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ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

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ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

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U.S. DEFENSE STRATEGY IN SOUTH ASIA

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, Tuesday, October 3, 2017.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 1:03 p.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. William M. “Mac” Thornberry (chairman of the committee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. WILLIAM M. “MAC” THORNBERRY, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM TEXAS, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will come to order.

The committee welcomes the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff today for a hearing on Afghanistan and South Asia. The Secretary had previously indicated that he would be back to discuss the administration’s approach to this region once it was decided, and that is the topic for today.

I understand that there are many issues facing the Department and this committee, but in the interest of time and focus, I want to encourage members to confine their questions to today’s subject.

United States officially launched Operation Enduring Freedom on October 7th, 2001, just about exactly 16 years ago.

Approximately 2,400 American service members have lost their lives in the Afghanistan conflict. Another 20,000 or so have been wounded. As this administration formulates its policies, the American people and Members of Congress have some basic questions, questions such as, does American national security still warrant our military presence in Afghanistan? Do we have a strategy to succeed or one to avoid failure? How is this administration’s approach different from previous approaches? And can we ever be successful in the face of Afghan corruption and Pakistan’s duplicity?

Both Secretary Mattis and General Dunford have considerable personal experience with this conflict, and I believe that they are as authoritative as anyone in helping provide answers to our questions and to chart the way forward. But these fundamental issues do need to be discussed openly for the American people and for those who have sacrificed over the last 16 years. That is the reason we are here today.

Mr. Smith.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Thornberry can be found in the Appendix on page 59.]

**STATEMENT OF HON. ADAM SMITH, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM
WASHINGTON, RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON ARMED
SERVICES**

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I think the chairman raised all of the questions that need to be raised. This is obviously a very, very difficult part of the world. We clearly have national security interests in how Afghanistan is governed, and Pakistan as well, going back to 2001, when the then Afghanistan government led by the Taliban allowed Al Qaeda to have safe haven to plot and plan terrorist attacks against the U.S., including 9/11. Making sure that we don't return to those days is clearly in our national security interests.

But what is not as clear is how we do that, and what the cost is of our current effort. Afghanistan is a very difficult place to govern. And I think one of the things that concerns most members of this committee and most people in the country is we understand that it is a fragile situation. We have been hearing that for, as the chairman mentioned, 16 years.

If we are there for another 20, I envision that whoever is sitting in those seats at that point would be having the same conversation, and I think that is my one big question, how do we get to the point where we can reduce our commitment in Afghanistan so that it is not an open-ended commitment and a blank check?

The President said that in his remarks when he rolled out his strategy, that it wasn't going to be open-ended, it wasn't going to be a blank check. Absent from that was what that meant and how we would go about achieving that very worthy goal. And I think that is my biggest question.

And the second question to that would be while granting that there are risks in pulling out, there are obviously risks in staying there. So, what happens under the two different scenarios? Because it would be great if we were able to bring our troops home and commit our resources elsewhere. And the longer we stay there, the less it looks like it is going to move us towards the positive outcome that we want.

So, are we envisioning just a prolonged stalemate where we figure we cannot leave, because if we do it will get worse? Or do we actually think we can get to the point where we go beyond prolonged stalemate and get to a more positive outcome, which is simply—you know, paraphrasing one of the questions the chairman asked. But those are the questions I think I am most interested in.

I appreciate both of our witnesses being here, and obviously their tremendous service to our country.

With that, I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Smith can be found in the Appendix on page 60.]

The CHAIRMAN. Again, Mr. Secretary, General Dunford, thank you all for being here. We will turn the floor over to you.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES N. MATTIS, SECRETARY OF
DEFENSE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE**

Secretary MATTIS. Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, distinguished members of the committee, I appear before you following the tragic event in Las Vegas. The Department of De-

fense is staying closely linked with the intelligence community, and we remain alert to law enforcement's assessment of events.

You on this committee are keenly aware of the complex and volatile security environment our country faces today. Russia continues to invest in a full range of capabilities designed to limit our ability to project power, erode U.S. influence and undermine NATO's [North Atlantic Treaty Organization's] transatlantic alliance.

China is focused on limiting our ability to project power as well, and weakening our position in the Indo-Pacific region, even as we work to find common ground in confronting North Korea's provocative actions.

The international community, as reflected by the two latest unanimous Security Council sanctions resolutions, is focused on the destabilizing threat posed by North Korea and Kim Jong-un's relentless pursuit of nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities. The Defense Department supports fully Secretary Tillerson's efforts to find a diplomatic solution, but remains focused on defense of the United States and our allies, per President Trump's orders.

In the Middle East, Iran continues to project malign influence across the region. While we continue to make gains against the terrorist enemy in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere, in Afghanistan we have faced a difficult 16 years. General Nicholson, our NATO and United States field commander, with troops from 39 nations has blunted the terrorists' offensive moves in Afghanistan.

NATO's strengths and support of the improving Afghan security forces and disarray among various enemy groups have caused the Taliban to expend resources, constrain their movements, and limit the Taliban's ability to conduct major offensives. Beginning last month, and for the first time in this long fight, all six Afghan military corps are engaged in offensive operations.

During these recent months, there have been fewer civilian casualties as a result of coalition operations, although regrettably, Taliban high-profile attacks on civilians continue to murder the innocent. While the Taliban still attempts to seize district or provincial centers before the end of this fighting season, they have generally been forced into decentralized, small-scale ambushes and the use of improvised explosive devices.

Importantly, the rate of Afghan National Security Force casualties has reduced from last year.

As you know, I just returned last week from a trip to India and Afghanistan and can report that General Nicholson and the NATO team are holding the line. Forecasts of a significant Taliban offensive remain unfulfilled. Violence and progress do coexist in Afghanistan, but the uncertainty in the region and the NATO campaign have been replaced by certainty due to the implementation of President Trump's new South Asia strategy.

This strategy has been welcomed almost uniformly by leaders in the South Asia region as well as the 39 countries contributing troops to the NATO-led campaign.

We must always remember we are in Afghanistan to make America safer and ensure that South Asia cannot be used to plot net transnational attacks against the U.S. homeland or our partners and allies. Our goal is a stable and secure South Asia. A political

settlement in Afghanistan is only possible if the Taliban rejects support of or conduct of terrorism.

Based on the intelligence community analysis and my own evaluation, I am convinced we would absent ourselves from this region to our ultimate peril. Our new conditions-based approach has set the stage for regional and Afghanistan national change. Our new strategy, vigorously reviewed and approved by President Trump is, quote “R4+S” unquote. Which stands for regionalize it, realign it, reinforce it, and reconciliation, coupled with sustaining it.

The first ‘R,’ to regionalize it, recognizes challenges exist beyond Afghanistan and adopts a geographic framework with a holistic comprehensive view. India, Pakistan, Iran, Russia, and China were considered at the outset, rather than focusing only on Afghanistan and then introducing external variables late in our strategic design. My visit last week to India was in part to thank them for their continued generous development support in Afghanistan.

We also discussed ways to expand our collaboration to improve long-term regional stability and security. We will firmly address Pakistan’s role. NATO’s demands need to be heard and embraced in Islamabad.

The second ‘R,’ to realign, signifies that we were shifting our main effort to align more advisors who can provide training and advisory support at the battalion and brigade level. The fighting will continue to be carried out by our Afghan partners, but our advisors will accompany tactical units to advise and bring NATO support to bear when needed.

Make no mistake, this is combat duty for our troops, but the Afghan forces remain in the lead for the fighting.

We have now approximately 11,000 troops in Afghanistan, alongside 6,800 from NATO and coalition partners and 320,000 Afghan National Security Forces. From these numbers, you can see the Afghan forces remain the main effort and we are supporting them not supplanting or substituting our troops for theirs.

The third ‘R’ is reinforce, and that is seen in our addition of over 3,000 U.S. troops arriving in the coming months to extend NATO’s advisory effort to Afghan troops that are currently without. NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg and I together toured Afghanistan last week, sending a message of the NATO coalition’s unity. He is also reaching out to our allies to increase their troop levels.

In light of our new strategy, 15 nations have signaled that they will increase their support. Again, certainty now having replaced uncertainty, we are looking to our partners to provide more troop and financial support.

The last ‘R’ is reconcile, and that is the desired outcome from our military operations, convincing our foes that the coalition is committed to a conditions-based outcome, we intend to drive fence-sitters and those who will see that we are not quitting this fight, to reconcile with the Afghan national government. Our goal is a stabilized Afghanistan achieved through an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace process.

War is principally a matter of will, and the international community is now making clear that it will stand alongside the Afghans committed to this fight. As we have shifted to a conditions-based strategy, not time-based or troop number-focused, ambiguity has

been removed. The elements of this strategy are a tangible demonstration of our resolve. All this will be carried out by, with, and through our Afghan partners and within the coalition framework ensuring this campaign is politically, fiscally, and militarily sustainable.

Our Afghan partners, who continue to take the lead, fight most effectively where NATO and partner advisors are alongside them. As President Ghani said to the United Nations General Assembly in New York, "Afghans are determined to fight. No one should mistake our will to defend our country."

I am heartened and impressed by the international reception to our strategy. I am confident we will see heightened levels of support from our allies and partners in the months ahead. As NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg said last week in Kabul, this is about making sure that Afghanistan does not once again become a safe haven for international terrorists. And the best way of doing that is to enable the Afghans to have defense security forces which are strong enough to do that.

We are already starting to see the psychological impact of this new strategy, both militarily in the field as well as through President Ghani and the Afghan government's commitment to reform.

President Ghani recognizes that fighting corruption and accelerating institutional reform across government are critical to success. The recently launched U.S.-Afghan Compact, outlining more than 200 measurable benchmarks for reform, demonstrates our shared emphasis on these goals.

Our South Asia strategy reinforces to the Taliban that the only path to peace and political legitimacy is through a negotiated settlement. It is time for the Taliban to be forced to recognize they cannot kill their way to power, nor can they provide refuge or support to transnational terrorists who intend to do us harm.

I want to close by recognizing the need to maintain the closest possible dialog with Congress and specifically with this committee. This committee has long appreciated that the defense caps mandated in the Budget Control Act [BCA] imposed the greatest inhibitor to our defense. Without relief from the BCA caps, our air, land, and sea fleets will continue to erode, our path to modernization will be shortchanged, and our technological competitive advantage lost.

I trust I will have your support for lifting the defense spending caps as we address today's complex and increasingly volatile national security environment.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

General Dunford.

**STATEMENT OF GEN JOSEPH F. DUNFORD, JR., USMC,
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF**

General DUNFORD. Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, distinguished members of the committee, thanks for the opportunity to join Secretary Mattis in providing an update on the South Asia strategy.

In recent months, our commander in Afghanistan, General Nicholson, described the current condition in the country as a stalemate. Secretary Mattis has testified that we are not winning. And

members of this committee have made similar statements. This situation has developed since the NATO mission in Afghanistan transitioned to an advisory effort.

Since 2015, we have advised and accompanied Afghan special operations units at the tactical level, but our advisory effort for conventional forces has generally been limited to the Afghan army corps and institutional level. We also reduced the aviation, artillery, and intelligence support provided to the Afghan forces. This construct did not provide Afghan conventional forces with the support they needed to succeed in combat operations.

My military assessment is that we drew down our advisory effort and combat support for the Afghan forces too far and too fast. As a result, the Taliban expanded territorial and population control and inflicted significant casualties on the Afghan army and police, while we lost campaign momentum. Last spring, Secretary Mattis directed the Department to conduct a detailed failure analysis to identify the root causes for the lack of progress in Afghanistan and he directed we provide targeted solutions.

Informed by these findings, our commanders developed, and Secretary Mattis approved, a new operational approach to break the stalemate and bolster Afghan capabilities. The new approach supports the President's broader strategy by expanding our advisory efforts to the tactical level, increasing the combat support we provide to our Afghan partners and enhancing authorities.

We believe these adjustments will improve the ability of the Afghans to conduct offensive operations, defend critical terrain, and reduce Afghan casualties. The emphasis is on providing effective support to the over 300,000 Afghans we have trained and equipped, so they can secure their own country.

Going forward, we will support President Ghani's efforts to reorganize the Afghan forces, which will expand special operations units while at the same time reducing less effective units. We will also continue to develop a capable, sustainable Afghan air force. And finally, we will enhance and expand our own counterterrorism operations in the region.

By next spring, this approach will have our most senior capable and operational experienced leaders advising at the decisive point in Afghan operations. Their efforts will be fully enabled by the support and the authorities they need to take the fight to the enemy—that is specifically for the Afghans to take the fight to the enemy.

As we implement the strategy, we are also tackling corruption, the single greatest roadblock to progress. In my judgment, our military objectives for this new strategy are clear and they are achievable.

The first is we defeat ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria] and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and we ensure other terrorist groups are unable to launch attacks against the homeland, U.S. citizens, or our allies. We are going to further develop Afghan forces that are capable of managing the residual violence with limited international support.

We will support President Ghani's effort to ensure that key population and economic centers are secure, and we will provide an enduring counterterrorism partnership with Afghanistan to protect our shared interests in South Asia.

As Secretary Tillerson has recently outlined, this entire effort is intended to put pressure on the Taliban and have them understand they will not win a battlefield victory, so they will enter an Afghan-led peace process to end the conflict.

And with that, Chairman, I am ready to take questions.

The CHAIRMAN. I appreciate it, sir.

I guess I want to—just basically have one question. A former military commander in Afghanistan directed me to this editorial written by former U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, Ronald Newman. It appeared in the Washington Post on August 9th. The first paragraph says in theory, U.S. strategy in Afghanistan has been to train an Afghan army that can fight Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and the Islamic State, and then largely to withdraw. After 16 years, it is not surprising that many people think that strategy has failed. In fact, it hasn't really been tried.

And then he goes through a brief history of our efforts, or lack of efforts, of deadlines, of not meeting commitments and so forth and concludes by saying that much of the rush to failure has been Washington driven.

And so, I guess I would like each of you to comment on the extent to which the lack of stability in approach, the lack of stability in commitment, the lack of stability in funding, as we begin the ninth consecutive year under a CR [continuing resolution], to what extent those Washington driven aspects have contributed to Afghanistan not being as successful so far as we would like it to be.

Secretary MATTIS. Chairman, war is primarily a matter of will-power and what we have to demonstrate, based on where the situation is at this time, is an implacable will that the international community—and that means America first among all of them, is going to stand by this effort. And that has to do with standing by certain policies, standing by the Afghan military, standing by budgets that give predictability so we keep our own military strong.

It is all part of setting a cohesive framework within which we can achieve tangible results and not face what Ranking Member Smith rightly is concerned with, a prolonged stalemate. When you set timelines, you are telling the enemy what you will not do—we will not fight past a certain day. When you set troop caps, you are saying what you won't do.

And I believe right now, the most important thing is to let the enemy know they are not going to win, and that is because we now have over 300,000 Afghan forces in the field that through some very severe fighting have earned our support, as we try to drag this toward an end of this war, toward reconciliation.

Chairman.

General DUNFORD. Chairman, you and many members of the committee have visited Afghanistan multiple times and I know in each of the visits one of the issues that has been raised is hedging behavior, hedging behavior by the Taliban, hedging behavior by regional actors, in particular Pakistan.

One of the primary drivers of that hedging behavior, which was inhibiting us in actually making progress in a campaign, was a lack of certainty and a lack of confidence that the U.S. commitment, the international coalition commitment would be enduring, and particularly for probably 4 or 5 straight years, there was al-

ways a sense, and it has been described as kind of the Y2K effect in Afghanistan—it was always a sense that when December came, the coalition would depart.

I think one of the most significant changes in the strategy with conditions-based is it leverages the center of gravity, the source of strength in Afghanistan which is the confidence of the Afghan people and the confidence of the Afghan forces.

And on the flip side, it actually undermines the confidence in the Taliban because they are not really trying to deal with us or wait us out. As Secretary Mattis said, it is a clash of wills. They now realize that the 300,000 Afghan soldiers and police that have been built, they are going to have the support they need to defeat the Taliban and to bring the Taliban to the peace table.

So, I think that is probably, in my judgment, how the hedging behavior back here in Washington, lack of clarity has affected the campaign.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Just sort of following up on that question, I think you—right we have had timelines. We have had troop caps. We have also consistently exceeded those troop caps and consistently gone beyond those timelines. So, if the Taliban were actually paying attention, at some point, they would come not to rely on those timelines or those troop caps.

And I guess what you have outlined is kind of what we have all been hoping for 16 years, is if we just stay there long enough, in great enough numbers, Afghanistan will eventually be able to defend itself, and we won't have to be there anymore.

I think the lack of confidence in that, and I hope that that editorial that was written is correct, comes from more than just the lack of commitment, it is the complications of the terrain, what does reconciliation look like? When do the Taliban come to the table?

And like I said, what I think we are really looking for is some confidence—let's say that we do it conditions-based and we do all the stuff—for how long? And I am not looking for a 1 year, 2 year—you know, 2 years, 12 months exactly, but what are the factors that give you confidence that we won't be in the scenario that I just described? That even if we do this more open-ended commitment that we won't be having the same conversation 20 years from now?

Because this is not Afghanistan's first time at this. As everyone knows, people have come and gone from Afghanistan for a very long time. And I get the feeling that as far as the Taliban are concerned, we can come in and say we are going to be there for 50 years, and they say fine, we will be there for 51.

