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HEARING

ON

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

AND

OVERSIGHT OF PREVIOUSLY AUTHORIZED PROGRAMS

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

FULL COMMITTEE HEARING

ON

BUDGET REQUEST FROM THE U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

HEARING HELD
APRIL 18, 2007

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CONTENTS

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF HEARINGS

2007

Page

HEARING:

Wednesday, April 18, 2007, Fiscal Year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act—Budget Request from the U.S. Central Command 1

APPENDIX:

Wednesday, April 18, 2007 65

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18, 2007

FISCAL YEAR 2008 NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT—BUDGET REQUEST FROM THE U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

STATEMENTS PRESENTED BY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

Duncan, Hon. Duncan, a Representative from California, Ranking Member, Committee on Armed Services 3

Skelton, Hon. Ike, a Representative from Missouri, Chairman, Committee on Armed Services 1

WITNESSES

Fallon, Adm. William J., Commander, U.S. Central Command, U.S. Navy 4

APPENDIX

PREPARED STATEMENTS:

Fallon, Adm. William J. 69

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD:

[There were no Documents submitted.]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD:

Ms. Bordallo 96
Ms. Giffords 97
Mr. Loebsack 97
Mr. Meehan 95
Mr. Skelton 95
Mr. Wilson 97

FISCAL YEAR 2008 NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT—BUDGET REQUEST FROM THE U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, Wednesday, April 18, 2007.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 9:01 a.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ike Skelton (chairman of the committee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. IKE SKELTON, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM MISSOURI, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The CHAIRMAN. Admiral Fallon, we welcome you and again congratulate you on your new position. You have done an outstanding job in the Pacific, and now we give you another part of the world. We appreciate your appearing before us.

We want to thank you for taking on your new challenge and also take a moment to thank those troops of ours who are under your command for their sacrifice and their hard work. We certainly owe them a great debt.

And I am positive that most of the members present today will ask you about Afghanistan and Iraq, and I certainly have questions. But hopefully we will not lose sight of the operations in other parts of your area of responsibility (AOR).

We would like to know what is going on in the Horn of Africa, Somalia, other ongoing regional engagements of the Central Command.

Spend some time, if you don't mind, talking about Iran, its role in Iraq, the nuclear program, how we can best deal with that country in going forward.

Please take a moment to talk about the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), the attacks on our ally, Turkey, and the risk of serious conflict there.

And members have had a long interest in the situation in Darfur and would appreciate an update on that horrible, horrible situation.

As we go through the hearing, we would appreciate any thoughts you might have on the growth of extremism in the Middle East.

I refer to Afghanistan as our forgotten war. We have a real chance of success there and we have a vital interest at stake. But we must not underestimate the challenges that are there, ranging from a possible spring offensive to record narcotics production.

How can we best address the problems to maximize our chances of success? And I have as a major worry of mine, Admiral, North

Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) living up to its commitments both in numbers and in what they are limited—in at least some of the countries, limited in doing.

I am so concerned that if NATO is seen as a failure there, what that would do to the NATO organization back in Europe.

Turning to Iraq, recently Muqtada al Sadr's allies in the Iraqi cabinet resigned. Some may say that is a welcome development. But we would be interested in having your thoughts about that.

American soldiers have spent four years heroically fighting in Iraq, who we are not able—in Iraq's civil war, and we should not be fighting it for them. The Iraqis must take steps to end their sectarian violence while we begin to reorient our efforts to training the Iraqi troops, fighting terrorism and protecting Americans.

Iraq's government must make a serious effort to keep its commitments to meet the benchmarks their president mentioned and what our President mentioned in January.

If they do not begin to do so seriously and address the de-Baathification process, pass an oil law, reform their constitution, hold local and provincial elections, take other steps they promised to take, the sectarian violence will obviously continue.

And we cannot simply keep the same number of troops we have in Iraq for much longer without breaking the Army, if it is not already broken. I am terribly concerned about that.

That brings me to my last comment, Admiral. I mentioned several of the challenges and conflicts in your area of operations that we can discuss. And we could spend hours talking about the potential flash points in your old AOR in the Pacific Command.

Many threats and possible sources of military conflict in the world, including the ones we can't see. I have been blessed to be in Congress 30 years. And during that 30 years, according to the Library of Congress, our country has used force 12 times—those actions were predicted years in advance. We cannot continue to take strategic risks without paying for it.

We must not allow our Army to be broken because of a policy, a misguided policy, fighting someone else's civil war. We have important interests in the Middle East and elsewhere, and we must protect them to continue to help our allies.

Admiral, my first year in law school, my roommate, who later became a judge, a longtime judge, in Brookfield, Missouri, was called to the Pusan Perimeter after he had graduated from college and before he went to law school. And that was a very unhappy Task Force Smith situation.

I don't want ever to see that again. And that is what worries me about the readiness of our military, not just today but for the future, and that is what is key to the whole problem of the days ahead.

So we thank you for being with us.

And I welcome the statement of our colleague, my friend, Mr. Hunter, ranking member.

STATEMENT OF HON. DUNCAN HUNTER, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM CALIFORNIA, RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. HUNTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for holding this hearing today.

And, Admiral Fallon, to you and your team, thanks for being here and sharing some time with us.

And, Mr. Chairman, I have reviewed those tough days when that—really, a third-rate military pushed us down the Korean Peninsula, and we had the difficult times in the Osan Pass and the Pusan Perimeter.

Mr. Chairman, I am reminded of one other thing, though, and that is that over the last six years we have more than doubled the precision firepower in this country that we have ready to utilize at any place in the world.

And so for those who think that we are not capable of reacting to a crisis somewhere else in the world, I would say don't bet your life on it, because you are going to lose.

Admiral, thank you for being here, and as you know, we have—I know you have had a thorough discussion with lots of other folks here in Washington, D.C.

I want to go directly to what I think is a key for a successful turnover of the security apparatus in Iraq, and that is a capable military force that is combat-tested and accountable to its civilian leadership.

And toward these ends, you may be aware that I forwarded to President Bush a recommendation to ensure that all 129 Iraqi battalions that are presently trained and equipped experience what I would call combat tours in hotspot areas like Baghdad to grow and validate their capabilities.

And this plan would involve implementing a rotation schedule that requires every Iraqi combat battalion to participate in a three-month combat rotation, to develop unit cohesion, leadership, confidence, capabilities in the chain of command.

Of course, we understand there are a number of battalions that have been in contentious zones in Baghdad, and in Anbar province, and the Sunni Triangle and other places and have a fairly extensive combat record at this point, but there are a number of them that do not have them.

And as we have discussed earlier, I think it is key to our success to rotate those guys in, get them their combat rotation, validate the leadership from top to bottom, and at that point they are capable of displacing American forces on the battlefield.

Along with that, I think we need to identify enabling capabilities that they have to develop, and I am sure that we are working on that right now.

And perhaps neighboring countries and coalition members could provide some support with respect to these enablers, especially in the medical area.

So I am interested in your thoughts on this plan. It is not complex. It simply involves doing what any military must do to become proficient, and that is to operate, undertake military operations.

And I know you are concerned about that, too, as is General Petraeus. So please comment on that, if you could, when you get to your comments.

I would also like to know about your insights, especially in your former role, with respect to current and planned naval presence in this region and how that might act as a deterrent to Iranian aggression. So if you could speak to that, that would also be, I think, very valuable.

And last, with respect to Afghanistan, I would appreciate your advice on how to create a sustainable alternative to opium as a cash crop.

And I know that one of our plans is to substitute out opium and to substitute in orchard crops, and orchards that could sustain an economic income for the farmers who heretofore have been developing opium crops.

And I would like to know how that plan is going, how that program is going. I know we have got a number of large nurseries that we have developed over in Afghanistan. We worked with the tribal leaders and with the populace to displace the opium crops with orchard operations.

I would like to know how that is going, because in my estimation that would appear to be one of the valuable, sustainable ways of permanently displacing opium.

Farmers are probably not going to cut down an orchard of 5- and 10- and 15-year-old trees to grow a one-time opium cash crop. So talk to us a little bit about that, if you could.

So finally, Admiral, we members of Congress appreciate all that you and your fellow service members and your families sacrifice to protect American national security interests around the world. Please know that you have our enormous gratitude.

And finally, Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this very important hearing on the crucial issue of the next several years. But thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I look forward to the remarks of our guest.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have had a national tragedy at Virginia Tech just recently, and I would like to ask our committee just for a moment to pause for a moment and pay tribute to those victims. Thank you.

Admiral Fallon, there have been a number of recent press reports—and in your comments today, I hope you would include something about the so-called war czar in your statement.

The floor is yours.

STATEMENT OF ADM. WILLIAM J. FALLON, COMMANDER, U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND, U.S. NAVY

Admiral FALLON. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Skelton, distinguished members, it is an honor to be back here again. It seems like just yesterday—it has actually been about a month.

But in my new responsibility here at CENTCOM, the real honor is to be able to represent the many, many thousands of men and women in uniform and those civilians that support them that are

serving so admirably throughout this region, which is challenging from one end to the other, for a number of reasons.

There is lots to do. I have tried my best to, in my written testimony, give you what I believe is my most accurate assessment of how things really are, based on a couple of weeks of observation and questioning and visits.

I took over about a month ago. I spent about three weeks out in the region visiting Iraq, Afghanistan and particularly the Gulf countries, and then Pakistan and Egypt and Jordan, to try to form my first impressions.

There are many things—you have brought up a number of issues already this morning, with the chairman and Mr. Hunter.

And so I think rather than give another dissertation, what I would like to do is just tell you that what I have done to date is, first off, to gather my staff and to gather a group of people from throughout the region who have various backgrounds and interests and locked ourselves up for about one and a half days.

And we pondered what it is we have on our plates and what it is we think we ought to be doing and why, took a look at the mission that Central Command had been operating under, and we set about trying to make sure we were focused on those things that were most important.

And from that, I have distilled five areas in which I want our people to work and have given them the guidance that if what they are doing doesn't fit into these areas, or if they think that we may have missed something, let me know, but if they are not in these areas then they probably ought not be doing it, and get yourselves redirected.

The areas are somewhat pretty obvious—Iraq, Afghanistan. I want to work on degrading the violent extremist networks, which are running throughout this region and to other parts of the world, because I think that a couple of these countries, particularly Iraq and Afghanistan, are really focal points for the terrorist networks.

The other area I would like to work on is with the neighborhood. I don't believe that there is really a solution to Iraq that is just internal to that country, that it is going to involve the neighboring nations.

And I am working hard to try to understand their perspectives and then get them to contribute to the stability not only in that country but in the region, which I think is very important for this country and the world in the long term.

And the last area would be to look at our posture, the way we have our forces arrayed right now, with an eye toward the future, and to see if, in fact, we are appropriately positioned.

And an enduring issue is the readiness and training of our forces and how we are doing in that.

So as we address these things, I will tell you that my initial impression of Iraq is we have got a lot of work to do. Whatever went on in the past is what it is. I am working from now forward.

I believe that the things that I see on a daily basis give me some cause for optimism, but I will tell you that there is hardly a week goes by—certainly, almost a day that doesn't go by—without some major event that also causes us to lose ground.

And so we are in the process of making a lot of change on the ground in Iraq. The surge of forces is one thing, but what they are doing is more important to me.

We have about half of the additional troops that are headed to the region actually in place right now. The rest are in some degree of movement toward the theater.

We have a lot of other changes that have taken place. We have got new leaders on the ground, both our ambassador and our leader in the military forces, General Petraeus.

We have a number of new initiatives by the interagency that are beginning to come into play.

And so as we pull these things together, I am acutely interested in figuring out how these things are going to work together and how we are going to be able to accurately measure and assess the progress that will be made or won't be made as we move forward.

So my summary is that I am guardedly optimistic, and I am very, very interested in the detail of how we go forward.

Afghanistan—different story altogether. Probably the biggest thing, the most encouraging thing, that I find across the board in that country is that the vast majority of the people there openly welcome us.

They are happy to have us there. They are interested in a better life, and there is an awful lot to do, as you know, beginning with just the basic literacy in the country, which is about one-third of the population.

And so there is an awful lot to do, but when you have the kind of open welcome that our folks have received, that is a pretty good place to start. So we can talk about that in a number of areas.

The rest of the neighborhood is not exactly benign. There are challenges in virtually every country in this region—no surprise to you.

You have mentioned some already—the Sudan. It just goes from one end to the other. But we are going to take those in turn.

I think that what I will do is go back and touch on a couple of the things that the chairman and Mr. Hunter have already brought up and at least kind of get those in play, and then I will turn it over to you for your questions.

First, regarding, Afghanistan and the NATO participation, my assessment here is that this is a very good idea. The theory is terrific. It remains to be seen just how much we are going to get out of this.

The idea is that NATO and the vast capabilities of this alliance be asked to play a role in helping this country get back into a position of stability and security.

If they didn't do it, then we would either—we would be faced, I think, with two choices, either it wouldn't get done, or we would end up trying to do it with more of our people.

So there are thousands of NATO troops and other personnel on the ground working the issue. There are challenges.

General McNeill, our commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) there, is a U.S. general, as you know. He is working for the NATO command. He is on record as asking the alliance in Brussels for additional assets.

He needs them not only in terms of military forces and capabilities, such as rotary wing lift to move these forces in the field, but he also needs some help in the civilian world.

There are a lot of slots that have been rogered up for, in military parlance. The nations have said they will provide. But as yet, there are lots of folks who have yet to appear on the ground. And this is really important if it is going to move forward.

The question was asked about Muqtada al Sadr and the influence he may or may not have inside of Iraq. This is a guy that is pretty difficult to understand for us. He holds clearly a large amount of influence within segments of the Iraqi population.

But of late, he has been absent; by all accounts, appears to be in Iran. And his followers, some of whom are particularly nasty—the militia—the acronym is the JAM, the Jaish al Mahdi—are certainly not people that are playing a constructive role in this country of Iraq.

Sadr has issued a number of proclamations, none of which have been helpful to the coalition or, I believe, to the greater government of Iraq, a very self-centered and—but what I find interesting is that the impact of these statements appears to be maybe less than some might have feared or given him credit for.

We have not, in the Baghdad security plan and its implementation in and around the capital city—we have not seen an overwhelming resistance, at least to date, from the JAM.

They are certainly attacking our forces sporadically, but we have not seen what there appeared to be at one time a potential for, and that is a mass uprising against our forces.

There are probably lots of reasons for this, and one of them is that a lot of people in this country have clearly gotten very tired of the sectarian violence, the murder, mayhem and chaos that are reigning every day.

And so we have people in leadership positions, such as the mayor of Baghdad or of Sadr City within Baghdad, who have stood up and said it is time to figure out a better way than just fighting everybody. Of course, for his trouble, he was hit with an assassination attempt.

But the kind of statements that the leaders must make in standing up to the terrorists, I think, is essential if we are going to make progress.

A little bit about readiness, Mr. Chairman. I am really interested in readiness of our forces. I think you know that from a long history of working with me.

I watch this every day. I will tell you honestly that the one area in which I am focused particularly is on the mid-level leadership, particularly of our ground forces, the Army and Marine Corps, the senior and mid-grade non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and our junior and mid-grade officers, because these are the people that keep going back for repetitive tours.

We have lots of young folks—and aren't we blessed to have them?—volunteering to come into the services still in large numbers, but it is these key leaders that are ones that I am concerned about, because of the importance of their task and the things they do.

We would not be able to do anything in this world without their particular expertise and dedication. And so I am acutely sensitive to this and will promise you I am going to watch it very carefully.

The business of the Iraqi security forces and their coming along to accept responsibilities—as we would like to have them take over the lead not only in small areas but throughout this country, so that we can then withdraw the footprint that we have now and revert to a different role in this country—clearly, one of our key objectives. It is a mixed bag to date.

Chairman Hunter, I take your point. And one of the thing that in my discussions with General Petraeus recently—were to try to get a better look at the leadership of the Iraqi security forces, to see just how we are doing with those that are charged with leading these battalions and other units in the field.

We are seeing some good examples of people doing the right thing and leading their troops, particularly in a couple of recent skirmishes, where the Iraqi security forces have given a good accounting of themselves. And this, of course, is what we would like to see replicated.

I think we are doing a lot better with the army, and that is really the area that we want to focus in, than the police. That is a different story. I could probably answer a question or two on that.

But we are focused on it, and the command, MNSTCI, the acronym, the multinational training organization, is one that I plan to visit when I leave here this afternoon and head over there. I am going to spend the full day with them.

And I want to actually go around—I have asked to actually sit and meet and watch what goes on with the Iraqi forces so I can get my own sense of how we are doing.

The last thing, it is the opium business in Afghanistan. This is opium harvest season, I am told, and that is probably one of the reasons why the Taliban have been relatively quiet in the last couple of weeks, because they tell me they are busy in the fields harvesting their crops.

It is painful to watch this, because the impact of this criminal activity runs throughout the country, and I suspect it is one of the reasons life is challenging in Afghanistan, because it appears that at every level, from the growers, the farmers, on up through higher levels, there is some degree of gain from this illicit trade.

However well and desirous it would be to me, and I am sure to you, to get rid of this as the main line of the economy in this country, I think we have got to come up with a realistic alternative.

Mr. Hunter, I have heard of the orchard proposal, and I have actually seen a couple of examples of this in the valleys there. What I don't know is how viable this is as a realistic major muscle mover in the economy.

I suspect that one of the challenges—in fact, I have been told that one of the biggest challenges—is actually getting this stuff to market.

But to that end, one of the highest priorities in development in the country is the business of extending the highway network, and particularly this ring road, which everybody that I have talked to from President Karzai on down tells me is absolutely essential to the economic future of this country.

So I don't have an answer, to tell you quite frankly, on what is really the best solution, if there is one. But I am very interested in it, as well as you.

I think I will end it there. And, Mr. Chairman, back to you, sir, for questions from the committee. Thanks again for the opportunity to be here.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Fallon can be found in the Appendix on page 69.]

The CHAIRMAN. Admiral, one question with two parts. We, of course, would like to know, as well as the American people would like to know, number one, what is the end state or victory, in your opinion, in Iraq? Second, what is the end state or victory in Afghanistan?

And that will be my only question. I will reserve the remainder for later.

Admiral.

Admiral FALLON. Mr. Chairman, I would say that to use the term end state would be a challenge, because we are in a world—reality in this world of constant change. And so conditions that we might point to for tomorrow will probably—not probably; without a doubt will be influenced by events that we have yet to see.

But there is little doubt in my mind that what we are trying to do in the biggest picture with both countries is to end up with states that are functioning for the benefit of their people, that actually give people a say in the government, that provides services that we would like to see for them.

We would like to see, because they are in different stages of development and the security situation is decidedly different in both, in Iraq we need an essential degree of security and stability so that the fledgling institutions in this country can actually be able to benefit the citizens.

I would like to see a substantially reduced level of bloodshed and violence in this country. I will tell you that my observation for the month that I have been in this job is, as I look at and ask for data—and I have got reams of it; trying to sift through and make sense out of it is a challenge.

But I am seeing some significant signs of goodness in the data in terms of a reduction in bloodletting, reduction in murders, reduction of incidents of many kinds.

However, I will tell you quite honestly that it bothers me, and I hold my breath regularly in anticipation, regrettably, of the suicide bombers, these people that are just seemingly totally bent on creating as much chaos and bloodshed as possible, particularly against the civilian communities. And I think we are challenged to work against this problem.

If I could digress for one minute, of all the things that we have on the plate in Iraq, the one that I think is first and foremost as a target for us to try to get a grip on and to neutralize is the group that is very clearly al Qaeda motivated, that is linked to Sunni extremists in this country that are perpetrating these big suicide bombings.

They have two objectives. One is to try to continually damage the coalition, to weaken our will and to kill and maim our coalition forces.

And the second objective is to kill and maim as many people in the population, with the idea that they would get retribution from the Shi'a. It is clearly sectarian-aimed, and it is very tragic.

If we can get a handle on this—and I think that ultimately, in addition to the kinetic things that our forces are doing, the best, most likely way that this is going to be reduced is by getting the Sunni population in this country to believe that they have a future as a part of Iraq and to tell us at every opportunity or tell the Iraqi security forces what is going on, so that we can really work against this threat, because of all the challenges, all the things that happen that are not good in this country, this is the one that I think is most destabilizing today. So we will work on that.

But back to the—what would we like to see in Iraq, I would like to see a place in which people have confidence that their future is going to be better than what they have seen in the past and what they have today.

And how we are going to measure that is one of the key things that I am working on right now, to get a baseline so that—everybody in town here is talking about benchmarks.

They are interesting, but what I want to know is what beneath the surface of these topics is appropriate for us to see whether we are actually making progress, and I will work on that.

In Afghanistan, there are institutions—there are people of significant competence that are in positions of leadership in this country. They have challenges.

The literacy rate is pretty abysmal. It is very difficult to get around. They are challenged with tribal affinities that go back for centuries that have caused instability.

There are lots of signs of hope. There are many people in the world that are working this, in addition to the ISAF and other security forces.

There are thousands of people volunteering, government-supported non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and so forth that are working many of the issues in Afghanistan.

And the goal here is to, again, have a country that is stable, that gets along with its neighbors and is doing things to try and help their population.

Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Admiral, thank you very much.

Mr. Hunter.

Mr. HUNTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just very briefly, Admiral, give us your take on the leadership at the very top in the Iraqi forces, in the Iraqi army particularly.

Admiral FALLON. I will start at the top with the minister of defense. He impressed me on a couple of counts. One, that he was into the detail of what was going on within the ministry of defense.

And I have met a number of leaders in this country and others that kind of give me a hand wave, but I get no sense of actually having a clue what the detail is.

This guy seemed to know a lot about that, maybe too much, but I am happy that he understands a lot about what is going on.

