

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE POSTURE OF
UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND AND UNITED STATES
AFRICA COMMAND IN REVIEW OF THE DEFENSE
AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024 AND THE
FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

Thursday, March 16, 2023

Washington, D.C.

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5
6 Thursday, March 16, 2023

7
8 U.S. Senate

9 Committee on Armed Services,
10 Washington, D.C.

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12 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:29 a.m.,
13 in Room G-50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Jack
14 Reed, chairman of the committee, presiding.

15 Committee Members Present: Senators Reed [presiding],
16 Shahee, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King,
17 Warren, Peters, Rosen, Kelly, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton,
18 Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Cramer, Scott, Tuberville, Mullin,
19 Budd, and Schmitt.

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

3 Chairman Reed: Let me call the hearing to order.
4 Good morning, and the committee meets today to receive
5 testimony from General Michael Eric Kurilla, Commander of
6 the United States Central Command, and General Michael
7 Langley, Commander of United States Africa Command.

8 Thank you both for your service, and I am grateful to
9 the men and women serving under your command. While
10 CENTCOM has many responsibilities, the top priority remains
11 deterring the Iranian regime's destructive and
12 destabilizing activities without undue provocation. This
13 is a complicated and urgent mission.

14 Iran is conducting malign activities across multiple
15 arenas, including continuing its own nuclear development,
16 launching drone and missile attacks on neighboring States,
17 supporting proxy groups, violently repressing its own
18 citizens, and deepening a military alliance with Russia,
19 and these threats are likely to increase.

20 In an unexpected turn, last week, Saudi Arabia and
21 Iran announced they have restored diplomatic relations in a
22 deal brokered by China. Press reports indicate the key
23 parts of the agreement were a commitment by Iran to stop
24 further attacks on Saudi Arabia and cut back on support for
25 Iranian linked groups that have targeted the kingdom.

1 The two nations plan to reopen their embassies and
2 reimplement a security pact to cooperate on several issues
3 to benefit their mutual national security. As The New York
4 Times stated, the deal is, "a shift that left heads
5 spinning in capitals around the globe."

6 General Kurilla, given the unpredictability of the
7 Iranian regime, I would like your thoughts on how best to
8 respond to its malign behavior in the region, taking into
9 account the new dynamic of their restoration of relations
10 with Saudi Arabia. What opportunities do we have to
11 collaborate with our allies and partners to counter drone
12 and missile attacks, and how can we address Iran's closer
13 alignment with Russia and China?

14 Turning to Afghanistan, although we have transitioned
15 all forces out of the country, the Biden Administration has
16 maintained its commitment to ensuring that Afghanistan
17 cannot be used as a base for ISIS, Al-Qaeda, or other
18 terrorist groups to conduct attacks against the United
19 States or its allies.

20 I would ask for an update on our posture and
21 capabilities, and whether additional regional agreements
22 have been reached to ensure we maintain a robust regional
23 counterterrorism architecture to address the threat from
24 these groups. General Langley, AFRICOM's area of
25 responsibility is becoming increasingly important in the

1 United States strategic competition with China and Russia.

2 Many African countries have longstanding military ties
3 with Russia and even deeper economic ties with China. As
4 the United States manages relationships across the
5 continent, we must be mindful of these preexisting ties and
6 avoid taking a with us or against us approach, or we will
7 risk alienating the very nations we seek to engage with.

8 I would welcome your thoughts on how best to calibrate
9 the US approach to strategic competition in light of these
10 factors. The security situation in East Africa remains
11 dangerously unstable. Since last fall, roughly 500 U.S.
12 service members have been redeployed to Somalia to support
13 the Somali government's fight against Al-Shabaab, one of
14 Al-Qaeda's most powerful global affiliates.

15 Our renewed presence is an effort to stabilize the
16 Somali government and train their forces, after our
17 departure in December 2020 allowed Al-Shabaab to grow in
18 size and strength. I hope you will share your views on the
19 status of our engagement with Somali partners and the whole
20 of Government strategy to ensure battlefield successes can
21 be effectively translated into longer term gains.

22 Finally, the security situation in West Africa also
23 continues to decline. Violent extremist operations have
24 expanded across the Sahel, including pushing down into
25 littoral states in the Gulf of Guinea. At the same time,

1 Russia and China are seeking to increase their engagement
2 in this region.

3 The Wagner Group continues to seek opportunities to
4 exploit instability in the region, and China has made no
5 secret about exploring basing operations on the West
6 African coast. Both countries are also investing in
7 natural resource extraction across the continent, often at
8 great expense to the long-term health of African partners'
9 ecosystems and economies.

10 Given these challenges, General Langley, I would like
11 to hear how AFRICOM is seeking to engage with partners in
12 Africa to expose these harmful and manipulative practices.
13 I want to thank you again and look forward to your
14 testimony.

15 As a reminder for my colleagues, there will be a
16 closed session immediately following this hearing and room
17 SVC-217. Now, let me turn to the Ranking Member, Senator
18 Wicker.

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. ROGER WICKER, U.S. SENATOR FROM
2 MISSISSIPPI

3 Senator Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would
4 like to thank our witnesses for being here. In recent
5 weeks, the committee has heard from top military and
6 civilian leaders about the significant security challenges
7 facing our nation.

8 Our top adversaries, including China and Russia, are
9 testing American resolve, not just in East Asia and Europe,
10 but also across the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa.
11 In the Middle East, Russia and Iran grow closer. Recently,
12 Iran agreed to purchase 24 advanced Su-35 fighter jets.
13 Today, Russia is deploying Iranian drones to kill
14 Ukrainians.

15 Meanwhile, China works to displace the United States
16 as the partner of choice for many of our longtime friends
17 in the region. The Chinese Communist Party offers more
18 streamlined arms sales and Huawei 5G networks that would
19 undermine our operational security in the Middle East. In
20 Africa, the Russian mercenary group Wagner does -- Wagner
21 does Putin's bidding.

22 They sow instability across the continent by
23 supporting coups and spreading lies. They use exploitative
24 practices to get critical minerals. They pressure African
25 governments to move away from the West. At the same time,

1 China is using economic coercion to gain leverage and
2 expand its military footprint in the basing, something
3 former AFRICOM Commander General Steven Townsend called his
4 number one global power competition concern.

5 We are right to focus on the growing Russia and
6 Chinese threats, but we cannot take our eyes off the other
7 security challenges coming from the Middle East, South
8 Asia, and Africa. In Afghanistan, the disastrous
9 withdrawal of U.S. troops nearly two years ago left a
10 security vacuum the Taliban, Al-Qaeda and ISIS have filled.

11 The Biden Administration assured us that the
12 Department of Defense would conduct counterterrorism
13 operations in Afghanistan even without a limited number of
14 U.S. troops on the ground, but the United States has only
15 conducted one strike in more than a year. The withdrawal
16 from Afghanistan emboldened ISIS and Al-Qaeda's affiliates
17 around the world, not just in Afghanistan.

18 The terrorist threat is real and growing. As a result
19 of the Biden Administration's policies, the world's number
20 one State sponsor of terrorism, Iran, presents an
21 increasing threat to our personnel and partners in the
22 region.

23 President Biden should have focused on countering
24 Iran's missile program and its support for terrorism.
25 Instead, he focused on returning to the flawed 2015 nuclear

1 agreement. In the process, this Administration has given
2 them practically everything and got absolutely nothing.

3 According to the Department of Defense, Iran could now
4 produce enough fissile material for a bomb within just 12
5 days, and its proxies are on the march nationwide. These
6 facts make it clear continued significant real growth in
7 the defense budget top line above inflation remains
8 essential to our national security.

9 I will be looking closely to ensure our security
10 assistance funding remains strong in these theaters and
11 that our counterterrorism and contingency forces are fully
12 resourced. This includes additional force protection
13 measures in both theaters, particularly to protect against
14 more complex Iranian backed attacks.

15 I would also note that the budget zeroing out of LPD
16 amphibious ships is the exact wrong move, when we did not
17 even have the capacity to send one amphibious ship to
18 Turkey to help with their earthquake. Finally, I am
19 interested in how the Office of Strategic Capital might be
20 leveraged to push back against the CCP in these theaters
21 and elsewhere as they seek to buy ports and raw materials
22 across the globe.

23 I thank our witnesses and look forward to their
24 testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Wicker.

2 General Kurilla, please.

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1 STATEMENT OF GENERAL MICHAEL E. KURILLA, USA
2 COMMANDER, UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND

3 General Kurilla: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member
4 Wicker, ladies and gentlemen of the committee, I am joined
5 today by Command Master Chief Derrick Walters, the Command
6 Senior Enlisted Leader of U.S. Central Command.

7 On behalf of the soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines,
8 Coast Guardsmen, and Guardians who serve this Command, the
9 Central Region, and this nation every day, thank you for
10 allowing me to testify regarding the posture of U.S.
11 Central Command, alongside my Ranger buddy, Mike Langley.

12 CENTCOM serves as the security integrator for an area
13 of responsibility that encompasses 21 nations, almost 600
14 million people, and serves as the strategic nexus of the
15 world's most important corridors of trade. I am now 11
16 months into command.

17 In that time, I have made 14 trips to the region, and
18 those visits have allowed me first person insights that
19 have informed my strategic approach, which is best
20 summarized in three words, people, partners, and
21 innovation.

22 People are our greatest asset and our most critical
23 resource. Our service members and civilians in the United
24 States and across the region are our nation's best. I know
25 this body keeps them top of mind that right now in the

1 CENTCOM region, thousands of troops are in harm's way.

2 Our people who are closest to the problem understand
3 the opportunities available to solve the region's most
4 complex challenges. That is why we rely so heavily on our
5 partners. Our partners are the nations comparative
6 advantage against competitors like China and Russia.

7 Across CENTCOM, we cultivate deep abiding partnerships
8 that can serve as a hedge against the threats in the
9 region, while deterring Iran from its most destructive
10 behavior. We have the kind of relationships that elicit
11 candid, sometimes tough, conversations that result in
12 solutions. These kind of relationships make us the partner
13 of choice in the region.

14 And a critical component of that partnership is
15 innovation, innovation of thought, innovation of process,
16 innovation of concept and technology extends the value of
17 the partnerships. Innovation allows us to move faster,
18 operate more efficiently, and increase progress across all
19 operational efforts.

20 This is more important now than any time in our
21 history. 40 years ago, the Department of Defense
22 established CENTCOM to counter the malign influence of a
23 revolutionary regime that seized power in Tehran and to
24 compete with a great power in the region, the Soviet Union.
25 The organization's charter, directed by this body, was to

1 direct and enable military operations and activities with
2 allies and partners to increase regional stability in
3 support of enduring U.S. interests.

4 That mission remains essentially unchanged to this
5 day. Iran still remains the focus. We now battle violent
6 extremist groups who threaten the region and beyond. The
7 Soviet Union has been replaced with China and Russia as
8 strategic competitors. With these challenges, the CENTCOM
9 region holds the greatest risk of derailing the National
10 Defense Strategy with a flashpoint international incident
11 that may demand a response using unplanned resources and
12 attention.

13 So today, CENTCOM priorities are to deter Iran,
14 counter violent extremist organizations, and compete
15 strategically with China and Russia. Four decades after
16 CENTCOM's formation, Iran remains the primary destabilizing
17 element in the region. We have seen rapid advances in
18 Iranian military capability over time.

19 The Iran of 2023 is not the Iran of 1983. In fact,
20 today, Iran is exponentially more capable than they were
21 just five years ago. Today, Iran possesses the largest and
22 most diverse missile arsenal in the Middle East, thousands
23 of ballistic and cruise missiles, many capable of striking
24 anywhere in the Middle East. Iran also maintains the
25 largest and most capable UAV force in the region.

1 The regime continues to enrich and stockpile uranium
2 far above what is needed for commercial use, and Tehran can
3 enrich uranium far faster than it could even two years ago.
4 An Iran with a nuclear weapon would change the Middle East
5 overnight and forever. Iran's vast and deeply resourced
6 proxy forces spread instability throughout the region and
7 threaten our regional partners.

8 As Iran continues to stabilize the region, we continue
9 to fight against violent extremist organizations. In
10 Syria, we put pressure on ISIS alongside our Syrian
11 Democratic Forces partners. In Iraq, we advise, assist,
12 and enable the Iraqi security forces in their fight against
13 ISIS. While ISIS has significantly degraded in Iraq and
14 Syria, the group maintains the capability to conduct
15 operations within the region and has the desire to strike
16 outside of it.

17 Our progress in Iraq and Syria contrasts with the
18 security situation in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, the
19 Taliban's hold on security is maintained through ideology,
20 continued humanitarian aid, and the persistent abuse of
21 human rights to dissuade unrest.

22 Extremist groups see opportunity and ISIS-Khorasan
23 grows emboldened, seeking to expand its ranks and inspire,
24 enable, and direct attacks in the region and beyond, with
25 the ultimate goal to strike on the American homeland.