So what is the confidence you have that this change can address not just whatever shortcomings might have been in previous administration strategies, but the reality of Afghanistan and Pakistan?

Secretary MATTIS. Congressman, we—the men and women in this world live by hope. They hope tomorrow is going to be better. The Taliban could hope repeatedly that whether we overstayed what timeline we gave ourselves, we had still said we are leaving as soon as we can. What we are saying now is there is going to

be an end to the war. It is going to end because we don't want the threat to America. We don't want the threat to our allies. And the best way to do that, as Secretary General Stoltenberg put it, make certain the Afghans have a force that can deal with this internally.

Certainly, it is going to take our mentors. What reconciliation looks like goes back some years in terms of the conditions. But it is Afghan-led. It involves the Taliban rejecting terrorism and supporting people who have attacked this country. It involves them to quit killing—to stop killing the Afghan people and live by the constitution. That is a pretty low bar if they choose to rejoin the political process.

If they don't, we are going to make it extremely uncomfortable for them by training, advising, assisting the Afghan forces. And I think what we don't want is some transient success. So we have pushed this forward in a way, in an implacable way, because that is the surest way to end this faster, rather than stringing it along—if that addresses your question.

Mr. SMITH. It does to some degree. And I understand that my question is unanswerable past a certain point. We don't know, you know, what it is going to take to really break the Taliban, but that does put us in the position.

I guess, put it just one different way. When the President says no blank check, no open-ended commitment, what does that mean? Where does the check stop? Where does the commitment stop?

Secretary MATTIS. One point is, sir, that Secretary General Stoltenberg when he was getting off the plane when we came out of theater, said he is going back to Brussels to build more support. In other words, we are going to have more people aligned with us in terms of financial and troop contributions because of our—the certainty we have replaced the uncertainty with.

It also means that we are going to see a declining use of American mentors as this army gets up on the step. We simply cut back too soon. We pulled the training wheels off the bike before it was fully ready to be balanced and move against the Taliban. This was a concern from our intelligence agency when we pulled all of our forces down to the level they were at. And so we are going to have to make up for it, and we have to inherit where it lies now.

But it is not an unending commitment. You will see a degrading number of American forces, a declining number of American forces, as you see an improving capability on the part of the Afghan forces conditions-based.

Mr. SMITH. Understood. And I know that Congressman Jones is next, and he will drill down on this in much greater degree than I did, so I will let that go. And the only other question I have, and it is largely rhetorical, but I would nonetheless like your response. You mentioned at the conclusion of your remarks the budget caps that the Defense Department faces and the CRs that have been presented to you have been one of the factors that have made it difficult to maintain a consistency of commitment to Afghanistan.

If we were to reduce revenue by \$1.5 trillion over the course of 10 years, would that not make it just a little bit more difficult to provide the Department of Defense the money that it needs to do what it needs to get done?

Secretary MATTIS. Chairman, probably someone with better financial background than myself could give a better answer. I would just say that as I understand the process right now it is to reduce the taxes to build the economy and the growth is going to accrue more government revenue. But this is not an area that I would call one of my expertise.

Mr. SMITH. Fair enough—and I know that is the hope. There is no credible economist—even conservative economists say that that is absurd under our current scenario, that somehow if you cut taxes dramatically for everybody you are going to magically wind up with more money.

If the top rate was, like, 90 percent or we had a capital gains rate of like 66 percent and we were cutting it down from there, but cutting it from where we are at to right now, making a commitment to our national security and reducing the revenue by at least \$1.5 trillion over 10 years is, I think, significantly inconsistent, and that is a point that I will return to at other hearings.

I yield back.

Mr. WILSON [presiding]. Thank you, Mr. Smith. And we are going to proceed—Chairman Thornberry has gone to the floor to vote so that the committee can continue meeting and then soon as he returns obviously we are going to proceed.

And at this time, we now have Mr. Jones of North Carolina.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Chairman, thank you, and Mr. Secretary and General, thank you as well.

I wrote to President Trump on July 18th asking him to please come to Congress and ask us to have a debate on a new AUMF [authorization for use of military force]. Now here is a sentence from one of his tweets that I would like to read: “Let’s get out of Afghanistan. Our troops are being killed by the Afghanis we train and we waste billions there. Nonsense. Rebuild the United States of America.” That is his tweet, not mine.

In addition, that brings me to this, General Mattis, in a Politico article in August of this year titled “Trump Administration Opposes Effort to Rein in War Powers,” they quote in this sentence as you—not quoting you, but it makes reference to you: “That stance appears to contradict comments by Mattis, who has endorsed passage of a new AUMF to govern the war against ISIS. Mattis chastised Congress at a March Senate hearing, testifying that he has not understood why the Congress hasn’t come forward to at least debate on AUMF.” Well, that is the fault of our leadership under Paul Ryan, to be honest with you. He could ask that we have a debate but he doesn’t do it.

My two questions—that is one, if you will just write that down. The other one is going to be as quick as well. The waste, fraud, and abuse in Afghanistan—we have spent over \$1 trillion. You talked about the soldiers and Marines who have been killed—thank you for remembering and sharing the 2,300/2,400, or Mac Thornberry did—over 20,000 wounded.

We have been paying ghost soldiers to help the Americans over there. They don’t even know who they are, but we have spent billions and billions of dollars. DOD [Department of Defense] paid \$6 million to buy nine goats. We don’t know where the goats are, by the way, but that is DOD spending that money.

That is why the position on sequestration, I somewhat agree with you. I didn't vote for it but in all fairness we keep wasting the taxpayers' money. As Mr. Trump said, not only in that one sentence, but he said it 30 times, and I have all 30 of his quotes.

The one that really of all the waste, fraud, and abuse that have just about shocked the people of the Third District of North Carolina, the home of Camp Lejeune and Cherry Point, was the one that the U.S. Department of Defense signed a contract with a British firm called New Century Consulting, where we paid them \$50 million to train Afghans to be intel officers.

Out of that they bought seven luxury cars. The firm in Britain bought seven luxury cars—an Aston Martin, a Bentley, Porsches, and four other luxury cars. Plus, they paid their wives—talking about the executives—\$400,000 each.

Go back to the AUMF and then I want to ask you this—who on your staff is responsible for reporting to you about all this waste, fraud, and abuse that John Sopko has done a great job of informing Congress and the American people, and it keeps going on and on.

It has got to stop because it is going to hurt the Nation, which is \$20 trillion in debt, and it is hurting our military. But how can you justify—not you personally—how can we justify spending more and more money when we can't account for the waste, fraud, and abuse in Afghanistan?

So, there are my two questions, and I appreciate your answers.

Secretary MATTIS. Congressman, we cannot justify wasting any money, and I am committed to finding who is responsible every time we find a case like this, holding them accountable and preventing it in the future. And I need to look into this New Century Consulting piece, and I will be getting back to you on this in detail, because I don't believe you can waste government money.

One of the things we are doing to make certain there are no more ghost soldiers—and by the way President Ghani has embraced it now because he is working on his ghost teachers—granted, not something we are putting money into. But he has got the same problem in his education system—because we are biometrically enrolling every one of them. And if necessary I will use U.S. paymasters, but we are not going to hand the money over and hope it gets to the right places in terms of fighting this war.

The biometrics alone will remove a lot of this problem, because the only way to be entered is to be there. So the ghost soldier piece will be more a matter of monitoring their continued status than it will be having corruption introduced at the beginning.

This comes out of the chairman's failure analysis that I directed him to do and what do we do about the kind of things you rightly bring up to us here today. But we are not going to continue that.

And as far as the AUMF goes, my point is that we need the unity of the American government and with the Congress involved that brings the unity of the American people to this fight. And I recognize we have to win your trust and your confidence on this. And the fact that the Department of Defense is big notwithstanding I intend to do that.

Mr. JONES. Thank you, sir. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Jones. We now proceed to Mr. Larsen of Washington State.

Mr. LARSEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

A couple questions. First off, with regards to the regionalization or 'R' in the new strategy—in 2004 the administration at the time designated Pakistan as a non-NATO ally, making Pakistan eligible for certain preferences, especially with regards to the support of its military.

Given that one of the points that you have made and the President has made about the administration taking a harder line towards Pakistan regarding support of the Taliban, are you ready now to revoke Pakistan's non-NATO ally status? If yes, can you give us the reasons, and if not, why not?

Secretary MATTIS. Congressman, what we are doing right now is we are aligning what Department of Treasury, Department of Defense, the intelligence community, Department of State, say, this is what we must ask Pakistan to do to change its behavior. At the same time, we are aligning that with NATO so we have 39 other nations that will also be reinforcing this.

As you know, I just visited New Delhi about the situation they face on their border. There are a number of ways, based on a very recent visit by the Pakistan chief of army staff to Kabul, about 3 days ago, that we can help Pakistan to see its way forward to do what is in its own best interest.

We will do this in a holistic, integrated way; holistic means whole of government and integrated with our allies and that is across South Asia. This strategy is not exclusive. In other words, any nation that wants to fight back against terrorism and reduce this threat to all nations is more than welcome.

It is not exclusive with Pakistan, it is inclusive, and that is why we started with a regionalized strategy. As we move this forward, we are going to have to find common ground with Pakistan. And, as you know, the international community does not stand for terrorism. So there are decisions Pakistan must make. They have lost more troops than probably any other fighting terrorists.

So on the one hand, we have the problems of havens and other things that we have all registered. And yet, at the same time, they have actually been fighting the terrorists. We have got to get this aligned regionally and solve this problem. And we have options to deliver—

Mr. LARSEN. And if I could just note in 16-plus years I have probably shared the frustrations of many on this committee about Pakistan as well as the limited number of successes that we have had with Pakistan.

Secretary MATTIS. Right.

Mr. LARSEN. Is revocation of non-NATO allies status on that list of possibles?

Secretary MATTIS. I am sure it will be.

Mr. LARSEN. General Dunford, you just came back from China, visited one border, the Chinese-North Korean border, but there is a 90-kilometer border between China and Afghanistan. It is not very easy to get to, but it does exist. Did you have any discussions with China on the regionalization issue and what role they can play—it can play?

General DUNFORD. Congressman, at really a minimum—that trip was really focused on North Korea—had a few sidebar conversa-

tions on Afghanistan. Clearly China has, you know, there are many areas where our interests diverge. There are some interest areas where they converge and I think counterterrorism is one of those areas where our interests converge, particularly in Afghanistan.

And I have certainly suggested to the Chinese interlocutors that they could play a more productive role, particularly in development and assisting with the counterterrorism effort on the border.

Mr. LARSEN. Thank you. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN [presiding]. Gentelady from Guam.

Ms. BORDALLO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

First, I would like to go on record to thank Secretary Mattis and General Dunford. It is good to see both of you again today, and I will take a moment to express my appreciation to you and the Department of Defense for providing the security to the people of Guam from North Korea, and we do appreciate the Department's efforts to have the THAAD [Terminal High Altitude Area Defense] battery protecting the people of Guam. Thank you very much.

My expectation is that today's hearing is one of the first steps in drawing out what an Afghanistan strategy that the administration puts out would look like.

Secretary Mattis, at your recent speech at the Air Force Association conference, you stressed the importance of not only listening to our allies, but be willing to be persuaded by them.

So can you point out to me pieces of this strategy where the administration and the Department of Defense have been persuaded by our allies, or would solicit input from the international community?

And what portions of the strategy do our allies and partners have concerns with?

Secretary MATTIS. Congresswoman, right now I would just tell you that to be willing to be persuaded, the allies were 100 percent persuaded by our approach to drive towards reconciliation.

It has received near universal agreement. I say near because I haven't talked to all of them. But during the—while we were putting this strategy together, I have met three times with various groups of allies; from the Defeat ISIS group, because of the similarities in the counterterrorism campaign, and with the Ministers of Defence, there in Brussels—the NATO ministers, as well as in the Pacific when I was at the Shangri-La Dialogue where I talked to many of my counterparts there.

They made it very clear that they believe that this enemy had to be defeated in Afghanistan, or whether it was in Europe or in the Pacific, we were going to see a wider spread.

So, I think this is why we have seen such—such support, frankly, from across our allies since we have rolled it out. From Brussels and the NATO nations to New Delhi in India, certainly in Kabul where even the housing prices are going up, based on the confidence—this is an objective measure we watch very closely for what is going on there.

So we have seen the input. We have heard the input. And it has been incorporated into what we have. And we are getting good feedback, ma'am.

Ms. BORDALLO. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, I am happy to hear that.

And gentlemen, when do you expect the new strategy to produce positive results? What tools and process do you have in place to assess progress toward the stated end goal?

I am aware that the strategy will not have predetermined timelines, but I am interested in the Department of Defense's plan to monitor progress toward the condition-based goals that have been set.

Either one of you.

Secretary MATTIS. Yes, Congresswoman, we have, in a U.S.-Afghan Compact agreement with President Ghani's government, we have over 200 specific benchmarks, as we attempt to quantify to the degree we can—you can't quantify everything, but quantify where we can, the progress we are making.

Furthermore, we have polling going on to see how we are doing with the hearts and minds of the people.

Additionally, we have a separate—by the Joint Chiefs of Staff we have a separate assessment that will be going on as we look at our own benchmarks that we intend to meet; numbers of units that are mentored, this sort of thing.

But in order to be output oriented, it is going to take a little time. That said, I was struck by the degree of confidence I saw, politically and militarily, in Afghanistan among our coalition troops and among the Afghan leadership, military and political, as a result of this strategy.

So I think the psychological impact is beginning to be felt. The Taliban have been unsuccessful in what they have been attempting to do, to take a provincial and district center. They are still trying, as we speak here today. But also, they are starting to fight among themselves due to a loss of some key leadership. And because they are just not getting along with each other, under the increasing pressure that the Afghan forces are placed on. Anything else, Chairman, to add?

Ms. BORDALLO. General.

General DUNFORD. I think we will have a pretty good sense for the strategy next summer, as our advisory effort is revised, and we implement the full advisory effort that is informed by the failure analysis that we spoke about earlier. Next summer's performance by the Afghan force will be one indicator.

There is also a very important event taking place in Afghanistan next year, which is the elections. You know, I think the—we will see the Afghan's ability to perform the security function associated with the elections as being a very good indicator as well.

Ms. BORDALLO. Thank you very much, General, and I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Speier.

Ms. SPEIER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To both of you, we are deeply grateful for your service, and for the kind of in-depth analysis you do on all of these issues to present to the President.

I have a couple questions. Director Coats, the Director of the National Intelligence, recently testified to Congress, in which he said "The intelligence community assesses that the political and security situation in Afghanistan will almost certainly deteriorate through 2018, even with a modest increase in military assistance by the United States and its partners."

General Dunford, you and the Secretary plan for only a modest increase in military assistance. If the intelligence community assesses that won't make any difference, then how can you defend sending thousands more troops, and how can we ask our allies to do the same?

General DUNFORD. Congresswoman, I think that is a fair question, and I think what the intel community has done is provided a snapshot in time. I don't think the intel community has assessed several things. One is the revised organizational construct of the Afghan forces. They are making some significant changes.

I don't think the intel community has factored in the change, the advisory assist effort, and the increased combat support that U.S. and coalition forces are providing to the Afghans. I don't think the intel community has adequately assessed the impact of a conditions-based strategy on the confidence of the Afghan people, the confidence of the Afghan security forces, or the behavior of other regional actors.

So Congresswoman, I—you know, again, this is a very difficult endeavor. The one thing I am sure of is that the strategy will keep the American people safe by preventing Al Qaeda and ISIS from conducting attacks on the homeland. But I also believe it has a good prospect of allowing the Afghan security forces to get to the point where they can secure their country on their own.

Ms. SPEIER. Do you agree with me that we will have a presence in Afghanistan for the foreseeable future, each of you?

General DUNFORD. Congresswoman, I will take that question first. Here is what I would say. In South Asia as a whole, we have vital national interests, and I believe those vital national interests are enduring. And I believe we will have a diplomatic, an economic, and some military presence in the region for a long period of time.

I do believe that the military element of our strategy will decrease over time to a sustainable level. What we are attempting to do in our overall campaign against terrorism is ensure that working by, with, and through local partners, we get to the point where we have a politically, a militarily and a fiscally sustainable strategy from West Africa, Southeast Asia. In Afghanistan, I look at—in that context.

So while I do think there will be U.S. influence and U.S. presence for some time to come, I don't think there will be a large footprint of U.S. forces for a long period of time to come.

Ms. SPEIER. So to be fair to the American people, we should make it clear to them that we are not leaving Afghanistan.

General DUNFORD. Congresswoman, we should only leave a region—again, if you look at our strategies being diplomatic, economic, and military, if we didn't have enduring vital national interests, and I believe we do, and so I think there has to be some presence and some influence. Again albeit in different form over time, but there has to be some U.S. presence in the region in order for us to advance our interests in the region.

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Secretary, do you have any comments on that?

Secretary MATTIS. I would agree with the chairman. We have a number going in now. It is going to make the Afghan military more capable. As they prove themselves and build their own capability as the enemy diminishes, certainly our numbers would be coming

down in a commensurate way, conditions-based as the President said.

Ms. SPEIER. So what does a diplomatic solution there look like? How do we bring the parties together? And what would that look like?

