effect has not been  
23 permanent. The removal of focused U.S. counterterrorism  
24 surveillance and direct action in Afghanistan, whether part  
25 of a deal or not, would most likely lead to the rapid

1 expansion of ISIS-K and al-Qaeda capabilities and the  
2 increasing likelihood of attacks against U.S. and allied  
3 homelands.

4       It is also easy to lose, in the length of this long  
5 war, a sense of what has changed. As General Keane has  
6 observed, we are well past the period of nation-building in  
7 Afghanistan. That has not really been going on since 2014.  
8 Certainly, since 2017, what we are seeing is a focused  
9 counterterrorism operation directly linked to the  
10 negotiations ongoing with the Taliban.

11       The Afghans have assumed the vast majority of the  
12 fighting and the dying in Afghanistan. And this is, in the  
13 main, a story of Afghan Security Forces fighting with U.S.  
14 advisors in support against the Taliban and ISIS-K. The  
15 reason we are focused on this today is the interest in the  
16 deal that may or may not emerge at a bargaining table with  
17 the Taliban. I would argue that this is not about getting  
18 "a deal," it is about getting "a good deal." A bad deal is  
19 on offer every day.

20       Who are the signatories? What are the terms? Is the  
21 agreement enforceable? These are the three primordial  
22 questions on any deal.

23       What would a good deal constitute? A good deal would  
24 prevent a Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, it would  
25 represent real power-sharing between the existing

1 Government of Afghanistan and elements that have been in  
2 contest with it.

3 Any lasting political settlement in Afghanistan must  
4 include the Government of Afghanistan as the senior  
5 partner, not an absentee, and not an afterthought.

6 U.S. access and partnership on counterterrorism must  
7 be guaranteed, not simply proposed. We need, for the  
8 foreseeable future, the ability to operate until such a  
9 time as locals can handle these problems to our  
10 satisfaction.

11 The United States must remain in some small size to  
12 enforce any existing or proposed political agreement.  
13 There is nothing in the recent 40-year history of  
14 Afghanistan to suggest that peace deals will be self-  
15 enforcing.

16 The way out of Afghanistan runs through a lasting  
17 settlement, not a phony peace. If we give in to the  
18 temptation of a hasty or lopsided or unenforceable  
19 settlement, we will be exposed and may well be dragged back  
20 in, as we were into Iraq and Syria.

21 How do we get there from here? The key is not to  
22 exercise or exhibit desperation. Good deals only emerge if  
23 we are willing to walk away, as the President did in  
24 September. We must force the Taliban senior leadership to  
25 negotiate with the sovereign Government of Afghanistan.

1 This is the hard right over the easy wrong.

2 We must also convince Pakistan that they must close  
3 the deal, not just open it. They must be willing to  
4 restrain the Taliban from attempting to take over a future  
5 Afghan political system. They must accept the emergence of  
6 a stable and peaceful Afghanistan as the prerequisite for  
7 any reconsideration of U.S.-Pakistan relations.

8 The beginning of wisdom in negotiations is the  
9 willingness to walk away. President Trump exercised that  
10 in September, and I hope that that trend continues.

11 A peace that deserts our allies and enables our  
12 enemies to seize power will raise the risk of terrorist  
13 attack. Such an outcome would be a bad deal for America.  
14 For these reasons, we may be better served waging a focused  
15 and increasingly efficient military campaign until an  
16 acceptable deal emerges.

17 Thank you.

18 [The prepared statement of Dr. Jackson follows:]

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1 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you.

2 General Field.

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1           STATEMENT OF BRIGADIER GENERAL KIMBERLY C. FIELD, USA  
2 (RET.), EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALBRITTON CENTER FOR GRANT  
3 STRATEGY, BUSH SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICE,  
4 FORMER SENIOR ADVISOR TO THE COMMANDER, OPERATIONS RESOLUTE  
5 SUPPORT

6           General Field: Good morning, Chairman Inhofe, Ranking  
7 Member Reed, and distinguished members of the committee.  
8 I'm very grateful for the opportunity to testify.

9           I first served in Afghanistan in early 2002 as the  
10 chief planner of a Civil Military Operations Task Force,  
11 and then again as a 2-year stint as the executive officer  
12 to the operational commander from '09 to '11, and then,  
13 most recently, as Senator Reed mentioned, as the designated  
14 red-teamer, as General Miller put it. I'm currently the  
15 executive director of the Albritton Center for Grant  
16 Strategy at the Bush School. And it's from both of those  
17 perspectives that I'm speaking.

18           So, in my 18 years of observing and participating in  
19 this conflict, our objective has, in fact, been consistent.  
20 We've sometimes lost sight of it, but we've always been  
21 there to protect the homelands, ours and the NATO member  
22 states.

23           The ways we have chosen to do that have varied from  
24 counterterrorism to counterinsurgency, to train-advise-and-  
25 equip -- -assist, then, now, to a negotiated political

1 settlement between the Taliban and the government.

2 But, looking forward, we have to ask ourselves two  
3 things. First, is the original purpose still valid, or  
4 have we sufficiently reduced the threat to accept more  
5 risk? And, secondly, how does Afghanistan fit in a  
6 different strategic context and a different conception of  
7 our position in the world than that of 2001?

8 With that in mind, I offer three options that I think  
9 are all, frankly, viable: We could leave now, we could  
10 accept an indefinite small presence, or we could refine our  
11 current theory of victory.

12 First, we could leave now, knowing that our homeland  
13 will be sufficiently safe in the short run. It's a fact  
14 that, with the recent degradation of ISIS in Nangarhar, as  
15 far -- as well as al-Qaeda's disorganization, there is now  
16 very little threat to us or our allies from Afghanistan. I  
17 just think we need to say that. But, leaving carries a  
18 risk of having to return, at significant cost, including  
19 the cost that we didn't, or couldn't, live up to our  
20 promises. To me, that matters. And so, this option sounds  
21 bad. Not only is ISIS likely to reemerge and the Taliban  
22 ties to al-Qaeda are intercommunal and interfamilial, but  
23 the option is incongruent with our values. We have armed  
24 the country to the teeth, making a potential civil war a  
25 bloodbath. We own part of the blame for the rampant



1 corruption from which the people have suffered. Tens of  
2 thousands of civilians -- Afghan civilians -- have died.  
3 We've made promises to women and young people, maybe  
4 promises we should not have made, but we made them. But,  
5 we did try hard. We can only do so much, and sunk costs  
6 are not necessarily a reason to stay.

7 A second option is to remain indefinitely -- and I  
8 think you've heard that today-- reducing presence and cost  
9 as much as we can. The NATO mission will likely stay, as  
10 long as the U.S. there. We continue to plug away on a  
11 conditions-based withdrawal as part of an intra-Afghan  
12 political settlement while pressuring key ISIS and Taliban  
13 nodes. Further, we have typically left behind a mid- to  
14 long-term presence in places of geostrategic importance to  
15 us to guarantee our desired outcomes. Is Afghanistan now  
16 of geostrategic importance in this era of great-power  
17 competition? I think we have to ask that.

18 What we should not do is continue to fight on and on  
19 without executable theory of victory. Major General Fox  
20 Conner said, in World War I, "Never fight unless you have  
21 to, never fight alone, and never fight for long." And I  
22 might add to that, "Never fight someone else's fight."  
23 We're doing all these things, really, and it's bad for our  
24 democracy. If we believe Afghanistan carries enough import  
25 to make these tradeoffs, it requires a clear message to the

1 American people: where this mission fits in the war on  
2 terrorism and/or why Afghanistan and the region are  
3 important in an era of major-power competition. It also  
4 demands we unuddle our message to the Taliban. We need to  
5 say we're not going anywhere until our objectives are  
6 achieved. That's what it would take for option two.

7 A third option is to address the shortcomings of our  
8 current plan to get that political settlement. And,  
9 frankly, this is the one I favor. Military pressure is  
10 necessary for Special Representative Khalilzad to bring to  
11 the table, but it's insufficient. Taliban fighters are, in  
12 fact, reeling from the precision and lethality of the last  
13 year. But, the pool of them is seemingly endless. More  
14 importantly, tactical pressure will work only if the people  
15 with whom we are meeting are actually able to speak for the  
16 Taliban, both the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Taliban in  
17 Pakistan. Finally, while it is true we have a good partner  
18 in President Ghani in prosecuting the military fight, it is  
19 less clear he is willing or able to speak for enough of his  
20 country in the peace process.

21 So, to the military pressure in the current -- effort,  
22 we should add at least three things I can think of:

23 First, we have to strengthen the diplomatic effort to  
24 address Afghanistan in the context of the South Asia  
25 Strategy. And, further, we should broaden our global

1 engagement to specify the international community's  
2 contribution to the peace dividend, and communicate that  
3 vision to parties of the conflicts. A forceful Taliban  
4 takeover results in none of that. The Quetta Shura and the  
5 Military Commission in Pakistan may not fully understand  
6 this, but it's time to convey that we have much less to  
7 lose than any Afghan or Pakistani. The spoiler owns the  
8 carnage, the poverty, the isolation, not really us.

9       Secondly, the Taliban's doing the fighting, living --  
10 the Talibs doing the fighting live among the Afghan people,  
11 89 percent of whom support negotiations and 64 percent of  
12 whom say reconciliation is a possibility. The Afghan  
13 government, with our support, should ramp up efforts to  
14 encourage Taliban fighters to stop using violence. They  
15 should not have to renounce the Taliban as a political  
16 movement. They, too, should hear clearly what peace looks  
17 like. And the last NDAA gave the Command the authority to  
18 support such efforts.

19       Last, and related to the unity required in our Afghan  
20 partner, the current level of corruption and fractiousness  
21 in the Afghan government is unacceptable. Afghan leaders  
22 must address it seriously. It's hard, but not impossible,  
23 to condition our money and our support on progress in  
24 anticorruption and unity.

25       Again, I prefer the third option, for a limited period

1 of time and against specific benchmarks. Our military  
2 campaign is the most precise and effective it has ever  
3 been. The use of a relatively small amount of resources  
4 has been highly strategic, and the current commander knows  
5 exactly how to align those needs with expert ways to  
6 achieve our ends.

7 Further, we should see any forthcoming first step in a  
8 peace deal Ambassador Khalilzad can wrangle as better than  
9 the status quo. That's the first step. There are choices  
10 to be made after that. But, the burden of creating gains  
11 out of 18 years of investment cannot fall on these two men  
12 alone. If a refined plan to get a negotiated settlement  
13 does not work, and the Taliban may continue to think they  
14 can wait us out, we have those two sub-par options left.

15 In closing, this was another horrific week for at  
16 least two families of soldiers deployed to Afghanistan. A  
17 thinking democracy must ask, as you have today -- and thank  
18 you very much -- Is it worth it? I say only if we are  
19 extremely clear about the threats, and honest about the  
20 threats. Our larger interests are values, the future role  
21 of our country in the world, and that we are clear-eyed  
22 about our theory of victory. We certainly want peace. To  
23 me, we have to try our very best to get it, but that does  
24 not have to mean forever.