1 Amidst these challenges, strategic competition is
2 deeply manifest in the region. The People's Republic of
3 China has chosen to compete in the region. The PRC is
4 aggressively expanding its diplomatic, informational,
5 military, and economic outreach across the region.

6 China, dependent upon the region for half of its
7 imported oil, is also moving beyond energy-based
8 investments to encompass physical and telecommunication
9 infrastructure that advances its Belt and Road initiatives.

10 Over half the oil and more than a third of all the
11 natural gas imported by China is supplied by CENTCOM
12 countries. 19 of 21 CENTCOM countries have signed a Belt
13 and Road initiative with China. We are in a race to
14 integrate with our partners before China can fully
15 penetrate the region.

16 Russia looks to expand its influence in Syria, seeking
17 permanent basing there and undermining our efforts toward
18 stability and security in the region. The U.S. Central
19 Command juts up against Russia with a border six and a half
20 times longer than the Russian border with NATO.

21 Putin seeks to take advantage of this proximity with a
22 foothold of influence in the Central Asian States,
23 leveraging historical relations and a perceived decline in
24 U.S. engagement to challenge our influence in that critical
25 part of the world. With all these challenges and

1 opportunities, the CENTCOM region looks to the United
2 States for assurances of our commitment.

3 For CENTCOM, that commitment is unwavering. In
4 closing, let me thank you for your support to our service
5 members. I would also like to thank the soldiers, Sailors,
6 Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, and Guardians who serve
7 and sacrifice in CENTCOM, and all those who have done so
8 for the last 40 years. It is the greatest honor of my
9 lifetime to be their Commander. Thank you.

10 [The prepared statement of General Kurilla follows:]

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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you, General Kurilla. General
2 Langley, please.

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1 STATEMENT OF GENERAL MICHAEL E. LANGLEY, USMC
2 COMMANDER, UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND

3 General Langley: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member
4 Wicker, distinguished committee members, it is an honor to
5 appear before you today to testify on the State of affairs
6 of the United States Africa Command.

7 I am proud to testify, along my good friend, General
8 Eric Kurilla, the Commander of the United States Central
9 Command. Now, I assumed command last August, and since
10 then, I embarked upon a campaign of learning over the last
11 seven months to inform our discussion here today.

12 I undertook this campaign of learning to fulfill my
13 commitment to this Congress to complete a holistic
14 assessment upon confirmation. I made that assessment, and
15 I will continue it throughout my tenure of command.

16 Upfront, I want to make one thing crystal clear. The
17 team of servicemembers and civilians at AFRICOM is a talent
18 and dedicated body. I am honored to serve among them. I
19 am joined here today by my State Department foreign policy
20 advisor, Mr. Phil Nelson, who represents the exceptionally
21 skilled diplomatic team embedded in our headquarters.

22 Our entire team is laser focused on implementing our
23 whole of Government approach, with our partners from the
24 Department of State, USAID, the intelligence community, and
25 other U.S. Government organizations. We campaign with our

1 allies and partners to advance mutual interest and to
2 promote stability and prosperity on the African continent.

3 You should be proud of their efforts, I certainly am.
4 Now, Africa is a vast and dynamic continent of sovereign
5 nations. Collectively and individually, these nations are
6 increasingly important players on the global stage. As
7 such, AFRICOM's contribution to American security must be
8 viewed through a global lens.

9 Threats once contained on the continent are
10 transforming into worldwide threats. Terrorism, poverty,
11 food insecurity, climate change, and mass migration shadow
12 African lives. They sow the seeds of violent extremists
13 and Russian exploitation. The Kremlin's invasion of
14 Ukraine has aggravated the food insecurity crisis in Africa
15 by blocking vital food shipments to the same nations that
16 feel the deepest impact of climate change.

17 Russia's Bogner mercenaries turned chaos into cash.
18 It destabilizes entire regions across Africa and cuts at
19 American interests worldwide. The expansion of the Middle
20 East based violent extremist groups such as ISIS and Al-
21 Qaeda, including now the biggest franchise Al-Shabaab,
22 threatens American lives.

23 Solutions to these colossal problems must be a shared
24 burden. African nations need to be at the helm of a
25 concerted international effort to produce sustainable

1 results, sustainable outcomes.

2 Assisting African nations to achieving the goals while
3 advancing American interests can only be accomplished
4 through a synchronized whole of Government approach, a
5 whole of Government strategy.

6 We call it a 3-D approach, which is a toolkit of
7 diplomacy, development, and defense, but one tool does not
8 succeed without the whole kit. So, I will advocate for my
9 State Department and USAID partners to receive the
10 resources they need to succeed. Now, Africa faces many
11 other challenges.

12 How we are putting African needs at the forefront of
13 our campaign, reinforced by multilateral and whole
14 Government engagement, will help AFRICOM and our partners
15 work towards a sustainable peace, stability, and
16 prosperity.

17 Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and
18 distinguished members of this committee, thank you for
19 having me here today. I look forward to your questions.

20 [The prepared statement of General Langley follows:]

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1 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, General Langley.
2 General Kurilla, you have rightly emphasized the critical
3 importance of leveraging allies and partners to counter
4 threats from Iran and Iranian linked groups.

5 And does our posture change with respect to the new
6 agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and how will it
7 impact our allies in the region or across the globe?

8 General Kurilla: Thank you, Chairman. Appreciate
9 that question. So, this agreement between Iran and Saudi
10 Arabia is the culmination really of three years of
11 discussions that have been going on, but just recently by
12 China.

13 And I would say an agreement is not implementation.
14 While these discussions were going on, in the last 90 days,
15 we have interdicted five major weapons shipments coming
16 from Iran to Yemen, which those weapons are then used
17 against Saudi Arabia.

18 One of those shipments included components of
19 navigation systems for short range ballistic missiles. So
20 again, I think the implementation is a completely different
21 matter on this.

22 Chairman Reed: Will China be held accountable by the
23 Saudis if they cannot limit attacks against the kingdom and
24 weapon transfers, as you described?

25 General Kurilla: So, I think that remains to be seen,

1 Chairman. What is concerning on this is China's
2 penetration into the region. In the national instruments
3 of power, they already have their economic in the region,
4 their information, their military with the increase in
5 sales of at least 80 percent over the last 10 years in
6 terms of their foreign military sales. And now we are
7 seeing for the first time really their diplomatic.

8 Chairman Reed: Thank you. General Langley, you
9 mentioned the presence of the Wagner group in Africa and
10 their behavior, which is contrary to any decency at all in
11 the world.

12 How are we trying, through the information domain, to
13 expose them and what they are doing, and also obviously
14 expose the Russian government that is supporting them and
15 sponsoring them?

16 General Langley: Chairman, from the mil-to-mil
17 perspective in engagement with our partners, we do use
18 information operations to effect and address the negative
19 sentiment in their message, the destabilizing in countries
20 in which they enmeshed themselves in, especially in Mali.

21 That is very -- has been very much present, that they
22 have this destabilizing activities. But it has been -- it
23 is reinforced by the UN force there, illuminating and
24 amplifying some of the atrocities that the Wagner group is
25 guilty of. So therein lies the whole of Government

1 approach.

2 Since I don't have mil to mil, because of sanctions at
3 this point, but we still have a whole Government approach
4 that can take that mantle and still be able to do
5 information operations.

6 Chairman Reed: Thank you. General Kurilla, when we
7 spoke about China, we also speak about Russia.

8 The aid that Iran is giving to Russia now in the
9 Ukraine fight and what would presumably be the
10 reciprocation by the Russians in many different ways is
11 another factor that has recently emerged.

12 What is your response to that? What advice can you
13 give to us, and how can we limit this -- the impact of this
14 arrangement?

15 General Kurilla: Chairman, thank you for the question
16 on that. So, it is very concerning any time we see
17 adversaries working together. We do know that they have
18 shipped hundreds of their advanced unmanned aerial vehicles
19 to the Ukraine.

20 These are the same ones that have hit our service
21 members in both Iraq and in Syria. They are improving upon
22 them based on what they are learning inside the Ukraine. I
23 am concerned then with the support that Russia can give
24 back.

25 As you know, the Iran State media announced the

1 approval of -- don't know the exact number yet what will
2 come out of the agreement, but the Su-35 is a fourth gen
3 plus fighter, which has a lot of our partners in the region
4 concerned as well.

5 Chairman Reed: And what types of steps are you
6 contemplating or we should be contemplating to try to
7 disrupt or diminish this threat that is emerging?

8 General Kurilla: Chairman, I think this will take a
9 whole of Government approach to include all of the
10 instruments of national power on this to be able to prevent
11 that.

12 Chairman Reed: And with respect to the Iranian
13 nuclear program, they have made significant steps since the
14 termination of the JCPOA. Is there any indication that
15 either Russia or China would encourage them, sponsor them,
16 or on the other hand, discourage them from moving further?

17 General Kurilla: And, Chairman, I will be able to
18 talk about that in the classified session immediately
19 following this.

20 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, General. Thank
21 you both. And again, thank the men and women. Glad to see
22 the Master Chief is here, so you are well supervised,
23 General Kurilla. Thank you very much. Senator Wicker,
24 please.

25 Senator Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let's stay

1 with Iran, General Kurilla. You can tell us in a non-
2 classified setting, can't you, whether the threat from Iran
3 has grown stronger or lesser in the past two years.

4 General Kurilla: Iran's malign behavior has increased
5 in the last two years, Senator.

6 Senator Wicker: Okay. And what do you need from the
7 Congress of the United States to meet this threat?

8 General Kurilla: So, as we look at the threat mainly
9 that we face is the ballistic missile and their UAV threat
10 in the region. One of the ways that we are countering that
11 is through regional agreements and a regional architecture.

12 As we go towards an integrated air and missile defense
13 in the region, we are making progress on that. So, what we
14 need is the continued resourcing, and I want to make sure
15 that I have a sufficient and sustainable posture in CENTCOM
16 so that I can accomplish the missions I have been given to
17 make sure I can mitigate the risk.

18 If there is one area in the world, I believe that can
19 derail the National Defense Strategy, it is that currently
20 the CENTCOM AOR.

21 Senator Wicker: So, the resources to help you
22 facilitate these agreements?

23 General Kurilla: It is the resources, Senator.

24 Senator Wicker: Okay. Will -- help us be specific
25 about that. Now, after the disastrous Afghan withdrawal,

1 the departments assured this committee that countering
2 terrorist groups would still be possible over the horizon.
3 We have only done that once. Is that correct?

4 General Kurilla: Senator, we -- actually all kinetic
5 -- all finishes in the methodology of find, fix, and finish
6 on counterterrorism targets are not kinetic. There is two
7 that are non-kinetic that we disrupted and I will talk
8 about that in a classified setting that involved over five
9 Combatant Commanders to disrupt those finishes.

10 Senator Wicker: Okay, so two non-kinetic and one
11 kinetic.

12 General Kurilla: Right.

13 Senator Wicker: Do you think do you think we should
14 be doing more of those?

15 General Kurilla: It is difficult right now, as I said
16 in my confirmation hearing. It is a difficult but not
17 impossible. One of the things that we are trying to do is
18 increase our intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance
19 over that.

20 We are putting an investment into long duration, high
21 altitude, alternative airborne ISR that can go up for days
22 and weeks, because right now I am spending 80 percent of my
23 time transiting to the region to be able to collect over
24 the top.

25 Senator Wicker: Okay. General Langley, tell us what

1 China is doing. How far along are they on their base in
2 Djibouti? And where do you think they might likely be
3 making their strongest effort for a military base in West
4 Africa?

5 General Langley: Thank you, Senator, for that
6 question. China's aspirations, especially at Doraleh, they
7 are coming across a thinly veiled front that is all for
8 goodwill. But we know that they are establishing,
9 especially with the destroyer that visited Doraleh last
10 March, shows that they have indications that --

11 Senator Wicker: Tell us where that is.

12 General Langley: Duraleh is in Djibouti. I am sorry.
13 So, Ranking Member, their aspirations are pretty clear.
14 That is a strategic line of communication, especially as it
15 embarks upon the Suez Canal and Bab-el-Mandeb, if they
16 wanted to fully militarize that. Duraleh is of concern.

17 They are saying it is all about goodwill, but I think
18 the other. They do have other aspirations, and in closed
19 session, ranking member, I know that I can be able to lay
20 that out where in West Africa is their next military base
21 aspiration.

22 Senator Wicker: Okay, but tell us then if you can,
23 and I think you can, how that would affect our security as
24 Americans, and particularly to North America, if the
25 Chinese are able to establish a base in West Africa.

1 General Langley: It would put us -- it would change
2 the whole calculus of the geostrategic global campaign
3 plans of protecting the homeland. It would shorten -- if
4 they build any capacity on the West Coast, geostrategically
5 it will put them at an advantage. Right now, we have the
6 decisive advantage. They cannot -- we can't let them have
7 a base on the West Coast because it would change the
8 dynamics.

9 Senator Wicker: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much. Thank you,
11 Senator Wicker. Senator Shaheen, please.