Secretary MATTIS. First, we have to remove from the Taliban a sense that they don't have to negotiate this, and how they can achieve what they want through violence. Once they get that through their head, then we are going to peel off some of them. And you already see this happening where there is an atomization of the Taliban going on because they have lost some key leaders. And the ones who have stepped up, frankly, have not been as good.

It has made in some way the reconciliation—political reconciliation a little harder because some of the people we are dealing with may not represent this new fragmented Taliban. But eventually the weakening of the Taliban should put us in a position where some of them say, "That is it; I am not going to keep this up." Others of them say, "We are willing to negotiate."

What does the negotiation look like? They stop killing people and stop supporting the terrorists who attacked this town and New York City. And at that point, if they are willing to live by the constitution, President Ghani has made clear that they can come back in. You have already seen parts of it actually come over, you know, come over to Ghani's side.

So it is starting and it is not tidy, but it is ongoing now. And that is what you will see continue to move forward as we block them militarily from having a chance for victory on the battlefield.

Ms. SPEIER. Thank you. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Gentlemen, it looks like it is going to be maybe another 5 minutes or so before other members come back. I could pepper you with questions, but maybe I won't. You have had—you have been testifying a lot today.

So what I think we will do is invite our witnesses to the ante-room and the committee will stand in recess for approximately 5 to 6 minutes.

[Recess.]

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will come to order. We appreciate you all's patience with our voting schedule. Chair recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. Wilson.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Secretary Mattis and General Dunford, I want to thank you on behalf of our military service members, military families, veterans. There is such a reassurance with your service and so greatly appreciated your dedication and your persistence on behalf of victory as we are proceeding in the global war on terrorism.

As the grateful dad of an Afghanistan veteran, one of the primary concerns that I would like each of you to address is the—are the rules of engagement in Afghanistan. During the previous administration, I introduced a resolution calling for a revision to the existing rules of engagement under Operation Resolute Support in Afghanistan in an effort to succeed in the complex environment combatant commander's face. What is the status of the new rules of engagement for U.S. military efforts in Afghanistan?

Secretary MATTIS. Sir, the old rules included both rules—under rules of engagement and operating principles, included a requirement for proximity of the enemy to be engaged by our air forces. President Trump has told me that I have the authority to change that. So I have removed proximity, and that in itself opens the enemy, wherever they are found, to the NATO air support, under the NATO OPLAN [operations plan]. So the first thing is, we have unleashed that. At the same time, we have had a reduction in the number of deaths by innocent people as a result of coalition operations, not Taliban.

And my point is, we will always take every humanly possible step to protect the innocent, but the rules themselves permit the engaged forces to bring air support and artillery support in. Furthermore, by extending the who—which units are being advised it means that many Afghan army units that never had advisors and had a very convoluted way to get at that air support—it wasn't a rule of engagement problem, but it was organizational problem; that has been removed as well. If that addresses your concerns.

Mr. WILSON. It does and I truly appreciate the complex situation of organizational end rules and you addressing it, and again, it is reassuring as a parent. And then Mr. Secretary we all want to succeed in Afghanistan and you clearly illuminated, or identified the situation and that is that we need to eliminate safe havens for terrorists abroad to defend American families at home.

At the same time, I support your efforts for more troops, but we have increased deployments meaning fewer ready units at home for unforeseen contingencies. Sadly, we have also had the recent extended loss of two destroyers, the *Fitzgerald* and *McCain* and the necessary support for devastating hurricanes. The strain on the military is ever-increasing. What can we in Congress do to help you face the multiple threats that are facing our country?

Secretary MATTIS. Congressman Wilson, I think the most important thing is that we get budget predictability and certainty because without that we cannot take the—adjust our forces and get predictability into our budgets that permits us to gain the best bang for the buck, to put it bluntly. We are going into the ninth year with a continuing resolution.

As you know, I cannot make new starts under that. Even if the cyber domain or the space domain require that we do new things we have not had to do before to maintain our competitive edge. So the most important thing, I believe, is to make certain that the Congress act together to relieve us of the Budget Control Act cap, the defense caps, and we get predictability in our funding.

Mr. WILSON. And I am really grateful for the leadership of Speaker Paul Ryan and Chairman Diane Black. We are trying to address that. And additionally, Mr. Secretary, as the former co-chair of the India Caucus, I appreciate your visit last week to New Delhi. Under the new strategy, how will our defense relationship with India change, and keeping that in mind, how can we balance our cooperation with India as we have a situation where Pakistan has a level of resentment?

Secretary MATTIS. Sir, the question you are bringing up is exactly why I was in New Delhi last week where Prime Minister Modi and their national security advisor, the minister of defense,

welcomed me. I would tell you that India is on the move. The economy is picking up.

But most importantly in my portfolio, we now have a strategic convergence of two natural partners, the two largest democracies in the world. And India has been generous over many years with Afghanistan. They have been the victim of terrorism, so I don't need to go there and talk about the terrorist threat with them.

We have many areas where we are natural partners with one another. And we are deepening and broadening the military-to-military relationship with them. But it is not an exclusive—it is not an exclusive strategy, exclusive of anyone. Any nation that wants to be part of this—the counterterror effort and this stability effort in South Asia, can sign up.

Pakistan need not think this is exclusive of them. It is open to any nation that wants to move against terrorism and remove this threat to all civilized nations.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Langevin.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And Mr. Secretary and General Dunford, thank you for being here. Thank you for your service to our country.

In President Trump's August 21st speech, the President stated that he had lifted restrictions placed on our warfighters and the expanded targeting authorities. And I know you understand that this is obviously—it is critical that Congress be kept apprised of the operational outcome as a result of these changes so that we can continue to conduct the appropriate level of oversight.

Can you more clearly define for me what are these restrictions that have been lifted? And which authorities have been extended? And which results have you seen—what results have you seen since these changes were made thus far?

Secretary MATTIS. Sir, the NATO OPLAN had certain—had certain objectives in mind. It is organized to bring the Afghan army into a stronger position. And in some cases we were not giving that army the high ground. In other words, having fought in the mountains, it is a very uncomfortable feeling when the enemy is above you.

We did not give the young Afghan boys the sense that they had the high ground when they were fighting against this enemy, that the NATO air support could have given them. Today, I can bring that air support to them. We have got to reorganize our advisors because those units with NATO and American advisors win, and those without them often do not win. So we are going to spread the number of units with advisors. We are going to bring that air support to bear.

And specifically, we are no longer bound by the need for proximity to our forces. In other words, wherever we find the enemy, we can put the pressure from the air support on them. It used to be we had to basically be in contact with that enemy. At the same time, we do not want this to be misinterpreted into a laissez-faire use of fire support when we are fighting wars where the enemy intentionally hides among innocents.

It is still very much aligned with our effort to do everything humanly possible to prevent the death or injury of innocent people, women and children, villages, this sort of thing.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Are there other restrictions that we should know about that you can identify now?

Secretary MATTIS. The other restrictions usually are basically in now being able to bring this fire support to bear where we could not before, whether it be proximity or we were not with those units. Remember, we were only advising under the old—under what I inherited, down to the corps level. We are now going down to the brigade level and the next level down, the kandak, or what you and I call the battalion level. These are the forces that actually move against the enemy.

You will notice the commando forces and special forces who consistently win against the Taliban also have—they also have NATO and U.S. advisors with them. Our failure analysis made very clear why we had the problem with the other forces. We are going to solve that.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you. Secretary Mattis, while the Afghan government is certainly determined to maintain security and stability, it is obvious that they are also contending with the clash of cultures in the region necessitating a coalition of our partner nations to address regional security challenges.

So I understand that you were just in India or you spoke about that with Congressman Wilson, where they pledged \$3 billion for development projects to train Afghan officers as well as additional naval cooperation.

So how will this expanded engagement enhance security in the region?

How do you intend to leverage relationships like this to develop a more effective coalition strategy that will inject a level of legitimacy and confidence between the Afghan government, its people, and its regional partners?

And, similarly, something that caught my attention in the President's speech with respect to Pakistan, how do you intend to persuade Pakistan to take more action to eliminate cooperation, support, and refuge for the Taliban in the Haqqani network?

Secretary MATTIS. Sir, I am—let me take the second question first. On Pakistan, what you are going to see is 39 nations all in the NATO campaign working together to lay out what it is we need Pakistan to do as well as in the U.S. Government—Secretary of Treasury, Secretary of State, the intelligence community, Defense Department, and we lay out what it is we need Pakistan to do and then we are going to use a whole-of-government international effort to align the, basically, the benefits and the penalties if those things are not done.

Pakistan, again, has lost more troops in this fight against terrorists than nearly any country out there. And yet at the same time, as you know, there has been some parsing out where some terrorists have been allowed safe havens. We are out to change that behavior and do it very firmly.

Based on a visit 3 days ago by the chief of army staff of Pakistan to Kabul, we actually have, for the first time, a sense of some optimism out of the Afghan government. So I am from—I am in a

show-me stage right now, but we intend to work through international partners diplomatically, economically, and work together to make the change that actually impacts in best interest.

As far as gaining confidence there with the Afghan people and their military and how do we make this work, I am going to ask the chairman to say a few words on this, but the bottom line is, sir, that if you look at what we call a loya jirga, which is the largest political assemblage under their culture, it is overwhelming how much of the population wants the NATO alliance to stick with them.

And so, when you add to that the countries like India which are trying to provide more generous—they have been very generous, but even more development support, there are ways to build the confidence of a people that have been tormented ever since the Soviet invasion by violence.

Chairman, if you have something.

General DUNFORD. Congressman, the one thing we always said was that the most important thing that we were delivering to the Afghan people was some hope for the future, and a conditions-based approach gives them that.

In recent polling, about 80 percent of the people reject the Taliban. About 70 percent plus have confidence in the Afghan security forces, and roughly those same numbers as Secretary Mattis alluded to, roughly those same numbers welcome a coalition presence.

So, I think that the commitment that the international community, because this isn't just a strategy about the United States, there are 39 other nations, and NATO has the same approach, a conditions-based approach. I think that is having a profound effect on the psychology of the Afghan people. Which again, we always felt was a source of strength in the campaign.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you both.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. LoBiondo.

Mr. LOBIONDO. Secretary Mattis, General Dunford, thank you for your very solid and extraordinary leadership. I think the Nation is very fortunate that you have accepted these assignments. A lot of my questions have already been asked and answered, but I want to go back just to what a couple of my colleagues have said previously about Pakistan.

So, I know that they are demonstrating, at least rhetorically, the right approach and willing—expressing the willingness to help, but we have seen this before. And we have been disappointed and sometimes they do a little bit and make it sound like it is a lot.

What—in this, I recognize we are also in an open setting, what can you tell us about if we find that this is a false start again that we can do to pressure them to more cooperate? Because I think it is pretty obvious without them we have a much more difficult time in Afghanistan.

Secretary MATTIS. Sir, the reason we did a regional approach in the beginning was so we didn't try to start with Afghanistan, put together a great plan and say, well now we have got to add in these kind of variables. We started with India to Iran. We looked up into Central Asia and down into Pakistan and came at Afghanistan as a geographically centralized problem, but informed by the others.

I think that there is an increasingly level of discontent in the world with any country that supports terrorism for any reason. I mean, it has taken a while for some countries to come onboard or you look at what Secretary Tillerson has put together in terms of the Defeat ISIS Coalition, 69 countries right now plus the Arab League, European Union, NATO, INTERPOL [International Criminal Police Organization].

When you think of that number of countries it is clear that what ISIS has done has created its own antibodies. And by doing that, there is more of a concern about the spread of terrorism. So as we work this problem with Pakistan, as Pakistan has moved actually against the border areas here in the last 6 months, losing a lot of troops and pushing against some of the border passes to give access into Afghanistan, I think that we are in a position now where we can be more compelling. But, this is going to be one step at a time. We are going to remain, basically, focused on this effort.

We are not going to back off and it will start with assistant secretaries coming out of Washington and the national security staff members going into Pakistan soon followed by the Secretary of State. I will go in and we have Secretary General Stoltenberg's very clear support for this in his advocacy as the Secretary General of NATO.

So we are going to continue to build this up in an international way with a whole of U.S. Government argument for the Pakistanis to work in their own best interest and ours.

Mr. LOBIONDO. Thank you, Secretary Mattis. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Tsongas.

Ms. TSONGAS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you both for being here.

At the outset I just want to, sort of, endorse Mr. Jones's comments that, I too, feel that we as a full body of Congress should have the opportunity to debate an authorization for use of military force. It has been too many years, I feel. I have been here 10 years and we have been having these hearings over and over and over again, and we have many new Members of Congress as well.

So, with the new administration a new effort, not necessarily is different, but nevertheless, a new effort I feel, we need the chance to debate this and recommit or not to what you are doing.

But I also wanted to just address, again, the regional approach that you are taking—and we have had some conversation about Pakistan but there has also been reporting that Russia is engaged in finding ways to support the Taliban; Iran as well. And I would just like your thoughts on how that is complicating your efforts there.

Secretary MATTIS. Well, any effort to support a violent group—a terrorist group like the Taliban, until they renounce terrorism, support for them is not in Russia's best interest, not in Iran's best interest. Certainly not in Afghanistan people's best interest and it is contrary to the NATO campaign and the international agreements under the U.N. [United Nations] that put us there in the first place, that authorized us to be there.

So, I think that this is very difficult to discern why they would do something that is not in their best interest. I am not ready to

say precisely what it is. I want to see more evidence about how deep the support is.

It is just hard to believe—Iran has had their diplomats killed by Taliban. Russia certainly has had enough problems coming out of terrorism in South-Central Asia, so this doesn't make sense, but then the world doesn't always make sense. We will figure it out and we will illuminate it where it is necessary in order to try to get a change in behavior.

Ms. TSONGAS. And yet, you have seen some evidence of it without really wanting to go—without fully having a sense of to what level it goes.

Secretary MATTIS. We have seen some, ma'am. It is—I need more definition on what is coming out of Russia—I can't figure it out. It doesn't make sense. But we are looking at it very carefully.

Out of Iran it has always been a low level of intermittent support for Taliban; mostly financial, some weapons. It is Iran doing what it usually does, in terms of trying to create chaos.

Ms. TSONGAS. General Dunford, would you like to comment?

General DUNFORD. Congresswoman, what we have seen, just to be clear, because you have talked about support. I think we have clear indications of communications. I think with regard to the Iranians there is no question that there is a degree of support, as well as communications. With the Russians, I don't think we have specificity on support to the Taliban.

Ms. TSONGAS. Thank you. That was my only question. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Turner.

Mr. TURNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Mattis, it is good to see you again and thank you for being here.

I too, like the other members, want to thank you for your work since you have been Secretary. You have been very diligent in ensuring that this committee is informed working directly with the members of the committee, but even beyond that you have with the classified briefings that you have held for the whole House, made certain that other Members hear your message.

That helps us because what we learn in this committee, in these hearings, we take out to other Members but you are taking your message directly which has included repealing sequestration, the effects of CRs, and I want to appreciate that you have done that because it is making a big difference.

So, I want to thank you for being here today also. And I want to ask you a question concerning the drug trade in Afghanistan. According to a 2016 survey concerning opium cultivation and production in Afghanistan, the cultivation in Afghanistan in 2016 increased by 10 percent. All regions, except the southern region, experienced an increase in opium poppy cultivation last year.

Additionally, aside from a drop between 2014 and 2015, the data shows a steady growth in opium poppy cultivation between 1994 and 2016.

If you look at the historical levels from 2001 to where we are today it has roughly doubled. So, we have seen that it was less than half before 2001. I know that that is unacceptable. I am certain you believe it is unacceptable, and it has a direct impact on

counterterrorism, as you know, because it includes funding. Counternarcotics efforts lessen the funds that are available to terrorists. It also breeds corruption in both the Afghan government and in the Afghan military.

And we know how to address this. We address the crops, we address distribution, we address labs, we address funding—basically the infrastructure for the narcotic trade.

So, in looking at your new additional strategy in South Asia, how do you see this strategy including an effort to affect the opiate narcotic trade?

Secretary MATTIS. It is a great question. Both the counter-finance aspects of the strategy and the counter-corruption are linked directly to the counternarcotics campaign. We will—we watched as we drew down too fast, too early. We watched the Taliban surge. As the Taliban surged, we watched the poppy surge right along with it. There is no surprise here—the intelligence community had warned us about this, so it is exactly what we were told would happen.

As we look at this we are going to go after the counternarcotics refineries, the transportation nodes, the bazaars as they call them, where they are bartered. And the reason is that is where the Taliban actually accrues their taxation cash off of the trade. It is not from the little guy down there who is farming this hearty crop of poppies.

And so, we are going to look at where does it help the Taliban and fight it from that direction rather than going pretty much in a big way just after the farmers themselves. So, there is a way to cut this thing and reduce it by targeting the right locations and the right nodes in the drug trade that will also undercut the Taliban's fundraising.

Mr. TURNER. General, we have dealt with this issue a lot and there have been times where we have had some success. In looking at this issue the committee is very aware of the fact that there are impediments as to how we are structured. Are there things inter-agency, interdepartment, funding issues that we need to address to ensure that the Secretary's new strategy is implemented? What do you see as your impediments?

General DUNFORD. Are you talking now more broadly, Congressman, or just with regard to the drug problem?