The other thing is my initial reaction is that he is a pretty shrewd judge of assessing the leadership capabilities of his people, and he proceeded to, in our first encounter as we got into talking

about certain personalities—gave me a picture of them that actually pretty well matched up with the picture I had from meeting some of these same people, and that is encouraging.

General Abboud, who is the leader of the Iraqi side of the Baghdad security plan, first meeting, impressed me as a guy that had a grip on things. He was unlikely from our first expectations. We didn't really know him, I think.

I say 'we' probably a little too easily, but the reports I got from Baghdad were that our people were not very familiar with this gentleman, and because they weren't, were a little uneasy.

What he seems to be demonstrating is the kind of leadership example that we would like to see in all people in those positions. He gets out and about. He is not hesitant to give guidance and direction to his subordinates, and I think that is a good thing.

But one of the challenges that is pretty obvious with these people is that very few of them have ever had the opportunity to have responsibilities of the scope which they are trying to deal with right now.

They have been in the military, maybe, been in the security forces for some time, but they have never been asked to do things at this level. So this is a challenge.

And the rest of the—from those that I have met in leadership positions with these divisions—it is a mixed bag. A good sign is that as we go down the road, those that appear to be weaker or less capable are being pulled aside and new people putting in.

So I think this is a process that is moving in the right direction, probably a long way to go, because we are trying to expand this force pretty dramatically. It is a work in progress, but it is one which General Petraeus and his team are really focused on as well.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman from California.

Mr. Ortiz, please.

Mr. ORTIZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral, good to see you again, sir. Congratulations on your new position.

Admiral FALLON. Thank you, sir.

Mr. ORTIZ. I was just wondering if you could comment on the recent Iranian—this issue of the 15 British sailors and marines. What were the motivations behind the Iranians apprehending them?

And will it require coalition forces to change how they operate off the coast of Iraq?

Some commentators have been talking about a possible agreement between the British and the Iranians, and that this was one of the reasons why they were turned loose.

Are you aware of any such agreement between the Iranians and the British, and if you are aware if the United States participated in such an agreement?

Admiral FALLON. Thanks. Good to see you again, sir, and pleasure to be here.

Regarding that issue in the Gulf, from the U.S. standpoint, one of the first things I did was to call Admiral Cosgriff, our component commander and Fifth Fleet naval commander in the region, and ask him what procedures we had in place and what he thought of those.

So we had a conversation, and he forwarded me some information, and we both agreed that we liked some aspects of it and we wanted some things changed, and if you want I would be happy to tell you a little bit about the detail maybe in a closed session, because it is operational in nature.

But suffice it to say that we had a good look at it, and I feel very confident that Admiral Cosgriff has got a grip on that.

There was no deal made between us and the British and the Iranians regarding this.

What motivated this thing? Interesting—and speculative on my part. The folks that carried this out, to the best of our knowledge, were the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). That is kind of a force within a force.

Our commanders over there for a number of years now have recognized that when they deal with Iranian military folks in this region there are a couple of different flavors, and that, for example, the Iranian navy, the mainline navy, is different and acts differently than these characters, who are more along the less disciplined and more likely to carry out actions that are less predictable than mainline forces.

So we are very wary of them, and the guidance that we have given to our commanders is quite specific. I don't want to get into the detail of that in an open session. But I think we have got the appropriate things in place to deal with it.

It is a place in which this area in which the Iranians claim that these folks were "over the line." As you know, in most cases in the naval world, there are no—in fact, in no cases are there lines on the ocean.

But the area in which these people were operating, the British, is an area near the oil terminals in the northern Gulf that are the primary export means for the Iraqi economy.

And we are up there helping the Iraqis to protect those terminals, and our coalition forces have been doing a very credible job. As you know, a couple of years ago, there was an attempt to blow those things up.

The waters are confined. They are shallow. And by my observation, the Iranians have been acting periodically in a manner that is not particularly helpful, that is occasionally threatening to the coalition forces, and that is not what I would consider responsible.

There is certainly dispute about exactly where the territorial lines go out into these waters. But one would think that responsible nations would direct that their forces act in a manner that is fitting to the situation.

We have not seen that kind of behavior, I will tell you, from the IRGC in this area. And so it is something that we ought to address in the bigger picture.

But there has been no deal cut regarding ourselves, the Iranians, or the British regarding this.

Mr. ORTIZ. My time is up, but if there is a second round—thank you so much. Good to see you again, Admiral.

Admiral FALLON. Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Saxton from New Jersey.

Mr. SAXTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral, good to have you here again.

Admiral, in your opening statement, you mentioned that every—or I don't know whether you said every or almost every—country in the AOR has issues that you are concerned about.

I suspect that you can say that those issues are related, as you travel around the AOR. Can you just explain to us how they are related and if they have an impact on the situation in Iraq?

Admiral FALLON. Congressman, many of the countries have religious and ethnic challenges, sectarian challenges.

Iran is a predominantly Shi'a nation, although it is composed of several different ethnic groups.

Iraq has a majority Shi'a population, and it is very clear that Iran is trying to play a major role inside Iraq shaping the future of that emerging government.

The rest of the nations in the Gulf area are predominantly Sunni, and this has been a friction point for some time.

And so there is concern not only about Iranian power or the perception of growth of power and influence against those nations, but also the perception in the Gulf countries that there is a potential alliance between Iraq and Iran that would be somehow more threatening to them.

There are lots of development issues. There are any number of challenges both internal and external. The issues on the Levant with Israel and the Palestinians overshadow, and I hear about it from every leader in every country as a primary cause of instability amongst the masses of people within countries.

There are certainly many challenges in the Horn of Africa. These are Islamic countries. The predominant folks in each of them are of the Islamic religion. And there are longstanding issues of development and challenge and governance within virtually every one of these states.

There are some moderate states which have established institutions—Egypt, a great example—which I think could be helpful in this area. Jordan plays a very constructive role, as an example. But it is very difficult to get people to work together.

I found in my initial meetings with most of the leaders in this region that they are keen to work bilaterally with us and with other individuals, but the idea that they would cooperate together for any common purpose is one that is a really tough sell.

Mr. SAXTON. Yesterday, in talking with an individual who has just returned from the region, I learned that there are—that most of the bad actors, suicide bombers and others, in Iraq are now from outside of the country and that they are inspired by some of the people that you are mentioning.

Would you just elaborate on that a little bit, if that is true?

Admiral FALLON. We have had the idea for some time that a significant number of these suicide bombers are from outside the country. I think it is really a mixed bag, and I am interested and keen to try to find out everything we can. It is pretty difficult to sift through the remains and to figure out who is who.

I think it is really a mixture of people. I believe that one of the most destabilizing influences are these outsiders that have been coming into Iraq to inspire people to commit these kinds of acts.

How many of them are actually the bombers themselves I think remains to be seen.

Mr. SAXTON. Just to use the last few moments of my time, is it also true, as I was told yesterday, that the general Sunni population in Iraq has had it up to here with the violence and that they are now beginning to take steps to deal with al Qaeda on their own?

Admiral FALLON. I think this is one of the most significant positive steps that is occurring within Iraq. I looked at some data yesterday that showed that for the eighth straight week the level of violence in Anbar province has been coming down.

And this is a really good sign, and the reason for this is that, in fact, people are fed up. And the leaders, the tribal leaders, there have made alliances among themselves and have come to the coalition and the government and said that they would prefer to work with us rather than al Qaeda. And we are trying to help them every way we can.

This is a really good trend, particularly within Anbar, and that is where most of the Sunni population is located.

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Reyes.

Mr. REYES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral, again, welcome. And I wish you well in your new job. So much depends on it.

I was wondering, Secretary Gates announced the extension from 12 months to 15 months tour of duty for the Army. Were you consulted in that process? And if you were, can you explain to the committee what that process was?

Admiral FALLON. Sure. We have had a lot of discussions since the first day I got here, because it was apparent—General Petraeus told me straightaway that his look at the situation in Iraq was such that a troop surge was under way to move us up to 20 combat brigades on the ground.

But as he looked at the rotation cycle that was already in place, the amount of time in which these 20 brigades would actually be together on the ground was, in fact, only a couple of weeks, and so he asked me to consider supporting his request for extending a couple of these brigades, and he identified them.

And when I was over there several weeks ago, we sat down, and I actually talked to one of the brigade commanders personally to kind of get a sense of what was going on.

The particular people that he was most interested in extending for a period of time, for a couple of months, were really key, and I understood that.

As we got into this, though, as you start to peel the onion, you begin to find out that there is just a continuing series there. There was going to be a continuing series of issues regarding who ought to get extended, for what period of time and why.

And no sooner had we looked and I had said, 'Okay, I think it makes sense to extend these two brigades for a couple of months to give you the staying power, so that we can actually see what effect we are getting from the surge'—and then it turned out there was a division headquarters that was actually very well-known to me, because it was the 25th Infantry Division from Hawaii—and so I was very sensitive to what they were doing and why they were important.

And so, okay, then as you look down the road, it also became apparent that there were other—there were going to be other decisions that would be coming up one after the other, so this month we could make this decision, and if it were supported, okay, and next month there are going to be more units that we would have to look at.

And so I could see that we would spend the next several months doing one series of debates after another.

Meanwhile, back in Washington, the Army had taken a look at this and said, "Yes, we can support this, if that is what you need to do."

But there is another issue, and that is the business of the Army at large, and how many units are being told what, and what kind of—you know, the differences between this unit—why are these people maybe going to do 12, these 14, these 13, these 15, and so forth.

So they looked at this and tried to come up with a comprehensive way that this could be addressed in a smart manner, that would give us—reduce the flail on planning and try to give the best predictable future for the most number of people, particularly families, for their planning.

And so the decision was made to at least put in place and to announce to people that their tours could be up to 15 months long. This is not a commitment to do this for the Army at large and for all these brigades.

But it puts us in position so that if you do the planning, you can lay these out and actually have forces available on paper and in reality. They can start making their plans to be able to do this.

And then some time later on this year we can then have a decision as to whether we are actually going to do this for significant numbers of the forces or it is not going to be done.

So really, you could have done it either way. We could have piecemealed it and had each individual request come up, with a constant churn on that, or try and take it and address the thing in large measure for the entire Army, at least put us in position, so that if we decide to back off, much better to have people say hey, you don't have to spend this whole amount of time, than to keep surprising people with very short notice.

The biggest issue I got from the people on the ground, the leaders out there, was, "Please don't drag this out. Make a decision. We think that we can make a difference if we stay here, and we recognize the value that we are providing to the forces, so just tell us now."

Mr. REYES. So right now the tour is 12 months with a potential to go to——

Admiral FALLON. No. Every one of these brigades has been told that they can expect to have a 15-month tour. Whether they actually do that remains to be seen.

Mr. REYES. Any chance that an extension would come along and then make it 18 months?

Admiral FALLON. I don't think so, because there is so many factors here. The flip side of this that is advantageous to the individuals and their families is this puts in place a way to actually get

them to stay back in their home bases for a year rather than some which are actually getting under a year now.

Mr. REYES. All right.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

John McHugh.

Mr. MCHUGH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral, welcome back. I, too, wish you all the best in, shall we say, an interesting region—very big and interesting region of the world.

I had the opportunity to go to Iraq and Afghanistan and Pakistan a few months ago. We spent a lot of time with Presidents Karzai and Musharraf.

It was clear to our people that there was seriously an agreement it is just not working, and we talked to President Musharraf about that. He seemed to express a willingness to rework it but not to do something different.

Have you been able to get a read on what the status of that is? It seems to me that is so critical if we are really going to interdict and get at the root cause of what is happening in Afghanistan.

Admiral FALLON. This is a very complex issue, as I am finding just about everything in this region.

I spoke with President Karzai and with President Musharraf separately and had, I thought, real good conversations for me—first time to actually meet each individual, but to get an understanding of where their heads were in this issue.

They have differing opinions, to put it mildly. But my sense in Pakistan in particular, because I know there has been a lot of talk, particularly here in Washington, that there is not enough being done, more needs to be done—President Musharraf was pretty eloquent in taking me through a long list of things that people had suggested, requested, or demanded, in some cases, that the Paks do, and met with different reactions from him.

But he was pretty kind in walking me through a number of things. There have been significant changes in recent days, within the last month or so. I have looked at it from two sides—one, at the big picture, to see what the level of commitment seems to be from him and from his government, and I see a couple of significant things.

He has moved or had his army move two brigades of forces from the Indian frontier to the west of the country.

Given the mindset that I think I understand within that country, this is pretty significant. Because of all the things that they are concerned about, they still have this fixation on the Indian frontier and the challenges between these countries—interesting to me, because having just come from the Pacific I had an insight into the Indian side as well.

As an aside, there is some good news here. For the better part of two years now, there has been a steady de-tensioning on that border between India and Pakistan, and I think that can be only good news for them and for the rest of the world.

But back to Pakistan. He has made these moves. He has put these forces in positions just outside these tribal areas. He told me that there is a long history in these areas.

These are not parts of his country in which he has traditionally put his military, other than the border forces, the tribals, that actually come from these areas and work in there to provide security.

He is working it. He has given his commanders authority to work with our commanders down to battalion level. I think this is very significant.

So at the other end of the spectrum, I went to our forces in Afghanistan and I asked what has been going on, what is the level of cooperation, have you seen a difference. Hopefully it is improved. The answer is yes and yes.

And I think this is really good. And the more that our people on the border and the Afghan security forces can work directly with counterparts, I think the more ground we are going to gain in this challenge with the terrorists and their supporters that are going back and forth.

One thing that I—the President asked me to keep in mind. This is the Pashtun tribal area. It encompasses large swaths of land on both sides of the borders. These people don't recognize a border. This is their tribal territory, and they feel they have got a right to go back and forth and do what they do.

In the last several weeks, in South Waziristan, you may have noticed that there has been significant conflict.

This conflict was instigated by the tribal leaders out there in Pakistan who have had enough, not unlike the tribal leaders in Anbar in Iraq, with outsiders, troublemakers, al Qaeda-inspired and other "we are here to help" ne'er-do-wells that have been destabilizing not only the border region in Afghanistan but inside of Pakistan.

It appears that the tribal leaders have been successful in ejecting a significant number of these insurgents from outside. I see all of these things as very positive steps.

And President Musharraf assured me that he would continue to work it to the best of his ability, and if I had a specific issue that I wanted to take up in here, he would be happy to entertain it.

So I think these are good signs.

Mr. MCHUGH. Thank you, Admiral.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Dr. Snyder.

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral, I wanted to ask you about the Iraq supplemental. One of my frustrations with the last few weeks is we have had this great debate going on in this country, and the President has been involved, and the vice president, and the speaker.

And it seems to me that the debate that has been going on has not really been about the language that is in the supplemental but on interpretations or overstatements of language, of what people are saying the language is.

I wanted to ask, were you consulted by the White House—have you had input into what the language of the House version and the Senate version might mean for your troops in Iraq?

Admiral FALLON. Sir, I will be quite honest, I have not focused on this. I have been using every available minute and hour to try

to have an understanding of what is really going on inside the country so that I can try to——

Dr. SNYDER. No, I understand that, but it also means to me that nobody from the White House called you up and said, "Admiral, we really need you to look on pages whatever and see what the language is going to mean for——"

Admiral FALLON. No, sir.

Dr. SNYDER. Well, that is the impression I have gotten from the debate.

Let me ask you some specific questions, because I think, you know, you read these press summaries—I have read them again today. They talk about, you know, the language that calls for a troop withdrawal by some time in 2008.

And there is no language—that not the result of the language of the House bill. I am going to speak specifically about the House bill.

And let me tell you what I mean, because there is very specific language in here that has a number of exceptions. And the result is we end up with a bill that is really calling for a change in focus.

And so the specifics—my understanding is that currently in Iraq we have about 5,000 U.S. troops involved in training. Is that about the right number, to your knowledge?

Admiral FALLON. I have seen a number like that that may be dedicated to the command that does training.

Dr. SNYDER. Is it fair to say that——

Admiral FALLON. But we have people all over—we have people embedded in every single one of these units that are doing mentoring and training——

Dr. SNYDER. Which I think is actually—my understanding is the goal is to get more than what is currently there, too, is that accurate?

Admiral FALLON. I am sorry, sir, what was that?

Dr. SNYDER. It is my understanding that the goal is to have more trainers as they get up trained and we get the numbers and what—that that number will go up as time goes by. Is that accurate?

Admiral FALLON. General Petraeus has expressed to me a desire to significantly boost the number of people within the Afghan units themselves—I am sorry, Iraq.

Dr. SNYDER. Yes, that is right.

Admiral FALLON. By the way, it also applies to Afghanistan, but Iraq. Now, here is the challenge.

Dr. SNYDER. Well, I have got very limited time. I need to stick with this language.

Admiral FALLON. The answer is yes.

Dr. SNYDER. You are helping me with your analysis here. Well, according to the language of the House bill, there is no limit in the numbers and no limit on duration of the number of U.S. troops that can be involved in training.

So when everyone says there is going to be a complete withdrawal of troops by some time in 2008, that is an inaccurate statement of the House bill.

My second point—the language also says that troops can be in Iraq for as long as the secretary of defense wants and in whatever

number to protect American troops. Well, specifically, these trainers would be the ones we would be most concerned about.

So if we have between 5,000 and 10,000 trainers, as you said, embedded all over the country in all these different units—I mean, I have talked to military people that would say it would take tens of thousands of U.S. troops in Iraq to protect those American troops with the kind of robust over-the-hill forces to get them out if we need to, to support them, close air support.

Would you agree with that? I mean, it is hard for me to say—pin you down on a number, but tens of thousands would not be unreasonable at all to protect 5,000 to 10,000 trainers sprinkled all over the country in Iraqi units, would it?

Admiral FALLON. Mr. Snyder, I have not looked at what kind of a laydown we might have in a different scenario in Iraq, but it is very clear to me that what we would like to have in the big picture is Iraqi security forces——

Dr. SNYDER. I understand.

Admiral FALLON [continuing]. Would take most responsibility, and we have a different supporting role for them—how many troops that is going to be.

Dr. SNYDER. Rapidly running out of time. There also is language in the bill that says that U.S. forces can be there in whatever number for as long as they need to be, without any regard to this 2008 date, to protect American civilians, American citizens.

Is it fair to say that we have tens of thousands of U.S. citizens in a civilian capacity in Iraq, both private, NGO, and in other government agencies other than military?

Admiral FALLON. I couldn't give you an accurate figure on that, sir. I know that we have a lot of people, and I have seen a lot of Americans. I have no idea how many are actually there.

Dr. SNYDER. And I would make the same statement by this language. There are also going to be tens of—there could be unlimited troops, U.S. troops, without regard to time or number, to protect U.S. civilians.

And then finally, and very clearly, you can have as many troops for as long and in what number as the secretary of defense deems necessary to go after al Qaeda and other international troops—other international forces.

Well, my time is up, but the bottom line is the language that is being used by the Administration—perhaps reflective of the fact they did not ask you for what that language actually would mean—is not what is in this bill.

And in fact, the President can well decide that there would need to be 100,000, or 150,000 or 170,000 troops to do the kind of things that you are talking about other than having U.S.-led combat missions.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Would the admiral take for the record a question? If you can get back to us in several days—the number of contractors that are in Iraq and a basic description of their various missions.

I know you couldn't give us that today, but we would certainly appreciate that.

Admiral FALLON. Yes, sir.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix beginning on page 95.]

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Hayes.

Mr. HAYES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, Admiral Fallon, thank you for being with us today and thank you for the incredible service that the men and women serving under you are providing and the successes.

In my district in North Carolina, Fort Bragg, and 82nd Airborne, and Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), United States Special Operations Command (USSOC) are very prominent in this fight, and we are extremely proud of them, fully deployed.

The 1st Brigade Combat Team is scheduled to deploy this summer, which will really make us fully deployed.

From information that I am getting from the field, the reinforcement of the troops is having a very positive effect on the war against terrorists, particularly in Iraq.

It is hard to find this information. You can dig through the press, and folks in the field are telling me about various incidents that are happening.

I would like for you—I want to complete my question—to sort of help me tie that together from your perspective.

And then another little component is—there was a bombing in the Green Zone of the Iraqi parliament which shocked everybody, but having been there numerous times, as most folks here have been, it is possible to see how that could happen.

It would seem to me that, bad as that is, that has strengthened the resolve of the Iraqi parliament, so if you could include that in your answer.

And just last, in the way of a comment, I would think—and you don't have to respond to this, but the only thing worse than Congress telling you how many troops and when and how to get them there and back would be to tell you how many trainers and how many civilians and all that stuff.

So I hope we don't go down that road. But if you would talk to me about the progress that is being made, that is obviously happening.

Admiral FALLON. Yes, sir. Our special forces personnel have been doing a phenomenal job. I was very, very impressed by the briefings and by my observation of their activities both in Iraq and Afghanistan. Americans nationwide would be exceedingly proud.

We are not going to talk publicly about a lot of what they do. I would be happy to give you more detail maybe in a closed session.

But they are working very hard and they are making a difference. They are dedicated.

I was impressed with not only the work of the forces themselves but the team that they have gathered to do their support work, the analytic work, the incredibly quick turn on information from the littlest snippet of intelligence.

To expand and build on this, to be able to take the appropriate actions, I think, are remarkable.

They are doing things on a daily basis that are exceedingly well-executed, well-thought-out, and we are getting great advantage from their work. And I will end it at that.

A comment about your second point on the bombing incident in the COR, the council of representatives. I was there a couple of weeks ago, visited that building, went actually to meet with Speaker Mashhadani.

And I will be honest with you. My impression as I walked into that building and I went right through that room where the bombing took place was a little bit of concern, because it was filled with people, of different folks coming and going, did not appear to be particularly orderly, and my instant reaction was I don't know who is in charge of security here, but it looks pretty tenuous.

In response to my queries, I was told that one of the biggest challenges was that every person in the COR saw him or herself as a very important person (VIP), and as such they merited certain particular privileges, among them being a coterie of bodyguards that were unique to that individual.