12 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Generals Kurilla,
13 Langley, thank you both for being here this morning.
14 General Kurilla, I want to pick up on a conversation that
15 we had when we met a couple of weeks ago, and I appreciated
16 that opportunity.

17 But one of the things we talked about was the
18 situation in the ISIS detainee camps in Syria. And can you
19 give us an update on what the current conditions are and
20 what you are doing in CENTCOM to help destabilize what is
21 happening there, and what you need from us in order for us
22 to be more successful there?

23 General Kurilla: Thanks, Senator. So, I have been to
24 Syria six times. I was in Syria last week. So, as we look
25 at ISIS in Syria, it has three categories. The first

1 category is ISIS at large. That is the ones that we are
2 fighting right now with our Syrian Democratic partners, and
3 I think we have contained ISIS, but the ideology is
4 uncontained and unconstrained.

5 The second category is what you may refer to as the
6 ISIS in detention. I refer to them as an ISIS army in
7 detention. There are over 10,000 ISIS detainees spread
8 across 26 different prisons in Northeast Syria. I went
9 inside the Hasaka prison last Thursday.

10 That is the same prison that January of '22, last
11 year, there was 4,400 ISIS detainees in there. They broke
12 out. Over 1,000 made it outside the walls. And in a ten-
13 day battle that involved both our U.S. forces, air power,
14 and Syrian democratic forces, over 400 were killed. Some
15 escaped, the exact number unknown, and then the rest were
16 captured.

17 But 121 of our SDF partners were killed in that prison
18 breakout. What we are doing specifically about the
19 detention facilities is we are trying to consolidate them
20 now. This body provided funding for us to build another
21 prison, which we think can consolidate the vast majority of
22 the rest of the prisoners.

23 We also train the guards that are on these detention
24 facilities and the CTF funds help facilitate that. And
25 lastly, the last category is the potential next generation

1 of ISIS. I had an opportunity to go into the Al Roj camp
2 and into Al Hol inside and talk to residents. I met -- I
3 talked to women from 16 different countries last week
4 inside the camp to include the woman from Alabama.

5 And then I also went inside the Al Hol camp and I met
6 three teenagers who had been there for six years. And
7 remember, ISIS really didn't come to Al Hol until about
8 late 2018. These were people that went there to escape
9 ISIS and escape the regime.

10 And then with the fall of ISIS's territorial caliph in
11 really March of 2019, it swelled from about 35,000 to
12 70,000. And currently right now there is about 51,000
13 inside of Al Hol. Over 30,000 of them are children, and
14 they are at risk from radicalization.

15 About 50 percent of the camp holds or espouses some
16 form of ideology, according to the camp guards, the camp
17 administrators, and the residents, and the other half are
18 trying to escape ISIS.

19 Really, the only role there is that we can do, is
20 there is no military solution, is the repatriation,
21 rehabilitation, and reintegration back into the society.

22 Senator Shaheen: And are we having any luck getting
23 some of the countries to repatriate those detainees who
24 came from their countries?

25 General Kurilla: Absolutely, ma'am. So, we have

1 actually had more success in the first few months of this
2 year than the last six months of last year. About half of
3 those IDPs that are in Al Hol are from Iraq.

4 And we work with our Iraqi security partners in the
5 Iraqi government to repatriate them. They have done 1,200
6 in the last two months. At that pace, it would be about
7 four years to get everybody back. So, we are working with
8 them on how they can increase the throughput.

9 But right now, it is their ability to go through the
10 Jeddah 1 camp, which is South of Mosul, as they bring them
11 back. What they don't want to do is just move one IDP camp
12 to another, so they are working through that process.

13 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. Well, I hope you will
14 let this committee know if there are additional resources
15 or other supports that you need. General Langley, the map
16 of Africa shows where the Wagner Group is operating, but it
17 doesn't speak to the success or not that they are having
18 with recruitment.

19 Can you speak to that, and maybe Senator Reed asked
20 about the success that information or disinformation
21 efforts that they have underway. Can you also talk about
22 what we are doing to respond to that in a little more
23 detail?

24 General Langley: Senator, first and foremost, I mean,
25 talk about bargainers and tensions. They are all about

1 power and profit. If they are going to give a false
2 offering of security, it is only for the elites in a
3 particular country.

4 We are seeing that in Mali. Wagner failed in
5 Mozambique. They tried to entrench upon it. And that
6 government, albeit developing, did not like that false
7 value proposition. They have continuing actions in Dakar,
8 a Central African Republic. And that -- well, in that
9 vein, I think Central African Republic is kind of getting
10 fed up.

11 So, there is no recruiting going on. It is all about
12 profit, making their way to gold mines, diamond mines, or
13 rare earth mineral mines. That is extension of the Russian
14 Federation.

15 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. I will submit a question
16 for the record on the disinformation efforts.

17 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Shaheen. Senator
18 Fischer, please.

19 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you
20 both for being here today and thank you for your service to
21 our country. General Kurilla, how long would it take ISIS-
22 K to generate the capability to conduct external
23 operations?

24 General Kurilla: Specifically, ISIS-Khorasan,
25 Senator? It is my Commander's estimate that they can do an

1 external operation against U.S. or Western interests abroad
2 in under six months with little to no warning. In the
3 classified session, I will talk about why I make that
4 assessment. It is much harder for them to be able to do
5 that against the homeland.

6 Senator Fischer: Senator Wicker talked to you quite a
7 bit about over the horizon and our capabilities that we
8 have there, or don't have there in Afghanistan. Do you
9 think that you need any additional resources in our
10 upcoming budget to increase or improve those capabilities?

11 General Kurilla: So, we have been funded, like I
12 said, for some alternative airborne ISR that will help us
13 get longer duration. But it is not just about ISR. We are
14 also increasing our other intelligence efforts to get
15 penetration into the networks that we want.

16 A part that goes unseen a lot of times is the
17 analytical back side. These are the analysts, the
18 linguists, and the production capability that help us make
19 the decisions. And there has been a significant decrease
20 shifted from the NDS to go against higher priority targets,
21 but I would like to see to make sure that we don't lose so
22 much of that capability that we cannot see the threat.

23 Senator Fischer: Because knowing that threat is
24 obviously very important, as you have stated, for the
25 existence that we still see in Afghanistan of the terrorist

1 groups that are there.

2 General Kurilla: Correct, ma'am.

3 Senator Fischer: Thank you. Have you requested
4 authority to conduct any strikes in Afghanistan against the
5 ISIS-K targets that have been identified?

6 General Kurilla: So, in a classified study, ma'am, I
7 can talk about where we are in terms of the find, fix, and
8 finish on them.

9 Senator Fischer: Okay. Do you still have a need for
10 munitions that can hit hard in deeply buried targets?

11 General Kurilla: I do, ma'am.

12 Senator Fischer: Do you have specific requests in
13 that area?

14 General Kurilla: That was in my unfunded priority
15 list last year.

16 Senator Fischer: Do you plan to include it this year?

17 General Kurilla: It depends on the full funding,
18 ma'am.

19 Senator Fischer: Would it be your recommendation and
20 your best military advice to this committee that it would
21 be -- that it should be included?

22 General Kurilla: So, we did receive funding for in my
23 Fiscal Year 2023 to include the additional procurement of
24 the -- its the Massive Automated Ordinance Penetrator,
25 which goes against hardened, deeply buried targets.

1 Senator Fischer: Which are growing in number with our
2 adversaries. Is that correct?

3 General Kurilla: That is correct, ma'am.

4 Senator Fischer: What is your assessment of Iran and
5 Saudi Arabia reestablishing diplomatic ties? You talked
6 about that a little bit. But how does that affect our mil-
7 to-mil relationships that we have with Saudi Arabia?

8 General Kurilla: We have very strong mil to mil
9 relationship with Saudi Arabia. I think this agreement is,
10 again, is the culmination of three years of talks between
11 them. The more concerning part is that China is the one
12 that was mediating this.

13 Senator Fischer: As we look at Iran and their proxies
14 throughout CENTCOM AOR, do they continue to pose a
15 significant threat to our partners and to our own forces in
16 the region? And what more can be done to deter Iran from
17 those malign activities?

18 General Kurilla: So, we see Iran as the largest
19 malign actor in the region. Less than 60 hours ago, we had
20 rockets attacked from Iranian aligned militia group against
21 one of our bases in Syria.

22 Senator Fischer: What more can be done to deter them?

23 General Kurilla: One of the things that we are doing
24 is increasing our defensive posture in these areas. And I
25 want to thank the services for providing a capability. So

1 particularly the Army has given us some tremendous
2 capability in terms of counter-UAS and counter rocket
3 mortar at our bases.

4 Senator Fischer: With Syria and Iraq, what do you
5 assess to be the situation in Syria right now? And have
6 you seen any change in Russia's presence in Syria, or has
7 that remained pretty steady since the invasion of Ukraine?

8 General Kurilla: So, Senator, Syria is very important
9 to Russia. They have taken very little out of Russia since
10 their invasion. They have taken a small number of forces,
11 some munitions, but generally has stayed about the same.
12 What we are seeing, though, is an increase recently in the
13 unprofessional and unsafe behavior of the Russian air force
14 in the region.

15 Senator Fischer: Can you give us an example of that
16 here?

17 General Kurilla: I can. So, they fly over our bases
18 with ground attack aircraft with weapons on them in an
19 attempt to try and be provocative. But really, it is
20 unsafe, unprofessional, not what we expect of a
21 professional air force. They want to try and renegotiate
22 the deconfliction protocols that they violate every day.

23 Senator Fischer: This is not new Russian behavior, is
24 it, sir, especially with regard to the drone incident that
25 we recently have seen.

1 General Kurilla: It is not new, but we have seen a
2 significant spike since about 1 March in Syria.

3 Senator Fischer: Okay. Thank you.

4 General Kurilla: Thank you, ma'am.

5 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Fischer. Senator
6 Gillibrand, please.

7 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would
8 like to continue Senator Fisher's line of questions with
9 regard to Iran. If this was a three year of talks, how
10 recent was China engaged in those talks?

11 General Kurilla: Ma'am, I understand that it is in
12 the last several months.

13 Senator Gillibrand: Well, obviously, that raises
14 serious concerns, because I just took -- I just joined a
15 delegation to visit the Abraham Accords countries, and the
16 interest of those countries, UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and
17 Israel, is to broaden and strengthen the Abraham Accords,
18 and they were hopeful that they could engage Saudi Arabia
19 in that context.

20 This seems to me that that would make that extremely
21 problematic, because if China is involved, it would be very
22 difficult to have the kind of technology shared in the
23 Abraham Accords if they are now in alliance with China.

24 And second, if they are in an alliance with Iran, the
25 whole point of the Abraham Accords is to counter Iran's

1 malign threats. So, does this make the possibility of
2 extending or expanding the Abraham Accords impossible? And
3 what do you recommend that this committee do to focus on
4 how we create more regional alliances?

5 General Kurilla: So, ma'am, I believe this is a --
6 the talks about opening diplomatic relations so much as
7 this is not an alliance between Saudi Arabia and Iran.
8 They have had diplomatic relations in the past while they
9 were still shooting at each other in the past.

10 So, this is really about opening embassies and opening
11 diplomatic relations when they closed the embassies back in
12 2016. What this does do, though, is that with China, the
13 most concerning part about this is that China is the one
14 brokering this because it shows that they are bringing the
15 diplomatic aspect of their national instruments of power.

16 And what we see with China on the military side is
17 that they have a significant increase in bringing their
18 equipment into the region and their foreign military sales.
19 And if there is Chinese equipment there, we cannot
20 integrate it with U.S. equipment.

21 And so, as we try and build the regional partnerships,
22 and we have been there for the last 75 years, when we try
23 and build these regional partnerships, you want to be able
24 to integrate with your partner. And if there is Chinese
25 equipment there, we are not going to be able to integrate

1 it.

2 Senator Gillibrand: Understood. Can you, in this
3 setting, give us more detail on where China has integrated
4 its equipment in the region?

5 General Kurilla: China has sold equipment all over
6 the region inside the Middle East. And I can take that for
7 the record and give you a specific follow up for that,
8 ma'am.

9 Senator Gillibrand: And then do you have a focused
10 plan on what to do about that?

11 General Kurilla: So, one of this is to increase our
12 partnership with these elements. So again, this is a race
13 to integrate before China can penetrate.

14 Senator Gillibrand: And would you recommend expanding
15 and deepening the Abraham Accords?

16 General Kurilla: I would, ma'am.

17 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you. With regard to
18 Afghanistan, I would like an update on what we are doing to
19 get our partners out and whether those operations are
20 continuing, and what are the barriers that you are facing
21 currently.

22 General Kurilla: So, ma'am, the getting the partners
23 out through special immigrant visas. That is a State
24 Department run program. But from the U.S., from the
25 military side, we are responsible for bringing them into a

1 place called Camp As Sayliyah in Qatar.

2 And we currently have about 2,600 there right now. We
3 provide the in processing, the security, and the basic life
4 support. The State Department runs the actual immigrant
5 visa side. They are averaging about 60 days there before
6 they are moved on.