25 Thank you for hearing me today.

1 [The prepared statement of General Field follows]

2 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman Inhofe: Yeah. Very good, General Field.

2 In the beginning of your comments, you talked about  
3 how promises were made to the women and young people, and -  
4 - elaborate a little bit on that.

5 General Field: Well, we've had a partner in the  
6 Afghan government --

7 Chairman Inhofe: Yeah.

8 General Field: -- over the years. As we moved from  
9 counterterrorism to counterinsurgency in search of enduring  
10 solutions in Afghanistan because of the connection between  
11 the Taliban and al-Qaeda, you know, we moved to a  
12 democratization, of sorts, in Afghanistan. And that  
13 includes individual rights. Women are half of the  
14 population. So, we ended up there. We had -- we put a lot  
15 of money into women's programs. We continue to do that.  
16 We still have a -- in fact, an appropriation to have -- to  
17 train and educate women in the security forces. So, we  
18 have made a lot of promises to the women, and to young  
19 people in general.

20 Chairman Inhofe: Okay. Is -- anyway, then -- the  
21 word I got from that was that we haven't really kept our  
22 promises there to women and young people. I kind of  
23 thought we were in pretty good shape on that, because it  
24 seemed that progress has been made primarily through -- by  
25 women.

1 All right --

2 General Field: Sir, we have kept our promises.

3 Chairman Inhofe: Sure. Sure. I appreciate that.

4 Dr. Jackson, you and I talked about -- kind of  
5 bringing up the subject that's been -- it's been behind us  
6 quite a ways, but it's my understanding that one of our  
7 colleagues is going to have a hearing this afternoon on the  
8 Afghan Papers. And so, I thought we might, kind of, get  
9 some comments in there, in the beginning. Now, you and I  
10 have talked about this in the past. We know that we're  
11 talking about, primarily, everything that was pre-2016.  
12 And so, I'd like to have you elaborate a little bit on the  
13 Afghanistan Papers and the -- in that that seems to be  
14 coming up for another discussion.

15 Dr. Jackson: Senator, yeah, I would echo your  
16 comment. The Afghanistan Papers does cover, exclusively, a  
17 period preceding the current administration; that is, sort  
18 of, pre-2016. I think there are several other elements  
19 that are -- that distort the picture unhelpfully in this  
20 rendition. I was reminded of George Wills' famous comment,  
21 saying -- of another subject, he said, "presenting the  
22 obvious with a sense of original discovery." That would be  
23 my epitaph for the Afghanistan Papers Project. Much of  
24 what is said in there is true. Afghanistan has been a  
25 violent place, it has been a place we have struggled to

1 understand, it is one that is beset with corruption, with  
2 drug economy, all of these things. True, true, true, and  
3 known. To leap from that, however, to arguing that there's  
4 a plot to deceive the United States people that's been  
5 prosecuted over three U.S. administrations by every senior  
6 military, civil servant, and political leader is, I think,  
7 unfair and deliberately distortionary.

8 Chairman Inhofe: Yeah.

9 Dr. Jackson: And I think it's unfortunate that we're  
10 sucking the oxygen out with articles like this, as distinct  
11 from very good reporting in the same paper. And I'd point  
12 to yesterday's article on ISIS-K by the Washington Post  
13 which was a model of good journalism: talking about a  
14 current problem, looking at what it might be in the future,  
15 in terms of ISIS-K's presence and threat. And I just wish  
16 we could spend the mind-share that we have available on  
17 current and real problems, rather than disinterring things  
18 that aren't very relevant --

19 Chairman Inhofe: Yeah.

20 Dr. Jackson: -- to the current discussion.

21 Chairman Inhofe: I agree with that. And that's an  
22 excellent statement.

23 And, General Keane, did you forget to introduce your  
24 friend today?

25 General Keane: This is Angela McGlowan, who --



1 Senator Reed: Turn your mic on, sir.

2 General Keane: All right. Angela McGlowan, my wife,  
3 who I married on December 8th and who ran for congressional  
4 office in the State of Mississippi a number of years ago,  
5 and summarily lost, but she did it as a promise to her  
6 father. And the first job she had in Washington, D.C., was  
7 working for Senator Bob Dole.

8 Chairman Inhofe: Oh, my goodness.

9 General Keane: And she's been working for Rupert  
10 Murdoch for about 22 to 23 years. So, thank you.

11 Chairman Inhofe: Well, great introduction, thank you  
12 so much.

13 And, General Keane, when you talked about the  
14 reduction from 12,000 -- probably 12,000-plus -- down to  
15 8.6, I think that the -- Secretary Esper has said that  
16 these reductions would not necessarily be linked to a deal  
17 with Taliban. A lot of people were kind of surprised that  
18 he said that. What do you -- how do you think --

19 General Keane: Well, I think --

20 Chairman Inhofe: -- that link should go?

21 General Keane: Yeah. Well, first of all, as I said  
22 in my opening statement, General Miller's been working on  
23 the force reduction for some time, based on his assessment  
24 that he had more forces than he needed to meet the mission  
25 requirement. And I believe that, given the fact that

1 negotiations were taking place, the administration made a  
2 logical decision not to unilaterally conduct that  
3 reduction, and use that as leverage in the negotiations. I  
4 think that's where we are. But, if the -- if there's not a  
5 settlement in those negotiations between the United States  
6 and the Taliban, I do think Secretary Esper is right, then  
7 we're likely to announce that reduction anyway, because  
8 General Miller wants to get on with it. He doesn't want  
9 anybody to be in that country, exposed to -- exposed  
10 unnecessarily to a risk, if he doesn't need them to  
11 accomplish the mission.

12 Chairman Inhofe: Yeah. Good point.

13 Senator Reed.

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

16 And I want to thank the witnesses for excellent  
17 testimony. And let me ask a question to all of you, and  
18 then I've got another question.

19 But, there seems to be a consensus that the greatest  
20 strategic threat that faces the United States in  
21 Afghanistan is the projection of terrorist power into the  
22 homeland. It's diminished -- going to General Fields --  
23 but, it's still there, and it could revive itself unless we  
24 get it right. And that's the strategic issue. And then  
25 there are other equities, if you will. We have created a

1 society in which women are given rights, et cetera. That  
2 could be endangered by a Taliban takeover.

3 But, the question I have is that, implicit in  
4 everything that you've said is, a continuing presence of  
5 U.S. forces for this counterterrorism threat is important.  
6 Reading what the Taliban have demanded from Khalilzad, et  
7 cetera, is the firm commitment that we withdraw our forces.  
8 How do reconcile that? Is it reconcilable? And then, an  
9 affiliated issue is, one of the presumptions is, we --  
10 they'll tell you, "You can take your forces out, because  
11 we'll suppress al-Qaeda." What capability do they have, or  
12 inclination?

13 So, General Keane, briefly --

14 General Keane: Sure.

15 Senator Reed: -- and then right down the panel.

16 General Keane: Thank you. Yeah, that's a great  
17 question, Senator.

18 I think what the administration is trying to do and  
19 reconcile in this issue -- I'll be, just, frank with you, I  
20 did read the initial draft agreement, months ago, before  
21 negotiations were broken off, and I was quite alarmed by  
22 it, because, up front, we were making a statement that we -  
23 - the United States is going to withdraw completely from  
24 Afghanistan. That, in of itself, would undermine the  
25 Afghan government, the morale of the Afghan National

1 Security Forces, be a huge propaganda victory for the  
2 Taliban, and they would sell it as a humiliating defeat for  
3 the United States. This is principally to shore up their  
4 own fighters. What's not well understood is how fractured  
5 the Taliban organization actually is, particularly at the  
6 tactical warfighting level, and how many of them are weary  
7 and really want some kind of a settlement and stop the  
8 fighting. Others continue to fight to the bitter end.

9 But, the point is, is that I think the reconciliation  
10 is, let's establish some conditions to work this through.  
11 And those are, specifically, reduction in violence. Well,  
12 that's a broad term, and I think there's argument over that  
13 right now, in terms of, what does that mean? The Taliban  
14 has two problems with this. It's why they don't want a  
15 cease-fire. One, they have people who will violate the  
16 cease-fire and continue to fight. Two, they will have  
17 people that will melt away if the cease-fire goes on for an  
18 extended period of time, because they're weary. So, I  
19 think that is an issue.

20 The second issue is to make a public break with the  
21 al-Qaeda. I, personally, think that's meaningless, because  
22 I think they've already demonstrated their allegiance to  
23 the al-Qaeda. They were willing to give up their regime  
24 and thousands of fighters to protect them, back when George  
25 Bush challenged them to give the al-Qaeda up. And every

1 indication we've had is the same.

2         And then, the third thing is to begin negotiations  
3 with the Afghan government. I can tell you for a fact,  
4 based on my sources, that the leadership of the Taliban  
5 still is very committed to two things: one, to get the  
6 United States out of Afghanistan; and two, to physically,  
7 militarily, overthrow the government.

8         Senator Reed: Thank you.

9         Dr. Jackson, please, and then General Field.

10         Dr. Jackson: Yes. To pick up on General Keane's  
11 point, I couldn't agree more. I think the Taliban, from  
12 the body of evidence, historical, stretching back into the  
13 1990s, has shown no inclination, even under the most severe  
14 strain, to break its real alliance with al-Qaeda. And this  
15 is the most disturbing aspect of the entire story. That  
16 is, when faced with a choice between the loss of the regime  
17 after 9/11 and taking any of a series of steps to hand over  
18 UBL -- Osama bin Laden -- that, essentially, Mullah Omar  
19 chose to lose power rather than break the alliance. I am  
20 deeply fearful that they will say all the right words and  
21 that they will very rapidly renege on those words. I  
22 don't, also, think that they have the capability --  
23 anywhere near the level of capability that we've built with  
24 our Afghan allies in the counterterrorism space. So, they  
25 are -- they cannot handle the residual threat, I think,

1 over the near or medium term, and they will not break the  
2 alliance with al-Qaeda.

3 Senator Reed: General Field, please.

4 General Field: Sir, you asked how to reconcile those  
5 two things. I think it's conditions-based. I know that  
6 sounds trite at this point. But, the issue really is, how  
7 do you start, from here? Like, how -- what are we doing --  
8 what, exactly, are we thinking is the formula that's going  
9 to get the Taliban in Pakistan -- for the most part, the  
10 Taliban in Pakistan -- the Military Commission and the  
11 Quetta Shura is really in charge here -- what is going to  
12 make them change their calculation? We have to add new  
13 injects. It's not just military pressure. That is not  
14 going to work. They -- I really believe they can fight for  
15 a very long time. Yes, they're tired, and yes, they're  
16 reeling. But, what else are we going to do to convince  
17 them? They're absolutely right that the people want peace,  
18 its fighters are tired, so that means you have to work  
19 inside the country a little bit, in my opinion, and we have  
20 to have a stronger diplomatic effort. We've got to aim --  
21 we have got to engage more in the region, but more  
22 globally, to say, "This is what peace looks like. You own  
23 that." If -- if we don't start moving there -- this is  
24 going to take confidence-building measures. We're not  
25 doing that. We just keep doubling down on military

1 pressure and thinking something's going to change. I don't  
2 know what that looks like.