And the second was unfettered access in and out of that building without any searches, because they were above this. And so you can see the recipe for a problem, and it certainly was exploited the other day.

In the aftermath of that, there have been some pretty smart decisions made to get a grip on security. I will tell you that General Petraeus and our team over there have had their fingers all over this to try to steer it in the right direction, to try to make it better.

I take note of your comment that in the aftermath of that, this particular institution, which has been sometimes less than enthusiastic in their approach to diligently carrying out their duties as this body may be, actually decided to have an extraordinary session and get together to demonstrate some solidarity.

That is a good sign.

Mr. HAYES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I might note for the record that some of the special forces soldiers we were talking with at Bragg on Friday were talking about how the ICTF, the Iraqi counterterrorism force, their special forces, are taking to and responding to the training.

Our soldiers were very proud of the improvements that those folks were making. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The gentleman from Indiana, Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Admiral. Before I get to a question, I would be remiss if I didn't tell you that three members in the room here today just got back on Thursday from the region.

And with everything we learned, probably one of the most important things was just how impressed I was, and I think we were, of all our troops, from all the different agencies and branches with their dedication, and obvious intelligence and internal fortitude.

I couldn't be more impressed with our troops over there.

Getting to my questions, General Pace was here a couple months ago and, in regard to the surge, talked about that they were developing a matrix to determine if the surge was going to be effective, and some benchmarks there.

And I just want to know—I really don't need to know the benchmarks, just if that matrix has been developed and if at some point in the future we might see that.

And then I would like you to comment, if you could—one of the—I guess the jaw droppers for me was in both countries. We are talking about the lack of real law, the lack of anyone in the country understanding the rule of law as we would know it.

And one of the generals referred to it as kind of like a milking stool. We are training the police—and I know you said earlier you may not be able to comment as much on the police—but we were training the police—but the total lack of the other legs of the stool, in the judiciary, the attorneys, both prosecutorial and defense, and then the penal system.

And I guess my question is what is our plan and a time frame for adding those two of the legs of the stool, so that it will sit on the ground, if that is going to be the answer that they take over and they do the job, when we can pull the military back, and put the police in?

You know, I think you know what I am saying.

Admiral FALLON. Yes, sir. Regarding General Pace's testimony on the matrix, I am not particularly familiar with that. I can tell you, for my part, I am working to try to put some meat on the bones of these things by which we can actually measure success.

The first order of business for me is to get a sense of the foundation, where we are right now, in areas that I think are key—security, levels of violence, governance, and moving forward and so forth, and not just in Baghdad, in provinces and so forth.

So one of the things I have my staff doing, in fact, this week while I am up here, is brainstorming how we would measure any number of topics here. And there are dozens of them, but to try to figure out which are most important and how we can actually track them and get good data.

As far as rule of law, clearly a big deal. There is no doubt in my mind that we can be as successful as the day is long in trying to establish security zones, if you would, to try to carve out areas in which the violence has been reduced, but the long-term stability of this country is only going to occur when and if the other instruments of governance are going to fall into place.

There is no tradition here, near as I can tell—very little tradition in this country of the kind of rule of law that we would certainly enjoy or like to see. So we have got to help them rebuild this, or build it from scratch in some cases.

General Petraeus has put out and made one of his key requests to try to get help in this area. He has started what I think is a pretty interesting innovation.

And they have actually set up a court system inside the Green Zone to provide a little bit of protection, because one of the key factors we have discovered is any time a person stands up and agrees to be a judge, or somebody in the rule of law system, they become immediate targets for al Qaeda, because they just—this is anathema to them. But they are starting.

For my part, I will tell you that I think this is a great idea, and I would welcome support from wherever we can get it in this regard. I will tell you that as I was leaving Hawaii, just as an anecdote, a gentleman came up to me and volunteered himself to actually go out and serve.

He is a lawyer, actually had experience in the Army as an Army Judge Advocate General (JAG), thought that his experience of 20 years in the service and then quite a number in the private sector would be helpful. And I said, "You are on." And I think we may be successful in actually getting him in place.

It is very, very important and necessary for a couple of reasons. One, to give people a sense of a future, that they have some recourse to just the rule of gun, or the thug on the corner, or the neighborhood bully, or the militia as the way to settle disputes, which inevitably, as you know, will arise.

In the old days, they had a tribal system that took care of these things in a manner that may not be very democratic or representative.

But we clearly recognize the need for this and are trying to help them to install a system that can be helpful to the country.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Drake.

Mrs. DRAKE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, Admiral, it is good to see you again and congratulations on your new command. We look forward to working with you.

My first question is can you comment to us on the recent Iranian claims that they have started industrial-level development of nuclear fuel? And tell us if you think those claims are credible.

Admiral FALLON. It appears, based on the level of effort and the analysis by the intelligence community, that they are hard into working to develop a nuclear capability in this country.

I don't view this as particularly beneficial to anything good in the region or the world. This has, I think, been widely recognized by most folks in the world as a negative development.

The U.N. has certainly taken note of it, and the Security Council, as you know, has acted accordingly.

This is destabilizing, and it is recognized by the neighbors. Their biggest apprehension is what Iranian intentions might be in this area.

They claim to be working for their own internal development, and they claim to have no negative desires or aspirations toward the neighborhood, but their actions belie their words.

Not only are they pursuing this program and the degree to which they are boasting about it—I am not sure how much of that is, in fact, accurate—but they are tripping over themselves, it seems to me, to make breast-beating proclamations that are unhelpful.

And there is no doubt that they are taking actions particularly destabilizing in both Iraq and Afghanistan. So the behavior is certainly not very good.

This recent caper with the British, the kind of cowboy-type activity that is certainly not representative of what they claim to be trying to do—and that has become a major player in the region.

The only thing major they are doing is acting in a manner that is not particularly exemplary by any of our standards.

Mrs. DRAKE. Can you also comment for us—I mean, we all understand the threat of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). We have seen the loss of life and the serious injury.

But there has been some criticism recently toward the Joint Improvised Explosive Devices Defeat Organization and concern that

in spite of all the money that has been spent that we don't have the results that we need, and they haven't produced anything.

So do you feel you are getting the support you need from them? Is there anything that we can do? And certainly, anything we could do that would allow us to overcome these IEDs should be a first course of action.

Admiral FALLON. Ma'am, there is little doubt that this organization—and General Meigs, who has been the head of it, has briefed me several times on their work—that they are dedicated and they are trying to help us in this problem.

The challenge is that a lot of their work tells us in detail what is going on, gives us better insight into what is happening, but frankly this is a very challenging situation in which we are chasing a rabbit that runs pretty quickly.

The enemy is very astute at watching what we do and adapting his tactics and procedures to take advantage of any weakness they see.

What has been very disturbing of late is that they are—some of these terrorist networks inside Iraq are clearly getting help from Iran. And the particular type of technology that the Iranians have introduced is deadly toward our people.

And so we are working hard to try to understand and defeat these weapons, but frankly it is the number one challenge that our troops face on a tactical level. It is very difficult to get ahead of this thing.

As we see an evolution of their tactics, we can typically come up with a counter to that. But trying to anticipate what they are going to do next and how these things might be used against us is a real challenge.

As you know, there are countless actions that have been taken to try to increase the security for our own forces and to give them a way to deal with these things.

Mrs. DRAKE. And also during these two weeks at home I heard a lot of concern from our ship repair yards and contractors in the region about what will happen if we don't pass the supplemental.

So I don't know if you are going to really have time to answer, but what your thoughts were if—either in a delay or not being able to get the supplemental passed—how that will impact the military.

Admiral FALLON. What I have been told from our people here in the Pentagon is for the commands in Central Command, in Iraq, Afghanistan, and those supporting, they are cash-flowing resources from the services, so there is money coming out of service entities, Army and Navy and other services, that would be intended for other things that are now being diverted to take care of our daily needs.

Mrs. DRAKE. Thank you, Admiral.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentlelady.

Mr. Johnson from Georgia.

Mr. JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I just had the opportunity, Admiral Fallon, to visit that region last week, Afghanistan and Iraq. And I was very impressed with what we have going on in Afghanistan.

The situation there is a little different than it is in Iraq, and I think you would agree to that. Security and governance are in

place in Afghanistan. The vast majority of the people over there favor representative government and prosperity, not Taliban brutality, according to your statement.

And they are standing up and fighting for their country's future. And you could also see that they were very eager, well-led, and courageous fighters. We visited with a number of them on the trip, and I concur in your assessment.

We also met with some Iraqi security forces. They seemed to be less eager, less well-led, less brave, and certainly not equipped with weapons, vehicles to get them around. In some cases, they were without uniforms, kind of a ragtag bunch.

And I don't know how many of them there are, how many have been through training, how many are currently in training. But it just appeared that the Iraqi security forces are not in a position to stand up and take on the security of their country.

We also visited with the Iraqi navy down in the Gulf where the incident occurred with the British forces, and my assessment—I won't give you my assessment, but bottom line, I didn't have a lot of confidence in the forces down there, the Iraqi navy in particular.

And have you had the opportunity to review the polling data from Iraq in terms of what the Iraqi people think of our presence in their country down there?

It appears that 60 percent of them think that it is—or they approve of using violence against American forces.

And so, differently from Afghanistan, where the people support the United States and NATO presence there, the people in Iraq don't support our presence there.

And there is no sectarian violence going on in Afghanistan like it is in Iraq, which puts our troops in the middle of a civil war, something that we cannot win militarily for either side.

And so my impressions were that we are doing a great job in Afghanistan, but it is time for us to depart from street combat responsibilities in Iraq.

And I would like to get your take on what I have said.

Admiral FALLON. Well, I would agree with some things and not agree with others. First of all, there is a very clear difference, as I indicated in my oral and written testimony, in the situations in both countries.

The size and the quality of the Afghan security forces—much smaller than the numbers in Iraq, with a tradition of experience in the field. These are tough—physically—people. A lot of them have had experience in security business before.

And they are well-led. Their defense minister—their general, Bismullah Khan, I think, is a sharp guy who really understands how to get things done, and so little doubt in my mind that they are moving out smartly in providing a foundation for security in that country.

Iraq has got a lot of challenges. We are trying to take an institution that was dismantled, partly by us, and build it from scratch into something of some several hundred thousand folks which we would like to see charged with taking care of security in this big country that is in constant turmoil day by day.

This would be challenging for anybody in any circumstances. There is no doubt in my mind that there are units within the Iraqi

security forces that have a long way to go. And it is our intention to try to do our best to train these people.

In fact, one of my priorities on this trip, leaving this afternoon, is to spend time with those forces so I can get my own personal assessment of how well we are doing.

I have seen some terrific performance by some of these forces. There is little doubt we have a lot of work to do with others. We are going to work on it.

Mr. JOHNSON. Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Wilson.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, Admiral, for your service. I believe what you are doing is crucial to protecting American families, by making sure that terrorist camps are not recreated in the region to attack the United States again.

I was really grateful—I had a son serve for a year in Iraq. It was a very meaningful experience for him.

I appreciate in your statement—you indicate the surge of additional military forces into Baghdad has disrupted extremist elements, at least temporarily reduced ethnic violence, and has been welcomed by a majority of the city's people.

This is a very hopeful assessment. A concern I have—have the pledged Iraqi forces been placed in the city? What is the status of Iraqi forces?

Admiral FALLON. There are substantial numbers of Iraqi forces that are actually in the city and functioning.

And the reports I received, which I am eager to understand, show me that in recent days we have had a couple of exemplary demonstrations of their performance, in which they have actually done very well under combat conditions, and in one case stayed in the fight all day, in the lead.

The overwhelming number of forces that were engaged were Iraqi forces with our people backing them up, and they actually performed very well. So we would like to see this continue.

One of the questions that General Petraeus and I both have is what the Iraqi plan is to continue to rotate forces in.

As they have had units there now for a couple of months, they have indicated they would like to change these out. And we are all ears to find out just how they plan to do this and whether we are going to be able to maintain the force levels that we would like to see in there.

So I would like to get back to you on that after I see it myself.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix beginning on page 97.]

Mr. WILSON. Additionally, I am very grateful. This weekend, I will be joining the sendoff ceremony of the 218th Mechanized Infantry Brigade of the South Carolina Army National Guard.

I served with this brigade for 25 years. And I am so proud of them. They are committed. They are trained professionals. They and the state of South Carolina are very proud that they will be proceeding to Kabul to train the Afghan police.

And I want you to know that under your command that you have just got top-quality people. And the people of our region are just

so supportive and understand how important this is for America's security.

I was interested—in your statement, you indicated that the spring offensive may be overstated. I am glad to hear that.

I really would like your assessment again on how it may be overstated, or what you can tell us has been done by way of being prepared fully to address the incursion.

Admiral FALLON. Well, there has been an awful lot of hype about the so-called spring offensive.

Frankly, what I am hearing from intelligence reports right now is that most of the Taliban that we think we can identify are actually out there whacking down poppies to fatten their coffers.

But there have been very aggressive actions taken in anticipation of any potential offensive by ISAF, both NATO and U.S. forces as a part of that, to go out and rout out the Taliban, particularly in the south, in and around Helmand province, where there has been report resurgence of Taliban activity.

We have had forces down there working for several weeks now that are pushing Taliban and their supporters out of key areas and have taken quite a bit of—reclaimed quite a bit of territory.

This has not been done—it was cleared out once several years ago. But frankly, my assessment is that we allowed this thing. We congratulated ourselves a little too early and allowed them to come back into these areas.

We have now cleaned them out again. The aim is to try and keep them out of there and get the Afghan security forces to take over responsibility for policing that up and keeping it squared away.

Mr. WILSON. And I, too, as Congressman Johnson, have visited Afghanistan. The level of support, although I have been to Iraq six times and been impressed by the dedication of their military, too—is there sufficient equipment for modernization for the Afghan army and police?

Admiral FALLON. The commander charged with that responsibility, U.S. commander, that is working it has been extremely diligent, I think, in trying to get the right things to the right people at the right time.

And I had a meeting with the defense minister and the chief of defense, General Khan, when I was there a couple of weeks ago, and they indicated that—of course, they have a long list of things they would like to have, but that they were receiving generally the equipment they wanted. And I think this is working pretty well.

Mr. WILSON. Again, thank you for your service.

Admiral FALLON. Thank you.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Loebsack, please.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Admiral, for appearing before us today. I, too, was in Iraq recently. It was in February. And I have to say that when I—and I am a new member of Congress, just some 100 days, or whatever it has been.

When the bombing occurred at the parliament, I was shocked, to say the least, because I thought to myself what if there had been a bombing at the U.S. Capital—the functional equivalent, basically.

Now, having been there, I realize that obviously the security situation isn't the same as it is here.

Although having been there and having been to the Green Zone and the U.S. embassy and what have you, I actually thought that—and having been trailed by contractors the whole time, even when I had to head to the restroom. I was very happy that they were with me.

But I thought to myself there actually seems to be somewhat more security there than there is here. That is not to say anything about our Capital or the security here. It is wonderful.

But the first thing that came to my mind was not only the contractors we have there, but the subcontractors—the Peruvians, for example. Can you tell us how many Peruvians are employed by us there?

Admiral FALLON. No, I can't, sir, but I will tell you that I have got it. I had a hearing yesterday with the House Appropriations Committee-Defense (HACD), had a lot of the same questions. I am only 30 days into my job, so——

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix beginning on page 97.]

Mr. LOEBSACK. Okay. Why do we have Peruvians in the first place?

Admiral FALLON. Well, it isn't so much why do we have them. It is many of these security personnel—and by the way, my impression was there were so many to be more dysfunctional than functional in the Green Zone, is my—probably the gang there don't want to hear this.

How effective all these folks are remains to be seen. What I believe is going on—and I know for a fact that many of the organizations within the Iraqi government have contracted for people through various ministries.

What I have discovered is that in addition to the Iraqi security forces that we generally talk about, the army and the police, every single ministry within that country has its own security force. And it keeps on flowing.

One of the challenges, I think—and there is a culture here. I think that one or the reasons or the methods by which Saddam kept the place under control was he had half the people in the country employed in some security capacity, and there is a tradition of that.

I want to look at——

Mr. LOEBSACK. Could I ask you about who is under our control? I mean, technically, we have occupied the country, so technically, you know, this is all supposedly under our control at the moment until we remove our troops.

But at the same time, my understanding was that the contract—Blackwater, or whoever it is—that we employ, that the U.S. Government pays, has also subcontracted with Peruvians and maybe others, for all I know. Is that correct?

Admiral FALLON. I don't know all the details, but what I am told is that there are contractors and subcontractors and subcontractors.

Mr. LOEBSACK. And I guess I just want to—I mean, I have a real concern about this——

Admiral FALLON. Me, too.

Mr. LOEBSACK [continuing]. Why we don't have American citizens protecting facilities that are under our command. This strikes me as a little bit strange, to say the least.

And I do want to make a comment, I guess, about sort of the privatization, if you will, and this has nothing to do with you as such, but, you know, the sort of privatization craze that I think we have seen in the last six years as far as our government is concerned.

And then it becomes manifest as far as the number of contractors. We have the whole issue of contractors in Iraq and to whom they are responsible, and then when they go out and subcontract.

Ultimately our government is responsible, is it not, for those operations?

Admiral FALLON. I think that this is, at the highest level, pretty well-intended in that if you can save having to put American uniformed personnel out here to do non-combat missions that this is general goodness, that there are many support functions which could easily be done by civilians that could free up service personnel to actually do things that would be more useful for the big picture.

The degree to which this has been rippled down is something I am just going to have to get a grip on. I see a lot of goodness in places, for example—many of the contracted personnel are, in fact, Iraqi civilians.

And this is an opportunity to actually give them some meaningful work, give them a future and actually, as they get to see what our people are trying to do for them, maybe carry this message back to the community. I see a tremendous amount of the potential for good there.

I also know that many people are contracted from other countries, and people are standing in line in these other countries to get these kinds of jobs for exactly the same reason, because they don't have work at home.

And you know, how much of this plays into effective security is the question, and I got it. I will work on it.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Thank you, Admiral. And I do thank you for your service. You don't have an easy job.

Admiral FALLON. Thank you, sir.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

Dr. Gingrey.

Dr. GINGREY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral Fallon, welcome to the committee and thank you for your tremendous service and what you did in leading the Pacific Command, and of course, now in this new area of responsibility, Central Command, the first naval officer to have that responsibility.

It is just amazing as I read about all of the areas that are under your command, certainly now the most volatile region in the world, without question, probably five of the top six most volatile areas. So I know you have got your work cut out for you.

I came in a little late, and I hope this question hasn't already been addressed.

But in regard to how your command works with NATO and General McNeill in Afghanistan, I know we have—I think it is about, what, 10,000 of our troops still in Operation Enduring Freedom and another 15,000 that are part of the NATO force structure, ISAF.

And it is a little hard to understand exactly how General McNeill works with you and what specifically we can do.

I know we recently put another 3,200 from the 10th Mountain Division preparing for the so-called spring offensive. I know you addressed that when Mr. Wilson was asking his questions.

But could you give us a feel of how—what is the working relationship between your command and NATO?

Admiral FALLON. I wouldn't feel alone in sensing this is complex, because it is complex for me, too. First, the easiest one to answer is that General McNeill works for the NATO chain of command, and he reports back through the NATO chain in Brunssum and then back into Belgium.

But in Afghanistan, there are several different missions, and only one of these missions, the counterinsurgency mission, has been officially signed up for by NATO. And that is what ISAF is attempting to do.

The challenge is there are a couple of other missions, as I see them, in this country. One is the counterterror mission which we have undertaken as part of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), to work not only within Afghanistan but in the region. This is one that is being done by U.S. forces and not by NATO.

The other mission that is rather surprising to me——

Dr. GINGREY. Admiral, if I could interrupt you just for a second, explain that again, because I may have missed that point.

Admiral FALLON. NATO has undertaken the mission of counterinsurgency within Afghanistan. The U.S. retains the mission of counterterrorism.

Now, on a given day, I would propose that you could flip a coin sometimes to decide which particular task might be in which category.

There is another significant issue within this country, and that is the reconstruction of this nation of Afghanistan, the nation-building responsibility.

NATO has not accepted that particular mission. But what I find fascinating is that there are people, many from NATO countries, that are working in exactly this area of trying to rebuild and to get institutions functioning and to reconstruct this country—not just NATO but other nations beyond that alliance, too.

So it is confusing, and it isn't clean and neat. And from my perspective, as I am the geographic commander for this region, I have responsibility for all U.S. service personnel in here, although for some missions, operationally, they don't directly work for me.

So this is something that I have highlighted to the secretary, to the chairman, and we are going to work on this as I get more into it, to make sure that I have a firm understanding of exactly what the lines are and how—at the end of the day, what we are really trying to do is figure out the way to be most effective and to actually get the job done, so we will work on that. But it is often confusing.

Dr. GINGREY. Admiral, thank you. It is confusing to us, and it is a little comforting to know that it is still maybe just a touch confusing to yourself.

But again, in my closing seconds, let me just say how much we appreciate and how much we realize that your job has got to be, at this point, the toughest one in the military.

And I just say godspeed. I know you are going to do a great job and give victory a chance. And I thank you for that.

Admiral FALLON. Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Spratt.

Mr. SPRATT. Admiral Fallon, you have a tough job, but I assure you you have our support in carrying it out.

With respect to Afghanistan, I noted from your testimony we have roughly 25,000 troops there.

Admiral FALLON. That is right, sir.

Mr. SPRATT. How many non-U.S. NATO troops augment our 25,000 troops?

Admiral FALLON. I don't think I would say it is augment. I think the number is about 14,000. But I will take that and maybe my staff can——

Mr. SPRATT. Is this all NATO can muster for——

Admiral FALLON. I am sorry?