7 In my understanding right now in the pipeline is about
8 85,000 special immigrant visas, but I would defer to the
9 State Department on the exact number.

10 Senator Gillibrand: Again, with regard to Iran, we
11 know that Russia and Iran have escalated their military
12 cooperation over the last year. How is CENTCOM
13 coordinating with EUCOM to ensure that our forces are able
14 to respond to threats that touch both areas of
15 responsibilities?

16 General Kurilla: So, I talked to Chris Cavoli often,
17 the EUCOM Commander in the SACEUR. We have done several
18 operations that I can talk about in a classified setting to
19 create additional dilemmas for Russia.

20 Senator Gillibrand: And then my last question for
21 you, sir, is you activated the U.S. Space Force Central,
22 which is responsible for space operations within the
23 CENTCOM area of responsibility. How are you incorporating
24 the space domain into planning and training so that your
25 subordinate commanders can effectively integrate space into

1 their operations?

2 General Kurilla: We think this is a very big positive
3 of actually having a component of Space Force. Space has
4 always played a large role in the CENTCOM AOR, but now I
5 have a Commander that sits at the table that is able to
6 then integrate more effectively because he has a seat at
7 the table to be able to do that.

8 And we actually just finished a large with all the
9 Combatant Commands in the region to talk about the lessons
10 we have learned over the last, you know, decade of doing
11 space operations in CENTCOM.

12 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you. General Langley,
13 despite the size and growing importance of the continent,
14 the 21st century wars in CENTCOM, the Russian invasion of
15 Ukraine, and the strategic competition with China have
16 dominated much of our focus on this committee. What might
17 we be missing about Africa that you think this committee
18 should take note of in the coming years?

19 General Langley: Senator, I would say just
20 aspirations of China. The aspirations of China is
21 threefold, one from a geopolitical. They are trying to
22 change the international norms and they are using some of
23 the African countries within the UN construct, whether it
24 be General Assembly or the Security Council, trying to
25 affect votes to change those international norms and the

1 international system writ large.

2 And then there is the geostrategic operation. Their
3 aspiration for military bases on the continent of Africa.
4 Just talked to my African partners, they don't want to be
5 militarized in a strategic sense.

6 And the last piece, Senator, is geoeconomic. Our
7 future economy is dependent upon a number of rare earth
8 minerals. And also, some of our clean energy technologies
9 depend upon the rare earth minerals. About 30 to 40
10 percent of those minerals are on the continent of Africa.
11 That is forward thinking by the PRC.

12 They are trying to harvest and leverage upon that
13 through shaky deals, engaging with some of these countries
14 so they can corner a market, if you will. That is what I
15 am concerned about, Senator. Thank you.

16 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Gillibrand.
17 Senator Cotton, please.

18 Senator Cotton: Welcome, gentlemen. General Kurilla,
19 I want to return to your answer to Senator Fischer about
20 the threat of terrorist attacks originating from
21 Afghanistan. If I heard you right, you said you believe
22 that such attacks could occur in a mere six months out of
23 Afghanistan against American citizens or allies or partners
24 in Eurasia. Is that right?

25 General Kurilla: Senator, I said abroad, which I

1 would also include Europe in that.

2 Senator Cotton: Eurasia. But you said less than --
3 more than that against the American homeland.

4 General Kurilla: It would be harder for them to do
5 that against the American homeland.

6 Senator Cotton: If you assessed six months against
7 Europe or Asia, what would you assess would be the timeline
8 against the homeland?

9 General Kurilla: I think it is hard to put a timeline
10 on that. But again, I assess that they could in as little
11 as six months with little to no warning. And I will talk
12 about that in the closed session as to why assess that.

13 Senator Cotton: How likely do you think a terrorist
14 attack on the United States or one of our allies is
15 originating from Afghanistan?

16 General Kurilla: I think it is a higher probability
17 overseas than it is in the homeland.

18 Senator Cotton: When you add up all the troops you
19 have in your area of responsibility and American citizens
20 who are there for business or tourism or pilgrimages on any
21 given day, what are we talking about? Probably hundreds of
22 thousands, right?

23 General Kurilla: At least.

24 Senator Cotton: So, hundreds of thousands within
25 range of a terrorist attack, in your assessment, in a mere

1 six months from Afghanistan. Okay, I want to turn to Iran.

2 Senator Wicker: I don't think we heard the answer.

3 General Kurilla: Yes, I do assess it.

4 Senator Cotton: I want to turn to Iran. You said in
5 your written statement they can produce sufficient fissile
6 material for a nuclear weapon in less than 14 days. You
7 also say that deterring Iran is arguably more urgent now
8 than any time in CENTCOM's history due to one, their
9 cutting-edge missile and UAV capability. And two, their
10 uranium enrichment program. That is correct?

11 General Kurilla: That is correct, Senator.

12 Senator Cotton: Yet you also say Iran is undeterred
13 from its malign activities. So that is not good. That it
14 is more urgent to deter them than in any time in Central
15 Command's history, but they are undeterred. Why is Iran
16 undeterred right now?

17 General Kurilla: Currently, right now we see them,
18 that their malign activity is increasing. We see them
19 again in the last 90 days. We have some of the highest
20 numbers of our advanced conventional weapons and munitions
21 that we have seen going from Iran to Yemen.

22 We see their attacks on our U.S. forces in Iraq and
23 Syria increasing, and we see the threat streams that I can
24 talk about in a higher classification.

25 Senator Cotton: I mean, those are more the results of

1 the lack of deterrence against Iran. Do they feel
2 undeterred because they feel safe that neither the United
3 States or our partners are going to threaten anything they
4 hold dear?

5 General Kurilla: I can't say the exact reason why
6 they feel that, but I know right now when I look at them, I
7 believe they are undeterred.

8 Senator Cotton: I mean, there is a history -- you are
9 right throughout your statement. There is a history of
10 Iran being deterred by the credible threat of military
11 force or actual military force. That is right, isn't it?

12 General Kurilla: I think that deterrence is always
13 temporal, so you can deter for a period of time and then it
14 will wane. I do believe the Suleimani strike was a
15 deterrence.

16 Senator Cotton: We can go back much further than
17 that. Iran waged war with Iraq for eight years and Ronald
18 Reagan sunk half their navy in the spring of 1988. And
19 surprisingly, that war ended just a few months later.

20 And Iran also stopped its enrichment program in 2003,
21 after the United States had invaded and toppled governments
22 on both its East and its Western border. And then, as you
23 say, they took only very tentative steps towards higher
24 enrichment in 2019.

25 And then after we killed Kassam Soleimani, they did

1 nothing at all for most of 2020 is that right?

2 General Kurilla: They -- it was a higher level of
3 deterrence after that.

4 Senator Cotton: Last week on the Intelligence
5 Committee, we had our annual worldwide threats briefing and
6 the director of National Intelligence cited the killing of
7 Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, a notorious Iranian nuclear scientist,
8 in November 2020, as the reason Iran accelerated its
9 enrichment program. Do you agree with that assessment?

10 General Kurilla: Senator, I think any talk of the
11 Iran nuclear program would be best in a classified setting.

12 Senator Cotton: I pointed out there is also something
13 that happened in November of 2020 besides the killing of
14 Mohseh Fakhrizadeh that might have emboldened Iran, and
15 that was the election of Joe Biden that gave the Iranians
16 confidence that they were no longer going to be held
17 militarily at risk.

18 Speaking of that time frame, I think it was December
19 of 2020, didn't we face threats to our personnel in Iraq
20 from militias and the Former President tweeted what he
21 called some friendly health advice to the Ayatollahs that
22 if a single American was harmed in Iraq, he would hold them
23 responsible?

24 General Kurilla: I am not familiar with that specific
25 tweet.

1 Senator Cotton: That did happen. It is okay. There
2 are a lot of them. You don't have to be familiar with
3 every one of them. But I also don't think those attacks
4 happened. So, I think what we can learn here whether it's
5 from Kassim Soleimani or the tanker wars or anything else,
6 that the only thing that will deter Iran is the credible
7 threat of military force.

8 One final question, I know you have added Israel to
9 your AOR, and you right in your statement that you readily
10 partner today with Arab militaries and the Israel Defense
11 Force alike. In fact, the inclusion of Israel presents
12 many collaborative and constructive security opportunities.

13 One of the opportunities I see is having Israeli Air
14 Force personnel training alongside American personnel on
15 KC-46 tankers, which we expect to be providing them in the
16 future, and that is training that we can provide them so
17 they will be ready to operate those aircraft as soon as
18 they get them.

19 Do you think that would be what you call a
20 collaborative and constructive opportunity between the
21 United States and Israel?

22 General Kurilla: I think when they get closer to
23 getting their aircraft, starting to train those pilots so
24 they can retain that training and go right into the
25 execution of operating them.

1 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

2 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Cotton. Senator
3 Hirono, please.

4 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would
5 like to turn to another part of your missions. In both
6 Central Command and in Africa Command, U.S. diplomatic
7 efforts are -- diplomatic efforts are at the forefront of
8 your missions. The military-to-military engagement is one
9 very important aspect of your responsibilities, but your
10 organizations are just one part of a whole of Government
11 approach.

12 General Langley, I note your team's work in
13 implementing the 2017 Women Peace and Security Act. Amid
14 the many extremist threats in both of your areas of
15 operations, it is more important than ever, as far as I am
16 concerned, to work for equality for women and girls around
17 the world. Generals, how are your commands supporting and
18 protecting women and girls in your AOR?

19 General Langley: Senator, thanks for that question.
20 As Women's Peace and Security Act passed in 2017, I have
21 seen from afar what AFRICOM has started to do. We didn't
22 wait for the plan or the construct over years.

23 CENTCOM -- excuse me, AFRICOM got after it. I saw
24 this, you know, because I was at CENTCOM and I was at the
25 J5, and we got out there as well at that time. But how far

1 that CENTCOM, that CENTCOM and AFRICOM has gone in the vein
2 of the intent of women's peace and security -- Senator, I
3 would like to just make note, we have it -- we have been to
4 our Africa campaign plan to effect in working with the
5 Department of Defense to finish out the construct.

6 But we just didn't -- we didn't wait for the word to
7 go. Just for your information, Senator, across the Horn of
8 Africa, our JTF, we have a Major General Shawley, and she
9 is affected that in every exercise that we do all the way
10 down from Djibouti down to Kenya.

11 And even her, Valerie Jackson, Brigadier General, the
12 United States Marine Corps, as they work with other
13 countries, they get it. President Assad Sheik Mohammed
14 sees a representation of our talent base in our military
15 and in our U.S. military, that 50 percent of the talent
16 base are women, and they are showing that it is effective.

17 And it is -- and for partners on the African
18 continent, they realize that. So, it is changing culture.

19 Senator Hirono: General, I think we have to be very
20 intentional about the support we provide to women and
21 girls, because wherever there is instability, and certainly
22 both of your AORs are characterized by what I would call
23 instability, women and girls are the ones who bear the
24 brunt of the challenges. General Langley, would you like
25 to add to what General Kurilla said? Because you are doing

1 a, I would say, a pretty good job.

2 General Kurilla: Ma'am I think--

3 Senator Hirono: Please.

4 General Kurilla: Ma'am, I think you are referring to
5 me on that. So, the -- I value the program.

6 Senator Hirono: I am sorry. Yes, I was referring to
7 you, General Langley. Go ahead.

8 General Langley: Yes, Senator. And so, in execution,
9 as we work with even in the West in our exercises, we
10 ensure that we do represent and within the spirit and a
11 letter of intent, of the Act of WPS, that we -- that our
12 partners ensure that their culture is changing and women
13 and girls get meaningful opportunities within the overall
14 governance and society.

15 And that is why I brought up Major General Shawley as
16 she makes her travels across. They see that America gets
17 it and they start to get it as well. It is very
18 compelling, Senator.

19 Senator Hirono: Thank you. General Langley, further
20 question for you. You noted in your testimony the climate
21 as a challenge in Africa. Can you describe the
22 destabilizing impact of climate change on African nations
23 and what we can do to counter this impact, or these
24 impacts?

25 General Langley: Absolutely, Senator. That is a

1 driver of instability, especially with irregular patterns
2 across the Sahel. We are seeing that. Across a whole of
3 Government approach as I work with USAID, I would say just
4 more flexibility, trying to predict where the effects are
5 going to go.

6 We need to stay ahead of this. And that is why
7 Administrator power is action for non-humanitarian actions,
8 so she can move resources, so we can address the effects of
9 climate change, because it is hard to predict. Even the
10 USAID being an evidence-based organization can't predict
11 where the next, two years out, where the next atrocity is
12 going to happen as a result of climate change.

13 So there needs to be flexibility across State
14 Department and USAID, then backed up by military, by
15 building a capability, adaptability within our partners and
16 our military so they can go out and assist the affected
17 people as a result of climate change.

18 Senator Hirono: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I am
19 particularly interested in what we are doing to counter
20 climate change impacts in Africa, because I agree that this
21 is a very destabilizing situation. So, I will continue to
22 pursue inquiries along these lines. Thank you.