Mr. TURNER. You get the assignment, but you don't have all the authorities. Where are areas where there is difficulty for you in trying to achieve, through the DOD structure, a reduction in narcotic production? And how can we help you?

General DUNFORD. I think having the right numbers of drug enforcement agents to advise the Afghan forces—they have got a major crimes task force there. And so, law enforcement officials that can help advise and grow the capacity of the Afghans to both arrest, protect evidence, and prosecute has been something that has showed good value in the past and also making sure the justice system continues to mature as well.

Mr. TURNER. Sorry, my mic was off. Secretary Mattis, anything you would like to add to that on the tools that you would need? I do know that you have difficulty—interagency, interdepartment, and structurally in trying to achieve these goals.

Secretary MATTIS. You know, sir, because it touches the Taliban and the counter-finance effort, is something that we are very much invested in and integrated. I don't sense that I have any missing authorities here, but if I find them, I will come up and see you and tell you what I need. I have made a note of it, I need to look at it. So far, I have not heard that, but I haven't asked a specific question. I need to do so before I answer you.

Mr. TURNER. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. O'Rourke.

Mr. O'ROURKE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Mattis, you said a couple of times during this hearing that war is a matter of will and that the Taliban have to understand that there is an implacable will on our side to continue this fight and to see it through until we achieve our goals. Convince me that our will is more implacable than theirs going forward.

Secretary MATTIS. Well, of course, I am not alone in this fight, sir. I have just come out and seen our troops in the field, including the troops of other countries. I have no doubt we have the troops with the willingness to endure danger and discomfort in defense of this country, and this town, and New York City that were attacked by terrorists operating out of this very area that we are fighting in.

But I think you bring up a good point and it goes back to something mentioned earlier about AUMF. I think there has got to be—the U.S. Congress has got to embrace this as our fight. We are all in this and we—I am eager to hear any criticisms of strategy, changes in the operation, open the door, have you go in, look at it. To me, if what you go in and see or what our inspector finds there isn't something you admire, then I need to change it.

But one thing, I have dealt with this kind of enemy since 1979. I do not patronize them. When they say girls don't go to school, you are not going to talk them out of it. They didn't rationally arrive at that point and we are going to have to confront this the way free—generations of Americans have confronted other threats. Whether it be militarism, fascism, or communism, we are going have to confront it for our time.

Mr. O'ROURKE. Let me ask you a follow-up question that—you talked about some of our goals. The primary one, I think, being that Afghanistan never again be used to plan or carry out attacks against the United States of America. We want those stakeholders, like the Taliban, to work within the national government and the political process.

You also said that the Taliban have to understand they cannot kill their way to power. I think you would also agree, we probably cannot kill our way towards these goals and conditions. So, therefore, what is going to have to happen for the Taliban to accept our conditions, short of us killing all of them?

Secretary MATTIS. Well, I think Congressman, it has got to be they recognize they are not going to gain power at the point of a gun and that the Afghan security forces are capable of defeating them.

General DUNFORD. Congressman, if I could just add in there, and we talk about will, I think the Secretary just touched on something that is important. It is not the Taliban will just against U.S. and

coalition will. It is the Taliban will against the Afghans and the Afghan forces in particular. In the last year, the Afghan forces had 16,000 soldiers killed and they stayed in the fight. They have proved incredibly resilient.

Sure, they have had battlefield shortfalls and we know what they are and our failure analysis indentified those, and the plan that we have proposed is designed specifically to address where there are tactical gaps in their capability, down at the small unit level, and particularly, the ability to deliver fires.

But I think at the end of the day, this is a clash of wills. It is a clash of wills between the Afghan people and some small portion of the Afghan people that actually want to resort to violence to advance their political objectives. And I think with support to the Afghan forces and the Afghan people, I am confident that their will will actually endure longer than Taliban will.

Mr. O'ROURKE. But with all due respect, General, it is not just the Afghan government and a small minority; it is the Afghan government, a trillion dollars in U.S. taxpayer support, tens of thousands of U.S. service members, NATO allies, the support monetarily and militarily from those countries as well, and we are in our 16th year with no end in sight.

And I am having a very hard time understanding and being able to explain to my constituents what the game-changer is that I am hearing today that will make this different going forward. And I mean no disrespect—

General DUNFORD. No, no.

Mr. O'ROURKE. But I am just not hearing it. I think this war has suffered from a lack of oversight and a lack of questions asked, and so I am asking you this question.

General DUNFORD. Sure, I think it is a fair question. I think it is a fair question to debate why this is different and why we should stay after 16 years.

I will certainly tell you from a military perspective why I recommended we stay was, we looked carefully at the 20 groups that are international terrorist groups, 20 of the 90 we recognize around the world, and the consequences of not keeping pressure on them. So that was number one.

In terms of what is different, people talk about 16 years—for 14 years of those 16 years, we were in the lead and we were in the fight. Over the past 2 years, it has been the Afghan forces that were in the lead and in the fight. They didn't have adequate force capabilities to be able to deal with the Taliban.

This doesn't address 16 years of us being in the fight; this addresses 2 years of the Taliban fighting legitimate Afghan security forces. And this plan is designed to fill the capability gaps that have been identified as a result of the 2 years of casualties and setbacks that they have suffered.

I think that is really important, is that this is designed to be fiscally, militarily, and politically sustainable over time. It will require a U.S. presence increase in the short term, but in the long term this is about leveraging the 300,000 Afghan forces that we have grown over the course of 16 years, but just inadequately supported here for over the last 2.

Mr. O'ROURKE. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Lamborn.

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Chairman, and thank you both for what you do to protect our country and our allies.

I believe the President is to be commended when he in his recent speech talked about Pakistan and how Pakistan needs to be more consistent in its promoting stability in the region. And, Secretary Mattis, you addressed that very strongly in your comments earlier.

And I would just like to follow up on that a little bit. What can we do if Pakistan does not follow through and be a better promoter of promoting stability?

Secretary MATTIS. Sir, we have an enormously powerful number of options there. Right now I would like to think we will be successful, but you have—you asked a very good question, because we don't want a transient or temporary change, but and then, you know, they—things go back the bad way.

But I think that right now with the growing consensus against terrorism, they will find themselves diplomatically isolated. They will find themselves economically in increasing trouble, as countries that are damaged by this terrorism coming out of there say enough is enough and take steps.

There is an awful lot of advantage to Pakistan of coming online with the international community, and I think that we have to stay focused there, but the penalties are just as significant as the advantages if they choose to go a different direction.

But for right now, we need to try one more time to make this strategy work with them, by, with, and through the Pakistanis. And if our best efforts fail, President Trump is prepared to take whatever steps are necessary.

Mr. LAMBORN. And, for either one of you, how will or how should our defense relationship with India change?

Secretary MATTIS. Sir, I was in India last week and was very well received by Prime Minister Modi, by his minister of defence, his national security advisor. We have a strategic convergence right now between the two—the world's two biggest democracies, and this is probably a once in a generation opportunity to with shared interests to deepen and to broaden our defense relationship, but also our economic relationship, I think our political relationship can be tightened together.

They are a force for stability in South Asia. They are a force for stability in the Indo-Pacific region. They are a nation coming into their own, economically, as a great nation, as they have steady growth rates going on right now.

And I think there is an opportunity here that we have not experienced in decades to tie us together in terms of a broadened level of cooperation and a natural alignment with each other's interest.

Mr. LAMBORN. As a follow-on to that, do you have anything that you are ready today to announce or designate specifically, that we will be doing that we haven't done in that past with India?

Secretary MATTIS. There are a number of things in motion right now, sir, and decisions, I think, will be coming very soon. We are both working to turn these big words into pragmatic realities and because I see both sides working together on it I am optimistic. It is not like we have to go over there and convince them that terrorism is a threat.

They have felt what has happened there. We have not had to convince them that we don't have nefarious designs on the Indo-Pacific area. We are two democracies that we can work together on this. There are some things we are doing in terms of their support in Afghanistan.

Development funding, they have been very generous for many years and they have achieved a degree of affection from the Afghan people as a result. They intend to continue this effort and broaden it. Furthermore, they are providing training for Afghan military officers and NCOs [noncommissioned officers] at their schools.

They are willing to do rehabilitation of Soviet-era equipment until we are able to replace it with American. That will take years in order to do it properly and all. So, they need to maintain what they have now. Helicopters, for example.

Furthermore, they have been providing and will continue to provide training for Afghani army doctors and medics in the field, so that the army is able to take casualties and better sustain themselves; that sort of thing.

So that it is really a very holistic approach that India's taking. You will notice I left off boots on the ground because of the complexity that that would bring to Pakistan. We are trying to make this an inclusive strategy and we don't want them to get a sense that they are vulnerable to any Indian Army people from their western flank. That is not necessary.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Veasey.

Mr. VEASEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Mattis, I wanted to specifically ask you about the State Department and the USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development] programs in Afghanistan now.

And how do funding cuts to the department as proposed by the administration affect the overall mission there? I know that you in the past that you have been very outspoken about the importance of diplomacy and other programs in support of the mission.

Secretary MATTIS. Congressman, right now what we are trying to do is get a lot more development aid from the international community. This is separate and distinct from what we are doing to lower the demand on the American taxpayer where we are paying an awful lot of the military piece of this.

We are also trying to raise money, by the way, from our allies to carry more of the commitment on the military side. But I am not—I am not certain what the cuts are as far as AID's budget for Afghanistan. I can get back to you. I will go to State Department, to USAID and determine that, and come back to you with an informed answer, sir.

Mr. VEASEY. Okay. Well, thank you very much.

I also wanted to ask you about Special Inspector General John Sopko. He said in March that with a new administration and a new Congress that it is a good idea, an opportune time to reevaluate our efforts in Afghanistan and find out what is working and what is not.

Now, one smart first step would be to do what SIGAR [Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction] recommended years ago, which is for each of the three major agencies in the re-

construction effort—State, USAID, and DOD—“to rack and stack their top- and worse-performing projects so they know where to invest further and where to cut those losses.” That was his quote.

And I didn’t know if you agreed with that proposal? And if so, has it been implemented yet in any way in crafting a South Asia strategy?

Secretary MATTIS. I do agree with what he said about what is working and what is not. We have done a failure analysis that has tracked—that has delved into this issue. Right now, before I have the chairman talk with his background as a NATO commander there in Afghanistan, I will just tell you that when I heard that the budget was being reduced for AID, Secretary Tillerson and I sat down together the next day.

We spoke about how we would align DOD and DOS [Department of State] at the high level to determine what were priorities, without any violation of our funding lines; make certain we were talking to each other; that we aligned our foreign policy effort, DOD reinforcing State Department, with a very strong partnership to make sure we are getting—we probably should have been doing this anyway—but make certain what we are doing was collaborative with one another in any part of the world we were both operating in.

But let me pass this over to the chairman. He has got some information on Afghanistan.

General DUNFORD. Congressman, I think to your broader question which is did the SIGAR’s report inform our strategy moving forward. The SIGAR actually partnered with us. When Secretary Mattis directed us to do a failure analysis, to go back and look at what has worked and what hasn’t worked in Afghanistan, one of the key partners—we brought in a number of outside agencies—one of the key partners we brought in, and I had Mr. Sopko in my office, and then he had representatives on our team.

So when we did the failure analysis, it was very much involved—very much informed by the work that the SIGAR had done over the past few years, not only with regard to projects, as you have talked about, but they have done some good work on resource transparency and accountability. They did some good work on what worked and what didn’t work in our advisory effort. They did some good work on what worked and didn’t work in terms of collaboration between State Department and the Department of Defense.

And so I think that I feel confident in saying that SIGAR’s work as well as some of the other literature that is out there that talks about what has worked and what hasn’t worked in Afghanistan is very much a part of the recommendations that we made to Secretary Mattis and the President.

Mr. VEASEY. And General, or Chairman also on that one, the July SIGAR report indicates a 21 percent increase in security incidents from last quarter of March to May 2017, and a 2 percent increase from the same period last year. What does this uptick in the security incidents tell us about the security situation overall? And how are we shaping our strategy going forward in light of these particular figures?

If you can answer that quickly. Time has—

General DUNFORD. Sure—sure, Congressman. I would just tell you that I don't think any of us are satisfied with where security in Afghanistan has been in 2016 and 2017, although so far 2017 is slightly better than 2016. And the reason why we believe those incidents have occurred is the Afghan forces haven't had the wherewithal to accomplish their mission.

So we have focused on those areas where they have fallen short of the mark, specifically the ability to deliver aviation support and provide advisors at the right level in their formations.

Mr. VEASEY. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Wittman.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Mattis and Chairman Dunford, thanks again for joining us today. Thanks so much for your service.

Secretary Mattis, I wanted to refer to the U.S. defense strategy on the war in Afghanistan. The President noted in his August 21st address that India continues to be a very important strategic and economic partner. And I certainly agree with that. I had the opportunity days after to visit with the foreign secretary in India, the defense secretary, chief of naval operations.

I know that you just returned from the region there, speaking with President Modi and others, and that your effort and your direction there in dealing with India is going to be steady engagement, which I think is spot-on. And I am all in favor of making sure we do joint naval exercises, that we continue expanded defense trade.

But in relation to what is happening in the region, I am more concerned about a stable Afghanistan and securing the hard-fought gains that we have had there. And I know that you noted that in reference to terrorist safe havens there in the region, that as global leaders India and the United States resolve to work together to eradicate this scourge.

And I am fully in agreement with that, but I want to get your perspective. What do you think that India can do specifically to help root out or to help reduce terrorist safe havens in that region? You talked about their engagement in putting dollars into Afghanistan, but what can they do in a broader sense in helping with the terrorist safe havens that are happening throughout the region?

Secretary MATTIS. Congressman, India has an outsized role to play because of its size, I think because it is as raucous a democracy as we are, frankly. It gives people hope that their voices can be heard, that economic opportunity can be passed broadly in a society, not to a corrupt few. And I think their example alone is important. It is why we are looking at this strategic convergence as an opportunity for steady engagement, so we have to do pragmatic things together.

I think in this regard, if there is any way for Pakistan and India to open their border to trade at great economic advantage to both of those countries, it would be a big help across the region. Because stability can follow economics as much as stability enables economics. And so I would hope that we will eventually see that happen. I believe India wants that to happen, but it is very hard to do that if your concern is that you open the border to one thing and you get something else.

So there has got to be some trust-building between those two nations. But I think that would probably be—in South Asia, one of the key enablers to getting trade going back and forth across all those borders—Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India.

Mr. WITTMAN. Very good. Thank you.

Chairman Dunford, I wanted to follow up along the same lines of terrorist safe havens, and you talked about the new Afghanistan strategy calls for expanding authority for U.S. forces to target terrorists and the criminal networks that operate in Afghanistan. And the President said that he agreed and said that we ought to have a policy to make sure that there is nowhere to hide and no place that is beyond the reach of American might and American arms.

I wanted to get you to elaborate a little more. I know you talked some about this—about what you see the expanded authority specifically needing to be, and what it means in a combat sense. And give us maybe some examples there about what is not happening now, but what could happen under expanded authority in how the train, advise, and assist role happens now versus what it would be in the future.

And have you seen any positive changes that are resulting from this transition through this change? And will there be any more changes that you think will be implemented, or will be necessary to be implemented?

General DUNFORD. Congressman, let me start with the TAA [train, advise, and assist] changes, because I think this is one of the more significant ones. We were providing advisors only with Afghan conventional forces only at the corps level. That is the general officer level, largest formation. Those are not the organizations that are actually in the fight everyday.

So two levels down below is where the decisive action is taking place, and we didn't have any advisors there. And so even though we had some aviation capabilities, some intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance capability, it wasn't being delivered to those Afghan units that were actually most relevant in the fight. So—because we didn't have the authority to put advisors down to that level.

So one of the more significant changes in authorities is the level at which we advise and assist. And that has and will make it—make us more effective.

Also, just broadly speaking, without going into rules of engagement in an unclassified venue, there are no individuals, there are no groups that threaten the Afghan government, threaten U.S. forces, threaten our mission, or threaten the coalition that General Nicholson does not have the authority to prosecute.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Gallego.

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This question is for Secretary Mattis. In your opinion is Iran compliant with the JCPOA [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action]?

Secretary MATTIS. I believe that they fundamentally are. There have been certainly some areas where they were not temporarily in that regard. But overall, our intelligence community believes that they have been compliant. And the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] also says so.

Mr. GALLEGO. Just a follow-up question to answer, General Mattis. Would you—will you be recommending to President Trump that we continue working—are working through the JCPOA to contain Iran's nuclear capability?

Secretary MATTIS. We are working that right now. There are—if you look—we have two different issues. One is the JCPOA and one is what Congress has passed, and those two are distinct but integral with each other. As you look at what the Congress has laid out at a somewhat different definition of what is in our best interest, and therein lies, I think, the need for us to look at these distinct but integral issues the way the President has directed.

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you, Secretary Mattis. If there is going to be any change in the status of our participation in JCPOA especially when—if it involves the interpretation of what we, in Congress, pass in terms of sanctions against Iran outside the JCPOA, will you come back and inform and talk to us? Because I believe many of us voted for Iran sanctions outside of the JCPOA with the understanding that they were not going to be linked.

Secretary MATTIS. Well, I think that this would probably be most appropriate by the Secretary of State, and I would follow him up here. I think that our diplomacy and the President and the Secretary of State, I think have the lead on that. But once a decision is made and I will be in on the decision, I will give input of course. I will be—always willing to come up and talk in hearing or in private.