Mr. SPRATT. Is this all that NATO can muster, of the non-U.S. member states?

Admiral FALLON. I think that is a really good question to ask the NATO alliance. I would be very happy, and I know General McNeill would be happy, with additional support both in troops and in other areas that these countries have actually signed up for but have not so far enabled people to actually show up on the ground.

Mr. SPRATT. Several years ago, I was at Shaw Air Force Base, where Central Command Air Force is headquartered.

Now, I had the opportunity to talk to the chief of intelligence and some of his junior officers who just returned from Afghanistan. They described it—while there was a tenuous balance of power, it was really a confederation of warlords.

Would you describe the situation in the country today as essentially the same as that of a rather tenuous balance of power amongst the confederation of warlords?

Admiral FALLON. No, I don't think I would characterize it that way. It is clear that the history of this area is one of tribal alliances and chieftains.

But President Karzai is attempting to build a set of governing institutions to actually help to move away from that traditional construct, and one that is more representative of the people as a whole, and actually get people to work together and to feel confidence in a bigger government.

It is a challenge, because the culture goes a different way. But there is certainly cooperation among the various factions and sects and tribes within that country, and he works at it every day.

I am eager, as I go back there on subsequent visits, to get out and see each of these different areas, to get my own assessment of just how well this is working.

Mr. SPRATT. Are you concerned that some of the replacement troops and augmentation troops being dispatched both to Iraq and to Afghanistan are coming from units that, in some cases, are below C–3, C–3 or below, in their readiness classification?

Admiral FALLON. The status of units that are in line to come to these countries is certainly of concern to me, but I have high confidence that the services, the Army and Marine Corps in particular, before they have these forces in the queue to actually come to me, will be in the appropriate readiness condition.

And I know they are working very hard to make this so. Clearly, I come from a culture in the Navy, for example, where we have not traditionally tried to maintain every deploying unit at a high readiness level.

We will recognize that events will occur that have these readiness levels dip for various reasons. But as they work up and prepare and do the training and get the personnel, particularly the new personnel, into these units, that the readiness levels will rise.

And that is not unusual to have that occur.

Mr. SPRATT. When we visited the White House and the President laid out his surge proposal, Secretary Gates and the other there, including General Pace, as I recall, said that we will know within three months or four months whether or not the surge was working, within a fairly short period of time.

What is the metric? What are the indicators that tell us whether or not the surge is working or not working and indicates whether or not this tactic is something we should pursue?

Admiral FALLON. Two things. First, let me go back and correct myself. I have been told that closer to 20,000 is the actual number of non-U.S. NATO forces in Afghanistan.

Mr. SPRATT. Is what?

Admiral FALLON. Twenty, two-zero. Twenty.

Regarding benchmarks and assessments and so forth, one of my priority tasks is to look at the areas in which we would like to agree, certainly amongst my chain of command down through General Petraeus, on things that we would recognize as goodness and be able to make an assessment that things are really working as we would like them to work in this country.

I will tell you that I have spent a fair amount of time already trying to determine which of these things we ought to measure and how we are going to do that.

I don't have that fixed yet. That is something I am building. And I will continue to work this with General Petraeus.

Mr. SPRATT. Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. I find it interesting. In making reference to conflicts of the past as to whether there were any such animals as benchmarks, we either knew we were winning or not.

With that, Mr. Calvert.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I also apologize. I wasn't here in the beginning, but—so if this question has been asked, I apologize. And again, thank you for your service, Admiral.

But regarding Syria, I was in Iraq recently, and as was mentioned in prior testimony, we were looking at some of the activities that Iran is involved in and the IED business, a particular type of

IED, as you are aware of, that is causing hardship on our troops, and certainly killed in action (KIA) that we are still experiencing to this day.

I wanted to know about what is happening along the Syrian border. I know we put the posts, border posts, in. I understand they are operating. They are manned.

Has that significantly stopped the smuggling of foreign fighters, which I understand are the primary folks that are being utilized as suicide bombers both in Baghdad and the Al Anbar province, and weapons that are being used to attack our troops?

Admiral FALLON. By every appearance to me, the bulk of the al Qaeda support, which is Sunni-linked, was coming down the Syrian rat lines, if you would.

By the anecdotal recent evidence in Anbar province, which has been now consistently moving in the right direction—I mentioned earlier in the hearing that I got data yesterday that showed eight straight weeks of reduced level of violence in this heretofore pretty volatile province.

That indicates to me that something good is happening out there. As I am told, and I will look forward to getting to each of these places down the Euphrates River Valley, which has been one of the traditional main sources of the flow of things that we don't want in the country, things have been significantly improved in most of these population centers.

And so it seems to me that things are working. When I was up there a couple of months ago in the north, the northern part, to the west of Mosul, I was told that we had a much improved situation along the border, where the Iraqi security forces actually have the lead, but we had a pretty robust U.S. and coalition force backing them up.

And it looks to me that appearance are that we are making progress in this area.

Now, things need to happen inside of Syria, to my way of thinking. And this country, I believe, could be more helpful in doing things that would try to help cut off whatever support may be existing.

There is a challenge here. There are many, many thousands of Iraqis that have migrated to other places for various reasons, some I am sure very innocently and just trying to do good for their families and get away from the violence, others maybe for different reasons.

And so there is a significant population of these folks that are in Syria. How many of them are helping and aiding and abetting the troublemakers, I don't know.

But we would welcome additional Syrian support to get this under control and cut down on, from their side, the transit of, particularly, foreign fighters into Iraq.

Mr. CALVERT. To be more specific, do you see any activity as far as the Syrian government, particularly President Assad, to do anything to stem the flow of foreign fighters and weapons into Iraq?

Admiral FALLON. We have some intelligence reports that would indicate that some progress might be being made.

I think more significant is likely to be the inclusion of Syria in fora such as this neighbors conference that is upcoming, scheduled

to be held in Sharm El Sheik in Egypt, in which we can, along with others, encourage Syria and the other neighbors to be playing a constructive role in the development of Iraq and the security situation there.

I think that to date, there has been very little in the way of assistance given by countries and, in fact, in the case of Syria, certainly negative assistance to help the situation.

But I would like to see a collective effort made by regional leaders to agree to cooperate to help the situation, because it is, I believe, in their best interest.

And in the long term, an unstable, insecure, chaotic Iraq is just going to be a real problem for every one of them. So I would think that, if nothing else, their own self-interest would take note of the fact that they ought to be doing more.

Mr. CALVERT. Again, thank you for your service.

Admiral FALLON. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Sestak.

Mr. SESTAK. Good morning, Admiral.

Admiral, if I could take off on your comment about Anbar province, you told us in the last three months that the tribal leaders out there have decided to band together, and that is the reason why we are successful, because they are finally helping the U.S. military.

My take, having been just there, is that what I heard was that may provide one of the three things I have heard you say in different ways. We need military security, but we also need political security and economic security.

And so the Anbar province may now be gaining military security. What evidence that was missing was the national entity that the Sunnis could now tie into—Baghdad, we heard very senior government leaders say words like, "The de-Baathification law is an appeasement. The de-Baathification law isn't that meaningful."

But yet when you talk to the military commanders, they say it is absolutely critical. So we see an improvement, some say, in the military security in Baghdad, but what is the reason why? Have they gone elsewhere? Are they laying low?

At the same time, we are told Iraqis were going to lead this, but U.S. military deaths are now in their third—which will be a record breaking—over 80 deaths per month, on our way to 100, although the Iraqis were to lead this effort. And we were told by someone very senior that the truth is they are not.

So my question is even if you are gaining military security, where is the political security? And what movement do you actually see, since you and others have said it really is a political issue here also?

Where is that coming, and what are your prospects for it?

Admiral FALLON. Thanks, Congressman.

First of all, I don't think we have a ghost of a chance of getting the kind of movement in this country that we—I think the vast majority of us would like to see, without a significant aura, if you would, of stability and security. So this is the critical function that the military can provide.

There has been significant progress on the ground in several areas in this country. The focus is clearly in Baghdad and Anbar because these have been the historic hotbeds of challenge.

The reason that many of the indicators are positive is because of the very significant engagement of U.S. forces along with Iraqi forces.

But there is no doubt that it is our influx of personnel and the significant redistribution and refocus of forces that are getting them out into many areas they hadn't been into in large numbers before that are both providing the security but, regrettably, on the downside, putting our people in a position where they are certainly subject—and as you have seen, the casualty rates have been high in the last couple of months.

And so this is certainly a price that we are paying for this increased security. But to the larger issue, if we can provide a sense of security, it hopefully will afford these people some space, some opportunity, to make these tough decisions.

And I think they are really difficult. As I look at the leadership in this country, this fledgling representative entity called the government of Iraq, almost without exception the leaders come from positions of very narrow political base, from a party position or some other ethnic or tribal affiliation that has never previously paid attention to anything except the goodness and desires of a very narrow entity.

What we are trying to do is introduce a concept by which these people will have to take responsibility for an entity called Iraq, much larger than themselves. It is a challenge. We have to encourage them.

And the thing that we can do in the military is provide security and to encourage them every——

Mr. SESTAK. Admiral, if I might, I understand encouragement. But what is the leverage you have in the political process, particularly since we heard out there, from the very top, that the debate here about not open-ended commitments has actually helped move the process forward? In fact, Secretary Gates was quoted today in the paper saying it.

What kind of leverage do we have? And what time frame?

Admiral FALLON. Time is short, and we have tried to give them space to make these decisions. But at every opportunity, I carry the same message, "You have got to start taking these tough decisions faster if we are going to be successful and you are going to be successful."

Mr. SESTAK. Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Admiral, would you expand just a little bit on your last question that Mr. Sestak put about time?

Admiral FALLON. About time.

The CHAIRMAN. Please.

Admiral FALLON. We have been at this for four years. We have seen various ebbs and flows of security but generally have not seen the consistent progress that we think we need to see to make this entity called Iraq the kind of functional representative government that we would desire.

It is very clear to me that we have in play right now a significantly different approach to this, but that given the many factors

that are at play that this is really the Iraqi leadership's major and potential last opportunity to really take this ball forward.

We have made an extraordinary commitment, from our country and from our coalition allies, to provide them the space to be able to make the decisions to try to move this country forward.

I can't imagine being given another opportunity of the degree and magnitude that they have been given now. And it is imperative, from my view, that they act on it.

I recognize there are countless problems and challenges both from their historic and various backgrounds in making these tough decisions. But I believe that they have to do it, and we have to keep at them, make sure they understand it, that the heads all nod.

Every meeting I have had with every one of them, they say they understand it, but these many inhibitors tend to slow down the decision making. But no doubt, it has got to move quickly.

The CHAIRMAN. Admiral, should we ask you that question three months or four months from now, will you give us your best assessment at that moment?

Admiral FALLON. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Bartlett.

Mr. BARTLETT. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Admiral, for hosting our Congressional Delegation (CODEL) just after New Year's. I think we were the first CODEL of the new year to come through Hawaii. You were very gracious as our host. Thank you very much.

Most of the focus in this country and around the world is on Iraq. But we are also in Afghanistan. And obviously, the quantitative challenge is very much greater in Iraq than it is in Afghanistan.

But qualitatively, which of those has the better chance of success and why?

Admiral FALLON. Well, I would like to think that both have a good chance of success. There are many, many reasons why we could and should be successful in both places.

Iraq, if you would, has resources in great quantity. It has many, many thousands of acres of arable land that could feed many people. After all, this is the Fertile Crescent.

It has a significant part of the population that is well-educated and ought to be very helpful in moving this place forward. It has certainly got a lot of challenges. We have talked about those.

But the foundations are certainly there, and I think the key issue now is whether the leadership in this country can pull together the significant factors to give the population the sense that they can be successful, that their future can be different and better than it was in the past.

Afghanistan—I mentioned earlier that the most encouraging factor in this country is that the vast majority of the people clearly don't like the Taliban, don't want to go back to that kind of rule.

They appreciate and support our presence there, and they want a better life. And they have a significant infrastructure of leadership, particularly in their security forces, that I think is in pretty good shape and should be able to help them.

So there are many reasons why this ought to be successful in both places.

Mr. BARTLETT. Admiral, I had the privilege before we went into Afghanistan to visit the king of Afghanistan in his villa just outside Rome.

It happened that at that same time there were, I think, ten of the tribal chiefs in the Northern Alliance that were visiting the king of Afghanistan, and so we had a chance to meet with them also.

Very clearly then, and I think probably now, Afghanistan does not represent a unified central kind of a government focus. Is the command of the central government now any better—the control of the central government now any better than it was then? Because at that time, the central government—the Taliban controlled very little of Afghanistan, and the Northern Alliance—these tribal chiefs represented a huge counter force which ultimately, with our help, was successful.

Will Afghanistan ever be a cohesive government, or will it forever, for the near future, at least, be—separation of tribal chiefs?

Admiral FALLON. I would propose that Afghanistan will probably not look anything like the U.S. Government and the relationship between the Federal Government here and the states and communities any time soon.

But I recognize, I think, in President Karzai a leader that has a very good understanding of what he has in this country. He has his own arrangements, connections, alliances, if you would, and processes for dealing with these various leaders around this country.

He is quick to get out and about and go visit them. When I was there last time, he left, certainly, shortly after meeting with me to go visit one of the provinces and have an interesting meeting, I am told, with one of the governors.

He knows the people. He has a hand in the selection of these people. And my sense is he has got probably, certainly, a much better understanding of how this works than I do. I am anxious to learn from him and to see.

I don't think it is going to be anything like what we have here any time soon. But given the motivation of the people and what I saw of the competence of the leadership, they are working on it.

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

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

Ms. Castor.

Ms. CASTOR. Welcome, Admiral.

This is quite a complex and complicated area of responsibility. And explain to me, as folks rotate into Central Command and out, what kind of training is—do folks undergo to understand the cultural diversity of this area?

It is a diverse and dynamic area in and of itself. I know in your testimony you highlighted some of the challenges with the present inventory of language and intelligence specialists, and counterintelligence, language expertise, which is crucial to counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, counterintelligence operations.

What is under way now? What tools do you have as folks rotate in and out? And then as we look to the defense reauthorization, do

you have any recommendations for how we can improve the training and all of the specialists that you need?

Admiral FALLON. It would be wonderful if we had—if each of us were fluent in languages in the regions in which we work. I will start with me. I don't speak Arabic, which is the most common language.

It puts me at a disadvantage, one which I recognize, and I have been searching for that magic person that is not only fluent but very well-versed in the history and cultures of these regions.

But I recognize that even in the Central Command there is a significant difference between the Sudan and the Horn of Africa and Central Asia, where the cultures are dramatically different. It is a challenge. It is one in which we recognize there is work to be done.

At the highest level, at my staff, we have people that are assigned to be as expert as we can make them for their parts of the region. And we try to get them well-connected with the history and background and, if at all possible, to have some fluency with the language.

It would be wonderful if all of our people that went forward were similarly equipped. I will be honest. They are not.

We are working the priorities, clearly, in Afghanistan and, more importantly, in Iraq, to have people there that can be immediately useful in the field and in the intelligence work in analyzing what we have got when we apprehend people, or detain people, or run into situations that need assistance.

And so there are a number of programs under way that are long-term. I know that for many years now, at least since 9/11, there has been an emphasis put on trying to get people to be trained in specifically these languages.

And I know there has been some fruit there, but the demand far exceeds the supply of those people now, so it is something that we work. I recognize it. And we try to—every individual soldier and Marine that deploys out there is given some amount. And I would have to get back to you on exactly who gets what.

Some, of course, have been out there before. Some are actually pretty proficient. They have managed to pick up the language, and they certainly know—but we make it a point to try not to have anybody show up in this theater that doesn't have some cultural sensitivity training.

And that even applies to the Navy and the Air Force people that may not be on the ground, but certainly they have an opportunity to interact while they are there.

Ms. CASTOR. And at MacDill Air Force Base, where the Central Command headquarters is located, I know there is a lot of construction. The facilities there are absolutely vital to the national security.

Do you have any impressions coming on as the commander there on how the progress on those facilities are going and long-term needs?

Admiral FALLON. Well, I can see the digging and hear the banging, so I know it is going on. To be honest with you, I have spent about three-quarters of the time since I have been on the job out in the region, so I haven't had the opportunity.

But I know it is in work, and the intelligence section is the priority construction. And I know it is under way. And I would look forward to the opportunity to get into them when they are completed.

Ms. CASTOR. And I hope you know that the Tampa Bay community is very supportive of the presence of Central Command headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base. And if we can assist you in any way, you know our community is there to do that.

Admiral FALLON. Thanks. We have been made welcome. I look forward to seeing you out at the facilities when you can. Thanks.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentlelady.

The gentleman from Mississippi, Mr. Taylor.

Mr. TAYLOR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, Admiral, thank you for sticking around for a fairly long time this morning.

Admiral, our efforts in Afghanistan go back to the events of 9/11. The people who perpetrated that crime were Saudi Arabians. They practiced their flight training in America. But we are told the mastermind who approved it and probably financed the effort was a guy named Osama bin Laden, who at the time was living in Afghanistan. We are now told that he could probably be on the border area with Pakistan.

And on the recent trip that several of my colleagues just mentioned, I became aware for the first time of an area that has apparently been given autonomy by the Pakistan government called Waziristan, which brings to my mind, at least, what happened a few years back in Colombia, where the Colombians had actually given an area to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC) and they pretty well could rule themselves in that area.

If Osama bin Laden was identified to be in a specific building, on a specific street, in a specific village in Waziristan—you had satellite imagery, human intel, several sources saying, "He is there," and since he at the end of the day is the reason for our involvement in Afghanistan, do you have operational approval to strike at him in Waziristan?

What would have to happen? What are the agreements or lack of agreements that we have with the Pakistani government to try to do something about that, if that situation came to you this morning?

Admiral FALLON. Mr. Taylor, I can tell you that if I could get information on the exact whereabouts of Osama bin Laden, we would do everything we possibly could to try to get him.

Mr. TAYLOR. Okay. But I have given you a fairly plausible scenario.

Admiral FALLON. There are a couple of factors here that, as I met with both President Karzai and President Musharraf a couple weeks ago, I think are pertinent.

First of all, this area in North Waziristan or the larger area of the FATA, so-called federally administered tribal areas—they haven't been given to anybody.

The fact is they have never really been owned, if you would, other than the border line that goes to the west of them by the Pak government. These are areas in which there really isn't government authority—one of the more complex issues in this region.

But to your point, I have, in fact, talked with President Musharraf about situations in which we might ask for specific help and have been assured that he would be—receive those should I bring those to his attention.

So without getting into the details of how we might do this, I will tell you that from the highest level I have gotten his assurance of assistance if we have an issue that we think we need to work.

Mr. TAYLOR. Well, Admiral, to the point, if that actual scenario occurred, if you had human intel, if you have satellite intel, if you had guys saying, "He is right there," do you have standing permission from the Pakistan government to try to do something about that, either to actually capture him or kill him?

Admiral FALLON. I do not have permission to go across that border on my own and to conduct activities within that country without some arrangement or agreement with the government of Pakistan.

Mr. TAYLOR. The second question is—I am pleased to see the Sunnis coming our way in Anbar province, but I am kind of curious as to their motives.

One line of thought is if the Iraqi—if you were to take a snapshot of the Iraqi government at this moment, the course that it is headed on, and project that out four years, my gut tells me it would look a lot like Iran.

It would look a lot like Iran. The government—the way they treat their people would be an Islamic state that looks a lot like Iran, and that one scenario for the Sunni cooperation is they see us as leverage against that.

Is that anywhere accurate in your mind?

Admiral FALLON. Well, if I could get back to your first question, I think that there is an awful lot of self-interest that is the real motivator here. I don't think we have had any great awakening that they now really love us, and that they are happy that we got rid of Saddam, and that they are out of power now.

I think this is a recognition that there is a greater evil here, and that evil is the constant terror and disruption of their lives that is perpetrated on them by al Qaeda and their allies, and they have had enough of it.

And so they are going to cooperate because they see an alternative that might be a little bit better than what they have had to endure recently. And I think that is the prime motivation.

Mr. TAYLOR. For the record, I would like your views of where you think Iraq is going to be four years from now, for the record.

Admiral FALLON. Well, I can tell you what we would like to see in Iraq, and that is one that has made progress so that these various factions within Iraq—the majority of the people feel that there is actually a government that has an interest in them and not just the narrow base from which the actual leaders are drawn.

And that is the critical step that needs to take place. If we are going to be successful, these populations—Sunnis, Kurds, Shi'a—all have to feel that this greater entity of Iraq represents a future that for them is better than what they have had in the past.

Mr. TAYLOR. Thank you, Admiral.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

Admiral, that is the confidence of which you spoke a few moments ago, am I correct?

Admiral FALLON. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Davis.

Ms. DAVIS OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Good to see you, Admiral, and I think we all do recognize what a difficult task you have. And we are behind you in that. Thank you.

You mentioned that you were going to be visiting the Iraqi security forces soon. And as a member of the Oversight and Investigations Committee, I know we have struggled to get the kind of numbers that we think are ones that we really can take a look at.

And so I hope that as you visit—and if you can help us to understand those numbers, that would be helpful. I think there is a difference between those Iraqis who have been trained and those who are actually serving.

We are also interested in the logistics issue and the capacity, really, of the military to develop the wherewithal to be able to do the job that is ahead of them and having some kind of a time frame in terms of all those pieces that have to be in play.

I also just wanted to mention, because it is interesting to me—and I guess I have heard this several times. You know, we talk about the ability of the government to benefit their people, to provide services, and we seem to have dropped—and I am not sure if it is a casual drop or whether it is more an understanding of the situation—to drop the words of democracy, because, in fact, we know people can provide services but that doesn't necessarily mean that the people are all being well-served.

And it may just be a matter of omission, but it is interesting that you are not the only one. That word seems to have been dropped. And if you would like to comment, please feel free to do that.