3 Senator Reed: Thank you.

4 I have other questions, but I just -- a brief comment,  
5 if the Chairman, would allow, is that -- it was touched  
6 upon by, I think, everyone's comments, the sustainability  
7 of the Afghan government. At present, the Afghan  
8 government funds only 55 percent of their budget, only 10  
9 percent of their forces. The notion that we can draw down  
10 forces and money simultaneously probably is not realistic.  
11 And we have to about -- think, all of us, Are we going to  
12 be investing, long term, maybe indefinitely, billions of  
13 dollars a year just to keep, sort of, the lid on it, if you  
14 will? And one of the other ironies -- in a coalition  
15 government, that means we're sort of providing resources,  
16 indirectly at least, to Taliban elements, or at least  
17 representatives. So, those are questions I -- that I  
18 wanted to get, and I just want to make those points.

19 So, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you.

21 Senator Purdue.

22 Senator Purdue: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 Thank you, all of you, for your service.

24 Secretary Jackson, we've heard the same testimony,  
25 we've heard the same concerns. It's all -- and it's all

1 valid. I agree with General Field, we need a  
2 multidimensional formula. And I believe it, personally,  
3 having had some experience over there during my career, the  
4 Pashtun problem is not just an Afghan problem or a Pakistan  
5 problem. It -- you know, and the India/Pakistan  
6 relationship right now has great bearing in Afghanistan, I  
7 believe. So, the question I have for you, specifically --  
8 and I want to do it from a perspective of what General  
9 Field just mentioned, as broadening this formula, because  
10 the current one's not working, and, unless we're willing to  
11 invest billions of dollars indefinitely for a status quo  
12 until they get on their feet, the question I have is -- I  
13 don't see an ultimate solution as long as the Haqqani  
14 family down there is different, as long as the people in  
15 the surrounding countries have the Pashtun problem and no  
16 national identity, we're going to always have this sort of  
17 issue in Afghanistan. So, the question is, what does the  
18 Pakistan relationship with India, right now, that  
19 relationship, have to do with Afghan peace process? And  
20 how do we broaden the bigger dialogue to include the bigger  
21 Pashtun problem to get to a long-term, sustainable  
22 solution?

23 Dr. Jackson: So, in my second stint in Afghanistan,  
24 in 2011, the biggest lesson I left with was the sense that  
25 we might have framed the problem wrong. At the time, we



1 were talking about an Af-Pak problem -- Afghanistan-  
2 Pakistan -- and I came out thinking that if we considered  
3 Afghanistan a secondary theater in the competition between  
4 India and Pakistan, we would be closer to framing it the  
5 way the locals do. So, I think Pakistan's position on this  
6 has always been conditioned by -- primarily by its  
7 competition with India, which is curious to us, but very  
8 real to them.

9 I think it points the direction towards potential --  
10 not easy potential, but potential -- for other ways to  
11 attack this. I agree with General Field's argument. And  
12 let me put it slightly differently. We -- it's hard to  
13 build a transmission belt between battlefield pressure  
14 inside Afghanistan and the decision making of the people  
15 we're trying to influence. That's the real problem. And  
16 so, the question is, what is that transmission belt? One  
17 way of getting at that is to get at -- and I -- the words  
18 are always going to be fraud sponsors, patrons, providers  
19 of sanctuary in Pakistan.

20 I do think there is potential, for the following  
21 reason. Pakistan is in a really bad place right now, and  
22 they know it. We've suspended security assistance, they're  
23 in a sort of a slow-motion economic crisis. They feel,  
24 genuinely, that the conventional military balance with  
25 India is moving away from them. And they're deeply

1 worried. This is -- explains, in many reasons, why they  
2 were willing to take important first steps to help convene  
3 the talks with the Taliban. I think the critical thing to  
4 tell them is, it isn't about the opening, it's about the  
5 ending. And, you know, if we tell Pakistan that the only  
6 road back to a normal and balanced relationship with the  
7 United States is to secure a real settlement involving  
8 power-sharing inside Afghanistan, it's not about having a  
9 piece of paper pointing to it and then watching the Taliban  
10 take over Afghanistan -- if that happens, fair or unfair,  
11 from Pakistan's point of view, they will be blamed, and  
12 they should be blamed.

13 Senator Purdue: Thank you.

14 General Field, the ANSF attrition rate over the last  
15 few years is really not sustainable, by anybody's measure  
16 that I've seen. And yet, with -- if we go to the drawdown  
17 that we -- that we're talking about now, what role do the  
18 NATO allies -- what -- how do you see that playing out in  
19 the short term? And what role do they -- NATO play in the  
20 longer term, in terms of trying to get to some sustainable  
21 solution, here, that avoids the military outcome that we're  
22 witnessing every day in Afghanistan today?

23 General Field: Thank you, sir.

24 I think NATO is there as long as we're there. They're  
25 there because we're there. I'm not sure they feel the same

1 threat to their homelands that we espouse. They're --

2 Senator Purdue: So, you -- I'm sorry, I don't mean --  
3 so, if you see a significant drawdown like we're making  
4 right now, does it -- what impact does that have on the  
5 NATO allies in Afghanistan? What sense of responsibility  
6 do they have?

7 General Field: Yeah, I think we may see a small,  
8 commensurate drawdown. They'll skinny down as much as they  
9 can, too, but I don't think they'll go anywhere. Again,  
10 this first step -- this first stair step -- I think we can  
11 do it, and I think that we probably should. And I don't  
12 think we'll risk NATO. We'll still have our base in Mazar-  
13 e Sharif and in the West, and -- which we need right now in  
14 any kind of support to the government and stabilization.  
15 It has to be across the country, at least in the major  
16 urban centers.

17 Senator Purdue: I see.

18 General Field: I think we're okay.

19 Senator Purdue: Great. Thank you.

20 Thank you.

21 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Shaheen.

23 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 And thank you all very much for being here.

25 Dr. Jackson, I certainly agree with your statement

1 that what we need in Afghanistan is not a deal, it's a good  
2 deal. And, in my mind, part of that good deal means that  
3 women have to have -- continue to have freedom of movement.  
4 They continue to need to have access to education, to all  
5 of the rights that they currently have under the new Afghan  
6 constitution.

7         So, I guess my question for each of you is, to what  
8 extent do you see women being involved in the Afghan peace  
9 talks, to date? Senators Reed and Jones and I were there  
10 in April, and we met with a group of women leaders who were  
11 -- recognize that we need peace. They understood that  
12 Taliban had to be part of that. But, they were very  
13 concerned about what was going to happen to their rights  
14 under any peace negotiation, and about the commitment of  
15 the United States to ensure that women are at the  
16 negotiating table. So, can I ask each of you to give me  
17 your insights on what you think is happening there?

18         General Keane?

19         General Keane: Yes, well, I totally agree with your  
20 concern here. I do know, from talking to administration  
21 officials, that going forward with the progress that we've  
22 made on women rights inside Afghanistan, which have been  
23 considerable, that that has got to be on the table,  
24 particularly when the Taliban is conducting negotiations  
25 with the Unity Government of Afghanistan. And they have to

1 be at that table, as well. That is the verbal commitment  
2 I've heard now. That remains to be seen if that is carried  
3 out. But, I don't know anybody in this administration or  
4 in a previous one who doesn't support women rights in  
5 Afghanistan and the progress we've made. And we -- there  
6 is no deal that we can participate in that would forfeit  
7 any part of that, in my judgment.

8 Senator Shaheen: Dr. Jackson?

9 Dr. Jackson: What I would say is, one of the more  
10 dispiriting aspects of interacting with the current Taliban  
11 leadership in the talks is how little their ideological  
12 positions have changed. The policy positions, whether  
13 they're on withdrawal of U.S. troops or assurances on  
14 counterterrorism, are almost word-for-word unchanged from  
15 the mid-1990s -- that is, pre-9/11. The same goes for  
16 women's rights. The line that they provide very frequently  
17 is that, "We will offer rights consistent with Islamic  
18 law." That was the same position they took under the  
19 Taliban version-1 regime, which was pretty hideously  
20 repressive.

21 I think what's at risk is not simply women's rights in  
22 Afghanistan, which is one of the towering achievements of  
23 our time --

24 Senator Shaheen: Right.

25 Dr. Jackson: -- but, really, all of modern

1 Afghanistan. And when you go to Kabul today, a city of 5  
2 million people -- this was something that was in ruins,  
3 with a population of 500,000 at the end of the Taliban  
4 period. Young Afghans have voted with their feet to come  
5 from dirt-poor areas of rural Afghanistan to buy into a  
6 modern, growing Afghanistan that looks a lot like the rest  
7 of South Asia. And whether it's women or young people of  
8 both genders, that's been an accomplishment that's easy to  
9 miss in the whole cloud of violence and frustration.

10 Senator Shaheen: I agree with you.

11 General Field, I'm going to ask you to respond a  
12 little differently to the question. And that is, given  
13 what Dr. Jackson and General Keane have said, doesn't that  
14 mean that the onus to ensure that the Taliban -- any deal  
15 with the Taliban includes protecting rights of women really  
16 falls on the United States and our NATO partners who are in  
17 Afghanistan? As well as the Afghans, of course.

18 General Field: It does. It does. I think that the  
19 agreement has to, simply must, include those  
20 considerations. Now, in execution, I think we have to be  
21 realistic. And the reason I say that is because there's a  
22 real divide between urban and rural. And yes, there has  
23 been an urbanization movement, for those --

24 Senator Shaheen: Right.

25 General Field: -- those rights. But, in much of the

1 rural areas, even -- there's a lot of Taliban ideology  
2 sympathizers. They don't want to use violence anymore,  
3 necessarily, but they -- and some of them are women -- so,  
4 I don't think we can paint the whole country with the same  
5 brush. But, the peace agreement certainly has to secure  
6 the gains.

7 Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

8 I'm almost out of time, but I did want to raise one  
9 other issue, because last week a Federal judge ordered the  
10 Trump administration to end visa processing delays for  
11 hundreds of Afghan and Iraqi nationals who have worked for  
12 U.S. forces. And I have been very concerned that we have  
13 many people who are in danger in Afghanistan who have  
14 helped us, and yet we're not doing enough to ensure that  
15 they are protected. So, I wonder if anyone on the panel  
16 has worked with any of those Afghans who are trying to get  
17 here, and if you can talk about the importance of ensuring  
18 that we keep our promises that we made to those individuals  
19 who helped us.