23 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Hirono. Senator
24 Rounds, please.

25 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen,

1 first of all, thank you both for your service to our
2 country and to your teams as well. A question for both of
3 you.

4 With regard to our country's refocus with regard to
5 the threat that we see from both the other major powers in
6 the world, specifically China, Russia to some degree as
7 well, what impact has that had in terms of the discussion
8 and the clear evidence that we have turned from literally
9 more than 20 years of fighting terrorism to where we are
10 now focusing on this major power competition.

11 What is the impact in terms of the countries within
12 your AORs, and how are they perceiving the United States
13 interest in your regions of the world? General Kurilla.

14 General Kurilla: So, Senator, we are concerned.
15 Again, as I said, this is about a race between integration
16 with our partners and Chinese penetration into the region.
17 There has been a significant increase both in their
18 economic \$460 billion in infrastructure development in the
19 last five years, \$2.6 trillion in trade.

20 And really, we see their military capability where
21 they are trying to sell military equipment and foreign
22 military sales. In the last 10 years, we have seen a 30
23 percent decline in the U.S., but an 80 percent increase in
24 Chinese on foreign military sales. And when they buy a
25 Chinese system, we cannot integrate it into our systems.

1 Senator Rounds: General Langley.

2 General Langley: Senator, you know, as Eric just
3 alluded to, we had the same effects on the continent as
4 well, as far as investments by -- from a military
5 standpoint, both the PRC and Russia. And, you know, how we
6 partner -- that really segways into the main issue as far
7 as how slow our 333 program of our arm, train, and equip
8 our partners. So, they do know that they have choices.

9 Now, as we saw down in South Africa, they want to show
10 the world that they have choices and that is why they had
11 Mosi II exercise. But up in our partners in the Gulf of
12 Guinea region, they are pressurized by all kinds of -- by
13 extremist organizations threatening their borders.

14 And they come in, they asked, and they said, hey, you
15 know, General Langley, we don't want your boots on the
16 ground. We want your equipment. We need help so we can
17 put up a good fight and take care of these violent
18 extremist organization across all the affiliates.

19 But as slow as our processes are, we have 333 and also
20 332, our other Title 10 authorities is moving to slow,
21 Senator. Just moving too slow, and they make the wrong
22 decisions.

23 Senator Rounds: Let's dive into that just a little
24 bit more for both of you. The foreign military sales, or
25 FMS, is a critical part of our foreign policy. It requires

1 not just the availability but also the approval process.
2 Could each of you share with me your opinion about the
3 approval process and whether or not there needs to be a
4 more expedited process in order to allow us to continue
5 with FMS? General Kurilla.

6 General Kurilla: Senator, they say about 95 percent
7 of all FMS goes according to plan. 5 percent doesn't. 80
8 percent of those 5 percent are in the CENTCOM AOR. The
9 challenge we have is the time it takes to get equipment to
10 our partners.

11 And there is, you know, the DOD, Department of State,
12 Congress, and industry all have a role in that. But what
13 China does is they come in, they open their entire catalog,
14 they give them express shipping, they give them no end user
15 agreement, and they give them financing, which at the end
16 of the day can end up being some type of predatory
17 financing.

18 But they are much faster to need, and our security
19 partners have real security needs and we are losing our
20 ability to provide our equipment so that it can integrate
21 into the region.

22 Senator Rounds: They would prefer to have our
23 equipment, wouldn't they?

24 General Kurilla: Absolutely. So, when you buy U.S.
25 equipment, you buy -- you get the quality, you get the

1 training, the sustainment, the upgrades, but you are also
2 buying into the bureaucracy, right now.

3 Senator Rounds: They just can't get it because of our
4 bureaucratic processes is delaying the delivery of that
5 product. If it is available, it is still a bureaucratic
6 mess to get it there.

7 General Kurilla: There is some that goes very fast
8 and some that goes very, very slow.

9 Senator Rounds: General Langley.

10 General Langley: Absolutely, Senator. We see that
11 just all along, and I fully concur with Eric about our
12 training and the capacity is more of a quality. But the
13 sense of urgency, especially in West Africa, across the
14 Sahel, across Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and Benin, and Togo,
15 they need equipment. They need weapons now.

16 So even with our significant security cooperation
17 initiatives, that process is not any faster. It is
18 designed to be faster, so they make choices, and they make
19 the wrong choices in siding with -- going with either PRC
20 or Russia for especially lethal aid.

21 Senator Rounds: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Rounds. Senator
23 Warren, please.

24 Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So, the
25 Biden Administration announced last week that it is

1 requesting \$842 billion for the Pentagon budget. It is one
2 of the largest budget requests ever.

3 Despite this already massive number, every year DOD
4 pushes to get even more money by using unfunded priority
5 lists or what I call wish lists that don't go through the
6 other budgeting screens. The services and Combatant
7 Commands ask Congress for billions more in funding for
8 programs from these lists.

9 Other Federal agencies have to balance their must
10 haves and their nice to haves, but DOD doesn't. Instead,
11 it games the system by submitting a second list of items
12 that they want so that their budget can grow even bigger.
13 I know that there are colleagues on both sides of the aisle
14 who are concerned about this and want to see this practice
15 stop.

16 Last year, both your predecessors at AFRICOM and
17 CENTCOM submitted these wish lists. So, what I am asking
18 today is about whether you plan to do the same. General
19 Langley, AFRICOM requested an additional \$353.6 million in
20 unfunded priorities last year.

21 In its submission, AFRICOM argued that if some of
22 these programs weren't funded, it would result in,
23 "unacceptable risk." So, my question is, this year will
24 AFRICOM be putting all of its priority projects, if it is
25 that important, if it is putting us at unacceptable risk,

1 will you put that into your base budget request?

2 General Langley: Senator, and just be transparent, I
3 will be submitting an unfunded priority list and here is
4 why. Because of the emerging threats. When President
5 Biden directed us back in last May to return to our
6 persistent presence in Somalia, and I took command a few
7 months after that.

8 And I asked, being a former programmer, I said, okay,
9 what is the fully burdened cost? I need to communicate to
10 Congress what the fully burdened costs. I need to
11 communicate to the Department first.

12 And I did that. I did that after budget submittal to
13 -- from the services to the Department. So that emerging
14 cost was informed by the risk that we have --

15 Senator Warren: So, you are telling me that this
16 request, the ink is not dry on the budget request from
17 Congress and from the President, and you are already saying
18 that you know that it is not enough.

19 And I want to remind you about emerging threats. DOD
20 already has transfer and reprogramming authorities to deal
21 with emerging threats. You have the ability to come back
22 to Congress if you can justify an emerging threat.

23 We have a panel looking at whether or not there are
24 more changes that are needed. But these unfunded priority
25 lists are just another way to game the system. If it is a

1 priority to cover something like this, then I think you
2 should be covering it.

3 So, are you telling me that the only things that will
4 be on your unfunded priority list are things you couldn't
5 have known about when you submitted your budget?

6 General Langley: Senator I -- even my predecessor
7 also put the other piece of that cost on there on ISR. We
8 never had enough.

9 Senator Warren: I am not hearing a yes or no. Are
10 you telling me that your unfunded budget priority list will
11 have nothing on it except things that you could not have
12 known about when you submitted your budget?

13 General Langley: There is a persistent threat that we
14 have to account for. So, on that, on the list it will
15 include that.

16 Senator Warren: That is what your budget is for,
17 accounting for the persistent threat. Let me ask General
18 Kurilla the same. Last year, CENTCOM submitted a request
19 for \$35 million in its unfunded priority list. Are you
20 planning to submit a wish list again this year?

21 General Kurilla: Senator, I am. But on last year's,
22 I am the one who signed last year. That was for the
23 Massive Ordnance Penetrator for heavy, deeply buried
24 targets. I do not have procurement dollars in my baseline
25 budget, that is why I requested it.

1 Senator Warren: So, what you are really telling me is
2 that this unfunded priority list is just a way to say I
3 need a bigger base budget.

4 General Kurilla: I don't have that color of money,
5 Senator, to ask to request that. But what I what I do as a
6 Commander is I mitigate risk and I go through my priorities
7 and the missions I have, and then when I have any risk left
8 over, by the law, I will submit per the UPL.

9 Senator Warren: You know, look, I appreciate this --
10 you all know I have raised this issue before. If we are
11 going to have a budget, we ought to have a budget. And
12 there is no reason that DOD shouldn't be able to work
13 within the budgeting process like every other part of
14 Government.

15 I am out of time on this, but I am going to be
16 submitting more questions for the record, Mr. Chairman, on
17 what these commands are doing to prevent civilian harm.
18 DOD is on the right path, but I remain concerned about
19 whether or not we are getting accurate and honest
20 reporting. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

21 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Warren. Senator
22 Mullin, please.

23 Senator Mullin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank
24 you both for being here. General Kurilla, I just want to
25 personally tell you how much I appreciate your service.

1 Upon reading more about you, I was even more
2 impressed. Any of us that have been in situations like you
3 were in Mosul. And being able to keep your head in the
4 fight after being shot three times and still be able to
5 direct fire, I commend you for that.

6 That is while it should be common, everyone in front
7 of you or, and behind you knows that is not always common.
8 So, thank you for doing that. I want to talk about
9 Afghanistan a little bit. The American withdrawal from
10 Kabul in 2021, as you know, was a complete disaster. And
11 it brought in systematic failures from the top down across
12 multiple agencies. But it is not enough to just say this
13 was a disaster and move on.

14 Lives were lost and our posture on the world stage has
15 been forever changed. As you reach one year in your
16 current position, can you explain what you have learned in
17 the aftermath of the Afghanistan withdrawal and how we can
18 prevent these types of failures moving forward?

19 General Kurilla: Senator, just for clarity,
20 specifically about the withdrawal or overall?

21 Senator Mullin: The lessons we learned from the
22 withdrawal, and how we can prevent this from happening
23 again, and how this has changed your position.

24 General Kurilla: So, in terms of the actual
25 withdrawal, one of the top lessons we learned is the

1 importance of partners' access, basing, and overflight. We
2 would not have been able to execute the actual execution of
3 the withdrawal without all of our partners that we have in
4 the Middle East --

5 Senator Mullin: I think executing would be a hard
6 word to say.

7 General Kurilla: It would not have been possible, at
8 the scale at which we did it, without our partners who
9 provided the access, basing, and overflight. I think one
10 of the other big lessons learned initially, it was just the
11 mission was given to CENTCOM. It became a five Combatant
12 Command mission, and then also with our partners, bringing
13 them all into that planning session.

14 Senator Mullin: Do you think people should be held
15 accountable from that withdrawal?

16 General Kurilla: I think anybody should be held
17 accountable if there is a failure in something.

18 Senator Mullin: You know, as you know, there was a
19 tit for tat going on between a couple of people during that
20 whole situation. Gerald Mackenzie, General Donoghue. I
21 found myself caught in the middle of that as we were trying
22 to get -- out with the team that I was part of. At the day
23 we did end up getting over 300 Americans out. But it
24 wasn't from the assistance of our Government.

25 In fact, I found that it was easier to work for the

1 Taliban because I knew the price, I was going to have to
2 pay for each one, than it was to get them out dealing with
3 it, unfortunately, us. In fact, Ambassador Pommersheim
4 that was over Tajikistan literally told me, Mr. Mullin, I
5 was told not to assist you or your group in any way.
6 Unfortunately, it cost the life of a three-year-old young
7 girl.

8 And at the same time, I see no one, not a single
9 person held accountable. In fact, General Donahue is now
10 over 18th Airborne. The irony of that is he is looking
11 over Europe now and deterrence in Europe. General
12 Mackenzie retired. No one in the State Department has been
13 held accountable. What does that say to our partners?

14 Our partners that lost lives. I was with His Highness
15 in UAE and he was even upset about it. He said that if
16 America is willing to walk away from the billions of
17 dollars that they spent in Afghanistan, what does that say
18 about our region?

19 And he went on to say that I fight, him, his Royal
20 Highness fought in Afghanistan, his two sons fought in
21 Afghanistan, and every single soldier that they lost, he
22 visited their house personally. And yet we pulled out,
23 loss of lives of -- that didn't have to be lost. Not to
24 mention our 13 soldiers, Marines. And no one, not a single
25 person, has been held accountable. You think that is

1 right?

2 General Kurilla: Well, Senator, if I could. I have
3 great respect. And I have known Frank McKenzie and Chris
4 Donahue --

5 Senator Mullin: I know you do. I am very familiar
6 with the relationship. It doesn't make any differences
7 underneath their command, and no one was held accountable.

8 In fact, the only person that was chastised about it
9 was the one Colonel that came out and chastised the
10 withdrawal mechanism, and how dare him speak out negative
11 about something. I get it. I get the chain of command.

12 I remember he broke protocol. But don't you think
13 someone -- you cannot sit here and tell me that that was
14 successful withdrawal. Don't you think that someone should
15 be held accountable? It was an absolute disaster.