But I wanted to just turn to a different border now and ask if you could comment on what was reported in the *International Herald Tribune,* that the chief of the general staff of the Turkish army announced that from a military perspective it made sense for Turkey to invade northern Iraq.

According to some reports, Turkey is already massing forces on the Iraqi border to prevent Kurdish rebels from launching attacks from Iraq into Turkey.

And I wondered if—what you, General Craddock at EUCOM, are perhaps doing or working with our border there—Iraq's border there to understand that situation. And what is our plan, in fact, if Turkey would choose to invade northern Iraq?

Admiral FALLON. Well, it certainly wouldn't be a great day if the Turks carried out that threat. The issue is that for quite a long time now there has been an insurgent movement of Kurds, now known as the Kongre-Gel, PKK in a prior day, which is instigating trouble and violence inside of Turkey, and they are tired of it.

And they know that these groups get some support, in their opinion, from Kurdish populations within Iraq. They have been working against this problem for some time. They are looking for help. We are trying to assist them in this area.

When I was in Iraq a couple of weeks ago, I spent the better part of a day in the north and actually with President Barzani. We

talked about a lot of things, the contribution they could make to a new Iraq, by example and by playing a role to help mediate between the Shi'a and Sunni further south.

And that part of Iraq, by the way, is decidedly different than Baghdad in its environs. It is booming.

But I was particularly interested in a role that I would like to see them playing, they being the leadership of Kurds in Iraq, to try to minimize the impact of this Kongre-Gel in Turkey, because at the end of the day it is going to be certainly to their decided disadvantage and hurtful to not only that region but the whole country if the Turks carry out this threat.

The Turks are concerned. I think they are making these statements to emphasize how concerned they are about it.

And I know that we are working to try to play a role to get this kind of activity stopped and to do whatever we can to get those who could——

Ms. DAVIS OF CALIFORNIA. Are you able to characterize it in terms of a level of concern right now in the region?

Admiral FALLON. I guess it is one of the concerns. I don't think it is—and I certainly hope they don't carry out this threat. We are trying to convince them that this is not a good idea.

Ms. DAVIS OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentlelady.

The gentlelady from Guam, Ms. Bordallo.

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

Admiral Fallon, thank you for appearing before the committee today. And the challenges you face are diverse and significant, and I wish you and all those service members serving in the Central Command godspeed in successfully achieving your mission.

I have two questions for you today, Admiral. First, four companies of soldiers from the Guam National Guard have rotated in and out of the Horn of Africa, and you have mentioned this region in your opening statement.

The Horn of Africa assignment for the Guam National Guard soldiers is becoming a regular one. Can Guam National Guard soldiers and their families expect the Guam Guard to be rotated in and out of the Horn of Africa for the foreseeable future?

Or can the Guam Guard anticipate a different mission?

Admiral FALLON. I will have to get back to you, ma'am, with the specifics, but I know that we have discussed within the headquarters the idea that instead of taking folks on subsequent rotations and bouncing them all over the theater that it would probably be in our better long-term interest to have folks get very familiar with and do subsequent tours in the same area if it weren't too onerous for other reasons.

So my first reaction to this one is that they will probably be reassigned to this area. But I will take it for the record and get back to you if it is different from that.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix beginning on page 96.]

Ms. BORDALLO. Thank you. Thank you, Admiral. I do know at our last CODEL out to Guam, which was a couple of weeks ago, we visited the guard facilities, and I know they are very satisfied with that mission.

My next question addresses one of my major concerns with respect to Iraq. You have recently begun your assignment as commander of Central Command and approached the challenges in your area of responsibility with fresh eyes.

So given this fresh perspective, I would appreciate learning your thoughts on this issue. Iraq has 18 provinces. Analysts have identified five of Iraq's provinces as the predominant areas of violence in that country: Ninewa, Salahaddin, Diyala, Baghdad, and Anbar.

Analysts have identified four of these five provinces as significant sources of violence, and that is Salahaddin, Diyala, Baghdad, and Anbar.

Now, despite this, the President's surge plan addresses only some of the challenges in only two of those at-risk provinces. That is Baghdad and Anbar.

That is, of the four provinces that are the sources of significant violence in Iraq, the President's plan addresses only two of them.

But more broadly, it also can be argued that the President's new plan for Iraq, which is focused on improving the situation in only two of Iraq's 18 provinces, literally is 16 provinces short of being a comprehensive plan.

So assuming that the surge plan is executed flawlessly, and that results in successful outcomes on the ground in Baghdad and Anbar, will these successes constitute the completion of Operation Iraqi Freedom?

Or, upon the completion of the surge plan, can the American people and Congress expect to learn of newer new plans for Iraq? Can you address this for the committee?

Admiral FALLON. Ma'am, that is a lot of territory you covered, but I will tell you, I think it is really a good point, and I would like to talk about it.

There is much more going on in Iraq than a focus in just Baghdad and Anbar. And I mentioned Anbar earlier—that we have seen significant progress in just about every respect out there, and that is really good, because this was really a tough territory.

The facts are that of all of these provinces in the country, the ones that you have highlighted are, in fact, where most of the trouble is. And the reason is because these are the provinces in which you have the mixed sects interacting.

In the majority of the south, it is all Shi'a, overwhelmingly majority Shi'a, and there is very little of the kind of sectarian violence that we see up in the center. In the north, in the Kurdish dominant lands—virtually nothing going on up there of an untoward nature.

And so it is the center of the country where the three come into conflict.

The reality is that we have significant forces that are working in other provinces, in Diyala, for example, which has become, in fact, significantly more challenging, probably because a lot of the characters that have been evicted out of Baghdad or decided on their own to leave moved up into this area.

And because it has been an area of fault lines, there is a lot of conflict, and we have a major focus. So a lot of these troops in the redeployment have, in fact, moved—we have a much increased presence up in this area.

In Ninewa, I guarantee you that this is not going to escape the attention of General Petraeus. He spent a couple of years up in this part of the country. He knows it very well.

And in fact, we are very attentive to what goes on in and around Mosul, and we are going to watch it.

I was in Salahaddin just a couple of weeks ago, met with our PRT and our military people up there. It is getting attention as well.

And so I can guarantee you that we are going to not let these things out of sight. In fact, we are working them today, and it is part of the comprehensive plan.

Mr. TAYLOR [presiding]. The chair recognizes Mr. Smith——

Ms. BORDALLO. Thank you, Admiral.

Mr. TAYLOR [continuing]. Mr. Smith of Washington.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I wanted to ask a question about Iraq, following up a little bit on some of the issues that Mr. Snyder raised earlier.

The big question and concern that I have—we have got, you know, a big debate going on, certainly, and difference of opinion about the direction going forward.

The question I have for you is at some point we are going to leave, and what is troubling to me, as we get further into this—it is increasingly difficult to decipher what the President and our command structure—or how, I should say, the President and the command structure envisions that departure.

And I guess the problem I have is—you know, we have got a huge problem over there, and I get that we need to secure the situation, but bottom line, in terms of the big picture of battling al Qaeda, it is kind of a bad thing to have 160,000 U.S. troops occupying a Muslim country.

It undermines us in a whole bunch of different ways, and that is not to say that we shouldn't do it if it is necessary, but it is to say that it should be in the forefront of our minds to try to figure out how to extricate ourselves from that situation in as responsible a manner as possible, not just because of the bad international stuff, but as you mentioned, I think, in answer to Mrs. Drake's question, you know, supplies to fund Iraq and Afghanistan are coming from the rest of the military and causing enormous problems.

And that is true, supplemental or no supplemental. We have got the readiness problem that we have got out there. So the bottom line is it makes sense to figure out some way to get out of there.

And as I look at it and what the President is doing, it just seems like this massive sectarian violence, and violence of other kinds as well, and we are just trying to be there as it shifts and ebbs and flows to monitor it and try to prevent it.

And there is really no end in sight. So if you could sort of help me out, what does it look like? You know, forget for the moment what Democrats or people who are against the war are saying.

Just as a commander looking at that situation, thinking that we need to get out of there at some point, what does it look like when we do?

What is the plan for an exit strategy? And what does the country look like? And is this something that the command structure has started to at least contemplate?

Admiral FALLON. I would like to talk about the term you used: leave Iraq. I would propose that at some time in the future that we—and we are clearly moving toward and have as an objective transforming the security laydown and focus that we have in this country now to something significantly different.

But the idea that we leave, as in "we are out of here" and all gone, strikes me as something that may not be particularly useful for this——

Mr. SMITH. Let me pick my term a little better: Significantly draw down. I mean, we have troops in dozens of different countries, and I know that we are going to have them there for a while.

Admiral FALLON. Absolutely.

Mr. SMITH. Significantly draw down. Let's call it that.

Admiral FALLON. So at some time we want to redefine the security arrangement with this country, and so I think this is something that would be helpful, as we discuss and you debate this issue back here, to—maybe it would be helpful for our own people to have that we, in fact, do have very, very useful and productive security arrangements with countries all over the world, the vast majority of countries in which we have some presence and engagement.

And it is absolutely crucial and seen by people around the world as crucial. And certainly in this region, we would like to do that.

Mr. SMITH. And I agree completely. You know, I chair the subcommittee that has jurisdiction over the special forces. We have them in a large number of countries. Those are not occupations, however. So I am talking about a different set here.

Admiral FALLON. And that is something that I am anxious to get into. We have some challenges today we have got to overcome. We have got to help get the security.

But you mentioned massive sectarian violence. I would tell you that the data that I am seeing now indicates that that particular segment of concern is dramatically improved.

If you were to look at the number, if you—again, one of my challenges is, of all the data that I am being inundated with in the last four weeks here, trying to decide what is the most important, to be able to be predictive of how we are really doing and assessing where we have come. I am working with it.

But one thing that is really standing out—if you look at the number of deaths that we have been able to identify over the last several months, you will see a dramatic improvement in those numbers.

There are still hundreds of people, bodies, that are showing up in the morgues in this past month. But compared to where it was back in December and January, there is a significant improvement.

There is no doubt in my mind that this is a direct result of the increased security presence in these areas of conflict that I just mentioned, in the friction areas of Baghdad and its immediate surroundings.

And this is the presence of our forces and particularly the Iraqi security forces making a difference. So it isn't just ebbing and flowing. There is a significant improvement in many of these factors.

Now, as I mentioned earlier when I first got into the hearing, the biggest concern I have are the periodic big bangs which are really troublesome because of the potential to instigate retaliation and retribution by the Shi'a.

Mr. SMITH. Well, like this morning, for instance. I am sure you have seen the news. There was over 130 killed in Baghdad—or I guess it was maybe yesterday, but—so there is some ebb and flowing going on there.

Admiral FALLON. There are certainly events. I watch it. I flip my computer on every morning. I am anxious to see what has happened. And we are in a phase where we have a lot of change going on.

And I would just ask that we collectively allow these changes to get in place and to see what the effect is over a period of several months—and I don't think we have a whole lot longer than that—to get a realistic view of how we are doing and what the chances are for continued success in the future.

Mr. TAYLOR. Thank you, Admiral.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. TAYLOR. The chair recognizes Ms. Gillibrand.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have a few areas of inquiry. The first—you know, I spend my weekends going to public forums and to Congress on Your Corner, where I talk to regular folks about issues that matter. And one young woman came up to me and said, "What is Congress doing about Darfur?"

And I wanted to get a sense from you what militarily is possible, if there will be any involvement, and what your thoughts are about stabilizing that region.

Admiral FALLON. This has been a troubled area for some time, as you no doubt are aware. There has been a mission in the Darfur area undertaken by troops from the African Union to attempt to provide some stability and security in the area.

I think by most accounts it has been not particularly effective. And so there has been a lot of pressure on the government in the Sudan to allow—one proposal is a U.N. force to actually get in there and see if it can do more.

I am told that there have been some public pronouncements in the last one and a half days that indicate that the government has now at least ostensibly agreed to allow for a U.N. presence.

And I think if that turns out to be true—again, I am the new man in town here, but I understand we have kind of heard some of these stories before that haven't turned out to be quite as they have been told.

So this would be a good turn if, in fact, this turns out to be true, at least to give a chance to get some other folks on the ground and maybe a better chance to do it good.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Thank you.

My second area of inquiry, of course, is Iraq. And I have particular concerns about Muqtada al Sadr's role and his prevalence in the region.

I would like to get an update from you about the current disposition of his army, how many members, how are they armed and who is paying for them, how are they funded, and then really what your assessment is about what al Sadr's impact of having his six followers leave Prime Minister al Maliki's government.

Admiral FALLON. One, I would say that to characterize his band of militias as an army is probably giving him more credit than they are really due.

There is not much good to be said about the JAM, as they are called, Jaish al Mahdi, which is the militia that appears aligned to him. There was an interesting discussion today and in recent times about Muqtada al Sadr.

He clearly has a populist following among a certain segment of the Shi'a population in the country. He has been publicly very unhelpful in comments that have been attributed to him.

Now, we don't know what he is really saying, because we don't know really exactly where he is. By all reports, he is in Iran somewhere.

And that is indicative of probably the fact that were he to come back into Iraq, folks would probably like to get a hold of him and have a conversation of sorts.

He has not been playing a particularly helpful role. But I wonder what is going on, and I think the jury is out on this one right now, exactly how much influence he has over how many people.

There are things that he has perpetrated, the most recent being the—two things that stand out in my mind. One is the admonition, allegedly, to his folks to go ahead and not cooperate—that is a euphemism, I think, for go after the coalition—and what that might mean for our people.

The second is his alleged direction to have the cabinet members of the Maliki government that are aligned with his party to bail out. So it remains to be seen what is going to happen.

There is a little bit of history here, in my mind. One is that last year, at the end of the year, he allegedly directed the members of the COR that were aligned with his faction to depart that legislative body.

But after a couple of months, they somehow decided that it was maybe in their better interest to come back in again. The net effect of this appears to me to be about a zero.

And I suspect that in the longer term, at least my appraisal of this is that his effectiveness as a leader may not be nearly as great as it may have been.

So we are watching this one closely. There are clearly factions developing within his militia, if you would, the JAM. These are not nice guys.

If some of these factions might be split into somebody that is more amenable to actually working with this government, it would be particularly helpful. I think that remains to be seen.

So he is kind of an enigmatic figure of dubious help, I think, to the government, but clearly with some following, and we are just going to have to watch to see what comes here.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Thank you. And thank you again for your leadership and your tremendous service.

Admiral FALLON. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN [presiding]. Mr. Courtney, please.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral, looking at your scope of command and the range of places we have talked about today, I was sitting here thinking you must feel like you are in that Johnny Cash song, "I Have Been Everywhere."

And just to keep moving along, a couple of months ago we had a hearing where it was brought out that two aircraft carrier battle groups were being located in the Gulf.

And obviously with your background, maybe this would be a good opportunity to ask you some questions about that, because obviously—and I don't think there is any great surprise to you—there was a lot of concern about what the policy goal—what the national security goal was being achieved by doing that.

And I just wondered if you could comment on the current status of naval operations in the Gulf and what the planning is for those aircraft groups.

Admiral FALLON. We routinely deploy forces around the world, as you know. It seems to me that it is to our interest as a nation that we periodically demonstrate our capabilities, which are substantial, to be able to influence events when required in various areas of the world.

We certainly have our land forces, the Army and Marine Corps, very busy today in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some folks might have the idea that because we are busy in these areas that we don't have the capacity or will or capability to actually be interested in other things that might occur.

To the contrary, our maritime and air forces are very capable and can operate in many places.

It is also to the advantage of the operational forces to periodically put capabilities together to make sure that we, in fact, are understanding of the challenges of operating forces in sizes that are above what we would characterize as the more routine deployments.

And so in practical terms, for the Navy, if there were to be an event of some significance anywhere in the world, you would probably ask for forces that were over and above the typical deployment of maybe a single aircraft carrier strike group or a single Marine expeditionary unit.

And as we demonstrated last year in the Pacific, where the commanders out there, the naval commanders, actually pulled three—and actually, for a while, four—aircraft carrier strike groups to operate in the same general area at the same time, it gave our commanders a rare opportunity to exercise the scope of responsibilities that they would have to be capable of doing in the event of some crisis in the world.

It also tests our ability to support and sustain these kinds of operations.

It was apparent, because these balls are in motion well before I appeared on the scene, that we had not recently demonstrated any of these capabilities in the Central Command region.

And so there were two carriers that were made available and have operated and done significant work. And so I think this is in our interest to demonstrate to ourselves our capabilities and to

prove to our people and to get the experience of operating in various regions. It is in our interest to do that.

And it is also, because I have had this comment just in past weeks as I traveled around the Gulf, certainly noted by our friends, allies and supporters, and I am sure by others, that we are capable of doing this, and it is reassuring, certainly, to many people that we are not only interested but capable of doing these things.

So I think I am not going to provide advance notification of future operations, but I would say that I think it is in our interest to periodically take our forces and to operate them in the sizes and shapes of capabilities that we ought to periodically demonstrate.

Mr. COURTNEY. And obviously, there was an incident that just happened there involving the Iranian navy and the British. And I mean, there was some question about an agreement that was instrumental in getting the release of those sailors.

I don't know whether you have any comment about our own possible involvement in such an agreement, whether the rules of operation were changed, or what effect that is going to have——

Admiral FALLON. Yes, there was another question earlier about some agreement. There is certainly no agreement between the U.S. The agreement that was reached between the British and the Iranians to get the freedom of those people is a detail that was only between those two countries. But the U.S. had no part of that agreement.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

Ms. Giffords, please.

Ms. GIFFORDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And congratulations, Admiral Fallon, on your new position.

There are currently about 20,000 security contractors serving in Iraq. And I am curious, since you took command of Central Command, what explanation have you received of the legal status of security contractors working in both Iraq and Afghanistan?

What legal system do they currently operate under? And what is the process by which they can be disciplined for misconduct?

Admiral FALLON. The answer is I don't know yet, but I will find out. This issue came up yesterday when I was in the HAC. It was news to me.

I was certainly aware that we had many contractors of various sizes and shapes and descriptions working in both countries, and for many well-intentioned reasons.

The numbers of them that are providing security I don't know exactly, but I can get back to you and find out.

Whoever they are, and if they are working for U.S. command that is under my responsibility, they are certainly going to be under our control and operate under certainly the same general rules of engagement that our people would operate, as a minimum. We will make sure that there is—I can't imagine that they have any more latitude than our own people do.

Before I misspeak here or get into it, I will go find out the detail of it. All I can tell you is that many entities within both countries have hired, my understanding is, security contractors to do work for them.

Many of these folks are not working for U.S. entities. They are working for other governments, either Iraq or ministries within

Iraq, for example, which I know are pretty plentiful, or in Afghanistan working for other entities.

But we will find out and get back to you.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix beginning on page 97.]

Ms. GIFFORDS. Well, Admiral, let me tell you about an experience that I had when I was in Iraq just a couple of months ago.

You see our United States military, and it is very clear what they look like and what they represent, by their uniform, by how they act and who they are accountable to.

To see, you know, the Blackwater, the Triple Canopy security forces—these guys, frankly, look like thugs. They have got tattoos. They have got earrings. They don't wear a uniform.

And for those Iraqis or the people of Afghanistan, it is not clear who is United States military and who is a contractor. And frankly, it blemishes our reputation.

Also, if you had a chance to see the article yesterday in *The Washington Post* about what was happening with Triple Canopy—and I urge you to read this.

The former director of the security for the Green Zone, when asked about the incidents of Triple Canopy in terms of the shooting rampage that went on and this cover-up, he was quoted saying, "This is out of my venue," and he referred the company to the Joint Contracting Command.

And then when Major Small, who is a spokesperson for Central Command, was asked about this, he replied, "This is not a CENTCOM issue. It is for whoever is running the contract."

We cannot allow this to perpetuate and to continue on, Admiral, and I would just like your opinion about that, and how we are going to immediately take control of the situation.

Admiral FALLON. Well, let me say that I think it is a really good point you make about the issue of identification and image. We are in both of these countries with an avowed mission of trying to help them to establish security and stability.

And any image of lawlessness, or gunplay or other reckless kind of cowboy behavior that is described here, of which I am not familiar, but—strikes me as being exactly the opposite of what we want to do.

As far as CENTCOM having no ownership of this, I will tell you what. If it has to do with security in either one of these countries, we have got a dog in this fight and we will find out.

I guarantee you General Petraeus, as our commander on the ground there, is very interested in anybody who would be doing anything that would either tarnish the image of what we are trying to do or actually contribute to instability or lawlessness in any way.

So I got it, and we will get on it.

Ms. GIFFORDS. And one other point, Admiral. When talking with some young soldiers over there, they are very aware that these contractors are making $500 a day, $600 a day, $700 a day.

And frankly, it undermines morale of our United States military when they are making $24,000 a year, and meanwhile someone—a kid that comes in that has—you know, didn't graduate from high

school, that—you know, there is just a whole range in terms of the background of some of these contractors.

And so it doesn't just affect our reputation, but I think it undermines as well our United States military.

Admiral FALLON. Well, I have no idea what these folks are being paid, but I will tell you that at least the proposed reason for why they are there is precisely so that we don't have to have more U.S. uniformed people on the ground to do these security functions.

So if what was well-intended is now working against us, it is certainly not what we want to perpetuate, and we will take it on and do something about it.

Ms. GIFFORDS. Thank you, Admiral.

Admiral FALLON. Thanks.

The CHAIRMAN. The admiral will recall my earlier request regarding contractors to be answered on the record——

Admiral FALLON. Sir.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. Which I would appreciate.

Ms. Shea-Porter, please.

Admiral FALLON. Yes, sir.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Thank you.

Admiral Fallon, thank you so much for your service. I wanted to say that I was in Baghdad last month, and I would ask that you speak to me privately for about 60 seconds, following up on what we just heard from the congresswoman.

Admiral FALLON. Sure.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. I think it is very critical.