20 I guess, Dr. Jackson, you're nodding, I will ask you  
21 to respond to that.

22 Dr. Jackson: Two observations. One, I think if we  
23 look to past involvements, one of the greatest stains on  
24 American honor at the end of the Vietnam War was our  
25 inability or unwillingness to take care of the people who

1 had worked for us. They were the billpayers for our  
2 withdrawal in Southeast Asia.

3 I think we can do better. I think we can take care of  
4 people who have exposed themselves to enormous personal and  
5 familial risk. There's one individual who has worked at  
6 the ISAF headquarters for every commander for the last 12  
7 years, Abdullah --

8 General Field: [Inaudible.]

9 Dr. Jackson: -- yeah -- has worked for every one of  
10 these commanders. And to show the kind of risk that he's  
11 encountered, he was one of the casualties in the attack  
12 that almost injured General Miller last year. He was  
13 severely wounded. He went for medical treatment and  
14 returned to his job. In that same year, quite tragically,  
15 his sister was killed in a helicopter accident in  
16 Afghanistan -- again, trying to do the right thing in this  
17 country. There are so many of these Afghans who have been  
18 stalwart allies. They deserve everything we can do to take  
19 care and protect them.

20 Senator Shaheen: Thank you all very much.

21 Mr. Chairman, I hope that you and Senator Reed and  
22 this committee will weigh in with the administration on the  
23 importance of ensuring that these SIV applicants are given  
24 their due and we ensure that that process moves along.

25 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you.



1 Senator Sullivan.

2 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 And I want to thank the witnesses for their decades of  
4 service to our country.

5 I was home in Alaska this past weekend, and, you know,  
6 we have a lot of military forces, a lot of veterans. It's  
7 a very pro-military State. But, in some of the meetings I  
8 had, there were questions on, "Hey, how long is this going  
9 to take?" And, you know, General Keane, I'm a big fan of  
10 yours. A lot of what you testified to could have been a  
11 similar testimony, you know, 10 years ago, in terms of  
12 where we are. But, on the other hand, I think we need to  
13 think through what happens if we're not there.

14 So, what I'd like to ask all of you, first and  
15 foremost, is, let's assume we don't just drawn down to, you  
16 know, 8600, or whatever. Let's assume, in the next year  
17 and a half, we leave Afghanistan. Militarily, we're gone.  
18 And then, a couple of years later, we drawn down aid to the  
19 government there dramatically. Very quickly, but each of  
20 you, what happens? What happens? We're gone. No military  
21 in Afghanistan. What happens to security in Afghanistan?  
22 What do you think is the risk to the homeland? And,  
23 following up on Senator Shaheen's question, what do you  
24 think happens to the rights of women in Afghanistan? What  
25 happens to the current government?

1 I'll just take that from each of you, if you can -- I  
2 know you could probably write a book on that, but I'd like  
3 to keep it short, because I have a few more questions.

4 General Keane: Sure. I'll take a poke at it.

5 Well, first of all, that would be a recipe for  
6 disaster, in my judgment. The Government of Afghanistan  
7 would be seriously undermined. Civil society --

8 Senator Sullivan: Would it collapse?

9 General Keane: Eventually, yes. It -- the Afghan  
10 Security Forces would have huge psychological, morale  
11 problems. They would feel a sense of betrayal that the  
12 United States is literally deserting them. I think civil  
13 war in Afghanistan would be on the horizon, you know,  
14 within 6 to 8 months as a result of it. And, certainly,  
15 ISIS and the al-Qaeda will also be the beneficiaries of it;  
16 not the obvious ones, in terms of the Taliban. They will  
17 have gotten what they've always tried to achieve since they  
18 were permitted to reemerge, and that is the United States  
19 withdrawal, where the United States is humiliated, and they  
20 can use that as a propaganda weapon to solidify the  
21 fractured nature of the Taliban fighters, and shore them  
22 up. It would be quite -- in my judgment, quite  
23 catastrophic.

24 Senator Sullivan: Threats to the homeland and the --

25 General Keane: Well, the safe havens are there, and

1 ISIS would grow, al-Qaeda would eventually grow. We'd --  
2 we can't -- if we're out of there, we can't keep our covert  
3 bases.

4 Senator Sullivan: Okay.

5 General Keane: So, we're not going to be able to keep  
6 a foot on the throat of the al-Qaeda leadership that we've  
7 been doing for 20 years. That's gone. We'd have to find  
8 another place to do that from, for sure.

9 Senator Sullivan: And progress that has been made  
10 with regard to women and the rights of women?

11 General Keane: And I think the -- the other thing is  
12 -- look, it -- we're all frustrated by the length of this.  
13 And I'll tell you what, U.S. policy has more to do with why  
14 we're there 18 years; and most of that's failed U.S.  
15 policy, in my judgment. But, we -- to look the Afghan  
16 people in the face and deal with that kind of catastrophic  
17 failure, and what that would mean to them after their  
18 sacrifice side-by-side with us, the casualties that they've  
19 had on the civilian side and also in their forces fighting  
20 this. They don't want the Taliban to rule them. As we've  
21 said, 80 percent of them, plus, reject them offhand because  
22 they know what this tyranny and barbarism truly is. So,  
23 yeah, I think there's a moral issue there, as well.

24 Senator Sullivan: Others? Dr. Jackson? General  
25 Field? Very --

1 Dr. Jackson: Yeah, I --

2 Senator Sullivan: Very quickly. I'm kind of burning  
3 my time, but I think it's a very important question. Just  
4 to expand on what General Keane said. And I would like --  
5 Senator Shaheen talked about -- there's a lot of progress  
6 that we've made for -- you know, our security is first and  
7 foremost, of course. That's why we're there. That's my  
8 view. That's what I certainly tell my constituents. But,  
9 there's progress, other areas. What happens? Quickly, the  
10 final two --

11 Dr. Jackson: Yeah.

12 Senator Sullivan: -- witnesses. What happens? We  
13 pull out fully, militarily. We're gone, and we start  
14 cutting back on aid. What happens?

15 Dr. Jackson: I --

16 Senator Sullivan: Build on what General Keane  
17 mentioned, don't repeat it.

18 Dr. Jackson: I get it.

19 I agree with him in his basic estimate. I think you'd  
20 see a renewed civil war. I think you would see a  
21 splintering of the Afghan National Defense and Security  
22 Forces, particularly if we cut off funding. I think you  
23 would forfeit all the gains of a modern Afghanistan that  
24 we've paid for over 20 years. That's a huge number. And I  
25 think, and importantly, you would see the entry of foreign

1 enemies of the United States in a big way. Iran would  
2 enter in a big way, covertly via militia groups. Pakistan  
3 would increase its involvement in an attempt to influence  
4 the political outcome. And Russia would likely become  
5 involved in a big way.

6 Senator Sullivan: General Field?

7 General Field: Sir, again, this is a slightly  
8 different take, perhaps. I do think that there would be  
9 civil war. I think the Tajiks are arming -- significantly  
10 arming. Having said that, I don't -- I'm not necessarily  
11 sure that ISIS would thrive in the utter chaos of civil  
12 war. It's not typically, historically, statistically not  
13 true that violent extremists organizations thrive in utter  
14 chaos. They need some stability, some ability to move  
15 around. But, the -- I think that the current government  
16 will collapse to the urban centers. They'll hang on a  
17 little while. I don't know how long. The warlords are  
18 also arming and are very armed, and we will lose a lot of  
19 the gains made for the -- in the modern society. With  
20 regard to women, we have more women educated now than there  
21 were all of children educated in Afghanistan. That will  
22 probably stop in the rural areas, and in the urban when it  
23 collapses, potentially. But, it's not predetermined to me  
24 that the Taliban will win.

25 Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

1 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Heinrich.

3 Senator Heinrich: In the last few days, I was  
4 dismayed to hear of the death of Sergeant First Class  
5 Antonio Rodriguez, of Las Cruces. Sergeant First Class  
6 Rodriguez died of injuries sustained when an individual in  
7 the Afghan National Security Force, in an NSF uniform,  
8 opened fire on both U.S. and Afghan forces in Nangarhar  
9 Province. That incident is still under investigation, but  
10 Sergeant First Class Rodriguez's death brings our continued  
11 presence in Afghanistan, the longest military operation in  
12 our country's history, into pretty sharp relief. And I  
13 hope, as we have this conversation today, that all of us,  
14 frankly, will keep his family in New Mexico, Texas, and  
15 North Carolina in our thoughts.

16 These sorts of incidents are not new. We are all  
17 familiar with the extensive reporting in the Washington  
18 Post. Building an ANSF that can stand and fight the  
19 Taliban is -- and, frankly, other military groups -- is  
20 still a core pillar of the American and coalition strategy.  
21 I want to ask, how viable is that portion of the strategy?  
22 Given 20 years of really halting progress within that  
23 organization, why and how is that still a viable piece of  
24 this? And, if it is a viable piece, what are we going to  
25 be doing different to ensure that this is a sustainable

1 operation?

2 And maybe we can start with General Field and go all  
3 the way across.

4 General Field: Thank you, sir.

5 Progress on the conventional forces, the conventional  
6 part of the ANDSF, has not been great. You're absolutely  
7 right. Is it sort of our theory of change? Is -- does it  
8 -- must it stay our theory of change, we have to have a  
9 vibrant security force in order to achieve our objectives?  
10 Yeah, that's probably right. We have made progress in  
11 certain capabilities. The ASSF, the Special Forces --

12 Senator Heinrich: Yeah.

13 General Field: -- made a lot of progress. We do have  
14 good leaders at the top of these organizations now. They  
15 are reliable partners to General Miller. How much of that  
16 is permeating down through the ranks is the issue. That's  
17 the problem. Rampant -- there's rampant corruption.  
18 There's just a lack of good leaders. Why can't we change  
19 that? I don't know. In part -- and I could be wrong about  
20 this -- I think we have asked them to fight in a way that  
21 isn't necessarily organic to them. We have made them  
22 reliant on our capabilities, the ones we use, not  
23 necessarily what they would use. So -- but, we can't start  
24 over. You know? That's the problem. We are where we are.  
25 So, what do we do? I say we have to devolve more and more

1 authority to them to do things their way, and support them,  
2 and watch our money.