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Coffman.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Secretary, General Dunford, Mr. Chairman. When we look back on the history of the Vietnam War in, I think in August of 1969, President Nixon orders a Vietnamization program in sort of a phased withdraw as the army of South Vietnam gains capability.

And then they couldn't—he couldn't, in 1972, bring the North Vietnamese to the negotiating table. So he did, I think it was Operation Linebacker II, which was a massive bombing campaign, late 1972 of North Vietnam. He brought them to the table, negotiated peace agreement that extricated the United States from the war in Vietnam.

If I look at Afghanistan today, I think that there actually is a better end state because I think that the Taliban come from the Pashtun ethnic group. And I think that there are areas in Afghanistan where the—particularly in rural Pashtun areas where they prefer the Taliban to the government of Kabul.

But like the North Vietnamese, the Taliban don't feel that they have—they feel like they are making gains. And so there is no need to come to the negotiating table. And so I understand this new strategy is designed to increase pressure to bring them to the negotiating table. At least that would be a by-product of it.

So—but I don't—so what I see is the change of the rules of engagement, when you talk about air support, which is vital. But—and we are plussing up with 3,000 troops. Is that going to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table?

Secretary MATTIS. Sir, in the past we have not had 300—over 300,000 troops who are for all of their challenges have stood in the

field and kept the Taliban from doing what they intended to do, even today, which is take the provincial and district centers.

So we now have the advantage of that experience—more experienced force. But we have got to get the advisors down to a level where they bring NATO air support, NATO intel support, and NATO artillery—and broadened artillery support to them. So you know, time will tell, Congressman.

But I think too, again, this strategy is four R's, regionalize it first. Make certain we are dealing with the safe havens and the broader issues, get more support. It is to realign our forces along these lines so they get down to the tactical level. It is to reinforce them with enough that they can get down to that level and make a difference. And then it is reconciliation.

But there is also an S. It is 4Rs plus S. Sustain this effort. Because if we are willing to sustain the effort—I still remember being up here on Capitol Hill, sitting behind Dr. Perry when he testified that it was never going to end the fighting, the killing, on the Dalmatian coast of Bosnia, Kosovo.

The international community stuck with that effort. And how many times have we read in the newspaper about the murder of innocent people in Kosovo and Bosnia. Do we still have a couple hundred troops there as part of the international effort? Yes, we do.

But the international community, if it sticks with this, if it sustains this, I am confident can throw the enemy on the back foot and give the Afghan people a chance to pull it together.

Mr. COFFMAN. General Dunford or Secretary Mattis, if I understand right, the significant change in the rules of engagement in the prior administration, that—I guess, that unless, in terms of the Taliban, you said that, I think, Secretary Mattis, you referenced contact, being in contact with the Taliban. But unless the Taliban showed harmful intent to U.S. forces, we didn't engage them. And I think that was modified towards the end of the last administration.

If there were—if a provincial capital were falling, then, in fact, they could be engaged. And so, if I understand a fundamental change in the rules of engagement, it is that if—that the—clearly the Taliban are an existential threat to the Afghan government that we are there to support. And if in fact, Afghan security forces in and of themselves are in contact with the Taliban, then we will provide close air support when reasonable. Is that a correct interpretation of the current rules of engagement?

Secretary MATTIS. Not complete—yes, at one time, sir, we could not help the Afghan forces unless they were in extremis. And I was not here then, and I don't know why it happened. And then eventually that was rescinded, but they still had to be in proximity. They basically had to be in contact.

Today, wherever we find them, the terrorists, anyone who is trying to throw the NATO plan off, trying to attack the Afghan people, the Afghan government, then we can go after them.

Mr. COFFMAN. To remove the Taliban?

Secretary MATTIS. Always with the caveat that we want to make every effort to not kill women and children, and innocent people. Chairman, if you want to comment on that?

General DUNFORD. Congressman, just to, I mean, I think just to reinforce the point, there are two things that have changed. We in the past were only providing advice, you know, again at that senior level and then, Afghan special operations forces. So the only aviation support that we could provide was when we had actually advisors that could—that actually could control that air support.

So the large number of Afghan conventional forces, the preponderance of those 300,000 forces we have spoken about, they could not receive close air support because we didn't have advisors. That is the big difference.

And then, the other thing that has changed is that now, again, any individual or any group that threatens the Afghan government, our mission, coalition forces, or U.S. forces, obviously, can be engaged.

And the conditions aren't specific to, as Secretary Mattis has alluded to, a specific engagement at a specific time. So if they are at an assembly area, they are in a training camp and we know that they are an enemy and they are going to threaten the Afghan government, our mission, or our people, General Nicholson has the wherewithal, the flexibility to make that decision. It is his level, is where the authority is. And that is a fundamental difference.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Moulton.

Mr. MOULTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And gentlemen, thank you so much for your continued service to the country. We have a lot of renewed confidence with you in your positions. But confidence is really my key question here.

And it comes back to a question we have heard a few times, and we heard from Senator McCain on the other side of the Hill, which is, how really will this be different? We have talked about some of the details. But as we have discussed on this committee before, at the end of the day, there has to be a political solution.

The Afghan army, 300,000, however many—it doesn't mean much if Afghan politics fall apart. Afghan politics have fallen apart several times. How is the political effort different, this time around?

Secretary MATTIS. Congressman, having just returned, I noticed sitting across the table from me in my meetings were new commanders and new ministers of interior and defense, proven people. People that the NATO officers said, we have fought with these guys, it is great to have them in place.

When you go down to the corps level commanders, these are all proven young officers who have grown up in this fight. They are not holdovers, not kept around from past wars. There is also an effort underway right now to remove many of the officers who are over the hill and replace them, give the young officers an opportunity to come up to levels they have demonstrated they can handle this fight.

That can only reflect a political reality because of the nature of that society right now. As you know, it is a society that has been shaken apart since the time of the Soviet invasion. It is also a group that now recognizes they basically have one last shot at this.

Mr. MOULTON. Mr. Secretary, you have detailed, and the chairman as well, how bringing our advisors down to a lower level will help on the military front. It sounds like the same thing is needed

on the political front. How confident—and I see a lot of nodding heads. How confident are you that our State Department can do that?

Secretary MATTIS. Congressman, it is not only our State Department. The NATO Special Civilian Representative—SCR there and his deputy and the other diplomats in the town of our framework—NATO Framework Nations, but also for example India, they are all working along these lines.

Mr. MOULTON. I understand that, Mr. Secretary. But how confident are you that our State Department can provide that support?

Secretary MATTIS. I am confident we get varsity people out there. Ambassador Bass is coming out of Turkey, this—

Mr. MOULTON. A lot of positions are unfilled right now. We just eliminated the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Is that helping, Mr. Secretary?

Secretary MATTIS. It—that has no effect on the intent that you are trying to highlight here. That is where the Ambassador and his staff, that is who does the yeoman—the heavy lifting of that kind of job. We also have other military—U.S. military officers in their ministries to build bridges across to each—the various ministry. We try to get the political concentration of effort—unity of effort that we need.

Mr. MOULTON. So, Mr. Secretary, are we actually pushing advisors farther down in the same way that we were doing on the military side of things?

Secretary MATTIS. I am confident we will be. We currently are doing that with NATO officers inside the ministry of interior, ministry of defense, and the intel agencies. As far as the other ones go, I believe—let me ask the chairman. He has been there as the commander on the ground in the past. But I will tell you that I have seen a new level of collaboration between Chief Executive Abdullah and President Ghani than I have seen in the past.

Mr. MOULTON. The bar is pretty low, but I appreciate that. Mr. Chairman.

General DUNFORD. Congressman, I mean, I think it is a fair question. And in—as part of the strategy, the State Department is tasked with coming up with a more robust approach. I would reemphasize one point and then talk about one that is aspirational. When we knew moving forward we were going to have a new strategy, we needed strong leadership in Kabul. Ambassador Bass actually was carefully hand-selected. He is coming out of Turkey. He has been there for 3 years. He has got an incredible background experience in Afghanistan.

And many of us—many of us spoke to him and encouraged him to accept this service, which is really what he has done. He has accepted this service in Kabul for 3 years. So it starts at the top, and I think we have the right diplomat that is going over to Kabul.

With regard to your other question, has the advisory effort on the political level been pushed down to where it needs to be? Not yet. And that has to be done in order for us to be successful and I know that is what Secretary Tillerson's intent is.

Mr. MOULTON. Thank you, gentlemen. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Mrs. Hartzler.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, gentlemen.

We are so glad that you are at the helm at this important time in our Nation's history, and in the life of Afghanistan.

I am so encouraged by a lot of the changes that you are instigating. I think it makes so much sense to have the strategy be condition-based, not just time-based or number-based.

And I have also been encouraged by what you shared earlier about making sure that every dollar that goes there is invested wisely.

Our Oversight and Investigation Subcommittee held a hearing recently dealing with the allegation that the Afghanists bought and perhaps wasted \$28 million dealing with their camouflage they chose for their uniforms.

And I was so encouraged at your memo, Mr. Secretary, afterwards, you know, directing that we bring to light the wasteful practices and make sure that everything is looked at and there is no waste.

So I am going to ask the question about another area, and that deals with just the assessment of the Afghan security forces. General Dunford, you had mentioned, and of course we talked about 300,000 troops there now and a lot of changes are taking place.

When I was in Afghanistan in 2011, I was struck by what I learned there about the difference in perceptions and the expectations of our military when we first went over there at the level of their education, level of their abilities, and we thought we were going to begin training at this point, but the reality was we had to go back here because of even the literacy rate was such that we had to start teaching them basic literacy before we could get them to this point and move forward.

And you said we are going to expand the air force as far as close air support. Could you just give a general assessment of where you think they are in their capabilities? Where is their literacy rate now? Where are the shortfalls in their capabilities? Where are they in building the air force and the close air support that we feel like they need?

General DUNFORD. Sure, Congresswoman. Let me start at the air force. So when you were there in 2011, I think they had a couple of small helicopters, MD-530s. They had some residual Mi-17s and they had a total of five Mi-3s. On any given day they might have been able to get one in the air.

Today, they've fielded 20 fixed-wing A-29 aircraft. They have fielded, I think on the order of about 20 MD-530s, which is small attack helicopters, with the plan to increase more. And we are in the process of transitioning from Mi-17s to UH-60s.

The first four UH-60s were delivered this month. The first two attack versions of the UH-60 will be delivered in January. And then between now and the next 7 years we will completely transition to a UH-60 model helicopter, which combined with the fixed-wing aircraft, the A-29 as well as the MD-530.

And then there is one other aircraft that is a smaller, light aircraft that conducts reconnaissance called the C-208.

So they have got a pretty robust air force that is growing right now. The most promising area of the air force has been the special mission wing, which supports their special operations.

And I can tell you from personal experience that the profiles that those pilots are flying are as sophisticated as the profiles that we typically fly on a routine basis. You know, and again, that is the result of many, many years of training. And this is the cream of the crop, there is no doubt. But there is some room for promise in the Afghan air force.

I think it is important, when you talk about lessons learned in 2011, in having an accurate assessment of Afghan capability, one of the things that the Secretary has directed is that our advisors are going to be the most mature, most competent, most experienced individuals we have.

And so what you will see are people that have actually been over there before and going back again on a repeated basis. So I would expect the advisors that will go in in 2018 will be people who have had experience in Afghanistan in the past. And so we will be starting from a known point in terms of their appreciation of culture, strengths and weaknesses, and so forth, and be better advisors.

One area that I think is significantly different in 2011 is leadership. And you know, in 2011 we were still dealing with the residual of a Soviet-informed army, that type of leadership.

This summer alone, as a result of President Ghani's decisions, the average age of the corps commanders was reduced 10 years between last spring and right now. He replaced five of the six corps commanders.

And so we really are now dealing with a group of individuals that have been trained, organized, and equipped and influenced by U.S. and coalition forces for over a decade.

The young lieutenants and captains that you met in 2011, those are now the kandak commanders and the brigade commanders.

And so, that is something that takes a long time. We say it takes 25 years to grow a division commander. It takes a long time. But the investment that we have made, bringing the Afghans to our schools and training them over years, now are starting to result in leaders being in the right place.

Mrs. HARTZLER. That is very encouraging. Thank you. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Hanabusa.

Ms. HANABUSA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary Mattis, General Dunford, thank you for being here.

Secretary Mattis, you talked about the new strategy, the R4+S. Is that strategy that you also buy into? Right. Is that something you support? The R4+S?

Secretary MATTIS. Absolutely.

Ms. HANABUSA. So can you tell me—I understood your description of what regionalizing is, but can you tell me what reconciliation means?

Secretary MATTIS. I can, Representative. What it means is that the Taliban decide to stop killing their fellow countrymen and women and sit down, as some of the small groups have, and start working with the Afghan government. They have got grievances, then bring them up through the normal processes that countries

have to resolve grievances, but no need for violence, no need to support transnational terrorists.

Ms. HANABUSA. So is this sort of linear? In other words, do we have to go through each of the Rs to get to the S, which is the sustained?

Secretary MATTIS. No—no, it is not. It is a great question. We are going to fight and talk at the same time. Already some groups have broken with the Taliban.

Furthermore, because the Taliban has lost some key leadership, there is internal fighting going on now, which distracts them from working against the Afghan government and against our NATO forces, our Afghan forces.

So this is not going to happen in a sequential, linear way. There will be—some of them will peel off early. Some will fight to the rugged end. But the bottom line is we will fight and talk at the same time.

Ms. HANABUSA. So is realign talking about the others, not just—you are not talking about our troops. When you talk about realign, you are talking about realigning, like the other terrorist organizations or other groups?

Secretary MATTIS. No, ma'am. We are talking on the realignment—realigning our forces to the main effort of bringing NATO support to the Afghan forces that have not had advisors before, and ensuring that the Afghan forces are made more capable to provide for their own defense.

Ms. HANABUSA. So the reinforce component of R-3, I think you said, is that the United States to reinforce by having more troops?

Secretary MATTIS. We will bring in more troops to extend the advisors to the other units that the chairman was saying are not right now getting advisors. But it is also Secretary Stoltenberg and myself going to other NATO and partner nations—NATO being the nations there in Europe; partners being ones like Georgia, Australia—and have them pick up more of the advisory duty, align more of their troops to advisor duty as well.

Ms. HANABUSA. So though we may not have more boots on the ground, so to speak, we do anticipate having more of our advisors or NATO advisors in Afghanistan in the future.

Secretary MATTIS. Yes, ma'am. There will be more boots on the ground. I mean, we are reinforcing. It is not to take over the fighting. It is not to supplant or substitute for the Afghan soldiers. It is to make certain that units that never had immediate access to NATO air support, intelligence support, this sort of thing, will now have it, making them more effective at fighting. But we are not taking over the fighting. We are enabling them.

Ms. HANABUSA. So, in your testimony, Mr. Secretary, you spoke a lot about the Taliban and how the—the basically lack of a better description, how the Taliban was such—doing everything so bad and it was an evil entity. Yet in the testimony of the general, he talks about defeating ISIS and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, and to ensure other terrorist groups are unable to launch attacks.

And then he ends with something I think you are talking about when you talk about reconciliation. And that Secretary Tillerson has recently outlined this entire effort is intended to put pressure on the Taliban and have them understand that they will not win

in the battlefield victory, so they will enter an Afghan-led peace process to end the conflict.

Is that the ultimate goal, that we will do away with ISIS and we will do away with Al Qaeda, but the Taliban is viewed almost like our future partner or the partner in peace in Afghanistan?

Secretary MATTIS. As you know, ma'am, the Taliban embraced Al Qaeda, supported them, and refused to break with them even after they attacked New York City and Washington, DC. So we go after the Taliban as providing the structure, so to speak, that other transnational groups have in fact used to conduct international attacks. I mean, you know what Al Qaeda has done. You know what ISIS has done; Haqqani in the area.

But the bottom line is we are going to go after Al Qaeda. We are going to go after ISIS. And if the Taliban wants to break with them and stop killing people and rejoin the political process, then we see reconciliation as the way we will end this war.

Ms. HANABUSA. Thank you. And I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Scott.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen, thanks for being here today.

General Dunford, you mentioned the A-29 mission. I am proud to tell you that that is Moody Air Force Base in Valdosta, Georgia, in my district. We are happy to have that mission there. I hope you will continue to expand it. I know that that mission is being utilized for other countries as well as Afghanistan, so thank you for your support of that and mentioning it.

You have talked briefly about this with General Coffman and Wittman and some others, but on page 3 of your testimony, you talk about the decisive point in moving—or the new approach that will have our most senior, capable, and operationally experienced leaders advising at the decisive point in Afghan operations.

Can you speak to—can you give any specific examples of where that has—that has made the difference?

General DUNFORD. Absolutely, Congressman. When we went through the failure analysis, the one thing that we identified was Afghan units that had coalition or U.S. advisors almost invariably were successful. So we have had—we call it persistent embedded, meaning they live and eat and they fight with the Afghan forces in support while they are fighting. And that is what the case was with special operations forces. So that has worked very well.

We have not had a commensurate effort with Afghan conventional forces. So when we talk about the decisive point, we are talking about continuing to make sure that at the lowest tactical level, this battalion-like organization of about 1,000 in the conventional forces, we actually have persistent embedded advisors that are—that is advisors that are there when they are actually in the fight.