Thank you for being here. What I wanted to talk to you about today was what our chairman had talked about, the growth of extremism and what instruments of our national power we would use besides military over time.

And I wanted to talk about an article that was in *USA Today* that talked about Iraqi children. And they had photo of children looking out a school window as U.S. soldiers were climbing onto the roof.

Now, I know those U.S. soldiers were trying to protect those children. I am not sure the world knows that when they sent that photo around.

And then the article went on to say that 70 percent of the Iraqi children are showing extreme post-traumatic stress syndrome disorder.

And I am very worried about the fact that the psychiatrists and psychologists have fled the country now, so they are not there treating them, and that these children, who have been so traumatized by all that they have seen—walking to school, they see people blown up.

How are we going to convince these children that we are, indeed, good people, which, of course, we are, but how are we going to convince them not to join the terrorists and the extremist movement after seeing what they have seen and going untreated—undiagnosed, untreated, and their communities are falling apart?

What is our role there, as you see it?

Admiral FALLON. A couple of comments. This challenge of media reporting is one in which I have a high interest, and we owe it to

ourselves as well as the Iraqis to try to get the appropriate reporting and imaging done.

As I see reports, both the official things that I see through the chain of command and then read the media reports, I am struck by sometimes a divergence in the description of the event.

And visual images, of course, are ones that are even more challenging. But it seems to me that we both in the military and all of our forces working this need to be sensitive to the fact that at the end of the day the most important target, if you would, of our attention is really the Iraqi people's perception of how life really is, and whether it is really better to live in the day-to-day uncertainty of terror and who is going to be alive or wounded tomorrow, or a better future.

And so trying to help the government of Iraq to do the things, to make the decisions that would move this thing forward—and at the same time being very sensitive to things we do.

You know, we are trying to provide security. I am certain that in the process of doing that, there are images of our actions there that appear to be convincing people that maybe this isn't a good deal.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Well, let me say——

Admiral FALLON. We have just got to work on it. I don't know how to do—I mean, we know what we are trying to do.

General Petraeus is trying his best to make sure that his commanders are highly sensitive to the image that they portray as they go about their duties.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. I may have been misunderstood. It is not the image that I am talking about. It is the reality.

Let's get over the picture and say that what I was talking about was the fact that the children of Iraq are seeing a country that is being laid to waste in areas and that they are suffering greatly the psychological damage.

And what are we going to do to remedy some of that, to stabilize that country, so that these children will not grow up to be the new wave of terrorists?

Admiral FALLON. I guess in my mind, first things first. We have to convince their parents that they ought to be helping the government and the security forces of Iraq rather than the insurgents in the daily decisions they make.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. I don't even think it is that, Admiral. I think that a lot of the people actually initially supported this. I think what is—is when they talk outside and their children are shot or see something terrible, that that is what is turning it, that what is happened has been this terrible violence.

So I don't even think it is a question of whether the parents supported something. You could talk the parents into, you know, supporting the government. I think it is just a fact of what they are seeing.

How are we going to treat the children? And how are we going to create some kind of a societal fabric again?

Admiral FALLON. We have to get the people to believe that there is a future, and the way that future is going to come about is by helping this government that is in place to make life better for them.

And the children we will deal with or try to help the government deal with those children as you get—but the children aren't making the decisions to aid and abet the terrorists.

It is the parents and others, the adults in the society. So we have got to—I think we have got to start there. I would love to help the children——

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. I respectfully suggest that most of those parents are not doing that with their children. But I understand what we are saying, that we don't have the answer, and I thank you for at least addressing the question, Admiral. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentlelady.

The gentleman from Hawaii, Mr. Abercrombie.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Admiral Fallon, aloha.

Admiral FALLON. Aloha.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Admiral, you already mentioned there is—at least what we know from media reports; I don't know what the actual numbers are—127 dead in hospitals today in Baghdad itself, hundreds wounded.

I cite that not to get in a discussion about whether that represents dramatically improved progress, or significant progress or anything like that.

Those kinds of things, I think, are relatively useless, and I wish we could get away from that kind of discussion. For me, that has political import.

My sole purpose in talking with you today has to do with the military side of it. There is entirely too much politics coming across from both sides in a lot of these hearings, it seems to me, these days.

I am sure you understand my meaning when I say I am not interested in your political views or your assessment of the efficacy of the political circumstances that you find you have to contend with when the military factor, the military element, of it is what you have responsibility for.

And that is the thrust of my questions to you. I am very, very concerned about the answer that you gave to Ms. Davis in the military context here.

That is to say, what is the role of the United States military, if any, in the upcoming situation that we are going to confront—that the United States military will have to confront in terms of Kurdish nationalism and the referendum to be held this December?

I know that General Ralston is appointed—I don't know if he is subordinate to you in this particular endeavor—as a kind of envoy in this situation in anticipation of it.

I believe this referendum is going to go ahead. I believe the Kurds will absolutely demand it. I believe that there is very, very difficult circumstances regarding the Turkmen and the ethnic cleansing that——

Admiral FALLON. This is the Kirkuk referendum that you are speaking of?

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. The Kirkuk referendum, yes. Without going into too much detail of the back and forth between the Turks and the Iranians, for that matter, who—at least the information that I have is that the Iranians and the Turks are talking about it, because they all have an interest in the Kurd situation.

My question has to do with where we fall in this situation. We seem to be, in all the answers you give today, finding ourselves as referees, or commentators, or interpreters of one kind or another.

Do we have a military responsibility, and do we have a plan, if you will, with regard to what happens with regard to the referendum in Kirkuk in December?

Do we anticipate participating in a military way in the—and I see you shaking your head "no". I don't see how that can be avoided if there is a—if we are occupying the country and there is a clash that takes place as a result of the Kurds not reconciling, as Secretary Gates would like them to do.

Admiral FALLON. Sir, my earlier comments to Ms. Davis were in connection with the cross-border activity with the Kurdish terrorists and insurgents operating inside of Turkey.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. They don't see themselves as terrorists and insurgents. We are in trouble already.

Admiral FALLON. Maybe, but the Turks sure see them that way.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. I know they do. That is my point.

Admiral FALLON. The fact is that the Kirkuk thing—this is the political process. This is an attempt to define a future for this region as a political entity——

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. I quite agree.

Admiral FALLON [continuing]. The military.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. That is why my question is do you see a role for the United States military in that context?

Admiral FALLON. I do not.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Could we take that that we do not have plans, then, to intervene should there be a clash between the—whatever the clash may be up there?

It doesn't necessarily have to be between the Turks and the Kurds, let alone Turkish Kurds, but this can be internally in the Iraqi so-called reconciliation process that we are attempting to support politically.

I am concerned that the United States military will find itself being called upon to try and solve a political problem in the Kurdish north that—I don't think such activity would be conducive to any kind of resolution.

Admiral FALLON. The provinces in the north that are predominantly Kurdish are teed up as next in line after Maysan in the south to revert to what they call PIC, or provincial Iraqi control.

And this is another step in a process that we would hope is much more political than the military. We would hope not to get involved up there any more than we have to.

We are in a position to provide oversight and overwatch, and we will certainly respond if there is some significant untoward incident, but we are pushing the Iraqis hard to try to figure this out themselves.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. My time is up. I am sorry. But I want to conclude, Admiral and Mr. Chairman, by saying I certainly hope that we don't end up in hopes. I don't think we can live in hope in this.

Mr. Chairman, I think we have to have a very clear understanding of what the United States military responsibility is in the wake of any kind of internal Iraqi conflict, let alone border conflict, with regard to the Kirkuk referendum.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

Admiral, there have been recent news reports that suggested that America was close to announcing a large arms sale to certain Gulf nations as part of a so-called Gulf security dialogue, but also that this is the—the news reports are that this has been delayed by Israeli concerns. Are you aware of this?

Admiral FALLON. I know that the Gulf security dialogue is an initiative to try to get multilateral cooperation among the Gulf states, to try to find common ground in things that would be useful for better security and stability in the region.

I have in my briefings, as I have gone into this, gotten an assessment of where we are with certain countries, and I think it is a good idea. It kind of runs against the traditional tide here, because most of these folks like to do bilateral things as opposed to multilateral.

Regarding the details of a massive arms sale somewhere, I am not up to speed on that one. I know that as I visited some of the countries in the last couple of weeks, there are specific requests for certain items that are out there, and I know those are being worked, but I am not aware of any particularly massive sale.

The CHAIRMAN. Along that same line, the reports that the U.S. and others allowed North Korea to ship some arms to Ethiopia—what steps are being taken to convince the Ethiopians to sever relationships, if any, with the North Koreans?

Admiral FALLON. What I believe I understand to date about Ethiopia is that of all the countries in the Horn of Africa, the Ethiopians at least appear to be playing the best shot at a constructive role in helping to deal with the instabilities in their region, particularly with Somalia.

And the extent to which they have received help from others is one that I will be interested in. I suspect that there are probably deals with the devil here that I need to check on and see exactly what is going on.

I don't have that information. I will look at it. What I do know is that Ethiopia has been attempting to help to stabilize this region, which we certainly support, and I will have to get back to you and see just what is going on.

The CHAIRMAN. Admiral, we were talking about benchmarks a little while ago, and the Administration has seen not to hold the Iraqi government's feet to the fire regarding benchmarks.

But let me ask you, how hopeful are you that the Iraqi government will actually pass and implement a meaningful oil reform, constitutional reform, as they have promised, and de-Baathification reform, which has also been promised?

Admiral FALLON. Mr. Chairman, I wouldn't want to predict——

The CHAIRMAN. I know predicting legislation is not always an easy thing to do, but nevertheless, this is terribly important, because they have promised to do these specific pieces of legislation, so how—do you have any thought?

Admiral FALLON. Sure. I would assess these as very essential elements to indications that this government is taking the steps that are necessary to make this a viable entity in Iraq.

And it seems to me that they need to take these actions, they need to make them effective, and that people need to see them as

something that would give them the kind of hope that would engender greater support and greater stability in the country.

Without them, it is difficult for me to see significant progress, unless they are actually enacted.

The CHAIRMAN. Do you have any judgment as to a time table regarding these three reforms that I mentioned?

Admiral FALLON. No, I do not. I know that they are constantly in play, in discussion, and for my part, when I visited and spoke with the prime minister and the other leaders a couple of weeks ago, I made known my strong opinion that I thought these were essential steps that needed to be undertaken at the earliest opportunity.

The CHAIRMAN. I have had the opportunity to be at the National Training Center some time ago, and of course we have the National Training Center as well as the Joint Readiness Training Center for pre-deployment rotations or which are returning to Iraq after a good number of months here in the home station.

I understand that there is a deployment of a good number of forces to Iraq, both active duty and National Guard, that have not been able to go to either the National Training Center or the Joint Readiness Training Center.

That concerns me a great deal, and I worry about the readiness challenge that the lack of attendance at these training centers will bring. Are you concerned about that?

Admiral FALLON. I would like to have every one of our units that deploys to Iraq to have the opportunity to get the maximum benefit of all the training that could be made available to them.

I suspect that given where we are that it is going to be very challenging for the Army to get each of these units to participate, certainly, to the full extent of the soldiers that would deploy to these entities.

I am going to be relying on my subordinate commanders to accurately assess the training status of these forces, and if they are not adequately prepared to go to Iraq that they would tell me that, and that we would take appropriate steps to make sure that if they are perceived to be deficient that they would be corrected.

So this is one that we are going to have to make sure my commanders understand and that we are getting the accurate assessments that are so necessary for the reasons you stated.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Hunter.

Mr. HUNTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I just ran over to the floor a minute ago for the commendation that Mrs. Drake is leading to commemorate the anniversary of the special operations forces. And there is lots of speakers over there to commemorate these great men and women.

I came back here to get these last questions in, so thank you, Mr. Chairman, for letting me come back here and ask a few follow-ups.

The gentlelady spoke a few minutes ago—and I wish she were still here—who spoke in a disparaging way about contractors, and I am just reminded that the Blackwater Group which is over there, to the information I received, is mostly American veterans, honorably discharged, many of them from Special Forces Command.

Many veterans who have served a lifetime in the SEALs, special forces, Army Rangers, are presently contractors, and I am further

reminded that it was—I believe it was Blackwater employees, contractors, who were hung from the bridge in Fallujah, when they were undertaking their mission over there that precipitated the initial battle of Fallujah.

And so there are many, many honorable people doing a great job as contractors in Iraq and some in Afghanistan. And in fact, many of them come from American Special Forces Command.

To my information, nobody who ever received a dishonorable discharge—and they were spoken of as thugs with tattoos and other things.

I don't believe anybody with dishonorable discharges from the military are allowed to participate as contractors, at least in the group that is known as Blackwater. Do you have any information to the contrary, Admiral?

Admiral FALLON. No, sir, and I would agree that it is not particularly useful to generalize for what may be—and I am not familiar with the details of the incident that the congresswoman referenced.

But I would agree with you that we have seen some terrific service by people in contracting status, be they in the field doing this kind of work or other things that are highly supportive.

I have had a chance to meet several contractors, if you would, that are working for General Petraeus that are doing phenomenal work for him in trying to think through and come up with the best way ahead in these challenging circumstances.

Mr. HUNTER. The last observation I would make on that is that most of those folks that have tattoos—and a lot of them have tattoos—my son has done two tours in Iraq. He has got a USMC tattoo. Most of those received their tattoos while they were in the United States military. And to disparage people because they have got tattoos I thought was not, as you said, particularly helpful.

Let me ask you a question that goes right to the point of the supplemental, Admiral. I have got a copy of the supplemental there. Your staff has got it right behind you.

And I direct you—it is right behind you there—to page 72, which has been a provision of enormous concern to me and to other members of the committee, and it says this.

It says, "None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available in this or any other act may be used to deploy any unit of the armed forces to Iraq unless the chief of the military department concerned has certified in writing to the Committees on Appropriations and the Committees on Armed Services at least 15 days in advance of the deployment that the unit is fully mission capable."

Now, I have asked our lawyers what that means, and that says you have got to wait 15 days. Even if they are fully mission capable, you have got to tell this committee and other committees two weeks before you make that deployment that you are going to make it.

And, Admiral, I am reminded that many of these missions are after targets which are fleeting targets. Some of them involve teams—in fact, some of those celebrated special forces teams that we are commemorating on the House floor right now—who come from out of country who have to enter Iraq.

And what our lawyers tell us, at least, is that that means they can't enter Iraq unless there is a 15-day notice, a notice and wait, given to the Armed Services Committee.

And similarly, if you make air strikes with aircraft that are out of Iraq, you have to give that same 15-day advance notice.

My question to you is is that something that will allow you to fight this war effectively? You have got the provision right in front of you there, and it is pretty straightforward.

Admiral FALLON. I would say that in my experience, a decision to deploy a unit or a sub-unit of some organization is made certainly with an understanding of our best assessment of the readiness of that unit.

There are times in which we may deploy units that are not in the highest mission readiness category with an understanding of the risk that may be involved in that mission and the assumption of that risk by the commander that receives that unit.

So from my experience——

Mr. HUNTER. What I am talking about, though, is the 15-day waiting period, even if you are fully mission-capable and you can certify that immediately.

This language says you have to report to the Committee on Armed Services and make that certification two weeks before you make the deployment of any unit.

That means if you have a hostage situation and you have to send a Special Operations Command (SOCOM) team in to rescue them from out of country, you have to wait two weeks under this should this become law.

My question is assuming all our SOCOM guys are fully mission-capable when they go into country, and presumably most of our air capability that would come out of a place like Incirlik is also fully mission-capable, but can you live with a two-week wait in a war against terror, where your targets are fleeting and sometimes the American forces are in extremis?

Do you see what my question is? My question is can you wait for two weeks before units go into Iraq?

Admiral FALLON. As a commander, I would ask for a consideration that we not limit the flexibility of our commanders in allowing them to use forces that might be necessary to meet a situation or a mission which they may be asked to undertake.

So I would opt to allow our commanders to have the flexibility of making that decision rather than have some dictated requirement in advance.

Mr. HUNTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I would tell the admiral that there are three waivers in the proposed legislation, Presidential waivers, and one of those three waivers is on the language to which the gentleman from California, Mr. Hunter, made reference.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, would you yield on that?

The CHAIRMAN. You bet.

Mr. HUNTER. Yes, there is a waiver, but the waiver does not go to units which are fully mission-capable, which presumably any special operation forces are going to be.

That waiver exists in subsection D, and it only refers to consideration of units that are not assessed as fully mission-capable.

So having asked our attorneys to look at this, there is no waiver for a special forces team that would be fully mission-capable, that would be capable of asserting that on the very first day. Under the law, they would still have a 15-day waiting period.

Subsection D applies to, and I am quoting, "a unit that is not assessed as fully mission-capable."

Admiral FALLON. I would just ask the committee in their deliberations to please keep in mind that our commanders would like to have the ability to have the flexibility to make decisions that would be appropriate to the task which they are asked to carry out.

The CHAIRMAN. It is my understanding, Admiral, that the waiver does apply, and of course it really boils down to interpretation by various lawyers, but I appreciate the gentleman bringing the—mentioning the issue.

Dr. Snyder.

Well, Admiral, we are very, very appreciative—oh, Mr. Sestak? You have a question, sir?

Mr. SESTAK. Admiral, thank you.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral, a lot of people talk about is there a Plan B if what is happening with the surge or escalation, however you want to characterize it, does not achieve the goals the President is trying to attain—military security environment that is such that politically people would, in his opinion, be more willing to compromise and come forward.

You had said that this is a last great chance opportunity for them. Did you mean that as far as militarily with this emphasis on what the military could do to help the process—but did you also mean that diplomatically?

And I say this with great respect for having watched what you did in the Western Pacific diplomatically with a nation such as China.

And so my question comes down to two areas—one, politically, internally, which we talked about, what leverage do we actually have to move them along?

But number two, if you could address it first, is Iran and Syria, and particularly Iran, who came to us in 2003 and appeared to want to work with us, to where General Eikenberry, when he sat at the table here, actually, in answer to a question, said, "Iran appears to be working toward our interest in Afghanistan," because our interests happened to coincide. It doesn't want al Qaeda there.

And yet there has been recent reports, just recent, that now there is arms from Iran there. Have we missed opportunities here? Is there an opportunity here?

Where you had talked about working with regional nations—you mentioned Syria—is there really a different approach we should be taking, not tougher, but not dissimilar to what happened in the Western Pacific, so that there really is a Plan B?

Admiral FALLON. Well, a couple things. First, to the latter comment on Iran, it seems to me that we ought to be very interested in those things which would be helpful in general security and stability of the region.

Whatever has gone on in the past, it seems that in this challenge with Iraq that we could use all the help we can get.

There is a conference upcoming that was agreed by President Mubarak to host in Egypt—actually, there are two, but the one of interest straightaway is the so-called neighbors conference.

This is an attempt by those in the region to get people together to talk about how they might be helpful to one another, particularly as regards Iraq.

And it seems to me that this is a really good place in which we might have constructive dialogue on an item that is of very high interest to us.

And you are aware, of course, that there was an inaugural discussion here in recent weeks, and I would look forward to the discussion that might ensue in this meeting, particularly in the context of what role Iran may play in a helpful venue toward Iraq.

And so I think this is probably a good place to start, and we look forward to that.

Regarding Iraq itself, and the business of how much time there is left and the necessity for tough decisions, I believe that notwithstanding the phenomenal effort that is being put forth by our military personnel and many other entities in the interagency and thousands of people that are hard at work today, that this is, at the end and the beginning, about the willingness of the Iraqi leaders to make those decisions that will engender the kind of confidence in the people in that country to want to move forward in a manner in which we would be happy to see them and really encourage them to do it.

So we are trying to make sure, without any doubt, that the leaders in this country understand that that is really our objective, and that we recognize that this is their decision. They are going to have to make the choices.

But if they fail to make choices that will engender that kind of confidence, then I don't know how much we could do absent those kinds of calls. So they got the message, and now it is going to be up to them.

But we recognize there is an awful lot of help that they need, confidence-wise and others, to help make that——

Mr. SESTAK. Could I just make a closing comment, if I might?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

Mr. SESTAK. Thank you, sir. It is not that I believe many are anti-war, so to speak, with Iraq.

And the issue on time, even just after this recent trip with Senator Hagel, comes back as I look at the Army brethren and watch that not one unit in America is ready to deploy to another contingency.

It is really pro-security and how we place ourselves—is why we keep coming back to how long. And so therefore, the comment is if it is having the political leaders willing to do something, what it ultimately comes to—what is the leverage?

And thus far, what I did hear out there from military leaders and political was dates, and not being open-ended has helped. Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Giffords has another question.

Ms. GIFFORDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I know that in my absence maybe there was a misunderstanding about the question that I asked you, Admiral.

I think it is absolutely critical that now, as the head of Central Command—that we know of these 20,000, plus or minus, contractors that we have of the security forces what sort of legal status they have in terms of security status in Iraq and Afghanistan, what legal status they currently operate under, and by what process can they be disciplined for misconduct.

My experience over there was that it was very unclear who these people worked for, what they did, and who was in charge of them.

Now, I know there was a comment made in reference to tattoos. And I think that is great. If people want to have tattoos, that is fine.

But our United States military—there are some very strict guidelines in terms of what your physical appearance can look like and should look like, because you represent not just your branch of the military but the entire United States of America.

So my experience was that it was very unclear—no name tags, no badges, no indication who these people worked for—and I just certainly believe that you need to take real control of who these 20,000 people are, where they—who they currently report to.

And I just don't want that to be undermined in terms of a comment that was made recently.

Mr. HUNTER. Would the gentlelady yield?

Ms. GIFFORDS. Yes, sir, I will yield.

Mr. HUNTER. I thank the gentlelady for yielding.