3 Dr. Jackson: I would very much echo that. I think  
4 the larger Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police  
5 have been a frustration for a number of years. Very large  
6 organizations that have varied wildly, in terms of efficacy  
7 on the ground. It's not that they're all broken or they're  
8 all perfect. It's a very uneven mix, region by region,  
9 unit by unit. But, the success of the high-end forces in  
10 Afghanistan should not be forgotten. The Afghan Commandos  
11 are terrific. Working with our Green Berets in-country,  
12 they have been the striking force that has beaten back  
13 ISIS-K. They are the guys who get sent around as fire  
14 brigades to various crises across the country. The  
15 Commandos are terrific, and they're proof that if you  
16 partner over a very long term with small numbers of U.S.  
17 forces, these guys are great. They want to fight, they're  
18 effective. This is true with --

19 Senator Heinrich: And that bright spot within the  
20 overall --

21 Dr. Jackson: Yeah.

22 Senator Heinrich: -- structure, is it sustainable  
23 over the -- like --

24 Dr. Jackson: Yes.

25 Senator Heinrich: -- at -- it is sustainable and



1 self-sustaining?

2 Dr. Jackson: Yes. So, to answer your narrow question  
3 -- and I think it's a perfect question -- is, you know, How  
4 would we change this? We can't change where we started,  
5 but I think a smaller Afghan Army, more heavily focused on  
6 these special capabilities, is probably the right answer in  
7 many instances. There have been, you know, observations at  
8 the command level. How do we do the hold mission better  
9 and more cheaply, and, on the other hand, how do we focus  
10 more resources and attention on the things that are going  
11 well, which is Afghan Special Security Forces?

12 General Keane: Yeah, I would agree with that  
13 assessment, that the Afghan counterterrorism forces has had  
14 significant success. A couple of things are driving that:  
15 leadership selection and development, vetting the people  
16 who are in that force, very similar to what we do with our  
17 forces. So, you have a higher quality in that force, to  
18 begin with, as a product to work with. And they're -- and  
19 they -- we've been operating, now, side by side for a  
20 number of years, where we've -- we do our operations  
21 together. And when they're looking at our guys and seeing  
22 what they do, they just -- it's easier to copy exactly what  
23 they're doing. It's much better than any classroom  
24 instruction that you can possibly have. And we've seen  
25 that when we were able to operate with the conventional

1 forces and we had some numbers of U.S. forces there when we  
2 were conducting combat operations. The best success we had  
3 was when we operated together and they could see it. But,  
4 we're not going back to those numbers of forces. That's a  
5 fact.

6 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Blackburn.

7 Senator Blackburn: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 And thank you all for being here.

9 And, General Keane, thank you very much for taking the  
10 extra minute and a half. And we appreciate that.

11 I want to ask just a couple of questions about great-  
12 power competition. Fort Campbell is actually primarily in  
13 Tennessee, and we represent and interact with many of the  
14 men and women in uniform who are there. We also have the  
15 118th at -- in Nashville, the National Guard unit that is a  
16 full-time Intel unit. And they've very involved with ISR  
17 and the drones. And there's a good bit of conversation  
18 around the issue of great-power competition and Russia and  
19 China and the impact that they are seeking to have in the  
20 Middle East.

21 And, General Keane, I'll come to you first. I would  
22 just like to hear a little bit about what you see with  
23 Russia and China and Afghanistan, and where you feel or  
24 think or have observed that that stands.

25 General Keane: Yes, thank you.

1 Well, I'm a little partial to Fort Campbell, myself,  
2 having had multiple assignments there.

3 Senator Blackburn: And we appreciate that you are,  
4 and hope that you --

5 General Keane: Yeah.

6 Senator Blackburn: -- continue to be.

7 General Keane: Yeah. Love the place, frankly.

8 Yes, big-power competition is something I think the  
9 National Security Strategy of this administration got  
10 right. It established a new strategic framework in dealing  
11 with the world as it really is. It also, in the  
12 congressional commission that I was on, underscored rather  
13 dramatically some of the challenges that we're facing with  
14 having adequate deterrence for China and for Russia, and  
15 how we've got to seriously accelerate the development of  
16 our capabilities, and not just in terms of the hardware  
17 themselves, but also in terms of new organizations and new  
18 doctrine to cope with an evolving threat.

19 One of the things that may be interesting to you,  
20 Senator, we disagreed with the National Defense Strategy  
21 that was espousing that we could accept risk by pivoting  
22 out of the Middle East to deal with the big-power  
23 competition. And, in our judgment, we fundamentally  
24 disagreed with that because of the evolving nature of the  
25 threat in the Middle East. The administration, I think,

1 has rightfully changed its policy with Iran to contain it  
2 and be willing to confront it. And it is an evolving  
3 threat that we need to work against with -- in cooperation  
4 with our allies. And secondly -- and that actually has  
5 forced us to increase troops to the region as a result of  
6 the activities of Iran, particularly this last year. And,  
7 as we have noted, the radical Islamic terrorist threat is  
8 thriving, despite all of our efforts with our multinational  
9 nations in pushing against this, because it is an ideology,  
10 and they're still young people who are drawn to it, that  
11 want to be a part of it. And so, our presence, I think,  
12 there, is very important.

13 Russia is really about a strategic issue, and that is:  
14 attempting to replace the United States as the most  
15 influential country that's outside the region. And that  
16 gives us great concern. They've got arms deals going with  
17 every country, every Arab nation. They're building nuclear  
18 power plants in the region. And, in full disclosure, I'm  
19 involved in a commercial effort to help secure those power  
20 plants. But, nonetheless -- and China, itself, is aligning  
21 with the Iranians, as is Russia, despite the fact that  
22 China depends on oil out of the Middle East, to the tune of  
23 62 percent.

24 So, yes, big-power competition is certainly central to  
25 the United States National Security Strategy.

1 Senator Blackburn: Dr. Jackson?

2 Dr. Jackson: I think, on the point of great-power  
3 competition, I would agree with General Keane. This is an  
4 overdue adjustment. I actually see it as a very bipartisan  
5 agreement. The challenge is that China and Russia deserve  
6 greater attention in the priorities. But, I also agree  
7 with General Keane, just pulling the plug in the Middle  
8 east tends to end not in happy endings, but essentially in  
9 whiplash. We've seen, as we try to draw down two foreign  
10 places like Iraq and Syria, we end up getting drawn back  
11 in. I think the name of the game is, go as small as you  
12 can in places like Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq. Go long.  
13 Wait for a good deal to come to you. Do not face bad  
14 deals. And, at the same time, use some of those savings,  
15 both in mind-share and in resources, to focus on what are  
16 genuinely larger long-term problems, like competition with  
17 China, like competition with Russia.

18 Senator Blackburn: I yield back.

19 Chairman Inhofe: We will continue on without our  
20 sound system working.

21 Senator Manchin.

22 Senator Manchin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 Thank you all for your service, and also for being  
24 here.

25 I come from a State, West Virginia -- a very patriotic

1 State. We love fighting. We have no problem dogfighting.  
2 The thing I want to say is -- I always said -- explain  
3 things, and they ask questions. So, I'm going to ask an  
4 overall question of where we are. And I've always said,  
5 "If you don't pay attention to history, it has a tendency  
6 to repeat itself." So, I have people that, basically,  
7 fought in the Korean War. We're still present in South  
8 Korea. We have over 28,000 troops in South Korea, but they  
9 have a thriving economy, and they offset a lot of their  
10 cost for us being there and having that presence in the  
11 world. We're in Afghanistan for 18 years, going on two  
12 decades. We've spent over \$2 trillion, and there's no  
13 resemblance of any economy whatsoever. We've left Syria  
14 and left the Kurds, the only people we had fought like the  
15 devil with us and never turned their guns on us, but we're  
16 still in the country that has no problems turning the guns  
17 we've given them and teach them how to use on us. The  
18 people in West Virginia are having a hard time. I know  
19 what you're saying, and I respect that and all of your  
20 wisdom, but, for us to still be there with a presence and  
21 no sign of us ever leaving, thinking we're going to leave  
22 it a barren waste hole, if you will -- it's going to be  
23 filled up with all this resentment against us. Is it  
24 really a threat? Is there really a presence of threat that  
25 we can't control? Have we not built up enough?

1           And I would say this -- enough intelligence in that  
2 area that we would not monitor their buildup if they're  
3 going to -- we're back on.

4           So, I go home to the good people in West Virginia.  
5 I'm trying to explain to them. I said, "I really can't. I  
6 don't know what the plan is." We've got people that want  
7 out immediately. Everyone has -- anybody that runs for  
8 higher office says, "Let's get out of there. We've been  
9 there long enough." And then the people that really know -  
10 - the military -- says, "We can't abandon them. Look what  
11 happened in Iraq. Look what's happening in Syria." I  
12 don't know why in the heck we left the Kurds. Can't figure  
13 that one out at all.

14           So, this whole thing that we have, and they said,  
15 "Well, look at South Korea, the presence we have there, but  
16 look at North Korea, what's going on now." Everything  
17 seems to be in a jumble, as far as our -- and we have fewer  
18 of our allies with us, supporting us, than ever before.  
19 So, if somebody can put any rationale that I can go home to  
20 West Virginia and says, "We've got to keep spending and  
21 keep keeping the faith."

22           General Keane: Well, I agree with you. I mean, the  
23 global security challenges the United States is facing  
24 today, you know, are on a scale that we haven't seen in 40  
25 years, with the big-power competition we just talked about,

1   Iranians' attempt to seek dominance and control of the  
2   Middle East and the flow of oil, and certainly the spread  
3   of radical Islam, despite some of our best efforts to deal  
4   with this ideology.

5           When it comes to the radical Islam issues, I think  
6   we've learned to make better choices.  And I don't want to  
7   relitigate, you know, the war in Iraq --

8           Senator Manchin:  Yeah --

9           General Keane:  -- and what our early policies were in  
10  Afghanistan.

11          Senator Manchin:  Let me --

12          General Keane:  We're past all of --

13          Senator Manchin:  If I could -- if I can interrupt you  
14  one second, because I forgot to make this.  And, like I  
15  say, we've -- we probably have more veterans per capita  
16  than any other State.  We've fought in everything.  You  
17  name a war, we'll go to it.  But, with that being said --  
18  with that being said, they bring back to me what Eisenhower  
19  said, "Beware of the industrial military complex.  Beware  
20  of that."  So, they're thinking that we're staying engaged  
21  because of this military complex, industrial military that  
22  benefits from the wars that we stay at.  You have all this  
23  right now, at a horrible time, in the most strategic time,  
24  that we've got to make some decisions in the long run.  So,  
25  just wanted to throw --



1           General Keane: Well, I will tell you, from my own  
2 knowledge of the leaders in the Pentagon, both military and  
3 civilian -- and they would like to be able to get out of  
4 this, certainly -- but, also, at the same time, they are --  
5 they've taken an oath to protect the American people. And  
6 that's what's driving this.