And it has worked with special operations. It has worked in our previous experience before we drew down the force before 2014, when we had a fairly robust advisory effort with Afghan forces. And I was in Afghanistan during that period of time. They were successful.

Again, why were they successful? We facilitated delivery of aviation support. That was number one. And we continue to help them

develop their tactics, techniques, and procedures, and ability to plan, and help them mature their logistics.

All of which takes time. And so they are—they are more improved than they were in 2014, but I think they still need advisors at that level when they are in the fight. So I think we do have a pretty—a pretty good body of evidence that indicates this will make a difference.

Mr. SCOTT. If I may before I yield the remainder of my time, I know that one of the—one of the ISR [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance] platforms that we used in that area—moving target indicators, the JSTARS [Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System]. Up to and until a few weeks ago, I would say I was proud to support the Air Force in the recapitalization of that program. I continue to believe that we need to recapitalize that program.

I have concerns about the Air Force's commitment to that mission at this stage. I look forward to working with both of you to make sure that we maintain the capabilities that the JSTARS platform gives us. And I hope that—I hope that the two of you can support the continued recapitalization of that program.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I would yield the remainder of my time.

Gentlemen, I have a tremendous amount of respect for both of you. Thanks for your service.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Carbajal.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Secretary Mattis and General Dunford, more than 24,000 U.S. troops have been lost; more than 20,000 wounded, all with the price tag of over \$800 billion. I know both of you are all too familiar with these numbers.

After 16 years, you are asking the American people to endure more, more loss of life, more money, and without an expiration date. And for what?

Secretary Mattis, I believe in the strength and the capability of our military. I believe we have the most powerful military in the world today. However, I do not know if we have the will to fight this war to the end. Because I don't think there will ever be an end to this fight against terror.

This is not a war that can only be fought with troops. We are fighting against not one, but a number of worldwide networks. The American people are tired, our troops are tired, and our allies are tired. I believe the American people deserve to know why additional troops are being sent back to Afghanistan.

Secretary Mattis, you have to understand, I have to be able to go back to my district and explain to my constituents why they are sending their sons and daughters to Afghanistan once again.

Secretary Mattis, would you say we know who our enemy is? Reading over the "lessons learned report" by the inspector general report for Afghanistan reconstruction, it doesn't seem we knew ourselves or the enemy. For example, we were wasting precious taxpayer money imposing advanced technology to an illiterate and uneducated population without the appropriate training, expecting them to be prepared to fight.

According to—in the same report, the U.S. underappreciated key strategic-level threats, including the will and ability of the Taliban to continue to fight, sustained popular support for the Taliban in Afghanistan, insurgent sanctuary in Pakistan, eroding Afghan government legitimacy, and corruption in the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces.

Essentially, we didn't know our enemy. Have you considered the strategic-level threats this time around? And if so what are they?

Secretary MATTIS. Congressman, I believe the strategic-level threats are the ones we experienced most directly on 9/11. Problems in these kinds of areas do not stay in those areas. They—in a globalized world they come out.

So, the question I always ask myself before I walk into the President's office, if I am going to recommend that we deploy American troops where they can be killed is, does this contribution, does this commitment of our forces—contributing our forces to this fight contribute sufficiently to the well-being of the American people? We could lose people as a result. It has got to pass that standard.

I think we do know very well who this enemy is. He is an enemy that doesn't wear a uniform. He hides behind women and children. I recognize the difficulty of taking the country further into this war.

I first landed in Afghanistan in November 16 years ago, so I recognize the challenges you bring up about keeping the American people motivated and understanding of what this fight is all about. I believe it is necessary to defend what we believe in and to protect the freedoms we have so the next generation can enjoy them.

I don't believe we can ignore this. I think if we leave this region, we leave it at our peril, and I think we have a lot of people—even with all the confusion about our strategy over the last several years when we kept talking about, we are leaving, we are leaving, 39 nations out of 50 still stuck with us, I think hoping against hope we would come up with what they are now encouraged by, which is this strategy.

So we are not alone in this would be one of the first messages I would bring to your constituents, Congressman. With all respect to your constituents, they need to know we are not alone in this fight.

Is it tough? Was the society of the Afghan people completely shaken apart, torn apart by the Soviet invasion? Did that open the door for then what happened here in terms of the society I think you aptly described? Yes. But we deal with the ball where it lies right now, sir. We can't wish it away.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Gaetz.

Mr. GAETZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Mattis, I had recent occasion to visit with some of my constituents who have been serving in this theater when they returned home at Walter Reed, and I promised them that I would share with you their complete confidence in the President and their complete confidence in your leadership of the Department of Defense.

They were injured in a green-on-blue circumstance in which they were attempting to give training, advice, and assistance to the Af-

ghan forces. Can you speak to any new strategy that we have—any new tactics that we have to ensure that folks who are there rendering assistance on how to perform the mission don't then put themselves in an unnecessarily vulnerable situation?

Secretary MATTIS. This is probably one of the most difficult aspects of this war. We all recognize that treachery has been part of warfare since the beginning of time, but this aspect is especially difficult for us to understand or to embrace, and it certainly undercuts the sense of commitment, if this is what is going to happen.

So, let's get down to what are we doing about it. There is a very invasive counterintelligence program in which we vet the people that we are going to be training. Numerous people have been dismissed from the service—from the Afghan service because of it. We also maintain a guardian program where you have guards on our people who are giving classes in the event the counterintelligence program, like all of them, can't be perfect—we assume that.

We also have a very strong support element there in the Afghan government. They recognize that nothing is more corrosive to the support of the American and the democratic people from Europe and other democracies that are part of our 39 nations than this sort of treachery.

So, it has got our attention. The Taliban continue to try to infiltrate their way into the Afghan units, and we have been relatively successful at stopping them.

But, chairman, if there is anything I have not answered, you go ahead, please.

General DUNFORD. Congressman the only thing I would say we had a very high incidence of these in 2012 and 2013. In fact, at a point where I think it is fair to say it threatened the campaign.

And the measures that Secretary Mattis outlined were measures that have now matured over time—the counterintelligence effort, the training of our people to detect changes in behavior of the people that they are training with.

But the thing I believe is the most significant that I would just reemphasize, as Secretary Mattis highlighted, is the Afghan leadership owns this problem and they recognize that. They know that our ability to continue to provide the kind of training and support they need is based on them making sure that we—our people are secure. So, while we provide our own—what the Secretary describes as guardian angels, we also rely on the Afghan forces to create an environment within which we can get our mission done.

In my judgment, the Afghan leaders jumped in and the reason why we do have some incidents—and one is significant in the young folks that you have visited up at Walter Reed are suffering the consequences of that, but we have driven the level of these types of incidents down to a very low level. And we should recognize it for what it is—it is an enemy tactic designed to erode our will, and we have got to deal with it as such.

Mr. GAETZ. Thank you. And I absolutely appreciate the extent to which we have highlighted this as a priority with the Afghan government, because that is where we will likely get the intelligence that we need to minimize this risk.

Another area of feedback we have gotten frequently is that the deployment cycles that people are on can create circumstances

where someone goes and has a great relationship with a tribal leader, a partner, but then they are out, a new person is in. And that this confidence that you have spoken of throughout your testimony today can be eroded by some of those cycles.

Are there—is there any tactical change to that going forward in this new strategy?

Secretary MATTIS. We are trying—Congressman, we are trying to bring troops back on repeat tours. Now, that is—but that is more of a corporate memory than a personal relationship. And we recognize this challenge. At the same time, we need to keep our troops fresh. It is very wearing, as you know, to be in a combat zone where you keep your guard up all the time.

And somehow we have to sustain this, and we have a military that has got a pretty wide portfolio right now in terms of threats around the world. So we are trying to maintain a more veteran approach going back in. We are trying to do the kind of things that mean we are putting people into areas that they understand inherently, even if they don't know that specific village.

In some cases, we are able to get that kind of return actually to the same area again, but that is going to be very challenging as we go forward. So it is more how do we train our forces for it and how do we do the counterintelligence piece that allows for us to be dealing with people who want to work with us.

Mr. GAETZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Brown.

Mr. BROWN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, for your—making yourselves available to the House Armed Services Committee. Several weeks ago, President Trump outlined in very sketchy format a three-pronged strategy to Afghanistan. And I would like to ask you about two of those. One is the time-based to condition-based approach, and the other is to appoint advisors down to brigade level.

So starting with the first, and this is a preparatory question. Does the condition-based approach envision or contemplate—and I am not asking for a time; I am asking for does it contemplate a state where we withdraw all U.S. forces?

Secretary MATTIS. No, it does not. It implies bringing people, the number of people we have there down based on the standing-up of more capability and the maturing of the Afghan forces. There could be American advisors there 10 years from now, maybe a handful compared to today.

Mr. BROWN. Okay—follow-up. So while the military goal, as I understand it, is to provide that time and space for the Afghan government, the Afghan army to establish itself so it can provide for its own security, what are the nonmilitary efforts to address the corruption and poor leadership, the eroding security, the economic stagnation, the minimal foreign investment, and the soaring unemployment—all of which contribute to a climate in which the Taliban and other extremist groups can recruit and then conduct their activities?

Secretary MATTIS. Congressman, the corruption is, to our way of thinking, a strategic vulnerability that has to be addressed. President Ghani has got—has signed with us a compact of what we are going to do about it. It has to do with control of money. It has to

do with who they put into position. There is accountability. They just put a three-star general in jail, to show you that this is going to the very top. It is not like it is only the little guy who is being scooped up.

There is an accountability there that is going to shift the opportunity for this into a penalty box, not an opportunity. We are going to change that.

I think on the eroding security, the offensive actions by the enemy have now been pretty much blunted. They are down to isolated ambushes and IEDs [improvised explosive devices]. Some of the IEDs are large, high-profile IEDs. But they have been unable to sustain the kind of offensives they had last year where they were able to move in large groups. They get in large groups now, they understand our rules have changed and we are going to take them out.

So they have had to fragment and disaggregate more, which means they can't take over the district and provincial centers that our press was full of stories how they were proclaiming what they were going to do this year. They have been unable. They have been unfulfilled what they said they were going to do.

It is not that they are not dangerous. I mean, it is not that we are not going to have to increase the security there for the Afghan people. We will.

As far as investment goes, you will see India, for example, picking up a larger bit of investment. We are going to other nations about the development investments to try to get them to do more. And so far we have had some success in this. We will see it actually go into action probably by sometime late this winter, start seeing it.

But we are addressing each of these efforts that you have laid out with benchmarks so that we as much as possible can quantify the progress. We may not be able to quantify everything about it. Some of it is subjective, but we are trying to quantify what we are doing in each case so that we do not have an assumption that things are going to turn out well. We are going to have to make it turn out well.

Mr. BROWN. If I could just use the rest of my time to make this statement. I visited with Ambassador Llorens. And while he has got the largest embassy in the world, they are camped out in Kabul. You have asked for 4,000-plus more soldiers. They are going to go to the brigade level. You are already stretched too thin with advisors. You are going to go two levels down. You will be stretched that much further.

He is not going to get the force protection that he needs. And while I understand the President's concern about nation-building or trying to build Western-style institutions, nobody can help reestablish civil institutions and a regional economy better than the United States. Our military is the best in training foreign militaries, and it is our State Department, our USAID that does diplomacy and development better than any other nation.

So I would like—I had hoped that we could see more U.S. involvement in that nonmilitary effort.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Bacon.

Mr. BACON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank you both for being here. Thank you for your leadership. Our country is blessed to have you.

General Dunford, you commanded forces in Afghanistan in 2014. How has your thinking evolved since then, seen from your new perspective?

General DUNFORD. You know, to be honest with you, Congressman, to some extent we are going back to the future here a little bit. When we did the evaluation in 2013 and 2014 about what would be need in a post-2014 environment, we identified the advisory effort that would be necessary for the Afghans to be successful. We talked about the capability gaps, to include the aviation gap we have talked about here today; the logistics sustainability that wasn't yet in place; the intelligence capabilities they would need.

And then we made a decision to lift off and provide support at the corps level and the institutional level. So, we are now having a conversation that is not dissimilar from the conversation we had in 2000, 2013, and 2014 which was, to be successful, we need to have advisors, the right kind of advisors, at the right place, and we had to have sufficient aviation capability until the Afghan air force came online.

So, I am not sure my thinking has changed significantly so much, Congressman, as we actually now—and it is rare that we do—but we actually now have an opportunity to do something today, that—is the right thing.

Mr. BACON. Thank you. You may have touched on this, but with the votes, walking in and out, let me just clarify a point. It is often read that we think the Taliban have nominal control of roughly 40 percent of Afghanistan. Is that about an accurate number?

General DUNFORD. I think what General Nicholson talks about, Congressman, is the government clearly in control of somewhere between 60 and 70 percent, 10 percent is approximately contested. So I think it is a bit less than—than what you described. But I think that is probably less important than the populated areas—

Mr. BACON. Right.

General DUNFORD. And focus on that. And I think in that regard, the government is probably closer to 70 percent. And what the goal is for President Ghani is to get to at least 80 percent of the key populated areas in 4 years, which I believe is attainable.

Mr. BACON. That is better than what I was reading, so that is good—good to hear. Secretary Mattis, what would be your assessment if we pulled out of Afghanistan, as some want us to do. What do you think would happen within, say 2 years?

Secretary MATTIS. If we pulled out completely?

Mr. BACON. Yes, Sir.

Secretary MATTIS. Well, I think we would benefit the Taliban greatly. And the Taliban have shown that they will permit transnational terrorists. So ergo, basically what we saw on 9/11, I think we could anticipate happening again.

Mr. BACON. Absolutely. The Taliban were allied with Al Qaeda. Would you say they are still allied with Al Qaeda? I know the Taliban had been allied with Al Qaeda, or the—the close ties. I think it is fair to say they still have those close ties.

Secretary MATTIS. Oh, absolutely. We have encouraged them to break those ties. Our argument, when we went in, was with Al Qaeda. We encouraged them then to break with Al Qaeda. We didn't—they were not a transnational terrorist group, the Taliban themselves. But they would refuse to do so. And so, they chose to fight.

Mr. BACON. One last question. I think our emphasis seems to be on counterinsurgency, also training the Afghan forces. What would you say is the percentage of investment or effort that is being put on nation-building versus the counterinsurgency and training aspects?

Secretary MATTIS. Well, sir, if nation-building is writ large, certainly having security forces, and intelligence forces, and police forces help. They set the conditions for a nation to find its footing. They set the conditions for families to raise children, to have—to bring in—to go to farms, to go to jobs, you know, bring jobs in. So in that regard, we are setting the conditions for the Afghans to build a nation.

In that regard, there is what is called the donor nations. And those—everything, they have met several times over the years. They raised money for Afghanistan and countries like Japan and Afghanistan, so many more—United Kingdom, bring the money in for targeted efforts, whether it be to build a road or in order to get products to market before they spoil, that sort of thing. We are setting the conditions—

Mr. BACON. Right.

Secretary MATTIS [continuing]. For that sort of thing with the military campaign, the security campaign we are putting together here.

Mr. BACON. Well, thank you very much. And before I yield, I just say I share your assessment. If we pulled out, we would be back in 2 or 3 years, having to take out the Taliban and Al Qaeda and it would be a worse fight. So I applaud the President's strategy, your strategy to win this and to keep Taliban and Al Qaeda out of power. So thank you.

Secretary MATTIS. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Panetta.

Mr. PANETTA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Secretary, Mr. Chairman, thank you for being here. I appreciate that. I appreciate your opportunity—the opportunity to address you, and hear from you, and obviously appreciate your candor on these issues.

General Dunford, you mentioned counterterrorism in the region, in what you are doing. I was wondering, how much of this is being responded to with special operations forces? Obviously right now, we have about—from what I have read, about 8,000 in the world. And what I am hearing over and over is that the forces are stretched too thin.

Is that true and is that affecting our ability to deal with counterterrorism in Afghanistan? And are we still using the element of—the strategy that I saw, there in 2007 and 2008, where we were finding, fixing, finishing, and exploiting, is that still being utilized?

General DUNFORD. Congressman, the last part of your question is, yes. That methodology is still the same methodology that we use

to go after the enemy from a CT [counterterrorism] perspective. And I would say we have sufficient special operations forces to do the mission today.

But the issue you raise is a concern, that we are running them too hard and in some cases, maybe, are there missions that they are performing that could be done by other forces. And the Secretary, about 4 or 5 months ago, right after he came into office, asked us to make sure that as we were doing Global Force Management, meaning every day looking at the requirements of the combatant commanders, number one, we made sure that only if something required special operations forces, would they go to that force. And then, we looked to backfill certain assignments that were being filled by special operations forces with other capabilities. And for example, this advisory effort, the vast majority of the advisors that will be going in is a result of the plan that has been approved by the Secretary—our conventional forces, the Army and the Marine Corps will provide conventional forces to be able to provide that advisory effort.

Because we are sensitive to the fact that special operations forces are critical, not only to the counterterrorism fight but also to the Russia, China, Iran, North Korea fight as well. And getting the balance right, not only from a day-to-day engagement perspective, but making sure that they can train against the full range of missions that special operations require is something that we are very sensitive to, Congressman.