16 General Kurilla: Senator, I served five years in
17 Afghanistan every year from 2009 to '14.

18 Senator Mullin: I know. I am aware of it.

19 General Kurilla: I am vested in there.

20 Senator Mullin: So am I.

21 General Kurilla: The actual thing. I was not part of
22 the --

23 Senator Mullin: I know.

24 General Kurilla: -- force provider. But I would say
25 that the execution --

1 Senator Mullin: You were there before Donahue and you
2 came back. You know it intimately. I am just asking you,
3 once again, shouldn't someone be held accountable. If
4 someone is below your command, and they went through this,
5 and they had an absolute disaster like this, losing
6 Marines. Don't you think someone at that point would be
7 held accountable?

8 General Kurilla: I think it is an absolute travesty
9 that we lost those 13 Marines at Abbey Gate --

10 Senator Mullin: But you don't think anybody should be
11 held accountable?

12 General Kurilla: I don't know if accountability has
13 been assigned to anyone, Senator.

14 Senator Mullin: Well, you know, it hasn't. I mean, I
15 get what you are saying, but you know there hasn't. At
16 some point, we have got to -- our adversaries and our
17 allies are both taking a look at this and we look weak.

18 And I know you are dealing with this and we are
19 dealing with this. And it is time for someone to be held
20 accountable. And what I am looking for is your help and
21 your assistance in moving forward. We got to right this
22 wrong. With that, I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Mullin. This issue
24 of accountability is a serious one, but it would take in a
25 20-year history of the struggle in Afghanistan. And based

1 on the operation, NEO was one of the most difficult
2 operations, General Kurilla. Evacuating over 120,000
3 people was something I think was remarkable. Would you
4 concur?

5 General Kurilla: I absolutely agree. Again, I think
6 the execution of bringing the people out was done very
7 effectively in terms of the numbers. We would not have
8 been able to do the numbers.

9 Chairman Reed: Thank you. Senator Kelly, please.

10 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General
11 Langley, good to see you again. Thank you for being here.

12 As you know, I recently returned from a bipartisan
13 CODEL to Africa, where I had the opportunity to travel
14 across the continent to Niger, Zambia, South Africa,
15 Morocco, Botswana, Cote d'Ivoire, and had conversations
16 with a lot of experts, senior leaders on a wide variety of
17 topics that we care about, including food security,
18 conservation efforts, critical minerals and defense.

19 And while we, the United States, is doing a lot of
20 great work across the continent, I worry that it is not
21 well known that we are providing this. At the same time,
22 it is clear that China and Russia have a lot of influence
23 in Africa. This concerns me a lot. And I know it does
24 concern you, too.

25 I mean, Africa has strategic importance to us for a

1 number of reasons, including that many critical minerals
2 that our defense industry requires are mined in Africa.
3 And this is something that China knows and they have begun
4 to exploit.

5 You know, last year, Senator Cotton and I introduced
6 the Reshore Act to reduce our reliance on China for these
7 critical minerals. But the important work on securing U.S.
8 supply chains need to continue.

9 So, General Langley, what are you seeing in Africa
10 with respect to China's mining activities and their
11 infrastructure development?

12 General Langley: First of all, Senator, thanks for
13 that question. And thank you for going on the CODEL, as I
14 saw in Munich when you were on your way down there. That
15 that really matters. That shows -- those are assurance
16 actions of our nation's leadership going on to the
17 continent, and I thank you for that.

18 And it pressurizes and it makes -- causes hesitation in
19 countries that are thinking about picking the PRC or even
20 Russia as their partner of choice, because those are
21 assurance actions that matter and resonate.

22 Yes, I agree, we are not telling our story well enough.
23 And that is why, you know, when the CODEL came through,
24 right after I took command on their way to the continent,
25 they asked what was being done on the continent. Show us

1 -- we know what the PRC is doing, their investments.

2 Show us what we do. And that is why I provided a blue
3 map just to show our investments. So, all that falls into
4 collectively across our whole of Government approach as I
5 engage across the interagency and also State Department,
6 USAID, how we can be able to coalesce this into actions
7 that resonate.

8 Senator Kelly: General, can you talk a little bit
9 about what China is doing and how it is impacting countries
10 that we have had relationships with. You know, I don't
11 want to, you know, lead you into, but I am really
12 interested in the negative impact that China's mining and
13 infrastructure activities have had on the continent.

14 General Langley: Yes, Senator. So, yes, I also
15 provided to the foreign actor reliance on the African metal
16 stores, and that is a very compelling story.

17 So, for economic reasons and also how they go about
18 striking deals with some of the countries on some of our
19 critical assets for not only for our rare earth minerals
20 that feed into our clean energy, but also into the military
21 side, as well as our high technical type of our arsenal and
22 equipment.

23 China is trying to harvest that. So, it is their
24 engagement with countries laid out on the slide, the last
25 slide we have, on the critical reliance on foreign

1 minerals. This is our new economy. This is going to be a
2 big demand as we start to modernize our forces and China
3 realizes that.

4 So those are actions they are trying to take on the
5 illustrated countries that we have highlighted on here.
6 So, yes, it is a strategic consequence that we need to be
7 able to face and in turn to these countries to ensure that
8 they have a partner of choice.

9 Senator Kelly: General, how do we do a better job
10 telling our story? Because you got China in there making
11 bad deals, building bad infrastructure. This isn't good
12 for, you know, the African nations. You know, at the same
13 time, the Russians have Wagner in there supporting, you
14 know, essentially, you know, terrorism. What can we do to
15 better tell our story on the African continent?

16 General Langley: Senator, illuminate and amplify. I
17 saw a good story this morning in the press about the
18 Kenyans have gone to the street tired of some of the stuff
19 that the PRC is doing for them, how they are taking
20 advantage of their economy and taking advantage of their
21 environment.

22 News stories like that resonate. They change ideas.
23 I guarantee you the rest -- if it happened in Kenya, is
24 happening all across the continent of Africa, and people
25 read these stories and it resonates. People are taking

1 action.

2 Senator Kelly: Thank you, General. And Mr. Chairman,
3 I will have a couple of questions for the record. Thank
4 you.

5 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Kelly. Senator
6 Scott, please.

7 Senator Scott: Thank you, Chairman. The -- first, I
8 agree with Senator Mullin that we need to have some way to,
9 you know, hold people accountable for what happened in
10 Afghanistan.

11 So, I have had a bill that would have a bipartisan
12 committee that would investigate exactly what happened
13 there. I want to thank the military for what they did, but
14 the decisions that were made don't seem to make much sense.

15 What does the American public not know about China
16 that if they knew would change -- because I assume you
17 spend a lot of your time thinking about what China is doing
18 all over the world.

19 So, what does the American public need to know about
20 China that they don't know right now that maybe would
21 impact, would have a positive impact on impacting their
22 ability to spend the resources to impact Africa anywhere in
23 the world? For both of you.

24 General Kurilla: Senator, so I would go to what one
25 of the chiefs of defense told me. He says, you have no

1 idea how much they have closed the gap on you and your
2 technology. And this is someone who is buying Chinese
3 equipment.

4 I also think that the American public don't have an
5 understanding of how much they have penetrated into the
6 Middle East in terms of their diplomatic, informational,
7 military, and their economic instruments of national power.

8 Senator Scott: General Langley.

9 General Langley: Senator, I agree with my good friend
10 Eric here. China, we have enjoyed for a number of years a
11 decisive overmatch. But that gap is closing because of
12 China's advancements or stealing our technology, you name
13 it. How they are -- the procedures they are executing to
14 close that gap.

15 That is what has me concerned. And even in the
16 economic realm, as they are trying to harvest a lot of the
17 critical minerals on the continent of Africa, all that
18 falls into them being able to, from an economic standpoint,
19 to actually try to close the gap on that decisive overmatch
20 as well.

21 And then also changing the international order and
22 international system as they try to get some of the African
23 countries to vote or abstain, something that is not along
24 social norms or the right thing to do in voting, especially
25 with mining or other things that -- or humanity, or human

1 rights, because they commit some of those atrocities back
2 in China or some activities they do in Hong Kong.

3 So just changing the economic system. So, in those
4 three areas is where it is most pressing of the list of the
5 activities of the PRC.

6 Senator Scott: So, if elected leaders spend more time
7 explaining exactly what China was doing with the end result
8 that every American would call out China for their human
9 rights violations or stop buying their products or not
10 putting their devices on our phones.

11 Would that, you think that would impact their ability
12 to do the bad -- you know, to spend their money on the
13 resources to counteract our military, not be able to go
14 into places around the world and lend money at unreasonable
15 terms?

16 General Kurilla: Senator, I think education is very
17 important that people understand what China is doing.

18 General Kurilla: Senator, I think it will impose
19 costs on them as well that they will have to reckon with.

20 Senator Scott: Yes. General Kurilla, what is the
21 optimal cooperation you envision among U.S., Israel, and
22 the Arabian, or Abraham Accords members? Is it air
23 defense? What would you hope out of that?

24 General Kurilla: So, I think there are several areas,
25 Senator, that we can do. So, the Abraham Accords are also

1 economic, and I think that is going to -- the economic
2 benefit you get in terms of job creation also is a --
3 reduces instability and some of the Abraham Accords
4 countries. We do have, we talked about Middle East air
5 defense. We talked about maritime security and cyber
6 defense as well.

7 Senator Scott: General Langley, you talked about what
8 is happening in Kenya. On top of the public being up in
9 arms about what is going -- what China is doing, are the
10 governments pushing back at all in Africa?

11 General Langley: Senator, that is part of the
12 problem, because what they invest in, and when they strike
13 these deals, they are striking the deals for mostly
14 autocratic or authoritarian type of governance. Those of
15 democracies have a voice because they know that the people
16 are watching. So, I think it really matters what
17 particular country that they are pressurizing.

18 Senator Scott: General Kurilla, do you have the
19 resources and personnel that you need to conduct your
20 counterterrorism mission that is laid out in the National
21 Defense Strategy?

22 General Langley: So, Senator, we are currently
23 balancing the missions that we have with the resources we
24 get. And I am adjusting risk every day dynamically with
25 the resources that I have. I am requesting the additional

1 resources I would need to be able to accomplish all of my
2 tasks.

3 Senator Scott: And what you requested is adequate?

4 General Langley: The -- what I have requested is
5 adequate, and then it is up to the allocation of those
6 resources in accordance with the national defense
7 priorities.

8 Senator Scott: Thank you. Thank you, Chairman.

9 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Scott.
10 Senate Rosen, please.

11 Senator Rosen: Thank you, Chairman Reed. Appreciate
12 it. Appreciate you holding this hearing. And I would
13 really like to thank Generals Kurilla and Langley for your
14 service and for being here today. And I am just going to
15 kind of get right into it about Iranian aggression, of
16 course, top of everyone's mind.

17 So, General Kurilla, the Pentagon estimates that
18 hundreds of American troops have been killed by Iranian
19 backed militias in Iraq and Afghanistan, yet Iran's regime
20 has never been held accountable for orchestrating attacks
21 against Americans. The men and women who gave their lives
22 are taken by these state forces. There are thousands of
23 families there without their loved ones as a result.

24 And so today, Iranian aligned militias, they are
25 increasingly targeting U.S. installations, service members

1 in Iraq and Syria via rocket and drone attacks. On a
2 regular basis, we know Iran, the world's leading state
3 sponsor of terrorism, is threatening the U.S. and our
4 allied interests in the Middle East and around the world
5 again via both direct attacks and also through their
6 support for Hezbollah and the Islamic Republic's other
7 terrorist proxies.

8 So, could you discuss in this setting some specific
9 threats the Iranian aligned militia groups pose to the U.S.
10 and our coalition forces? And what can we do to
11 proactively not just defend against them, what can we do to
12 proactively maybe push them back?

13 General Kurilla: Thanks, Senator, for the question.
14 So, again, Iran is the number one malign actor in the
15 Middle East. The latest attack we just had was less than
16 60 hours ago on one of our bases in Syria that we know that
17 was Iranian aligned militia groups that conducted this
18 attack.

19 We do see the threat that we face from them are from
20 rockets, from unmanned systems that are increasingly longer
21 range and more accurate. Just in January, we had three
22 UAVs attack our base in on Al-Tanf garrison in Syria.

23 That was Iranian drones that did that. So, we do see
24 that across the region, and also against our allies and
25 partners, whether that was from the Houthis coming out of

1 Yemen against Saudi Arabia and the UAE, or from Lebanese
2 Hezbollah against Israel, or from elements coming out of
3 Iraq and Syria against Iranian aligned militia groups.

4 What we can do is it is going to take a whole of
5 Government approach to be able to go after this problem
6 set. It is not just a military solution.

7 Senator Rosen: So, we can work with you on the
8 resources we need to take care of that. Because I want to
9 get to something we talked about a little bit earlier, Task
10 Force 59 and some other interesting things we are doing,
11 but really, Israel's transfer to CENTCOM. It is now within
12 your area of responsibility.