7           Listen, we have made some -- I think, some very good  
8 choices. I describe Syria, Iraq, both ISIS, "Modest  
9 investment, big payoff, keep ISIS down, don't let them get  
10 back." Afghanistan, we're doing the same thing with al-  
11 Qaeda, ISIS, and the Taliban, who want to be their host.  
12 That is a modest investment, big payoff, protect the  
13 American people. Three other places that we've decided to  
14 make an investment, very modest. We go into Yemen to take  
15 down al-Qaeda when we have opportunities to do so. Couple  
16 of hundred people are committed to that. We go into Libya,  
17 we stopped ISIS from establishing a safe haven in Libya.  
18 That was their choice, and we put our Special Ops guys in  
19 there and hit them hard, and kept hitting --

20           Senator Manchin: I think that's all great.

21           General Keane: A couple of hundred guys involved in  
22 that. And --

23           Senator Manchin: But, here's the thing --

24           General Keane: Now, why are we -- why do we go to  
25 those places? Because just radical Islamists are there?

1 No. We're there because both of those organizations have  
2 aspirations to hurt America.

3 Senator Manchin: If I could --

4 General Keane: And the third place is in eastern  
5 Africa. We've got a -- we've got a Maritime Task Force  
6 that, every once in a while, goes into Somalia and Kenya  
7 and goes after al-Shabaab because they have aspirations  
8 outside of the region. Six places we're involved. Forty-  
9 plus places where radical Islam is in the world, we are not  
10 involved, but we are involved in this place because of the  
11 security of the American people. That is what you can tell  
12 them, Senator.

13 Senator Manchin: Well, I do tell them that, but I --  
14 and I'll just follow up with this. They come back to me  
15 immediately and they said, "You know what? We don't want  
16 all \$2 trillion. A little bit of investment in West  
17 Virginia -- build us a road and a bridge and a school -- we  
18 won't burn it down, and we won't blow it up." They cannot  
19 understand why we're doing -- trying to do nation-building  
20 there. There's no nation to build. The people don't even  
21 know what-in-the-heck-country they live in. They know they  
22 live in a province, but not the country. It just seems  
23 like we're trying to establish something, and money won't  
24 do it.

25 General Keane: Well, we have stopped that, Senator,

1 for the last 4 to 5 years. We are not involved in nation-  
2 building. We went down -- we went down that rabbit hole,  
3 and we paid a horrible price for it, and we squandered an  
4 awful lot of American taxpayers' dollars. I totally agree  
5 with you.

6 Chairman Inhofe: Senator Hawley.

7 Senator Hawley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 Thanks, to all of our witnesses, for being here today.  
9 And thanks for what you've said.

10 Look, I mean, this is a -- our -- the situation in  
11 Afghanistan is -- obviously, it's a huge problem. It's --  
12 in many ways, seems like an intractable problem. But, I  
13 disagree with Senator Manchin. I think that the people of  
14 my State -- Missouri is the State that I represent -- and  
15 the American people have been really patient. And I hear  
16 you counseling patience this morning, as if -- as if, you  
17 know, we're just a year or 2 into this thing. We're almost  
18 20 years into this thing. We've spent -- you know, a  
19 modest investment? We've spent almost a trillion dollars  
20 in Afghanistan. We have lost many, many lives in  
21 Afghanistan. We have been there -- it's the longest  
22 conflict in our history. And I, for one, still can't  
23 figure out what in the world our strategy is there. I  
24 don't think we have a coherent strategy. I'll just be  
25 honest with you. We've had a succession of American

1 presidents who have promised to end this war. It's not  
2 over. I don't see any particular clear strategy there. I  
3 don't know what we're doing in Afghanistan. I don't see  
4 any reasonable prospect that we're soon going to change  
5 course. And I can tell you, the people of my State don't,  
6 either. And they're out of patience. And they're right to  
7 be out of patience. And I'm out of patience. So, let me  
8 just ask some questions in that vein.

9       General Field, let me ask you this. You alluded to  
10 this earlier. What if we reduced our troop presence below  
11 8600? What's the effect on our ability to conduct direct  
12 action against al-Qaeda and ISIS? I mean, give me your  
13 assessment of that.

14       General Field: This is a great question, and sort of  
15 dangerous ground, because, once we start this thing, it's -  
16 - it might snowball, and all of a sudden we're somewhere we  
17 didn't necessarily want to be.

18       Having said that, I think it's a question for General  
19 Miller. I think he would probably say he can go lower and  
20 still conduct the counterterrorism mission. That's my  
21 guess. I don't want to put words in his mouth. I think he  
22 would say that.

23       The question, you know, really becomes, then -- it's  
24 the CT-plus, right? What do you need to maintain access to  
25 human intelligence, to special -- the Afghan special

1 operators? What price is the Aghan government going to  
2 extract from us to be able to stay there and pursue our own  
3 interests? Right? It's the "plus" part of CT. As far as  
4 military capabilities, we could come way down. Right?  
5 It's just a little trickier than that.

6 But, I would just say, if I may, sir, the -- your  
7 constituents are not wrong. There's -- they're not. But,  
8 I guess the question I would ask back to them is, does the  
9 object of Afghanistan have any value whatsoever? Is it  
10 worth a certain amount of money and a certain amount of  
11 lives? I guess that's really the question. And that is  
12 the question you just asked me.

13 Senator Hawley: Yeah, indeed. Well, I think our  
14 investment in Afghanistan -- I mean, surely we've answered  
15 that question, haven't we? A trillion dollars is a lot of  
16 money. And lives lost, we've spent a lot there. My  
17 question is, how are we actually going to adopt a strategy  
18 in Afghanistan that will see to our national interests? My  
19 fear is, we're not yet focused enough on what our interests  
20 actually are. I'm not interested in being in Afghanistan  
21 just to be in Afghanistan. And I'm not interested in  
22 pursuing policies that haven't worked. And we've had a  
23 succession of administrations over years who have said,  
24 "This time, it's going to work. This time, we're actually  
25 going to refocus. This time" -- meanwhile, China -- China,

1 which is a pressing national security threat to us, growing  
2 stronger, militarily, by the day -- China continues to grow  
3 in the Indo-Pacific, poses direct threats -- we are not  
4 postured correctly in the Indo-Pacific. We are not ready  
5 to meet that challenge. We are behind the curve. We've  
6 got to get ahead of the curve. And the question is, what  
7 are we going to do about that? -- I think. And I hope that  
8 you're sensing -- I mean, it's -- none of you are, any  
9 longer, stakeholders in this. And I -- again, I want to  
10 emphasize how much I appreciate your service. This is a  
11 tough problem, obviously. I mean, clearly. But, I just  
12 think that it's time that we communicated that we need a  
13 change.

14       General, I would just -- General Field, I just wanted  
15 to stay with you for a second because of what your -- your  
16 testimony has been very interesting. Can I just ask you a  
17 further hypothetical? Can you just -- let's imagine a  
18 worst-case scenario. You mentioned the Afghan government,  
19 so let's imagine a worst-case scenario. Let's say there's  
20 no settlement, and let's say that we do reduce our troop  
21 presence below 8600, just hypothetically. And let's say  
22 that the Taliban does expand its territorial control. What  
23 would that do to our ability to carry out any direct action  
24 against al-Qaeda and ISIS, our CT strategy? If the Taliban  
25 expands their control, we reduce our troop presence, but we

1 don't have a deal.

2 General Field: The question then becomes, do we have

3 any secure ground from which to take direct action? The

4 neighborhood is tough. Can we work with Pakistan?

5 Everybody says, "No way." I don't know. Maybe we could.

6 We have a lot of leverage, as Dr. Jackson was saying.

7 Right now, we have more leverage than we did before because

8 of the situation they're in. Could we do it outside the

9 country? I'm not sure. But, I'm throwing out that it

10 should be explored. Do we have -- would there be any --

11 could we -- would there be any of Afghanistan still under

12 the control of the government that we could guarantee?

13 Needs to be explored.

14 Senator Hawley: Yeah. Thank you very much.

15 Thank you, again, to all of you, for your service to

16 our country, and for being here today.

17 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 Chairman Inhofe: Thank you.

19 Senator Jones.

20 Senator Jones: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

21 Thank you, to the witnesses, for being here today.

22 I want to go at this a little bit different way, and

23 it is really a follow-up, to some extent, from Senator

24 Hawley and Senator Manchin.

25 General Field, you mentioned, in your prepared

1 remarks, your testimony initially -- you talked about the  
2 need to be clear-eyed about our threats, but you also  
3 mentioned victory. And I think one of the frustrations is,  
4 what does a "victory" look like? There is a difference  
5 between a victory, in the traditional sense of the word,  
6 versus achieving objectives, I think. And I know Secretary  
7 McCarthy has talked about a book that was published  
8 recently called "Infinite Games." And that's my concern,  
9 is that we are in a position now where conflicts are not  
10 the same, they're -- we don't have -- they're -- there is  
11 no -- when we talk about "declaring war on X," it implies  
12 that there's going to be an ultimate winner and an ultimate  
13 loser. And that just doesn't seem to be the case, these  
14 days, in anything we're doing, whether it's drugs, poverty,  
15 or terrorism.

16 And so, I'd like for each of you, if you can, a  
17 minute, to talk about that and the difference between  
18 victory -- because a lot of this may be just trying to  
19 reorient the American people a little bit about what we're  
20 facing in the long term.

21 So, I'll start with you, General Field. And be --  
22 feel free to tell me I'm wrong or misguided. I'm -- I have  
23 no qualms about that, either.

24 General Field: You know, it's a tough question for  
25 military officers to say that victory isn't -- and winning



1 isn't what we're all about.

2 Senator Jones: Right.

3 General Field: Having said that, your question, I  
4 think, sir, is right. In this case, I did use "theory of  
5 victory." And I struggled with that -- Should I use  
6 "victory"? -- just for the reason that you said.

7 I think, really, in this case, victory is a negotiated  
8 settlement. How do we get that? And I already gave you my  
9 prescription, my --

10 Senator Jones: Right.

11 General Field: -- prescription for getting there.  
12 But, to your larger point about whether these conflicts  
13 just need to be managed now -- and we need more expertise  
14 in managing them, not simply having a mindset of military  
15 victory. And that comes back to what Senator Reed said  
16 initially is, what are our other instruments that we have  
17 to strengthen? Diplomacy. Or economic development. What  
18 are the other things that we need to do? And, you know, we  
19 point, always, to the National Defense Strategy, but that  
20 nests in the National Security Strategy, which talks about  
21 many other things than just whacking people with our  
22 military --

23 Senator Jones: Right.

24 General Field: -- to be crude.

25 Senator Jones: Yes, sir.

1           Dr. Jackson: I think you're exactly right to point  
2 out, you know, sort of, what is -- What does "victory"  
3 mean? I would tell you that, you know, in the vein of  
4 Clausewitz, you know, "War is politics by other means,"  
5 we're seeking something political, here; and largely, we  
6 have achieved it, albeit at an enormous cost. That is,  
7 preventing additional attacks on the American homeland.  
8 Victory does not mean we want to administer Afghanistan.  
9 Victory does not mean we want to stay there just because  
10 we've been there. It is to prevent attacks.