Mr. PANETTA. Understood. When—back in 2007, 2008 we were—well the FATA, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas were, to me, seemed kind of like the Wild West. And I remember the town of Wanna, in I think it was South Waziristan, kind of reminded me of the town of Tombstone. Is it still like that and can we be assured that Pakistan is going to be able to patrol and control those areas when it comes to breeding grounds for terrorists?

Secretary MATTIS. As you know, Congressman, the Federally Administered Tribal Area, the North-West Frontier has a long history of discontent—would be a polite way of describing it. But I would also say that since the partition, it is called the Federally Administered Tribal Areas for a reason. In other words, it is not a state.

And you understand that it has been an area that has been very hard for Pakistan to maintain the same kind of control as it has down in the settled areas, for example. But that said, they have been running some very strong operations up there. They have lost, as you know, many of their own troops in this fight.

And they have just completed one set of operations that moved against the border on several lines of effort. And those obviously had some of the effect of pushing people over into Afghanistan—enemy over there.

So 3 days ago, the chief of army staff from Pakistan flew into Kabul, and this is the first time I have heard of a visit actually creating some degree of optimism. And so we will see. There is reason for us to say there is a new day here. But it is too early for me to come in front of this committee and pronounce that with confidence.

I will fly in to Islamabad soon, after the Secretary of State is done, so as the lead for our foreign policy, I will fly in, and we will

continue to try to work with them cross-border operations against what can only be described as our common enemy. And we will see if we can make this work this time.

Mr. PANETTA. Thank you. Gentlemen, thank you. Mr. Chairman, I yield back. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Banks.

Mr. BANKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary Mattis, General Dunford, thank you for being here.

As an Afghanistan war veteran myself, I represent tens of thousands of Americans who have served there that want to know that our service and sacrifice meant something.

And that is why, Secretary Mattis, I applaud your work and the change of course in Afghanistan. That is why your change in strategy recently brought me great hope and optimism that we will turn the tide and fight the war to win it, rather than fight 14 separate 1-year wars that have resulted in what we see today.

I want to focus first, for a moment, on the specific mission of CSTC-A [Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan], and the over \$70 billion that we have spent in ANSF [Afghan National Security Forces] funding. And I know we have talked already about the wasted money on uniforms, but every week a different story piles up in a stack of stories that you can find by googling waste in Afghanistan.

From the headlines that I brought with me today, 43 percent of America's military weapons unaccounted for, Afghan forces lost \$700 million in U.S. ammo, U.S. unsure if Afghan intel service even works despite half a billion dollars in aid, \$28 million wasted on Afghan uniforms, wasted money on payroll, wasted money on construction. You get the point. The list goes on and on. And these aren't stories from 10 years ago; these are stories from the last couple of years.

So my first question is what—I know you have already talked about the general—the lessons learned. But what are we putting in place within the structure of CSTC-A? What type of process are we creating to raise the level of accountability on this investment that we are making in the Afghan National Police and the Afghan military?

General DUNFORD. Congressman, that is a great question. About 2012, maybe it was even as early as 2011, in order to develop Afghan capacity, we started to move money to a, what we called on budget, meaning we gave the money to the Afghans for them to manage. At one point, I think we had well over 70 percent of the money that we were giving to the Afghan forces that was on budget.

We have actually walked that back. Now less than 25 percent of the money is actually administered by the Afghan government; 75 percent is administered through us. And for that 25 percent, we have put in some rigorous conditionality—you talk about the lessons learned—rigorous conditionality to make sure that we have transparency.

And President Ghani, unlike his predecessor, has allowed us to get into the ministries where the money is being administered, check the books, be able to do an audit just as we would for, you know, on our own accounts. And I am confident in telling you this,

that the \$4 billion-plus that we provide to the Afghan security forces every year, our commander will have in CSTC-A, as his executive organization, will have visibility.

And I expect to be able to come back up to you and talk to you about the transparency and accountability that we have over those resources.

So we have learned some lessons, but I think one of the more significant ones is that we are now delivering capability and equipment, and they are not—they weren't quite ready for—to execute the entire budget and have the kind of same standards that you suggest—

Mr. BANKS. Thank you, General. As a follow-up to that, how do we know, today more than ever, after supplying 14 years of weapons and ammunition, vehicles, uniforms, that we are giving the Afghans what they need and not what they want?

General DUNFORD. Well, I think that is a constant process of refinement. But here is what I want to tell you—is the glimmers of hope. You know, we bought Stryker vehicles—those are being employed right now, and they actually have provided a competitive advantage to the Afghan forces over over their counterparts.

The aviation enterprise, actually, is a success story, and I think you—I don't know if you have been back recently, but I would hope, when you go back, you can see the Afghan air force in particular. So we delivered an A-29—it is an aircraft that is relatively simple to learn, simple to fly. As one of the Congressmen mentioned—that we bring the pilots back to Moody Air Force Base—they are going back, and they are being able to sustain that effort.

So I believe, right now, that the lessons learned over the last few years have highlighted for us what equipment works, what equipment doesn't work. And to be honest with you, we do need to improve the accountability of equipment, the maintenance procedures, and so forth. That is an area that the advisory effort is designed to address, as well.

Mr. BANKS. I have 30 seconds left. I wish I had 30 minutes.

But when we talk about rule of law in Afghanistan, it seems to me that one of the greatest inhibitors to rule of law is Vice President Dostum. What are we doing to prevent him from continuing to wreak havoc on the security—or on the rule of law situation in Afghanistan, as he returns to country and returns to his position?

Secretary MATTIS. I think the most important thing is we are reinforcing the positive elements in the country, and not leaving them to deal with these kinds of issues that Dostum represents on their own.

This is—we are looking at bringing in gendarmerie kind of police trainers—not from the U.S., but from those countries that maintain gendarmes, so that the police themselves are more capable of carrying out the rule of law.

It—you have got to have the right kind of police force. Then you need to have the right kind of courts. And again, there is nothing easy about it because of what happened to that society, what it has been through. But I think that the right thing to do is to reinforce the positive side and keep working against those who are disruptive.

And right now, we obviously are trying to work by, with, and through the Afghan government on it. But we register loud and clear the concern that that is, in terms of trying to get the rule of law, reduce the corruption, and get this country on the right track so we can draw down what we are doing and leave them more on their own.

Mr. BANKS. Thank you. Yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Suozzi.

Mr. SUOZZI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Secretary, General Dunford, thank you so much, again, for your service. You inspire tremendous confidence.

I traveled to Afghanistan in April of this year, and at the time, General Nicholson was making his request or—and logically supporting his idea that we should increase the number of troops by 3,000. And I publicly supported that effort with the understanding, though, that those troops would be used for force protection and to replace private contractors.

Are the troops being used for those purposes, or are they being used to implement this strategy of moving down lower into the brigades?

Secretary MATTIS. Both, Congressman, both. Obviously, some will be in force protection of those advisors that are out there. And certainly, we are going to make certain that, where we can bring in an Army unit coherent, rather than breaking it up and bringing in high-paid contractors—that was forced by the troop cap, and I am not condemning anyone who did it in the past, but it is not the way we want to go.

Mr. SUOZZI. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

So the problem of ungoverned areas—there is a problem on the Afghani side in Nangarhar province and other places where the troops would not take offensive action, as they more or less wait at checkpoints, and the Afghan army would do that.

And there is a problem on the Pakistani side. I met with the Pakistani ambassador about 4 months ago, and they said that they were starting to do more efforts in their ungoverned areas. You have affirmed that today.

And you said earlier in your testimony that all six corps are currently in offensive actions. Does that mean that they are now moving beyond their checkpoints and that they are moving out into these ungoverned areas?

Secretary MATTIS. It does. But let me be very specific—it means that in each of the corps areas they have offensives under way; that doesn't mean everyone is doing that. In some cases, they are simply holding their own, holding the district centers, but there are offensive actions in each area—in each corps area right now.

Mr. SUOZZI. Are we encouraging them to move into the ungoverned areas on their side of the border?

Secretary MATTIS. Principally we are encouraging them to hold and protect the populated areas, but at the same time—I was just in Nangarhar last Thursday, and they certainly have offensive actions underway in Nangarhar. And as you know, that is right along the border there.

Mr. SUOZZI. And another major initiative was to get our Air Force to train their air force how to coordinate better with their

military—with their army and their air force to coordinate better with each other. Is that happening? I will ask General Dunford.

General DUNFORD. Congressman, it absolutely is. You know, we have talked a lot today about the advisors at the brigade and the kandak level. We have an equally robust effort with the Afghan air force, where our very best and brightest airmen are over there training with them as well.

And the key is—you just hit on really, I think one of the key points we wanted to make today—is that the ability of the Afghan ground forces to integrate the Afghan air force is a key link.

And because we haven't had advisors down there at the level where that kind of coordination takes place, they haven't matured as fast as we want. One of the primary outcomes that we expect from our changed advisory posture is the Afghans being more effective in the ability to what we call integrate combined arms; that is, the artillery and air support they need to be successful in their maneuver.

Mr. SUOZZI. One thing—this is a separate question—I think that most Americans don't appreciate the difference between these transnational terrorists that operate out of Afghanistan that we are trying to constantly disrupt and the Taliban and how that is a completely different type of terrorist organization that is more focused on regional impact. Have the rules of engagement changed for the Taliban as part of this change in rules of engagement? Or have they only changed for the multinational terrorist organizations?

General DUNFORD. Congressman, when we—the authority that has been passed down to the commander by the President is that any individual or any group that threatens the Afghan government, threatens our mission, threatens U.S. forces. or threatens the coalition can be engaged. So, it is based on their behavior and what they are doing as opposed to what group they are a part of.

Mr. SUOZZI. So, our special forces will seek out members of the Taliban if we believe they are engaged in terrorist activities?

General DUNFORD. Our special operations forces will seek out groups or individuals that are actually threatening the mission or our people.

Mr. SUOZZI. Okay. Thank you very much. I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

We have now gone through all of the members who were here at the gavel, and we have already held the Secretary and the chairman longer than we had intended.

So, what I want to do to wind up is see if the remaining members have one 15-second question that we have not addressed yet—and I want to get them all out together and then give the Secretary and the chairman a chance to wind this up.

Ms. Cheney, did you have something that we have not yet touched on?

You do? Okay, 15 seconds.

Ms. CHENEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank both of you for being here, and thanks for allowing us to conduct our oversight obligations, but mostly thank you for reminding us that we have our own constitutional obligation, and that is to support, raise, maintain our Armed Forces.

And as often as you can this notion of the BCA, the extent to which the BCA is damaging us, we are in a position where I am completely dismayed as a new Member of Congress, at the extent to which there is agreement about the damage of the BCA and then people walk away and don't do anything about it.

And as we come up again to December 8th it is going to be crucial that we take this on. I can assure you both this is something we take seriously. We cannot fulfill our constitutional obligations with the BCA in place, and I want to thank you for raising it; thank you very much for being here today.

That is it, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. It was great. It was a little more than 15 seconds, but it was good.

Mrs. Davis.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And really quickly, my question was partly how do we avoid empowering the factions that grow up out of the voids that are often created as the government begins to, you know, take hold?

And are we at a point that we cannot use quantity as much as a metric but quality? And I am thinking about some of the work that has been done not just in the Afghan military but also among the women who are being trained for the Afghan police and for other jobs? Because they seem to have more capability than they are allowed to utilize. That takes security, but I am wondering where we are going with that.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Gabbard, did you have—

Ms. GABBARD. Briefly, so much of what has been discussed today and the justification for our continued open-ended presence in Afghanistan centers around preventing it from being a safe haven for terrorists who launch attacks against us.

The issue is that there is a long list of countries around the world who fall under this category of being a physical safe haven. What to speak of the phenomena of the internet now making it so that a physical safe haven is not even required for a terrorist to plan and launch an attack on us or on our interests or allies.

So, my question is a big one, and maybe you can follow up with me—but how do you justify the expenditure, the open-ended presence, this forever war in Afghanistan given the global threat that we are facing both physically and electronically?

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Mrs. Murphy.

Mrs. MURPHY. Just very quickly, in President Trump's speech in August he stated that one of the core pillars of his salvation strategy is to take a more aggressive approach towards managing our relationship with Pakistan. Specifically, he said, "We have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars. At the same time they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting, but that will have to change, and that will change immediately."

I think it is fair to say that our relationship with Pakistan is complicated, and I think it is important that we understand what Pakistan is doing and what they are not doing as it relates to our relationship. And that is why I am planning on introducing some legislation that would get the intel community to account for that. It was an idea that was proposed in the 2009 Af-Pak policy review.

But my question for you today is what tools does DOD currently have at its disposal to calibrate our security relationship with Pakistan and compel them to act in a way that is helpful rather than harmful to the United States?

The CHAIRMAN. And Mr. Khanna.

Mr. KHANNA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Very briefly—I don't know if you had a chance to see the Saudi ambassador's op-ed in the New York Times this morning. It would be the definition of propaganda and fake news. If we are going to be involved in Yemen against Al Qaeda, that makes complete sense, but could you assure the committee and the American people that we will not aid in any way the Saudi Arabia—Saudi Arabia in its war against the Houthis and in its gross human rights violations?

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you all for agreeing to do that.

Secretary MATTIS. Well, let me, Chairman, take a first stab at this and then bring the chairman in wherever he believes I missed something or has more. As far as the buildup of factions in Afghanistan as we get rid of terrorists in certain areas, so long as those factions become ones that are part of the political process, we will not get choosy about which ideas can come forward. That is for the Afghan people to sort out.

But I think, too, that we have seen enough progress in some parts of Afghanistan and the younger people are different based upon the education that is now reaching boys and girls, which is a big change. And I think that we will see the Afghan people choosing better which factions—hopefully political factions, they can support.

On quality versus quantity, we are also carrying that theme forward. In that regard, if a unit is—cannot fight well, if we find there are too many ghost soldiers, there is no requirement for that unit to be maintained on the rolls. Take the good soldiers who are in it, transfer them to an effective leader, an effective unit, and go with quality not quantity.

About the women who are serving and they continue to go through the training, obviously there is a cultural aspect to their service. That is a reality everywhere in the world. Every nation has its own culture. But at the same time, we would not be having even the discussion about women serving or reducing the number of Afghan units to only the quality ones if we were meeting here 10 years ago. So it is somewhat a challenge for us, but it is a good challenge to have as we go forward here.

On the havens and the concern there, the reason we shifted to a “by, with, and through” global approach to terrorism is exactly what you bring up. We could eventually pour our troops into so many ungoverned spaces, so many havens that we wouldn't have enough troops to go around.

So the way we invest our troops is, and I can show this to you in private—it is classified for obvious reasons. I can show you what it is we do for every troop invested, how many coalition troops do we have in North Africa with us, how many African troops do we have. If you go to Somalia, I can tell you what is going on there. If we go to the Korean Peninsula, I can show you what 28,000 or

whatever it is U.S. troops bring in terms of the 3 million-man South Korean army.

So what we are looking at as we look broadly across the world, how do we deal with the geographic havens in a way that we do things by, with, and through others.

Now on—you make a very good point about the virtual havens, about the internet and this sort of thing. Different problem set, needs a different response. And in that one, I think education is one of the most bulwarks against this taking over young people's hopes and dreams, and turning them into what we have seen in various places.

I would just tell you that exchange programs, USAID efforts to keep libraries open, virtual libraries open, as we promote ourselves and take our own side in this fight. But I think it has got to be addressed differently and perhaps that is not where the military should have the lead. That is addressed separately.

On the Pakistan relations and what tools do we have, we have diplomatic tools, diplomatic isolation by more and more nations that are growing—excuse me, joining together with Secretary Tillerson's Defeat ISIS campaign.

That, ma'am, is 69 different nations joined together to fight ISIS from all around the world, plus Arab League, NATO, European Union, and INTERPOL so that we can trace these foreign fighters as they try to go home or try to move across boundaries, this sort of thing.

All of this shows an increasing alliance against terrorism, and any nation that would then support it or be seen to providing havens would be running afoul of basically the most powerful economically and diplomatic, militarily powerful nation in the world. We also have economic tools from loan guarantees and working with other countries on what access people have with certain banking tools and this sort of thing.

As far as Yemen goes, we are engaged in antiterrorism campaigns only right now and where we work with the others, it is to reduce civilian casualties and it is to try to drive this or draw this into the U.N.-brokered peace negotiation to end the civil war there between the Houthis and the U.N.-recognized and Saudi-supported Hadi government.

Miss anything?

General DUNFORD. Mr. Secretary, I think you gave a very comprehensive answer to each of those questions.

Secretary MATTIS. We are all tired.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me—Mr. Secretary, let me just add one thing back to Ms. Cheney's point and it is really how we started, talking about stability. Stability of commitment and stability of funding—in addition to stability, adequacy is also necessary for funding. Many of us were very pleased to see the President at the U.N. endorse the level of funding that has already passed the House authorization, the House appropriation, and the Senate authorization bill.

Working together, I think it is essential that we get that across the finish line so that whether you are the Taliban or the Russians or the Chinese or whoever, you know that we are going to stand up and defend ourselves with adequate resources to do so. That is

a key part of our mission as well as working with you, so I appreciate that.