13 And it is my sincere hope that this realignment is
14 going to potentiate even greater military cooperation
15 between the U.S. and our shared goals, as well as greater
16 cooperation between our Arab and Israeli partners, as we
17 see with things like the Abraham Accords coming forward.

18 So, I know that I am pleased to see the increasing
19 pace of joint exercises between the U.S., Israel, Arab
20 partners. And so can you tell us a little bit about the
21 progress you have made in advancing the integration of
22 Israel into your multilateral maritime partnerships, like
23 the very exciting task force, the development they are
24 doing.

25 I was able to learn about them when I recently visited

1 NAVCENT in Bahrain.

2 General Kurilla: So, thank you, Senator. We think it
3 is going very well with the integration of Israel into the
4 CENTCOM AOR, including our exercises and our training as
5 well. We did have a bilateral exercise called Juniper Oak
6 that we just did in January, which was the largest exercise
7 with 142 aircraft that we participated with them in
8 January.

9 When you talk about Task Force 59, that is our
10 Maritime Security Innovation Task Force. Is an unmanned
11 and undersea unmanned vessel task force, where we basically
12 are enhancing the manned platforms that we have.

13 So, one police car -- one destroyer in the Red Sea is
14 the equivalent of one police car patrolling the state of
15 California. When we take a bunch of unmanned platforms
16 like sail drones and other unmanned surface vessels and
17 undersea vessels, they act as a series of indications and
18 warnings with sensors out there in a mesh network.

19 They can feed it back into a structured database that
20 then we run algorithms against to help us make decisions.
21 Is that normal behavior, abnormal behavior, to then use our
22 manned platforms better to be able to get after the problem
23 set.

24 Senator Rosen: I am going to -- hopefully you will
25 come and show us all a briefing on what you are doing

1 there. It is pretty exciting. But in the few seconds I
2 have left, we are talking about the region integrated air
3 missile defense, naval maritime partnerships.

4 How is CENTCOM reassuring our regional partners that
5 the U.S. is really committed to regional stability and
6 security? When we were there leading the Abraham Accords
7 caucus delegation when I was there, this was the number one
8 thing people wanted to know. Are we committed to the
9 region? How are you showing them that?

10 General Kurilla: I spend 50 percent of my time in the
11 region. We have a series of exercises and training events.
12 So last 41 training and exercises that we do multilateral
13 and bilateral, and that is the way we are trying to build
14 up our partner capacity with them by integrating them into
15 the systems that we have as well.

16 Senator Rosen: Thank you. I see my time is up, Mr.
17 Chairman.

18 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Rosen.
19 Senator Budd, please. Oh, excuse me, Senator Tuberville
20 has arrived. Senator Tuberville.

21 Senator Tuberville: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
22 Generals, thanks for being here, and thanks for your
23 service. You have got your hands full. General Kurilla,
24 in your organization, Task Force 59, has had some great
25 success building unmanned systems. I am familiar with one

1 of their platforms, Saildrone.

2 It seems like these systems have a lot of potential
3 for both CENTCOM and the Navy, and it is encouraging to see
4 your command taking advantage of cutting-edge technology
5 commercial sector. What do you think has contributed to
6 the success of Task Force 59 work with systems like
7 Saildrone?

8 General Kurilla: I think what is successful is the
9 people. It is the people that we hire that are innovative
10 and creative and critical thinkers. And when we push these
11 systems into their hand, they are using them in ways that
12 we never thought possible. A lot the systems in the
13 unmanned and the undersea that we use, they are used for
14 commercial fishing.

15 When fishermen go out, they are not going out to find
16 fish, they are going out to catch fish. And so, we use a
17 lot of these systems with their integrated sensors.

18 I think Saildrone initially was an environment -- was
19 used for maritime oceanographic capabilities, and we have
20 turned that into something they can act as indications and
21 warnings with the sensors that are on it.

22 Senator Tuberville: Yes, we almost lost a couple a
23 couple of Saildrones. I think Iran tried to load a couple
24 on one of their ships. Was that during your --

25 General Kurilla: It was.

1 Senator Tuberville: Yes. How did that go out?

2 General Kurilla: We got him back.

3 Senator Tuberville: You got them back? Good. Well,
4 that is good to know. At one time, we had 60 balloons over
5 Kabul, Afghanistan. Our ISR is very limited. How
6 confident are you in the intelligence you have to see new
7 threats rising from the Taliban?

8 General Kurilla: So currently our intelligence has
9 degraded since we are no longer in Afghanistan. I believe
10 we can see the broad contours of an attack. Sometimes we
11 lack the granularity to see the full picture. And we are
12 working to close that gap with our alternative airborne ISR
13 and some of our other intelligence that we are working to
14 penetrate into those networks.

15 Senator Tuberville: It seemed like for some reason
16 this Administration is going to accept Iran developing a
17 nuclear weapon. If Iran does develop a nuclear weapon of
18 mass destruction, which the United States spent trillions
19 trying to keep out of the hands of dictators in the Middle
20 East, how will that scramble your AOR?

21 General Kurilla: It would change it overnight and
22 forever.

23 Senator Tuberville: General Langley, I am aware of
24 several vacancies in key diplomatic posts. I was in South
25 Africa recently. China is there daily, trying to move in.

1 Is that important to you, the diplomatic post being filled?

2 General Langley: Senator, absolutely it is. It
3 builds capacity. As I talk about the 3-D construct, having
4 full-fledged bolstered capacity at our diplomatic posts is
5 essential and it makes a difference of us being able to
6 maintain our partnership and capacity. Moreover, ensuring
7 our strategic access.

8 Senator Tuberville: Could you talk a little bit about
9 South Africa and what you have done since you have been
10 there, your relationship that you have made and what you
11 see coming from China, and maybe even Russia?

12 General Langley: Senator, I haven't been to South
13 Africa yet. I will be going there in the coming months.
14 But right now, what I am really concerned about is Mosei
15 II, that exercise, that naval exercise. That was just a
16 messaging campaign by the Russian Federation and also by
17 the PRC. So, I have been having discussions with
18 Ambassador Brigety down there and saying, what is South
19 Africa's story?

20 South Africa, they are -- they have been a good
21 partner. We are building that relationship, but they don't
22 want to be pressurized in who they choose. So, I have to
23 use assurance actions to compel them that we are the
24 partner of choice.

25 Senator Tuberville: Don't you think it is vital that

1 we keep China from overtaking that port there in South
2 Africa?

3 General Langley: Absolutely, sir, because as we look
4 at the Cape of Good Hope and look at how much transit that
5 our commerce goes across, and as also -- it can also be a
6 power projection point as well. So, we can't ill afford,
7 from a geostrategic opposition, allow either the PRC or
8 even Russia to use that as a platform.

9 Senator Tuberville: Yes, I know it is not your
10 purview, but they are trying to do the same thing in
11 Argentina, you know, which is the point of South America.
12 And we definitely don't need to lose those two points --
13 contacts in terms of navigation. Thank you. Thank you
14 very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Tuberville.
16 Senator Peters, please.

17 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General
18 Kurilla, welcome. Good to have you here. I, along with my
19 colleagues on the committee, have worked to strengthen our
20 partnership with Israel.

21 In particular the collaboration and synergies between
22 our two countries in the innovation space, I believe
23 probably has never been greater, and it certainly is an
24 area that I believe the United States must do more to take
25 advantage of our friendship with like-minded, I guess you

1 could call them techno democracies that are highly
2 sophisticated in that area.

3 I was proud to sponsor legislation creating a U.S.,
4 Israel Operations Technology Working Group to help further
5 the DOD efforts in that area. And my question for you is,
6 if you could please speak to the strategic advantage that
7 our relationship with Israel offers in a global environment
8 where rapid innovation and the fielding of emerging
9 technologies rapidly is absolutely key to our national
10 security.

11 General Kurilla: Thank you, Senator. Israel is one
12 of the world leaders in technology in terms of the
13 innovation and how to take that to the areas of national
14 security. I have been over there several times. I have
15 seen how they are implementing that. I do find that the
16 relationship that we have with them is already bearing
17 fruits in terms of that.

18 I look at that in the counter U.S. field where I have
19 been all the way down from Iron Dome, all the way up to the
20 exoatmospheric Arrow 3. And it is the ability to
21 understand their technology and be able to proliferate that
22 as well.

23 Senator Peters: Right. General, at the end of this
24 month, we will mark the eighth year of the war in Yemen.
25 This conflict has been a humanitarian catastrophe for

1 hundreds of thousands of deaths, millions displaced, and
2 tens of millions Yemenis suffering from both famine and
3 disease.

4 The war has been exacerbated by the role of a proxy
5 conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran and has been the
6 people of Yemen who unfortunately have been the victims and
7 have suffered as a result of this geopolitical
8 strategizing. Congress has been active in ensuring that
9 U.S. support is not the cause for any innocent suffering in
10 Yemen.

11 A June 2022 GAO report regarding civilian impacts of
12 U.S. military support for the Saudi coalition provided
13 recommendations to the DOD on measures to help mitigate
14 civilian harm from our support.

15 So, my question for you, sir, is has the Department
16 developed and implemented guidance for reporting any
17 indications that U.S. made defense articles were used in
18 Yemen by Saudi Arabia or the UAE against anything other
19 than legitimate military targets?

20 General Kurilla: Senator, I am aware of that GAO
21 report. I have read it. I have seen it. And my
22 understanding right now is the Department is working
23 through any implementation instructions from it.

24 Senator Peters: Very good. General Langley, drug
25 trafficking and the cartels profiting from that trade are

1 without question a global threat. AFRICOM is certainly not
2 immune to these issues with West Africa in particular now
3 serving as a popular vector for cartels to move products
4 from Latin America to Europe.

5 The drug trade destabilizes lawful governments,
6 undermines public safety, and provides critical funding and
7 resources for other transnational criminal organizations.
8 So, my question for you, General, is what efforts is
9 AFRICOM making to strengthen the ability of local
10 governments to conduct counter-narcotics operations and to
11 attack this insidious trade?

12 General Langley: Senator, thanks for asking that
13 question, because that is of particular concern with our
14 partners. The Gulf of Guinea is like the wild, wild West
15 of illicit activity, especially the drug trade.

16 Two exercises that just happened in the past month.
17 Obangame Express, Obangame Express is where we -- it had a
18 number of countries that come together to focus on illicit
19 activity across the Gulf. And the drug trade is one of it.
20 Smuggling is another. And transiting citizens as well
21 across that region.

22 But it is inextricably linked to South America as
23 well. So, I work with General Richardson on that, and I
24 thank this Congress for legislation that gave us \$200
25 million to address this issue. But building partnership

1 and capacity with African nations, especially in the Gulf
2 of Guinea, addresses that issue as they build their
3 maritime capacity. But that is also an opportunity for
4 another ask.

5 Hershel Woody Williams and even the Coast Guard when
6 they bring a cutter in, it makes a difference. This is
7 naval diplomacy at its best. If we can get assignment to
8 another ship, I wish I had another Hershey Woody Williams
9 to cover the other side of Africa continent. But just
10 naval activity and bolstering our partners' ability for
11 their maritime expertise. To build upon that building
12 capability is essential going forward. Thank you.

13 Senator Peters: Thank you, General. Thank you, Mr.
14 Chairman.

15 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Peters. And now,
16 Senator Budd.

17 Senator Budd: Thank you, Chairman. Good morning,
18 gentlemen. I want to thank you both for your leadership
19 and your service, particularly your commands of units in
20 North Carolina at Fort Bragg and Camp Lejeune. So, I
21 recently returned from both of your overseas areas of
22 responsibility.

23 A common complaint from our allies and our partners is
24 that the foreign military sales process is overly
25 complicated and slow. It is just downright bureaucratic.

1 So, in that vein, I have a series of questions.

2 And if you would, just if you would give me a simple
3 yes or no to the answer, and then at the end hopefully we
4 will have a little more time and I will give you some time
5 to elaborate. So General Kurilla, is the current FMS
6 process fast and flexible enough to meet our foreign
7 partners' security needs in your respective AORs?

8 General Kurilla: In CENTCOM, no.

9 Senator Budd: General Langley.

10 General Langley: AFRICOM, no.

11 Senator Budd: Does the transfer of U.S. defense
12 products build our partners' capacity to provide for their
13 own defense and respond to threats? General.

14 General Kurilla: Yes, Senator.

15 General Langley: Yes, Senator.

16 Senator Budd: Given the success of Western arms
17 against Russian equipment in Ukraine, is there an increased
18 interest in U.S. defense products in your AOR?

19 General Kurilla: There is a very strong interest in
20 U.S. products.

21 General Langley: Very strong in Africa as well,
22 Senator.

23 Senator Budd: Thank you. Thank you. Is China
24 increasing arms exports to any countries in your AOR?
25 General Kurilla.