11           I think the operative question -- and getting back to  
12 the earlier Senator's question -- Why are we there? I  
13 think we're there to buy an insurance policy for your  
14 constituents against the possibility, which is hard to  
15 estimate, of future external attacks from the region. The  
16 operative question is, do you want to self-insure? Do you  
17 want to wear that risk? Personally, my opinion, I would  
18 not. If I'm going to take out an insurance policy -- and  
19 that's what we're doing right now in this region; it's very  
20 focused, but it could get, potentially, cheaper -- the  
21 question is, Are we overpaying for that insurance policy?  
22 And that is a legitimate question. That's why General  
23 Miller is so focused on saying, "How skinny can we get  
24 while still accomplishing the things we seek politically?"  
25 But, I think that's the way I would frame it. And I know

1 it's a tough sell, and I know that this has been  
2 exhausting. You know, most so for a lot of the folks who  
3 have been involved with it on the ground. This has not a -  
4 - been a fun campaign, or a deeply satisfying one.

5 Senator Jones: Right.

6 General, if --

7 General Keane: Yes. I mean --

8 Senator Jones: -- if you would -- you mentioned the  
9 National Defense Strategy, as well -- if you would, maybe,  
10 incorporate, "Do we need to make some changes to that?" --  
11 as part of your answer on this.

12 General Keane: Well, the National Defense Strategy --  
13 we looked at it for a year as part of the Congressional  
14 Commission, and we felt that -- we were alarmed by the fact  
15 that we were not truly ready to provide adequate deterrence  
16 for China and Russia. And there's much needed to be done.  
17 And we outlined that very specifically in our report. And  
18 we were trying to send a clarion call to that effect.

19 In dealing with warfare, itself -- I mean,  
20 fundamentally, you're trying to change an adversary's  
21 behavior -- initially, politically, if you can, and  
22 diplomatically -- and, if not, then it may lead to  
23 confrontation. But, the objective is also to change their  
24 behavior, which will result in either unconditional  
25 surrender or some kind of political settlement.

1           The problem we have, when you're dealing with radical  
2 Islamists or extremist terrorism who are conducting a  
3 different kind of unconventional war, they will always test  
4 the will of democracies, because the nature of these wars,  
5 by definition, are protracted. And my problem with three  
6 administrations now is their absolute failure to come to  
7 grips with that in terms of the public education of the  
8 body politic in America, to explain why we're in these  
9 wars, to give the American people periodic assessments, to  
10 don't run from setbacks that take place, to explain that  
11 it's not just military that's involved here, there is a  
12 whole-of-government approach -- I'm not talking about  
13 nation-building -- that's involved here. And look at what  
14 the -- President Bush wanted us to go back and watch the  
15 Yankees, which is a good thing after 9/11. I got it. But,  
16 never was the progress being made in Iraq or in Afghanistan  
17 addressed periodically, or the lack of progress. And  
18 that's how you keep an American population engaged. They  
19 have a right to know.

20           And the same thing in Afghanistan. We made horrible  
21 policy decisions in Afghanistan that should have been some  
22 rendering to the American people about, which protracted  
23 the war. The Taliban didn't protract the war. We  
24 protracted the war. And we tolerate Pakistan to keep the  
25 safe havens in -- for the Afghan Taliban in that country.

1 Do we address any of that to the American people? Have any  
2 of the administrations, to include this one, gone before  
3 the American people and talked to them about this, and be  
4 straight up about what's happening, what's our assessment,  
5 what's our plans to deal with it? That's what keeps the  
6 American people engaged. And that's -- and so, your  
7 constituents are poking you in the chest every time you're  
8 home, "What's going on there? Why are we still there? It  
9 seems like we're not making any progress." You shouldn't  
10 have to explain that to the American people. The executive  
11 branch should be doing that. And we've failed at that  
12 miserably through three administrations, in my judgment.

13 Senator Jones: Thank you.

14 Thank you all.

15 I appreciate it, Mr. Chairman.

16 Chairman Inhofe: Senator King.

17 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 First, I want to thank you for -- and Senator Reed --  
19 for calling this important hearing. I think it's an  
20 important discussion.

21 I do have a suggestion, however. I'm, as you may  
22 know, a member of the Intelligence Committee. And, for 7  
23 years, we've been having hearings, in the Intelligence  
24 Committee, on Afghanistan, and hearings here. And there  
25 were times when I weren't sure we were talking about the

1 same country. So, I think it would be very helpful, if  
2 this committee wants to take an active role, that we have a  
3 classified hearing with the intelligence community about  
4 what their perceptions are in Afghanistan, what the chances  
5 are, what would happen if we left, if we stayed. I just  
6 think that would be -- give us a more fulsome picture,  
7 because, as I say, they have a -- they have, over the  
8 years, had a very different view than the witnesses that  
9 we've had at this committee.

10 Chairman Inhofe: Well, which one's better?

11 Senator King: I would say that the CIA is running  
12 slightly ahead right now.

13 [Laughter.]

14 Chairman Inhofe: Okay.

15 Senator King: In terms of their assessment. That's  
16 all I can tell you, Mr. Chairman. But, I just think it's  
17 important. If we're going to tackle this subject, we ought  
18 to have the most complete picture that we can. And these  
19 witnesses have added a great deal to our understanding  
20 today.

21 Let me talk about the haven-for-terrorism argument,  
22 because that's really the fundamental justification. Is  
23 that a realistic justification now? Because there are  
24 other places that can be havens: Yemen, Libya, Somalia,  
25 Mali, Sudan. Are we -- is it, sort of, geopolitical whack-

1 a-mole: We're going to focus in one place, and our  
2 adversaries are going to rise up somewhere else?

3 Dr. Jackson? Do you see what I'm saying?

4 Dr. Jackson: I -- absolutely.

5 Senator King: I mean, haven-for-terrorism arguing is  
6 sort of -- it reminds me of the domino theory of the '70s  
7 or the '60s --

8 Dr. Jackson: Yeah.

9 Senator King: -- as a kind of all-purpose  
10 justification.

11 Dr. Jackson: Absolutely. I think it's an infinitely  
12 expansible argument. And you're right to ask, what makes  
13 Afghanistan different? I think at least three different  
14 things make this particularly difficult and important to  
15 us:

16 One is, sort of, geography. This turns out to be a  
17 sanctuary that's hard for us to at if we're not actually  
18 physically located there. This is a war being waged in a  
19 landlocked country surrounded either by enemies or  
20 frenemies. This is an incredibly hard place to wage a war  
21 if you're not there. So, the consequences of leaving  
22 there, leaving our counterterrorism footprint and trying to  
23 exert influence from outside, is much, much, much more  
24 difficult.

25 Senator King: So, it would really become a haven --

1 Dr. Jackson: Yes, absolutely.

2 Senator King: -- because of its geography and  
3 location.

4 Dr. Jackson: And we've run this experiment before, in  
5 the '90s. In other words, the Clinton administration got  
6 very worried about --

7 Senator King: But, we're doing counterterrorism in  
8 other countries without a military presence.

9 Dr. Jackson: Absolutely.

10 Senator King: Would that be --

11 Dr. Jackson: Yes.

12 Senator King: -- possible in Afghanistan?

13 Dr. Jackson: Not in the same way. In other words,  
14 it's much more -- it's much easier for us, geographically  
15 and politically, to operate in a place like Yemen from  
16 offshore than it is for us to operate offshore into  
17 Afghanistan. It has to do with distances, it has to do  
18 with agreements with neighboring countries, that type of  
19 thing.

20 Second thing I would point out is sponsors. This  
21 neighborhood is full of people fueling extremist behavior,  
22 or backing various horses in this race. Iran is a  
23 consistent backer of various -- not just Shia, but Sunni  
24 groups. Pakistan has had a finger in multiple different  
25 proxies.



1 Senator King: Could I ask you to accelerate? Because  
2 I've got a --

3 Dr. Jackson: Yep.

4 Senator King: -- digital timer going down.

5 Dr. Jackson: I'll leave it there.

6 Senator King: Thank you.

7 General Keane: My addition --

8 Senator King: Go ahead.

9 General Keane: -- to that is, we are interested in  
10 Yemen, Libya, and Somalia and Kenya, and we operate  
11 offshore to do that. We don't have a physical presence in  
12 the country. We use direct-action forces to do that.

13 Senator King: Right.

14 General Keane: And, as I explained earlier, the  
15 reason is, all three have aspirations to attack the United  
16 States or our European allies. In Central and South Asia,  
17 much more challenging, to be sure, for the reasons we just  
18 discussed. And I think a physical presence is essential.  
19 Half of the world's terrorist organizations are in that  
20 region; in Pakistan and in Afghanistan, in particular.

21 Senator King: Well, we've maintained a troop presence  
22 in Japan, South Korea, Germany, other parts of Europe for  
23 70 years.

24 General Keane: Right.

25 Senator King: Is this a case, would you make to the

1 American people, that this is a place where we need a -- we  
2 need an indefinite presence, not at a terribly high level,  
3 but as a -- at a level that will enable us to keep, as I  
4 think you used the term --

5 General Keane: The -- I totally agree --

6 Senator King: -- "keep our foot on the throat of the  
7 terrorists"?

8 General Keane: I totally agree with that assessment.  
9 I think it's a -- it's a political apple that leaders are  
10 not willing to swallow and talk to the American people  
11 honestly about. This is a multigenerational problem that  
12 we've got. We are being selective about which radical  
13 Islamist groups are threatening the American people. And  
14 you can make a case that we could possibly have to have a  
15 counterterrorism force someplace in Central/South Asia --  
16 best place is Afghanistan -- as long as that threat is  
17 there, indefinitely.

18 Senator King: And it will require a military presence  
19 to support the counterterrorism function. Isn't that --

20 General Keane: Yes.

21 Senator King: -- what you're saying?

22 General Keane: And I think we will eventually,  
23 frankly, get down below 8600 at some point, and we'll  
24 narrow that down to intelligence, counterterrorism, and  
25 airpower that's outside the country to be able to support

1 our activities. But, it could possibly lead to an  
2 indefinite commitment of a small number of forces in that  
3 country, much like we have less than 1,000 now trying to  
4 keep our foot on ISIS -- keep our foot on their throat in  
5 Syria to make sure that --

6 Senator King: But, I --

7 General Keane: -- they don't reemerge.

8 Senator King: -- I think you would agree -- and I'm  
9 out of time, but I think you would agree that, if that's  
10 going to be the case, somebody's got to tell the American  
11 people that.

12 General Keane: I totally agree with that, Senator.

13 Senator King: Thank you.

14 General Keane: Totally agree with that.

15 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 Chairman Inhofe: You know, we were just visiting,  
17 here. I think there's merit in having a closed hearing of  
18 this committee.

19 Senator Reed: Intelligence.

20 Chairman Inhofe: Well, not necessarily. We can do it  
21 ourselves.

22 Good thought. We'll follow through.

23 Ms. Duckworth?

24 Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 I want to chat a little bit about the AUMF and the

1 role of Congress, and what we can do to assist in the  
2 efforts in Afghanistan.