Thank you all for being here. I think this was very helpful. The hearing stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:10 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

OCTOBER 3, 2017

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

OCTOBER 3, 2017

**House Armed Services Committee
Chairman William “Mac” Thornberry
Opening Remarks
Full Committee Hearing on
U.S. Defense Strategy in South Asia
October 3, 2017**

The Committee welcomes the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff today for a hearing on Afghanistan and South Asia.

The Secretary had previously indicated that he would be back to discuss the Administration’s approach to this region once it was decided, and that is the topic for today. I understand that there are many issues facing the Department and this Committee, but in the interest of time and focus, I encourage Members to confine their question to today’s subject.

The United States officially launched Operation Enduring Freedom on October 7, 2001, just about exactly 16 years ago. Approximately, 2,400 American service members have lost their lives in the Afghanistan conflict. Another 20,000 or so have been wounded.

As this Administration formulates its policies, the American people and Members of Congress have some basic questions—questions such as:

Does American national security still warrant our military presence in Afghanistan?

Do we have a strategy to succeed or one to avoid failure?

How is this Administration’s approach different than previous approaches?

Can we ever be successful in the face of Afghan corruption and Pakistan’s duplicity?

Both Secretary Mattis and General Dunford have considerable personal experience with this conflict, and I believe that they are as authoritative as anyone in helping provide answers to our questions and to chart the way forward. But these fundamental issues do need to be discussed openly for the American people and for those who have sacrificed over the last 16 years.

That is the reason we are here today.

**House Armed Services Committee Ranking Member Adam Smith
Opening Remarks
Full Committee Hearing on U.S. “Defense Strategy in South Asia”
October 3, 2017**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important hearing. I also wish to welcome Secretary Mattis and General Dunford and to thank each of them for appearing today on short notice. Their insight will be instrumental to our evaluation of the Trump Administration’s new policy for Afghanistan and South Asia.

In August, the President announced that the United States would expand military efforts to stabilize Afghanistan as part of a broader regional security initiative. In doing so, he restated several familiar national security objectives, which include preventing Afghanistan from becoming a haven from which terrorist attacks can be staged, preventing weapons of mass destruction from falling into terrorist hands, and supporting Afghan establishment of a sustainable peace through political reconciliation. The President also confirmed that the U.S. military will continue to conduct counter terrorism operations in Afghanistan and to train, advise, and assist the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces in support of a comprehensive, whole-of-government approach to security in the region. None of that is new.

The policy changes that the President highlighted included reverting to a conditions-based approach to conducting military operations, expanding authorities for the U.S. military to conduct those operations, demanding that Pakistan demonstrate greater commitment to combatting terrorism, and encouraging India to play a more prominent role in Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, the Administration has not yet adequately explained how it will achieve its policy objectives. Simply committing to an intensified, open-ended application of U.S. military force does not constitute a sufficient plan for addressing the vast array of complex regional challenges. Yet, it remains unclear how increased military pressure will complement diplomatic and development efforts to provide sustainable security in the region.

Moreover, the Administration’s South Asia strategy raises numerous questions. For example, what are the new strategy’s inherent costs and risks? What authorities have been or will be granted? What conditions would be conducive to peace, security, and a reduced U.S. presence in Afghanistan? What qualifies as success, regarding American involvement in Afghanistan, beyond the counterterrorism context? How will this Administration manage our relationship with Pakistan differently to foster more productive cooperation? And, if, as the President has stated, “our commitment is not unlimited, and our support is not a blank check,” what conditions and limitations has the Administration placed on maintaining further U.S. involvement?

My hope is that this hearing will provide better detail as to how the Administration intends to implement its policy for Afghanistan and South Asia. After sixteen consecutive years of conflict in Afghanistan, we owe it to the American public to be exacting in our scrutiny.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to our witnesses' testimony.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

OCTOBER 3, 2017

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. LANGEVIN

Mr. LANGEVIN. I am encouraged that in his August 21st speech, the President seemed to arrive at the same conclusion many of us had previously reached—that, quote, “the consequences of a rapid exit are both predictable and unacceptable,” end quote—however, we are still light on details as to what makes this new strategy in Afghanistan and Asia so new, and we have seen nothing on paper. So what are the metrics you intend to use to define success or failure in Afghanistan moving forward, and what conditions will need to be met before considering a withdrawal of troops? Will this alter any rules of engagement in order to meet these metrics more swiftly?

Secretary MATTIS. The new South Asia Strategy is different than past approaches to Afghanistan in several important ways. One important difference is that the Department is not tied to arbitrary timelines for withdrawals. Our presence in Afghanistan is based on conditions on the ground. Another important difference is that we have a willing and increasingly capable partner in Afghanistan that is leading this fight. Our overarching goals in Afghanistan, which we expect Afghanistan to work towards to maintain our support—the conditions we will be measuring against—are as follows: terrorist groups cannot exploit sanctuaries in Afghanistan to plan and stage attacks against the U.S. homeland, U.S. citizens, or our allies and partners overseas; the Afghan government counters corruption and is viewed as a legitimate government by its citizens; the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) continue to professionalize and reduce corruption; the ANDSF secures more of the Afghan population and territory; regional actors support a stable Afghanistan; and the Afghan and Pakistani governments work together to secure the border. We seek a comprehensive political settlement that includes relevant parties, including the Taliban. We will adjust our personnel numbers as needed to help realize these goals. The Department is developing a framework to assess the effectiveness of the new strategy. This framework will help us understand progress and communicate to a number of audiences. The Department takes its responsibility to the U.S. public and Congress very seriously, and when possible to measure progress in tangible, quantifiable terms, we will do so. It is important to note, however, that many aspects of the strategy, including political stability, reconciliation, and our relationship with regional countries will be very difficult, if not impossible, to measure in real time. We will endeavor to provide you with the most accurate information. Regarding rules of engagement, I have already approved expanded authorities that allow for more tactical-level support to the ANDSF. The new authorities also remove certain restrictions that made it difficult for our military personnel to engage the enemy. Expanded authorities and more flexible U.S. advisory efforts will help the ANDSF increase pressure on militants and drive them towards a durable political settlement.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MS. SPEIER

Ms. SPEIER. This question is not related to Afghanistan, but I want to take this opportunity with both of you here to ask you to please respond for the record. And, given that I have yet to receive any answers to my questions for the record from when you were both here in June, I ask that you be prompt with your response.

On Sunday, the Washington Post reported on the case of Air Force Colonel Ronald Jobo, who sexually harassed and assaulted a female civilian subordinate. Colonel Jobo repeatedly said he wanted to have sex with her, tracked her movements and sent her recordings of him masturbating in the shower. Twice, he trapped her in the office, grabbed her arms and forcibly tried to kiss her. There is documentation to substantiate all of these charges, including texts, videos, and a photo of the bruises Jobo left on the woman’s arm. Colonel Jobo admitted to all of this.

However, Lieutenant General John Thompson, the senior officer in Jobo’s chain of command, decided against charging Jobo with abusive sexual contact, or any crime at all. Instead, General Thompson imposed nonjudicial punishment, allowing Jobo to retire at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, and will continue to collect a mili-

tary pension for the rest of his life. The Air Force tried to keep all this secret until the case was leaked to the media.

I want to know how a decision was made that non-judicial punishment was an appropriate remedy for such a clear-cut case of sexual harassment and physical assault.

Secretary MATTIS. I share your concern that appropriate justice is applied to cases of sexual harassment. The Secretary of the Air Force has ordered a review of this case and she will provide you an update upon completion.

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I want to know how a decision was made that non-judicial punishment was an appropriate remedy for such a clear-cut case of sexual harassment and physical assault.

General DUNFORD. The Joint Force is steadfast in its commitment to properly investigate and address all reports of sexual harassment and other misconduct—regardless of the rank or status of the offender or victim. Commanders have the legal and moral duty to hold their Service members accountable for their actions. With the advice of their staff judge advocates, commanders determine how to most appropriately address misconduct by considering the relevant circumstances and unique facts of each case. Detailed information on this case may be obtained from the Air Force as the Services are best positioned to provide specifics concerning their members' misconduct and the procedures and decisions associated with addressing such misconduct.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. SCOTT

Mr. SCOTT. The USAF briefed Congress earlier this summer indicating the Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS) Recap program was on schedule for award and funded.

Now, within 6 months of that briefing, the USAF is now saying the program does not support future warfighting needs and new alternative approaches to the mission need to be studied? I do not understand how the USAF has conducted an Analysis of Alternatives (AOA) and multiple studies since 2009 that validated the program approach and now at the 11th hour, plan to do another study to yet again evaluate alternatives. Please explain the logic of this action.

Secretary MATTIS. The Air Force continually assesses the evolving threat environments our adversaries present, and the risks these increasingly complex environments pose to current and future Programs of Record. These environments threaten our ability to provide battlespace awareness required in the highly contested operational environments of 2030 and beyond in the manner which we have in the past. To ensure the Joint Surveillance Attack Radar System (JSTARS) Recapitalization program is a prudent way forward, the Air Force is reviewing alternative approaches for providing Ground Moving Target Indicator and Battle Management Command and Control that could be more effective in highly contested environments. The source selection for an Engineering and Manufacturing Development for a follow-on contract to JSTARS is ongoing. If it is determined that JSTARS Recapitalization is the best way forward, source selection, which began in March 2017, is projected to be completed by the end of Fiscal Year 2018.

Mr. SCOTT. The USAF has been telling Congress that JSTARS Recap is a priority with validated Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) requirements with less than 5% of airborne Ground Moving Target Indicator (GMTI) mission requirements from the COCOMS being fulfilled and yet, the USAF is now floating the idea

of cancelling the Recap program? I would like to understand the logic behind this decision, why it is happening at this point in this program, and how using the alternative assets General Holmes, the commander of Air Combat Command (ACC), alluded to in his statements will satisfy COCOM needs and increase meeting the validated JROC requirements.

Secretary MATTIS and General DUNFORD. Concerns about the value of Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System Recapitalization in a changing threat environment have motivated the Air Force to reassess its investment priorities. The Combatant Commands and Joint Staff are reviewing potential capabilities and alternatives under consideration by the Air Force.

Mr. SCOTT. For the last 5 years, the USAF has asked us to support this critical national mission area and we have done just that, but now they are saying it is no longer needed due to the new threat? Please explain to us how other assets support the USAF 2030 roadmap if the JSTARS Recap weapon system is not survivable in that environment? Is it your view that the United States will need to replace every weapon system in the USAF inventory, to include Compass Call cross-deck and E-2 Hawkeye aircraft, because of this new threat over the next 10 years? If yes, what is the DOD strategy to execute this?

Secretary MATTIS and General DUNFORD. The unique capabilities and roles of any individual system mean that any decisions about Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System Recapitalization would not necessarily be applicable to other platforms. Our potential adversaries' intent to deny our access to their battlespace requires us to carefully study the right mix of capabilities for command and control of our forces in the future.

Mr. SCOTT. The USAF has discussed using an alternative mix of manned and unmanned assets to perform the E-8C mission in lieu of pursuing JSTARS Recap. Do the COCOMS or the Joint Staff concur with this assessment and strategy?

General DUNFORD. The Combatant Commands and Joint Staff will assess the ability of alternative architectures to meet joint requirements as these alternatives mature.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. MOULTON

Mr. MOULTON. Chairman Dunford indicated in his answer to Congressman Moulton's question as to whether State Department political engagements with Afghan governmental and tribal leaders are being "pushed down to lower levels" commensurate with our military advise and assist mission—he replied "not yet." What aspects of the Joint effort can be better resourced to leverage collaboration between DOD and State Department efforts on ensuring Afghan governmental institutions are able to govern, provide citizen security, and eliminate corruption?

Secretary MATTIS. The President's South Asia Strategy is a whole-of-government effort. The Department of Defense, Department of State, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and other departments and agencies must be appropriately authorized and resourced to implement the new strategy. U.S. implementation efforts include: supporting Afghan government efforts to promote economic development, health, and education; combatting corruption and the narcotics trade; and strengthening the Afghan government's capacity to deliver public services. I defer to the Department of State and USAID on their specific resource requirements and their approach to support grass roots political engagements. Resolute Support and the U.S. Embassy in Kabul are working closely with each other and with the Afghan Ministries of Defense and Interior in a process known as the "Kabul Compact." The Compact, completed in August 2017, establishes a series of benchmarks to monitor and measure Afghan progress in four main areas: governance, economic development, the peace process, and security. We have made it clear to the Afghans that they must weed out corrupt officials from the military and government, and President Ghani has recently launched very promising anti-corruption reforms. We have also begun a new phase of the fight against the Taliban by going after their narcotics trade, which directly funds their insurgency.

Mr. MOULTON. In response to a question from Congressman Moulton, Secretary Mattis stated that the administration's elimination of the Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (S/RAP) has "not impacted" regional political engagement—yet this office was specifically designed to better coordinate whole-of-government efforts. What office or high-level official is charged with executing the regional political strategy the Trump White House and Secretary Mattis have outlined? How can the State Department and Defense Departments be best resourced and positioned to advance this regional political dialogue?

Secretary MATTIS. There is no single office or official in charge of implementing the South Asia Strategy. The strategy flows from the White House down to all relevant stakeholders, and we endeavor at every level to make sure our whole of government efforts are synchronized. With the dissolution of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (SRAP) office, the Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs assumed the SRAP's function, and the departments work together to implement the South Asia Strategy. I cannot speak to resourcing the State Department, but I have previously noted that it is imperative that Congress pass a budget and not rely on continuing resolutions. It is difficult for any Department or Secretary to carry out our shared mission without proper and predictable funding.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MS. ROSEN

Ms. ROSEN. Secretary Mattis, what is the status of reconciliation efforts with the Taliban and how does that status affect the security environment in Afghanistan and the Afghan unity government?

Secretary MATTIS. Reconciliation is a State Department-led effort the Defense Department supports. The security environment in Afghanistan is improving as we continue to train, advise, and assist the Ministries of Defense and Interior. As the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) get stronger and more capable, the Taliban will realize they cannot wait us out, and they cannot escape the pressure of the ANDSF. The ultimate goal of our military efforts is to force the Taliban to recognize it cannot win on the battlefield, and must turn instead towards a negotiated political settlement with the Afghan government. We remain committed to maintain the unity of the government of Afghanistan as we drive towards an ultimate peace settlement.

Ms. ROSEN. Secretary Mattis, what specific demands will the United States make of Pakistan? Why do we expect Pakistan to change behavior now, after 16 years of conflict in Afghanistan?

Secretary MATTIS. The United States desires a pragmatic partnership with Pakistan that serves our mutual interests; however, Pakistan must change its behavior. The Department considers a variety of tools, including diplomatic and economic means, to expand our cooperation where our interests converge and to advance our interests in areas of divergence. Our approach to Pakistan is designed to demonstrate to Pakistan where its interests converge with the interests of the international community.

Ms. ROSEN. Secretary Mattis, our new strategy in Afghanistan will no longer include nation building. Will the U.S. continue to provide diplomatic and foreign aid support to help bring about a political solution to the conflict, in order to facilitate conditions that would allow for a responsible U.S. military withdrawal to be possible?

Secretary MATTIS. The United States is in Afghanistan to make the U.S. homeland, U.S. citizens, and our allies and partners safer, not to nation build. As the President stated in his August 21 address, a fundamental pillar of the new South Asia Strategy is the integration of all instruments of U.S. power—diplomatic, economic, and military—toward a successful outcome. Therefore, the strategy does include the use of diplomacy in support of a political settlement and foreign aid to facilitate economic growth and decrease Afghanistan's reliance on donor assistance. I defer to the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development for details on these efforts. The Defense Department is responsible for training, advising, and assisting the Afghan forces, as well as for a small amount of counterterrorism missions, all designed to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table with the Afghan government.

Ms. ROSEN. General Dunford, a recent SIGAR publication on U.S. efforts to train the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces painted a bleak picture of our ability to build a sustainable and capable force. Are you confident that the United States is making progress toward building a capable force in Afghanistan?

General DUNFORD. I'm confident our efforts will drive progress building Afghan capacity to provide security in their country. We continue to see improvement in many areas of the Afghan forces, notably the Afghan Special Security Forces and the Afghan Air Force. Our previous efforts helped build the foundation to enhance Afghan capability to provide security for their country. The new South Asia Strategy accelerates those efforts, aligns them with President Ghani's Roadmap, and ensures synergy with our broader regional objectives. We will support President Ghani's doubling of the Afghan Special Security Forces, aligning our efforts with this expansion and providing robust tactical level advising to their forces, exploiting the

unique capability Special Forces bring to the fight. We will also support President Ghani's efforts to expand and modernize the Afghan Air Force. A sustainable Afghan Air Force that can integrate with Afghan National Army ground operations is a critical component of Afghan stabilization efforts and our long-term strategy. It will take time to fully mature this capability, but our efforts with the Afghan Air Force are already contributing on the battlefield, to include increased special mission wing support to counter-narcotics and counterterrorism missions as part of the summer 2017 campaign. Morale remains high and Afghan Air Force attrition is consistently less than 1 percent of the force. By the end of 2020, their fleet will consist of over 200 aircraft. In parallel, Afghan maintenance capability continues to mature, and this year they were able to maintain their Mi-17s and C-208s with limited to no coalition or contract logistics support. The SIGAR report noted introduction of the A-29 aircraft and associated pilot training as an example where the United States had succeeded. We're expecting similar success with the introduction of the UH-60 Blackhawk, the first of which arrived in September and are already being used to train Afghan aircrews in Afghanistan.