My comment, and I was the person who commented—in fact, I wish you had stayed—was not to the point of the control factor of the contractors—and incidentally, the fact that you didn't see control doesn't indicate there wasn't any—but your comments with respect to thugs, tattoos, et cetera.

And my point was, which I didn't think you understood, was that the vast majority of those contractors at places like Blackwater are, in fact, honorably discharged veterans of the United States military who are outstanding Americans, SEALs, special forces, people who have done an enormously good job for our country and are in a second career.

And they are in a second career as contractors. They have security skills. They are disciplined people. And they are good people. And they aren't thugs. And I heard the word "thug" used.

And my further point was that if you use the idea that a person has a tattoo—is somehow an indication that he is a disorderly or a bad person—most of the people who are contractors who have tattoos are people who acquired them in the United States Navy, Army, Marine Corps, Air Force.

We have had a lot of our contractors who have been killed over there. They have given their lives for what they thought was a good cause.

The contractors who were killed and whose bodies were hung on the bridge in Fallujah were American contractors, in fact, who came from the place that you spoke of somewhat disparagingly. That is Blackwater. They were Blackwater contractors.

So that was the point that I made, and I don't think the admiral has said that his contractors are out of control.

Ms. GIFFORDS. Mr. Chairman.

Mr. HUNTER. And I thank the gentlelady for yielding.

Ms. GIFFORDS. I would like to reclaim my time.

Ranking Member Hunter, I am sorry if my comments were taken out of context. But what I said is that some of these security contractors look very unprofessional. And we have to take ourselves out of the position and think about what the Iraqi people think about seeing Americans over there.

Some of them, I am sure, were discharged honorably from the United States military, but they are currently not under the umbrella of the United States military, so they have served our country with honor and they may continue to serve our country with great honor and distinction.

But it is important not to take my words out of context. Some of these men look unprofessional. And it is important that we understand—again, getting away from—the premise of my question—of what sort of legal system do they currently operate under.

And in terms of discipline for their misconduct, how do we do that here? And does Central Command play an active role?

The comments that were made in the newspaper just a couple of weeks ago by Major Small, a spokesperson for Central Command, was, "This is not a CENTCOM issue. It is for whoever is running the contract."

So, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Hunter, I urge the United States military to really take control of these contractors. I think it is really important.

Mr. HUNTER. I have some information on that, if the gentlelady would yield just briefly.

Ms. GIFFORDS. Actually, you know what?

Mr. HUNTER. My understanding is that—and I believe we asked these questions initially during the initial occupation—was that because there was a determination—is it under what body of law American personnel in Iraq would be governed by.

And there was initially an agreement with the Iraqi government—and you will have to—the staff will have to help us on this, because this was some time ago—that the American contractors would be under the jurisdiction of American law, if your question is what jurisdiction applies.

Ms. GIFFORDS. Thank you.

And, Mr. Chairman, I would like to yield the balance of my time to Congressman Sestak.

Mr. SESTAK. And if I could, Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to comment to your comment.

I spoke with the colonel who had to go get the remaining body parts of the three Blackwater individuals, and he said to me—and it gets to Admiral Fallon's point about command and control—"If only they had called me, I would have told them that that road was not safe, and they would be alive today."

Not only for their safety, but for accountability of not having a separate military force, Admiral Fallon's point well-taken by my fellow representative, it is very important to have the command and control of this separate entity there.

And that is what I learned, is we don't have that, according to the Marine colonel.

Thank you for yielding your time.

The CHAIRMAN. Admiral Fallon, in an earlier comment, made it clear that they are under the Central Command control.

Am I correct, Admiral?

Admiral FALLON. I have now got this article that is attributed to a person at Central Command whom I don't know. And I will go find out.

But if there is someone who is contracted to us or representing us in any way, shape or form, then I will take responsibility and find out what is going on.

The CHAIRMAN. That clarifies that.

Second, Admiral, I think the questions put by the gentlelady and others would fall within the request I made earlier regarding contractors, and——

Admiral FALLON. Got it.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. We look forward to an early answer to that request of you, knowing full well you don't have it at your fingertips today.

Admiral FALLON. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Admiral, we can't thank you enough for your past service, your present service, your future service. You are a great American.

We appreciate your taking this very challenging position on, and we wish you the very best. Thank you again.

Admiral FALLON. Thank you, Chairman.

[Whereupon, at 12:33 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

April 18, 2007

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

April 18, 2007

STATEMENT OF

ADMIRAL WILLIAM J. FALLON, UNITED STATES NAVY

COMMANDER, UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND

BEFORE THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

ON THE 2007 POSTURE OF THE UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND

18 APRIL 2007

I. Introduction

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the men and women of the United States Central Command (CENTCOM), I thank you for this opportunity to testify on the posture of our command, and to provide an assessment of security and stability in our Area of Responsibility.

CENTCOM is in its sixth consecutive year of combat operations and our region continues to be challenged with insecurity complicated by violent extremism. Operations in Iraq are focused on providing security for the population while increasing the capacity of the Government and Iraqi Security Forces to defend and secure their people. In Afghanistan, efforts continue to assist the young representative government with mentoring, training, and governance, as well as counter terrorist and security support. Pursuing stability and security in the region requires the focused, coordinated application of military power and a robust interagency effort. By helping people manage social, political, and economic change, we can further the interests of peace and representative government.

In my first month as CENTCOM Commander, I have traveled to many countries and met face-to-face with leaders to discuss the situation in the region and to enlist support for our efforts. A number of impressions frame my overall assessment, which is one of guarded optimism.

Our top priority is achieving stability and security in Iraq. The ongoing sectarian violence threatens Iraq as well as the region, and inhibits essential economic progress. Both security and economic opportunity are necessary to convince the Iraqi people that a better life is possible. The Iraqi leaders in Baghdad understand that their ability to provide confidence to the population is key to success in stabilizing the country, and that they must make decisions on governance that are representative of the whole population. Though sectarian interests are working overtime to try to divide them, large numbers of Iraqi people are indicating they are tired of the violence and willing to cooperate with Iraqi and coalition security forces.

In Afghanistan, I believe that the foundation of security and governance is in place. The vast majority of people are in favor of representative government and prosperity, not Taliban brutality, and they are standing up and fighting for their country's future. Capacity of the Afghan Security Forces, particularly the Afghan National Army (ANA), is growing and the ANA is eager and well led. However, many parts of the country have never known centralized governance, lack basic social services and infrastructure, and desperately require expanded capacity to meet the needs of a populace under pressure from the Taliban.

Though Iraq and Afghanistan need their neighbors to help them, Iran and Syria have not cooperated with efforts to combat terrorism and promote reconciliation. Their policies and actions threaten the internal security of their neighbors and the collective stability of the region.

The Iranian regime provides material support to violent extremists in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, and Palestine. It supplies Shi'a militia groups in Iraq with training, funding, and weapons, including particularly lethal Improvised Explosive Devices (IED). It also continues to provide money and weapons to Hizballah, which threatens the legitimate government of Lebanon.

Iran's most destabilizing activity has been the pursuit of nuclear weapons technology in defiance of the international community, International Atomic Energy Agency, and United Nations Security Council. A nuclear-armed Iran would further threaten regional stability, potentially trigger an arms race, and increase the potential for extremists to acquire weapons of mass destruction.

The Syrian government continues to meddle in Lebanon. Its support for Hizballah is destabilizing the country and it stonewalls the investigation into the Rafik Hariri assassination.

Over the past five years, terrorists, suicide bombers, and foreign fighters have traveled through Syria to attack Iraqi and Coalition forces. The government in Damascus has tolerated the presence and operations of Iraqi Sunni insurgents who have fueled the fighting in Baghdad and elsewhere in the country.

In Lebanon, the government is confronted by opposition groups and violent protests, but the Lebanese Armed Forces are maintaining a fragile order. Hundreds of thousands of Lebanese have stood up publicly against assassination and terror, and for their elected government and a peaceful, prosperous future. The international community continues to support the popularly elected government in Beirut and its legitimately constituted and disciplined security forces.

In the Horn of Africa, Sudan continues to defy the international community and resist the deployment of an effective United Nations peacekeeping force to Darfur. Ethiopia and Eritrea have yet to agree on terms to demarcate their common border, and Eritrea has imposed restrictions on the operations of the United Nations mission there. Ethiopia has accused President Isaias Afwerki's government of sponsoring insurgent groups and violent extremists in Somalia, where the situation remains volatile. The African Union mission to Somalia is unable to provide security beyond its garrisons, resulting in a country vulnerable to the return of al-Qaida and associated movements.

These impressions highlight both the challenges and opportunities in the CENTCOM Area of Responsibility. We are heavily engaged in several areas but have in place key elements to succeed in advancing U.S. security interests and enhance regional stability. Committed Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines, working with interagency and Coalition partners, lead the way. Staunch allies work with us, and strong partnerships with friendly nations facilitate our endeavors. More than 800,000 people of the region serve in their nations' security forces, risking their lives to combat terror. They are casting a powerful vote for hope, and ultimately victory, by fighting, and often dying, to ensure their countries do not succumb to extremism and terror.

As we move forward, our initiatives are organized into five focus areas: setting conditions for stability in Iraq; expanding governance and security in Afghanistan; degrading violent extremist networks and operations; strengthening relationships and influencing states to contribute to regional stability; and posturing the force to build and sustain joint and combined war fighting capabilities and readiness.

II. Setting Conditions for Stability in Iraq.

CENTCOM's Multi-National Force – Iraq (MNF-I) leads 143,000 U.S. and 13,500 Coalition personnel from 24 countries who are working to develop critical security and governance capabilities. Our shared goal is a representative government in Iraq that upholds the rule of law, respects the rights of its people, provides security, and is an ally in the War on Terror.

Accomplishing these objectives requires the focused attention of all elements of the U.S. Government. The explosion of sectarian violence, highlighted by the February 22, 2006, al-Qaida bombing of the al-Askariya Mosque in Samarra, has dramatically changed the security and political situation. After enduring almost three years of attacks conducted primarily by terrorists and foreign fighters, Shi'a militants retaliated with a sustained campaign of kidnapping, torture, and murder. The ongoing sectarian violence became self-sustaining and threatened economic and political progress.

With the ongoing surge of Iraqi and U.S. security forces and renewed interagency commitment, I believe we can establish greater security in support of the emerging Iraqi political process. The surge of additional military forces into Baghdad in Operation Fardh al-Qanoon (Law and Order) has disrupted extremist elements, at least temporarily reduced ethnic violence, and has been welcomed by the majority of the city's people. The establishment of Joint Security Stations offers some enduring promise of improved Iraqi and Coalition force coordination and presence in neighborhoods. I believe these posts will also improve our access to information about insurgent activities.

That said, I recognize that we have a limited opportunity in which to capitalize on the potential offered by the surge. The local populace must see tangible results to gain a sense of a more hopeful future, and as a result, come to believe in alternatives to extremism.

Insurgent groups in Iraq have multiple and often competing motivations for perpetuating violence. However, a common thread is their opposition to U.S. and Coalition presence and refusal to accept the legitimacy of an inclusive, representative government. Al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI) seeks to incite a sectarian war between Sunni and Shi'a Arabs through despicable and highly visible attacks on civilians. There is very little popular support for these groups. Some Sunni communities appear to be resisting al-Qaida in Iraq's intimidation. Several local leaders and their supporters have begun to actively support the regular Iraqi Police and Army forces against extremist threats.

Some Shi'a militias, especially Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM), seek to increase their political influence and to expand illegitimate activities under the guise of protecting their communities. These groups threaten stability and undermine confidence in the Iraqi Security Forces and the central government. Their death squads are responsible for the majority of the sectarian violence against Sunnis in Baghdad. Infiltration of the police by their members is especially problematic, as it undermines faith in fledgling Iraqi institutions.

Neutralizing these groups depends in part on disrupting the support they receive through neighboring countries. The transfer of lethal technology, weapons, and money from elements in Iran to Shi'a militias threatens stability. Similarly, Sunni Arab extremists continue to receive external moral, material, and logistical assistance from

private supporters in Syria and elsewhere. To counter these influences and take bold steps to bridge factional divides, the Government of Iraq needs steadfast support from the international community and its neighbors.

I do not believe these differing factions in Iraq share a similar vision of an inclusive political middle ground, nor do they agree how to get there. The Government of Iraq must move toward inclusion by passing legislation on reconciliation, sharing of oil and gas revenues, and provincial powers. Furthermore, holding timely provincial elections and passing constitutional amendments on the matters agreed upon last year would reduce incentives for violence.

I also found that poor budget execution has inhibited infrastructure development and the provision of basic services to Iraq's citizens. While the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) are helping improve local government performance and capacity, it will take considerable time to institute long term good governance. In the near-term, communities would benefit from job creation programs, a significant expansion of micro-credits, and rehabilitation of viable state owned enterprises that can open for business quickly.

Development of an effective and self-sufficient Iraqi Security Force (ISF) continues to be a top priority. In January 2006, there were 230,000 members in the combined security forces. Today there are more than 320,000 equipped soldiers and policemen who have received training and are taking an increasing role in confronting extremists and criminals. The ISF is also expanding command and control of operations as a part of the Baghdad Security Plan.

As we look to the future, we will continue the transition of responsibilities to Iraq's government as conditions allow. This should give its people additional confidence to build and sustain their institutions.

Achieving our strategic goals in Iraq will require the focused efforts of our government's capabilities, the participation of key Iraqi factions, a reduction in external destabilizing influences, and most importantly, courageous and consistent good leadership by the Government of Iraq.

III. Expanding Governance and Security in Afghanistan

Afghanistan's primary insurgent threat, the Taliban, operate mostly in the southern and eastern provinces of the country. While they remain unpopular in most districts, small pockets of hard-core extremists are intent on asserting control and undermining the reform-minded government. As the NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) expanded operations last year into previously uncontested areas, insurgent attacks increased to their highest levels since the Taliban's fall in 2001. Violence did, however, level-off in October and remained lower throughout most of the winter.

We expect Taliban activities to increase from now through the summer but believe that predictions of a major Taliban offensive are overstated. Despite the ability to instigate increased levels of localized violence, they are not able to militarily defeat the Afghan National Army and Coalition forces. While continuing to counter the insurgent threat militarily, we will work with other agencies and a broadly based international effort to assist the Afghans to expand governance and promote economic development.

Improving Afghan governance, infrastructure, and economy requires a concerted effort. The priorities are roads and electricity, followed by agricultural development, micro-credit, job skills, and education. ISAF is actively pursuing initiatives in these areas, from building schools and providing them with supplies to encouraging and stimulating the growth of small businesses. Until there are sustainable governmental institutions and a viable replacement for the Afghan poppy crop, opium trafficking will be a significant part of this country's future.

In addition to reconstruction and development activities, efforts have focused on the Afghan National Army. Now at fifty percent of desired end strength, its 35,000 soldiers enjoy a high level of support from the populace, and are growing steadily in competence, effectiveness, and professionalism. Though we have made progress in manning the Afghan National Police and Border Patrol, currently consisting of approximately 46,000 officers, these forces remain several steps behind the Army. As the Afghan Security Forces become capable of sustaining security and force development, we will hand responsibilities over to them and transition to a long-term security relationship.

Despite positive developments in the Afghan National Security Forces, long-term security requires the effective disruption of cross-border extremist operations. Essential security cooperation with Pakistan is increasing and more needs to be done. While the issues of border security and militant safe havens are difficult problems, coordination at tactical levels in both countries and with ISAF is increasing. This should lead to further confidence building measures and more robust joint efforts. Tri-lateral cooperation between ISAF, Pakistan and Afghanistan to improve governance, the rule of law, and

trade in the border regions can also help eliminate extremist sanctuaries. Meanwhile, ISAF has retained the initiative, clearing and isolating enemy sanctuaries in places like Helmand Province since last autumn. In ongoing operations, MEDUSA and ACHILLES, ISAF forces have undertaken a multifaceted approach to clearing, holding, and building. They have killed and captured several hard core Taliban leaders and cut their lines of communications, while aggressively pursuing development projects in the surrounding districts. This not only encourages the population in these areas to reject the insurgents, it vividly demonstrates the contrast between the grim reality of Taliban rule and the health and prosperity of government-controlled areas.

There is a general sense of optimism and determination among the Afghan leaders and people. They regularly voice their appreciation for our assistance, and believe things have improved since last year. We must help them succeed.

IV. Degrading Violent Extremist Networks and Operations

Whether sponsored by Iran, enabled by Syrian destabilizing efforts, or motivated by networks such as al-Qaida and its associated movements, violent extremism is a serious danger to regional and global security. We must identify, mobilize against, and confront this menace as its anachronistic world view and murderous tactics threaten people and stability worldwide. While our efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan continue, we will use all available methods to build regional and international momentum for moderate behavior while eroding support for violent extremist ideology.

The highest priority in our counter-terror efforts is to defeat al-Qaida. Part of this effort, but not an end to itself, is the destruction of senior al-Qaida leaders. Since the

September 11th attacks, we and our partners have captured or killed terrorists, diminished safe havens, driven leaders underground, and restricted operating space. Despite these efforts, challenges continue as our enemies work to reconstitute their networks. Critical to countering these violent extremists is the denial of their sanctuaries, nation-state support, and the lines of communication that sustain them. These militant Islamist terrorists attract recruits from a large, worldwide pool of disaffected young people. Unfortunately, their tactics and radical ideology remain almost unchallenged by voices of moderation. In response, we will enhance our intelligence capabilities, develop partner nation capacities, strengthen information sharing, disrupt illicit lines of communication, and work to prevent terrorist organizations from acquiring and using Weapons of Mass Destruction. All of these actions will require inter-agency and international coordination and cooperation.

Equally important to defeating al-Qaida and other extremist groups is de-legitimizing the underlying social and political movements that support them. To diminish the radical social movements from which our enemies derive their strength, we must maintain operational pressure on their networks while building capacity in governance and security that help at-risk societies address problems that foster internal and local grievances. This work requires empowering credible experts to expose the flaws and internal contradictions of the enemy's ideology; provide viable, competing alternative worldviews; and contest the intellectual "safe harbors" where extremist ideas incubate.

V. Strengthening Relationships and Influencing States and Organizations

To increase prospects for long term stability and security in the region, we are working to strengthen relationships between and among regional nations and the United States. We are also trying to influence states and organizations such as the Gulf Cooperation Council and operational constructs to contribute to regional stability and work to ensure the free flow of commerce and positive economic growth.

The Central Command theater security cooperation program is built on a foundation of enduring relationships, and to that end, I support the Middle East Peace Process. The synchronized efforts of all the elements of U.S. and international power are key. We are fortunate to have a large number of close, reliable partner nations. Five of these, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Pakistan, are Major non-NATO Allies, and of those Jordan and Bahrain are our country's Free Trade Agreement (FTA) partners. Our Theater Security Cooperation Strategy enables regional stability and advances security efforts that protect vital U.S. national interests, and helps partners build capacities to combat terror and become self-reliant.

Theater Security Cooperation programs and combined military training exercises strengthen partner military capabilities, increase interoperability with U.S. forces, encourage professional development, ensure access, and enhance intelligence and information sharing. Most importantly, these efforts cultivate personal relationships and build mutual trust and confidence between U.S. and partner military personnel.

We continue to support these programs as a matter of high priority. Whether they are Department of Defense activities, or paid for with Department of State resources, such as Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and International Military Education and Training

(IMET), the assistance we provide to our friends in the region is fundamental to building long-term security partnerships.

FMS is particularly useful in helping our partners build modern, capable forces that can more easily integrate into Coalition operations. However, long administrative delays and procurement lead times undermine responsiveness to emerging threats. Expanded 1206 funding is helping to address this problem by allowing the Department of Defense to directly fund security cooperation activities. However, expanded 1206 funding in dollar amounts and including partner internal security forces that are engaged in fighting terror would be helpful.

I will work to strengthen relationships with our international partners and allies who are contributing in many important ways to building a better future for people in the region. I would now like to give examples that illustrate the criticality of our own relationships in the region.

Arabian Gulf States. Gulf Cooperation Council members Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates are important partners in maintaining stability in the Gulf. We will work closely with these governments and their security forces to develop solid bilateral security cooperation programs and build confidence and capacity in their forces.

Each of these states has been a valuable partner in our mutual security efforts. The Bahraini Joint Counter-Terrorism Center has helped several agencies of its government to prepare for potential terrorist attacks. At its Gulf Air Warfare Center, the United Arab Emirates host air exercises that build multilateral cooperation and interoperability among the Gulf Cooperation Council, Egypt, and Jordan. Qatar provides

excellent host nation support to our air operations center and the CENTCOM forward headquarters. In 2006 it again hosted the multinational crisis response exercise EAGLE RESOLVE, and successfully planned, coordinated, and supervised security for the Doha Asian Games. Oman, a strategically situated state in the region, partners with U.S. forces in exercises and other activities to help keep global commerce flowing and secure its extensive coastline and borders. In 2006 CENTCOM conducted 38 combined military exercises in the Arabian Gulf with these countries.

Saudi Arabia remains a vital partner, and its campaign against terrorists has significantly degraded al-Qaida operations on the Arabian Peninsula. Central Command will closely link its initiatives to broader U.S. Government efforts to work with the Saudis in their efforts to defeat threats and promote reform. Eight combined military exercises are scheduled for 2007, all designed to increase cooperation and to develop the Kingdom's security capabilities. Our security cooperation efforts will prove increasingly important as we promote multilateral security efforts and counter-proliferation initiatives in the Arabian Gulf area. These are aimed at deterring destabilizing influences and protecting our friends and U.S. interests from aggression.

Our partnerships with these states also provide essential basing and port access, overflight rights, and additional force protection for U.S. units in the region. Our strong partnership with Kuwait has been in place for nearly 20 years. Kuwait remains a steady supporter of Coalition efforts, hosts the Combined Forces Land Component Command, and serves as the primary staging point for forces and equipment rotating into and out of Iraq. I cannot imagine operations in Iraq without the vast support of Kuwait. Bahrain is one of our longest-standing partners and it has welcomed the U.S. Navy for sixty years.