3         The Constitution grants Congress with the sole power  
4 to declare war. With this authority comes a solemn  
5 responsibility to make sure our forces are properly  
6 resourced and a commitment to making sure our Nation  
7 actually brings the wars that we authorize to an end. As  
8 has been referenced today, military operations in  
9 Afghanistan are conducted pursuant to a broad AUMF that  
10 Congress enacted in 2001 to authorize the use of all  
11 necessary and appropriate force against the perpetrators of  
12 9/11, to prevent those terrorists and their enablers from  
13 conducting a future attack. While the 107th Congress  
14 clearly passed the 2001 AUMF to respond to the 9/11  
15 attacks, subsequent Congresses and Presidents have done  
16 little to prevent multiple administrations from  
17 interpreting this 2001 law to justify nearly any military  
18 operation in the region. Whether one supports or opposes  
19 the current U.S. military strategy in Afghanistan, there  
20 should be some consensus -- and, more importantly,  
21 acceptance -- that, ultimately, it's the responsibility of  
22 the 116th Congress to debate and vote on the path forward  
23 in Afghanistan.

24         Building on the issue of democratic accountability, I  
25 would like each witness to address whether you support the

1 current Congress holding votes on whether to repeal the  
2 2001 AUMF and whether to pass a new authorization that  
3 accurately reflects what U.S. troops are doing on the  
4 ground in Afghanistan today.

5       General Keane: Well, I'll bite on it. I absolutely  
6 think it's essential that we get a new Authorization for  
7 the Use of Military Force. President Obama, I think, was  
8 stretching it when we went back in the -- went back into  
9 Iraq. I mean, there is -- you can make the connection.  
10 The current administration is stretching it, you know, to  
11 deal with our operations in Syria and continuing our  
12 operations in Iraq.

13       I -- when I watch the Congress try to deal with it, I  
14 get frustrated with it, because we seem to come to an  
15 impasse. And part of the impasse that concerns me is,  
16 you've got to give the executive branch -- you're giving  
17 them authority to use military force, but you should not  
18 get into the details of what the strategy is and start to  
19 limit how that force would be used. And that, it seems to  
20 me, is the tension point that I've noticed in your  
21 deliberations. When we begin to impose that, then this  
22 body is not going to be able to agree.

23       But, I agree with the basic premise. I want the  
24 Congress to come together and authorize the use of military  
25 force, and stop using that old authorization document -- I

1 don't believe which is sufficient for what we're doing  
2 today.

3 Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

4 Dr. Jackson?

5 Dr. Jackson: I'm very sympathetic, philosophically,  
6 to cleaning up the sort of authority situation. However, I  
7 will say, from the seat I used to sit in, the act of  
8 creating the detail that hangs on those authorities  
9 actually takes time and is really necessary. I will say  
10 that I think the Commander, General Miller, today has the  
11 authorities he needs to prosecute the war, both against the  
12 Taliban and against ISIS-K and al-Qaeda. It took years to  
13 get the right detailed authorities there so that he could  
14 use a small number of forces to go after these very large  
15 problems.

16 My fear would be, first, do no harm. That is, be  
17 careful, when we reopen this, that we don't disrupt a  
18 series of authorities that are necessary to an increasingly  
19 skinny force waging a war in Afghanistan.

20 Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

21 General Field?

22 General Field: So, yes, I think that we certainly  
23 need another conversation about AUMF, but not necessarily  
24 to expand the authorities, but to actually limit the  
25 authorities of the executive branch to keep us -- to engage

1 in and then keep us in sustained conflict.

2 Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

3 Very briefly, speaking of renewed congressional  
4 oversight of this war, I recently joined my colleagues in  
5 supporting the Ensuring a Durable Afghanistan Peace Act.  
6 Our bipartisan bill seeks to ensure transparency and  
7 oversight of any peace effort in the region. I'd love the  
8 entire panel, if you could -- we're -- I'm out of time;  
9 perhaps you could do it in writing -- to address a  
10 constructive role that Congress should play in promoting a  
11 durable peace process.

12 [The information referred to follows:]

13 Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

14 I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

15 Chairman Inhofe: Yeah. Senator Peters. Sorry.

16 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 Thank you, to our witnesses, for some very thought-  
18 provoking testimony. I appreciate it.

19 General Field, I'm interested in your views on whether  
20 a, quote, "conditions-based strategy" remains a credible  
21 option, given U.S. policy and rhetoric that we hear on  
22 Afghanistan. President Trump's rhetoric on Afghanistan has  
23 included referencing nuclear weapons, and that, if he  
24 "wanted to win that war, Afghanistan would we -- would be  
25 wiped off the face of the Earth," end of quote from the

1 President. The administration has pulled back or withheld  
2 aid funding for unspecified concerns about corruption. I  
3 know that has been creating confusion among our Afghan  
4 partners. The President has made conflicting comments on  
5 his policy for the number and role of U.S. troops in  
6 Afghanistan. I could go on.

7 But, General Field, based on your experience, what has  
8 this done to U.S. credibility in the region? And how has  
9 it impacted our ability to rely on a condition-based  
10 strategy?

11 General Field: I think we have credibility in the  
12 region, but there's a lot of uncertainty. There's a lot of  
13 uncertainty, and even fear, I think, on the part of certain  
14 segments of the Afghan society.

15 The -- it would be helpful if we were to determine --  
16 once we have determined our strategy and the way forward,  
17 and that we are committed to trying our very best with a  
18 negotiated settlement, it would be helpful to say that,  
19 "We're here until we do it." That would be helpful. It  
20 would send a very strong message to the Taliban, mostly the  
21 Taliban in Pakistan.

22 Senator Peters: Well, I find it interesting you used  
23 the term "once we have determined a strategy." We've been  
24 there 20 years. That's quite a long time.

25 At the time the administration's South Asia Strategy



1 was released, which was the most recent strategy, General  
2 Nicholson briefed us on a campaign plan that emphasized  
3 ensuring the Afghan government controlled the vast majority  
4 of the population. His -- he had three lines of effort:  
5 provide additional U.S. troops as advisor at lower levels  
6 within the Afghan military; two, modernize the Afghan air  
7 force and double the size of Afghan Special Forces so that  
8 they can go on the offensive; and three, attack Taliban  
9 sources of financing, particularly through airstrikes  
10 against narcotics and sources across the country. It's my  
11 understanding that our current strategy, the shifting  
12 strategies, has shifted away, now, from these lines of  
13 effort and other than focus on increasing the size of the  
14 Afghan Special Forces. So, I know that General Miller has  
15 ended the practice of tracking population control, and has  
16 argued that it's not a useful metric anymore.

17 General Field, you were an advisor to General Miller  
18 on these changes when they took place. Can you place them  
19 into context for us? Were the military lines of effort  
20 that General Nicholson prioritized failing? And, if so,  
21 why?

22 General Field: I wouldn't necessarily say they were  
23 failing, but we did not have the metrics to say that they  
24 were succeeding. Now, I know that sounds like a dodge,  
25 right? But --

1 Senator Peters: It sounds like more than that.

2 General Field: -- but, the -- but, part of the issue  
3 really is that we have different sort of lines of effort  
4 and metrics each time we change our command. Right? So,  
5 any strategy depends on an alignment of ends, ways, and  
6 means. We didn't necessarily feel like we had enough  
7 resources to execute those lines that General Nicholson  
8 laid out, particularly the counter-threat financing. We  
9 didn't have the metrics that they were working, at striking  
10 drug labs. It was just not -- it wasn't -- we weren't  
11 seeing any effect. And we needed all of the resources we  
12 had for -- to pressure the Taliban, certain nodes, and to  
13 prosecute the fight against ISIS.

14 Senator Peters: General Keane, in 2009, over 10 years  
15 ago, you made clear that you believed that, quote, "this  
16 war is winnable" -- 2009 -- "and that we should not run" --  
17 quote, "run from the term 'victory.'" Is that still your  
18 opinion? And what's that victory going to look like?

19 General Keane: No. That's not my opinion today. I  
20 mean, what was taking place in 2009, the Bush  
21 administration was departing, they left a review on  
22 Afghanistan that we had to change the strategy to  
23 counterinsurgency, much as we had done in Iraq and achieved  
24 a positive military outcome. And the Obama administration  
25 did their own review -- two reviews -- and made the same

1 conclusion. Then they asked for military options from  
2 General Petraeus, the CENTCOM Commander, and General  
3 McChrystal, the Commander in Afghanistan. They wanted  
4 options. McChrystal and Petraeus gave them a force level  
5 of 80,000. This is a surge, now, an escalation of our  
6 forces to be able to apply a counterinsurgency strategy,  
7 but was -- by definition, requires more forces. At 80,000,  
8 there's no risk. At 60,000, there is some risk. And at  
9 40,000, it's the least amount of force necessary to win.  
10 By "winning," mean we have a stable military outcome and  
11 the Taliban is not in the position to overthrow the  
12 government.

13 The Obama administration made a decision to cut that  
14 by 25 percent. General Petraeus allegedly said, "I'm not  
15 arguing over a transportation bill, here. I'm arguing over  
16 the basic needs to conduct a successful campaign." And  
17 then the -- so, we went in there with 25 percent less,  
18 which meant we could not work against the Haqqani Network  
19 and --

20 Senator Peters: General --

21 General Keane: -- the Quetta Shura in the south, and  
22 we pulled the forces out 15 months later.

23 Senator Peters: General --

24 General Keane: That doomed us to where we are today.

25 Senator Peters: I'm out of time. I don't mean to cut

1 that off. And that's part of why we're still here. All  
2 these things --

3 General Keane: That's part of why we're here today.

4 Senator Peters: So, my question is just, Is this war  
5 winnable, like you said in 2009? Is it winnable?

6 General Keane: What we need to do today -- we're not  
7 going to summarily defeat the Taliban. What we have to do  
8 -- we're at a stalemate with them. I don't see them being  
9 defeated in the near term. What I do see is preventing the  
10 American people from being attacked by the al-Qaeda or by  
11 ISIS groups. And that is our focus. And we've been  
12 succeeding at that, fortunately, for 18 years.

13 Chairman Inhofe: Okay.

14 Well, thank our witnesses. We appreciate it very  
15 much. That was very blunt and very enlightening, and I  
16 appreciate your willingness to be here.

17 And any further comments?

18 Senator Reed: I, too, want to join the Chairman in  
19 thanking the witnesses for their excellent testimony. And  
20 I think this issue deserves even further scrutiny in --  
21 both in a closed session and in further open sessions.  
22 But, thank you very, very much for your insights today.  
23 Appreciate it.

24 Thank you.

25 Chairman Inhofe: We are adjourned.

1           [Whereupon, at 11:21 a.m., the hearing was  
2 adjourned.]

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