It is also home to U.S. Naval Forces Central Command and the United States Fifth Fleet. Though not large countries, each contributes greatly to a better future for all the peoples of the Arabian Gulf.

Egypt. The Arab Republic of Egypt remains a key U.S. ally in the fight against extremism in the region. It strongly supports the Middle East Peace Process and has deployed forces to preserve stability in the aftermath of the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Egypt has been a moderating voice in discussions with Syria, Lebanon, Fatah, and HAMAS, and was among the first regional countries to send humanitarian supplies to Lebanon and to volunteer assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces. Its position as protector of the Suez Canal and gateway to the Middle East has contributed greatly to Coalition efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Hundreds of Suez Canal transits and thousands of overflights have expedited U.S. military operations in CENTCOM's Area of Responsibility.

This year, Egypt will again host the biennial BRIGHT STAR combined military exercise, Central Command's largest training event. In 2005, BRIGHT STAR included twelve participating nations and more than 30,000 troops. This year it will include air, naval, ground, and simulated training events that incorporate post-9/11 operational themes designed to improve interoperability.

Unfortunately, Egypt has suffered numerous terrorist attacks, including one aimed at the Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai. Egyptian security forces have been diligent partners in combating extremist networks. Continued Foreign Military Financing, Foreign Military Sales and International Military Education and Training

funding are needed to develop and modernize forces that contribute significantly to stability in the critical Suez Canal area and the Levant.

Horn of Africa and Yemen. The nations of the Horn of Africa Djibouti, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, and the Seychelles, are plagued by border tension, insurgencies, corruption, terrorist infiltrations, and poverty. Moreover, Coalition pressure on al-Qaida and other extremist networks in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere increases the potential for some of these terrorists to migrate to the Horn as a place to plan, conduct, and coordinate terror attacks.

CENTCOM's Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA), with nearly 1,300 U.S. personnel, works closely with U.S. Embassies in the region. It conducts operations, training, and humanitarian missions in the Horn and in Yemen to help nations build capacity to combat terrorism and prepare for other challenges including natural disasters. Activities that it undertakes include training local security forces as well as assisting with civic projects such as wells, schools, and clinics, and providing medical and veterinary services in remote villages. Security capabilities and civil affairs training gained by local forces, coupled with the goodwill engendered by numerous humanitarian operations, increase the regions' resistance to the spread of extremist ideology and fortifies local desires to defeat terrorism before it becomes entrenched.

Jordan. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan remains a key and valuable partner in the fight against violent extremists and contributes significantly to regional stability. Threatened by internal terrorist activities, it has led significant counter-terror efforts.

Jordan is a regional leader in security and counter-terror training, and hosts major initiatives for developing security capabilities. The Peace Operations Training Center has provided more than 1,100 U.S. military leaders and soldiers with valuable cultural awareness and language training. Meanwhile, the Jordanian International Police Training Center has provided training for over 50,000 Iraqi police officers, and other Jordanian schools train Iraqi military forces, air traffic controllers, and aviation inspectors. Upon completion in 2009, the King Abdullah Special Operations Training Center will provide a regional capability to train special operations forces. These programs are building competent and capable Iraqi security forces and will help other regional security services improve their effectiveness.

Jordan's other contributions are also important. Its highly trained and disciplined armed forces are a positive example for other militaries with high levels of professionalism and combat effectiveness. Additionally, I would like to recognize the Jordanian doctors and nurses who have established a hospital in Afghanistan and treated over 550,000 Afghans and 1,900 coalition members.

Jordan's strategic location, balanced vision of modernization, and well-developed security establishment give it a regional role and influence that exceed its size. Our programs of military and economic assistance remain vital to encouraging Jordan's continued modernization and leadership in the region.

Pakistan. Pakistani security forces have captured and killed significant numbers of violent extremists, to include high-ranking leaders of al-Qaida and the Taliban. They have also suffered extensive casualties. Our long-term partnership with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is central to defeating extremist groups in the region, and it is

difficult to imagine success in that struggle without its support and cooperation. We are working together to reduce the tensions stemming from the radical and violent presence in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Useful initiatives include regular meetings with Pakistan's military leaders, and more robust liaison and communications among our units operating along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. While President Musharraf is working to moderate groups within Pakistan and to prevent militants using the FATA for sanctuary, he is working with a backdrop of potent political, social, and ethnic forces within his country.

Pakistan remains a strong partner of the United States, and our support for its counter-terror efforts will continue with a variety of focused programs. Our security cooperation funding and bilateral exercise programs help the country's government conduct counter-terror operations and enhance its internal stability. Our goal is for Pakistan to view the U.S. as a long-term, preferred international partner, particularly in our efforts to defeat our common enemies.

Central Asian States. Situated at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, the Central Asian States of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are playing an increased role in global energy markets. They are also strong partners in the struggle against militant Islamist movements and their Islamic scholars have taken the lead in publicly countering extremist propaganda. However, as with other areas of the CENTCOM region, the Central Asian States contend with a number of threats to stability and security. Restricted oil and gas export options limit their income, geography makes border security especially difficult, and organized crime, narcotics

trafficking, and political instability are preeminent concerns. Though local perceptions of U.S. involvement in the region are complex, our access to government officials is strong.

Despite the challenges, there are signs of progress in Central Asia. Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan have negotiated a series of agreements that should improve trilateral border security. Over the coming year, Central Command will prioritize engagements that sustain logistics chains for Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, reform regional defense institutions, enhance organic counterterrorist and counter-narcotics capabilities, further improve border security and disaster preparedness, and prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

VI. Posturing the Force to Build and Sustain Joint and Combined Warfighting Capabilities and Readiness

Joint and combined war fighting capability and readiness are fundamental in our ability to prosecute ongoing military operations, maintain a credible presence to deter aggression, and respond effectively to contingencies. Because we execute nearly all of our activities jointly and in concert with allies, we must cultivate effective inter-service and multinational ways of doing business. Additionally, because our region is filled with uncertainty, we must maintain a full spectrum of responsive capabilities through an effective forward deployed force structure, thorough planning, and realistic combined training exercises. Other critical capabilities include the following:

A Strong Coalition. At present, we have over 40 partner nations with troops in Afghanistan and 24 with personnel in Iraq. They bring important mission capabilities, but also significant integration challenges. Blending capabilities of these countries into

effective action requires, among other factors, a command and control infrastructure that accounts for remote locations, multiple languages, cultural differences, and challenging force protection issues. Our Coalition must share classified and sensitive information when appropriate, and have the networks and infrastructure to facilitate such exchanges.

Interagency Coordination. Establishment of security and stability in our region requires the application of all elements of national power: military, diplomatic, economic, and information. The military instruments can set conditions for security but other agencies foster lasting change.

We are fortunate to have several U.S. Government entities engaged in the Central Command AOR. The Departments of State, Treasury, Justice, and Homeland Security, as well as subordinate agencies including the U.S. Agency for International Development, Diplomatic Security Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Drug Enforcement Administration, and United States Coast Guard, are actively engaged in our theater. Their efforts are helping to protect critical infrastructure, prevent terrorist attacks on our homeland, train fledgling law enforcement organizations, and rebuild damaged or aging infrastructure. There is clearly a need for better integration and more comprehensive application of all the elements of national power.

Flexible Logistics. Strategic airlift, rapid sealift, pre-positioned inventories, and access to bases with critical infrastructure are the key logistics components which support operational flexibility. Our primary focus in this area remains the timely deployment, equipping, and sustainment of units engaged in combat operations. There is no better example of the importance and flexibility of our contingency air and sealift capabilities than the evacuation of over 14,000 Americans from Lebanon during last summer's

conflict between Israel and Hizballah. We will continue working with the Joint Staff, Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Department of State, and partner nations to ensure access to the infrastructure we need to support ongoing and future operations.

Adaptable Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) Capabilities. Interoperable, high-volume communications systems are essential to conducting operations across a dispersed command space. Our systems operate near full capacity daily with little surge capability. Because many of our needs must be satisfied by commercial providers, access to them is critical. The largest challenge we face is integration of disparate systems into interoperable and reliable networks. We must embrace policies that enable successful integration and technologies that result in effective interoperability and efficient information-sharing.

Ultimately our ability to target violent extremists depends on precise and actionable intelligence. We continue to evolve our techniques and procedures to optimize efforts to "find, fix, finish, and exploit" targets. Our adversaries have been agile in adapting to our operations. We continue to improve battle space awareness, seeking greater specificity, detail, and timeliness of intelligence whenever possible. We are aggressively seeking ways to manage shortfalls or capability gaps in imagery intelligence, wide area coverage, sensor integration, signals intelligence, moving target indicators, layered Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance architecture, biometrics, counterintelligence, and human collectors.

Responsive Counter Improvised Explosive Device Program. Insurgents' weapon of choice will likely continue to be the Improvised Explosive Device, or road-side bomb. They are cheap, effective, anonymous, and have been adapted to include toxic industrial chemicals such as chlorine. While some are crude, our adversaries increasingly use sophisticated technology, including Iranian-supplied Explosively Formed Penetrators. These weapons have killed or wounded 15,000 military and civilian personnel in Iraq, and IEDs are becoming increasingly prevalent in Afghanistan.

To counter this threat, and working with the interagency and our Coalition partners, we are fielding jammers, specialized route clearance vehicles and equipment, and improved vehicle and personnel protective armor. These initiatives have reduced IED effectiveness. We must continue to develop new technologies, tactics, techniques, and procedures. Of particular importance to CENTCOM is rapid fielding of Mine Resistant Armor Protected vehicles, and further research and development to improve the detection of mines, IEDs, and unexploded ordnance.

Personnel. Sustained operations in the CENTCOM Area of Responsibility depend on personnel who have foreign language proficiency and cultural awareness competency in addition to military skills. Retention is a critical issue, and we depend heavily on quality of life enhancements such as Combat Zone Tax Relief, Imminent Danger Pay, and Special Leave Accrual. The Rest and Recuperation program continues to be a success, serving more than 470,000 troops to date. Over the past year, we have conducted a comprehensive review of the manning of our headquarters, which, after five years of war, is still highly reliant on temporary individual augmentation personnel. My subordinate war fighting headquarters are also heavily manned with individual

augmentees. I am committed to working with the Services and the Joint Staff to properly size and resource all of these headquarters.

CENTCOM is also working to address requirements for low density skills. Our present inventory of language and intelligence specialists (especially human intelligence) and counterintelligence agents does not support current requirements. Language expertise is crucial in counterinsurgency, counterterrorist, and counterintelligence operations, and will continue in high demand. Contracting language expertise provides interim capability, but in the long run, we need service members and career civilians with the requisite language and cultural skills.

VII. Conclusion

Despite difficult and often dangerous conditions and lengthy absences from home and family, our military men and women in the CENTCOM Area of Responsibility persevere in their efforts and demonstrate courage, professional skill and uncommon dedication to duty. Whether engaged in combat, providing humanitarian relief, or supporting operations, they represent Americans at their very best. While we fight tirelessly against those who would do us harm, we also stand equally ready to assist those who would help bring peace to this region. The American people and the Congress have provided staunch and steady support, and we sincerely appreciate your advocacy and assistance. I am proud and honored to represent the men, women, and supporting families of CENTCOM. On their behalf, I thank you for your support, and for this opportunity to testify regarding our defense posture.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

APRIL 18, 2007

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. SKELTON

The CHAIRMAN. Can you get us the number of contractors that are in Iraq and a basic description of their various missions?

Admiral FALLON. As of April 2007, there were approximately 129,000 total personnel working for DoD-funded contractors within Iraq. There are approximately 6,000 Private Security Contractors (PSCs) in Iraq. In addition to those working for DoD, there are a number of contractors in Iraq who work for a variety of other USG agencies including State, Justice, USAID, and Interior, to name a few.

Contractors within the CENTCOM AOR perform a variety of functions and services. These include communications support, construction, facility maintenance and repair. In some locations, contractors perform base operations that include food and sanitation services, base security, and other logistical support functions.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. MEEHAN

Mr. MEEHAN. Please comment on the relationship between CENTCOM, General Petraeus and the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. How is our strategy in Iraq coordinated between them? Who is responsible for the development of the campaign plan that addresses the political, diplomatic, information, military and economic (DIME) plans there?

Admiral FALLON. The relationship between CENTCOM, MNF–I and the US Embassy in Baghdad are founded upon the principles and congressional intent expressed in the National Security Act of 1947, as amended, in the Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1958, and the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. Our strategy in Iraq is a mutually coordinated effort. As CENTCOM Commander, I establish the military regional strategy for our CENTCOM area of responsibility (AOR), and as a major subordinate headquarters, MNF–I (GEN Petraeus), establishes and recommends the strategy for Iraq. The Iraq Joint Campaign Plan, development, and revisions are collaborated efforts between the US Embassy and Multi-National Force-Iraq. The Joint Campaign Plan addresses the political, diplomatic, information, military and economic (DIME) aspects of a collaborated campaign. Prior to the Joint Campaign Plan being approved and signed by the Ambassador and Commanding General, the plan is briefed to me.

Mr. MEEHAN. Could you please detail CENTCOM's role, as distinguished from the Multi-National Forces-Iraq (MNF–I), commanded by General Petraeus, the Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC–I), commanded by LTG Odierno, and the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC–I), commanded by LTG Dempsey, in "direct[ing] all U.S. Government efforts and coordinat[ing] all international efforts in support of organizing, equipping, and training all Iraqi security forces," as provided in the May 11, 2004 National Presidential Security Directive (NSPD–36). For example, a. What role does CENTCOM play in the plan to develop an organic logistics capability for the ISF? b. What role does CENTCOM play in vetting requests for forces for transition teams and the selection of personnel to serve on the transition teams? Does CENTCOM receive feedback on the performance or training of transition teams? On the progress of the Iraqi Security Forces? On the Transition Readiness Assessment (TRAs) reports? If so, what does CENTCOM do with the feedback? c. What are typical requests for support from CENTCOM headquarters from MNF–I or MNSTC–I relative to the Iraqi Security Forces and transition teams? d. How is CENTCOM participating in the revision of the MNF–I/U.S. Embassy Baghdad "Joint Campaign Plan?" How is CENTCOM tracking progress in meeting the conditions set forth in the Joint Campaign Plan? Can the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee get a copy of the plan and a briefing on the ISF's progress relative to the plan?

Admiral FALLON. US Central Command (CENTCOM) provides strategic-level guidance to both MNF–I and MNSTC–I including forming the Iraqi Security Force's (ISF) logistics development plan.

The CDR, MNF–I validates all requirements for transition team personnel and sends those requirements to CENTCOM who in turn vets and validates the requirements and submits them to the Joint Staff. Selection and training of transition team

personnel is accomplished by the individual services. MNF–I and MNSTC–I submit feedback directly to the services and their training centers. USCENTCOM receives periodic reports and TRA data from MNF–I that tracks the progress of the ISF. The CENTCOM staff monitors and analyzes this information so as to keep the CENTCOM commander informed of ISF development. Typical MNF–I and MNSTC–I requests for support include requests for forces, strategic guidance, and assistance in planning efforts.

Campaign assessment, development, and revisions are collaborated efforts between the US Embassy and Multi-National-Iraq. Prior to the Joint Campaign Plan being approved and signed by the Ambassador and Commanding General, the plan is briefed to the Commander, US Central Command.

Mr. MEEHAN. You may be aware, the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, which I chair and on which Mr. Akin serves as the ranking member, has undertaken an in-depth examination of the planning for and progress in the development of the Iraqi Security Forces. I was able to lead a congressional delegation in-theater in February and obtained valuable insights into both the progress that is being made and the challenges the Coalition faces in standing up the ISF. Additional follow-up work is needed to assist the subcommittee's investigation. The subcommittee staff is having difficulty in arranging a follow-on staff delegation trip this month or early next month. Preliminary arrangements for travel that was to occur this week have been pushed off, we're told, until mid-June, at the earliest, because of the surge. We are sensitive to the fact that it can be a challenge to accommodate such work during wartime, but we have done our best not to request personnel from theater in such a way that would take them out of the fight. That is part of the reason that travel to Iraq is necessary. I would ask for your support and assistance in seeing that the staff delegation is re-scheduled as soon as possible. Can I have your commitment to see that that occurs?

Admiral FALLON. US Central Command (CENTCOM) recognizes the need for Congressional travel to the CENTCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR) and makes every attempt to accommodate all requests. It should be noted that in light of the current operations tempo in Iraq and the increased demand on airlift assets, CENTCOM has been operating under restricted travel for several months. Due to the number of request for Congressional delegation travel, staff delegations are approved on a case by case basis by exception and are authorized military air support into and out of Iraq on a space available basis.

Mr. MEEHAN. Current programs call for the Iraqi Air Force to acquire tactical transport and limited ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance)-capable assets. What longer-range plans are there for the Iraqis to purchase and train on aircraft and systems providing the full range of capabilities currently provided by Coalition support?

Admiral FALLON. [The information referred to is classified and retained in the committee files.]

Mr. MEEHAN. Are any issues arising with respect to training the Iraqi Navy given the Iranian capture of the British?

Admiral FALLON. No, the Iranian capture of British naval personnel earlier this year has not had any effect on the training of the Iraqi Navy.

The Iraqi Navy faces significant challenges in meeting the individual and collective training needs for its ambitious acquisition program, including development of leadership and technical skills. Training efforts include mentorship conducted by the Naval Transition Team and active skills training conducted by Coalition Navy, Marine, and Coast Guard Forces. Infrastructure development will remain the primary effort throughout 2007. Naval planning is maturing and coherent across acquisition, training and infrastructure lines of development extending to 2010.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MS. BORDALLO

Ms. BORDALLO. The Horn of Africa assignment for the Guam National Guard soldiers is becoming a regular one. Can Guam National Guard soldiers and their families expect the Guam Guard to be rotated in and out of the Horn of Africa for the foreseeable future?

Or can the Guam Guard anticipate a different mission?

Admiral FALLON. Although the Horn of Africa will continue to be a requirement within the Central Command AOR, we do not make recommendations as to which units fill those requests.

USCENTCOM does not know the future force requests that the Guam Guard will be required to fill.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. WILSON

Mr. WILSON. Have the pledged Iraqi forces been placed in the city? What is the status of Iraqi forces?

Admiral FALLON. Since the end of 2006, the Iraqi Army has provided reinforcement units to support operations in Baghdad. The original requirement has been adjusted several times resulting in the current fixed requirement of 3 Brigades and 9 Battalion.

Each unit deployment in Baghdad is scheduled for a period of 3 months (90 days), not including a period of three weeks of unit preparation at the unit's home location and additional collective training at the Besmaya Range Complex east of Baghdad. Two units have volunteered to extend their tours in Baghdad.

The MOD is already planning the next series of rotations which will occur in July, August and September. To reduce the turbulence caused by these constant unit rotations, the Ministry of Defense plans to create six dedicated battalions for use in Baghdad (in addition to those units and formations already based in Baghdad) before the end of the year. Once complete, this initiative will reduce deployment, training, and sustainment problems currently felt by the rotating units and donor formations. Furthermore, these units are likely to have improved manning numbers as they are based in Baghdad, their home territory.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. LOEBSACK

Mr. LOEBSACK. Can you tell us how many Peruvians are employed by us there?

Admiral FALLON. The mix of contractor personnel in Iraq is approximately: 16% US; 33% multi-national; and, 51% Iraqi. We do not maintain statistical data on the country of origin of multi-national contractors and sub-contractors.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MS. GIFFORDS

Ms. GIFFORDS. There are currently about 20,000 security contractors serving in Iraq. And I am curious, since you took command of Central Command, what explanation have you received of the legal status of security contractors working in both Iraq and Afghanistan?

What legal system do they currently operate under? And what is the process by which they can be disciplined for misconduct?

Admiral FALLON. Contractors are required to comply with USCENTCOM Rules for the Use of Force (RUF) and are not authorized to participate in offensive combat operations. However, private security contractors are authorized to use deadly force, when necessary, in self defense; in the defense of facilities or personnel as specified in their contract; to prevent life-threatening acts directed against civilians; and, in defense of Coalition-designated property as specified in their contract.

Private security contractor (PSC) personnel must be properly licensed to carry arms in accordance with host nation law and must receive USCENTCOM/Coalition Forces approval of their operations. PSC personnel must comply with US and host nation laws; treaties and international agreements; US regulations, directives, instructions, and policies; and, orders, standard operating procedures, and command policies.

Additionally, PSC activities are governed by an MNF–I FRAGO (05–231) which establishes procedures for private security contractors to report all escalation of force (EOF) incidents or other weapons firing incidents. If a firing incident occurs, an initial report must be sent to the Reconstruction Operations Center (ROC) as soon as practical.

Issues of questionable conduct are governed by a variety of authorities depending on the nature of alleged offense. These sources of authority include: Title 18, U.S. Code; the Uniformed Code of Military Justice (UCMJ); host nation law; command/activity directives; and employer directives and policies.

Companies within the CENTCOM AOR which are under contract with DoD are currently held accountable through the following organizations: US Army Corps of Engineers for military construction (MILCON); Joint Contracting Command Iraq/Afghanistan (JCCI/A) for theater support contracts such as transportation, vehicle maintenance, water, and waste disposal; Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) for multiple classes of supply; Air Force Center of Environmental Excellence (AFCEE) for reconstruction; Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) for Logistics Civil Augmentation Program (LOGCAP); and, Defense Energy Supply Center (DESC) for fuel.

Private security contractor personnel whose conduct would constitute a felony under U.S. law are subject to prosecution by the Department of Justice under the Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act (MEJA) of 2000 (18 U.S.C. 3621). A recent legislative change also allows for the use of the UCMJ in prosecuting civilians who serve with, or "accompany", the U.S. Armed Forces.