1 General Kurilla: Yes, Senator.

2 Senator Budd: General Langley.

3 General Langley: Senator, it is kind of flatline
4 right now.

5 Senator Budd: But they have been before.

6 General Langley: They have been before in the past.

7 Senator Budd: Thanks. Is the United States still the
8 security partner of choice in your AORs?

9 General Kurilla: It is, Senator.

10 General Langley: Absolutely, Senator. It is in
11 Africa.

12 Senator Budd: Is the United States at risk of losing
13 that security partner of choice status to either China or
14 Russia?

15 General Kurilla: China is making inroads. I do not
16 assess Russia is.

17 General Langley: It is a risk, Senator.

18 Senator Budd: So, if you -- elaborate that, if you
19 could each explain how FMS challenges are impacting
20 strategic competition with China and Russia in your AORs.
21 If you would elaborate on that, please.

22 General Kurilla: Sure, Senator. So, in the in the
23 CENTCOM AOR, with the number of attacks that we see in
24 there, our partners have real security needs, and so they
25 want to have the equipment they need fast.

1 What China is able to do is come in very quickly, open
2 up their catalog, let them pick from anything in it, very
3 quickly to deliver it. There is no end user agreement.
4 But what they don't do is they don't follow up with it and
5 they don't have the training, the expertise, the
6 sustainment, the upgrades.

7 And what we do find with our partners is when they buy
8 Chinese equipment, a vast majority of it becomes non-
9 mission capable. A year or so after they have that
10 equipment and we do see a complaint from that. They want
11 to buy U.S. equipment, but sometimes it is the timeline to
12 get it that is a hindrance.

13 Senator Budd: And the process --

14 General Kurilla: The process is what takes the time
15 to do it. And there are I know that the Department of
16 Defense has a Tiger team to look specifically at what the
17 Department of Defense can do to increase it. So, there is
18 four levers, Department of Defense, State, Congress, and
19 industry. And I know the Department of Defense is looking
20 at their lever.

21 Senator Budd: Thank you. General Langley.

22 General Langley: Senator, I have characterized in my
23 assessment since taking command that West Africa is at a
24 tipping point. And what I mean is how these extremist
25 groups, whether we are talking about ISIS, West Africa, or

1 even JNIM or Boko Haram, they are all at the door,
2 especially at the Gulf of Guinea states.

3 As I have done my travels, and I was in Ghana, they
4 said, we don't want your boots on the ground, but we would
5 like your equipment. All we need, in Ghana all we need to
6 affect quad initiative, which is a coalition of willing of
7 states of Togo, Benin, and Cote d'Ivoire, but they want
8 equipment.

9 Before they go across the line of departure, they need
10 equipment. They want U.S. equipment but they know how long
11 it takes. So, there they are considering because these
12 affiliates are at their back door, they need something now.

13 They want to come with us, Senator, but the process is
14 too slow, and they need to be able to affect a viable
15 offense to help Cote d'Ivoire -- excuse me, to affect
16 Burkina Faso save their own country.

17 So, we are showing a good -- what we would like to
18 see, partner led, U.S. enabled. But we need to step up the
19 U.S. enabled at this point.

20 Senator Budd: You know, that matches conversations
21 with our allies recently. Can you please discuss how your
22 requirements for Special Operations Forces has grown, and
23 what cuts to SOF in strength would have on your operations?

24 General Kurilla: Senator, I rely very heavily on our
25 Special Operations Forces in the CENTCOM AOR. They are

1 doing tremendous work. And any cuts to in the CENTCOM
2 region would affect me significantly.

3 General Langley: It would take the heart out of our
4 efforts, both in the East and the West with our Special
5 Operations Forces of AFRICOM.

6 Senator Budd: Thank you both. Chairman, I yield
7 back.

8 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Budd.
9 Senator King, please.

10 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General
11 Langley, we have been having a lot of discussion today
12 about China's activities in Africa. Is there any buyer's
13 remorse? China has sort of scaled back on Belt and Road to
14 some extent, and some of the debt issues are now coming to
15 the fore. Are there countries in Africa starting to
16 rethink some of those commitments? Buyer's remorse is
17 probably the best term.

18 General Langley: Senator, great question. And in I
19 traverse for that, for any indicators of that, and I low
20 and behold I saw a story this morning out of Kenya. They
21 have taken to the streets of how China has been taking
22 advantage of them in the deals that they strike. Now,
23 there are other indicators across the continent, other
24 stories of debt trap diplomacy that --

25 Senator King: They call it debt colonialism.

1 General Langley: Oh, yes, absolutely, Senator.

2 Senator King: So, let me follow up if that is the
3 case, and it appears that it is, does this create an
4 opening for us to be more active in infrastructure
5 projects, support for development in these countries, that
6 we can come in and show that it can be done in a much more
7 efficient and skilled way.

8 General Langley: Absolutely, Senator. That we do
9 have -- that we see that as an opportunity. As we call it,
10 a consolidated strategic opportunity, and we need to match
11 it up with key strategic activities.

12 And whereas we can use a whole of Government approach,
13 we can use Prosper Africa, Digital Africa, and get these
14 programs off the ground and going. I know that I have met
15 with, you know, Assistant Secretary Molly Phee last week
16 and also, I was over at USAID, and they we have a plan of
17 action collectively, whole of Government to be able to put
18 it in motion.

19 Senator King: You use the term whole of Government,
20 and I think the private sector also has to be included in
21 this in terms of development of resources. You used a
22 phrase earlier that I noted about the Chinese efforts to
23 monopolize and get a hold of these rare earths and
24 minerals. Forward thinking by the PRC.

25 We haven't been doing that forward thinking. We have

1 allowed them to take control of, for example, lithium, an
2 essential element for EV batteries. 87 percent of the
3 process to lithium that goes into EV batteries in this
4 country comes from China. And we haven't been doing that
5 forward thinking.

6 I am suggesting that that is something we should start
7 to think about and it should be a combination of Government
8 action, but also the private sector. We don't do
9 everything by the Government here.

10 General Langley: Senator, that is correct. We don't
11 tell the good news story enough, and that is why I provided
12 -- well, this, the blue chart here. But on legislation
13 passed affect us such as Prosper Africa is also a message
14 to our private industry to invest in Africa. That is what
15 I talk about when I talk to the country teams as they are
16 heavily recruiting back in the U.S. for investment in the
17 African nations and states.

18 Senator King: Thank you. General Kurilla, King
19 Abdullah was here about a month ago and he said the this
20 was the most dangerous moment in Israeli-Palestinian
21 relations that he would seen in decades. Give me your
22 analysis of the status of that. It seems like it is a very
23 heightened sense of danger in terms of open conflict.

24 General Kurilla: Senator, I agree with the statement
25 of King Abdullah on that, and we watch this very closely.

1 We think the conditions are there, the tinder and the
2 kindling is there, and we don't know what it could take for
3 what spark to be able to start a larger conflict in the
4 West Bank.

5 Senator King: Let me just ask a sort of parenthetical
6 question. Often, we get the question about Iran's nuclear
7 capacity. In your -- do you have a military analysis of
8 what a strike, an air strike, a significant substantial
9 airstrike on Iran's nuclear capacity would actually -- what
10 would be the impact of that on their ability to move toward
11 a nuclear weapon?

12 General Kurilla: I do, Senator, but I best believe
13 that would be in a classified setting.

14 Senator King: Okay. Thank you. One other question
15 in your AOR about stability, and that is Pakistan, a
16 nuclear armed country. They have had a lot of political
17 issues lately. An assessment of the stability and long-
18 term prospects for stability in Pakistan.

19 General Kurilla: So, they have a, you know, idea what
20 the military relationship there. I have a great
21 relationship with the Chief of the Army Staff, General
22 Munir. I think the concerns right now in Pakistan are
23 their budget, their financial situation, the current
24 political situation, and the counterterrorism situation as
25 they see the three key Taliban, Pakistani, the TTP, the

1 attacks are significantly increasing with the end of a
2 cease fire there.

3 Senator King: Are you confident of their nuclear
4 security procedures?

5 General Kurilla: I am confident of their nuclear
6 security procedures.

7 Senator King: Thank you. That may be the first good
8 news we have heard today. Thank you, General. Thank you,
9 gentlemen.

10 Chairman Reed: I thank you, Senator King. Senator
11 Schmitt, please.

12 Senator Schmitt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you
13 all for being here. Appreciate it. I want to follow up a
14 little bit on the question that Senator Scott asked. I
15 think part of our challenge right now is, you know, as the
16 newest or one of the newest members of this committee, it
17 has become very clear to me that China is an immediate
18 threat, long term threat, intermediate threat.

19 How are you going to characterize it, China is --
20 should be a very important focus of ours. And so, one of
21 their tools, obviously, that they deploy around the globe
22 is the debt trap. And I would like for both of you if you
23 could help us communicate back home to the folks who are
24 wondering what are the most pressing needs of the country,
25 what is the most concerning thing from a national security

1 perspective, how that affects what you guys do, and what
2 are some of the most egregious examples that you have seen
3 in your roles.

4 General Kurilla: So, Senator, thank you. What I see
5 again is the penetration economically where they go in and
6 they provide infrastructure with the financing that goes
7 with it, and I can use an example in one country where they
8 went in, they provided infrastructure, and it was almost
9 like a balloon mortgage payment.

10 In the peak of the COVID crisis overseas, at the worst
11 point of their economy in this one country, they came and
12 they demanded their payment and it absolutely crushed that
13 country to do that. And it caused them to see the way that
14 China does in terms of their debt trap.

15 And there are several other examples also in the
16 Central Asian states as well. It is important to
17 understand, though, what China is doing. They are doing it
18 for their own benefit, not for the other's benefits.

19 General Langley: Senator, the same thing has taken
20 place on the continent of Africa as well. Whether in the
21 vein of death trap diplomacy -- here is the difference that
22 makes us a partner of choice. We go off aid first,
23 financing last.

24 China does financing first. And that financing is --
25 puts at a disadvantage of those that are asking for the

1 funds. Very few times will they actually do any type of
2 aid. So that is the assurance action that it causes our
3 partner countries on the African continent to side with us.

4 There is a number of initial deals struck in a
5 memorandum of agreement in the Belt and Road Initiative
6 across 40 countries across the continent of Africa. That
7 is very compelling. It hasn't matured yet to actually show
8 the negative effects. But in aggregate, we do communicate
9 cautionary tales from signing such agreements.

10 Senator Schmitt: 18 months ago, Israel was integrated
11 into CENTCOM, and I just wanted to find out how that has
12 gone. What your -- is there, you know, fully integrated
13 into that theater. How you view that?

14 General Kurilla: It is going exceptionally well and
15 we view it as a net positive, Senator.

16 Senator Schmitt: Okay, that is great. I guess
17 finally, because I have got about a minute and a half here,
18 we talked about the debt trap, but I think that, you know,
19 the building of the islands in the South China Sea being
20 fully weaponized with the spy balloon that traversed over
21 the, you know, Alaska and the Continental United States, it
22 has certainly raised awareness, I think, at a point now
23 that we have not seen before.

24 I think and these are terrible things that have
25 happened. But I think the American people now recognize

1 the threat that China poses to the United States. And not
2 just I think, you know, obviously economically, some of the
3 theft from an intellectual property perspective has been
4 well documented for a while.

5 But clearly, as they try to project that strength into
6 the Indo-Pacific and the South China Sea, and those islands
7 are fully weaponized. Beyond the debt trap that you, you
8 know, illuminated, what are a couple of other examples that
9 you see that maybe most people don't know about, that
10 certainly raises a lot of concerns and the alarm bells are
11 going off about how serious China is about global
12 domination.

13 General Langley: Senator, I will focus just on them
14 trying to change the international order, trying to change
15 the international system. That is very compelling, and how
16 they engage with African nations on the continent, and how
17 they vote in the UN General Assembly. That is an
18 indication that they cannot gain a strategic advantage
19 unless it is along their norms, what they consider their
20 norms.

21 Then the economic piece is very compelling of how they
22 are trying to corner the market on what we call some of the
23 rare earth minerals or even resources that are on the
24 continent of Africa, and how they are trying to strike bad
25 deals with these countries, extracting these resources

1 without the benefit of the African nations. That is a
2 cautionary tale that needs to be told.

3 General Kurilla: Senator, we see 19 of 21 countries
4 in the CENTCOM AOR have signed Belt and Road Initiative
5 agreements with China. That is for China's benefit. We
6 have also seen 20 of 21 countries have Huawei contracts in
7 them. They are building smart cities and a lot of this is
8 for Chinese advantage.

9 Senator Schmitt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Schmitt. Senator
11 Blumenthal, please.

12 Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thank you
13 both for your extraordinary service to our nation. I want
14 to focus on the Wagner Group, which I think is kind of the
15 elephant in both of your rooms, so to speak.

16 I am a strong supporter of designating the Wagner
17 Group as a foreign terrorist organization, which will have
18 a constructive impact, I would think, in both of your
19 commands. General Langley, if I remember correctly in your
20 testimony, you talk about the price of the Wagner Group in
21 Africa as being, "the failure of government institutions,
22 the withdrawal of stalwart security allies, the extraction
23 of mineral wealth, and long-term resource concessions and
24 debt that chip away at Africans' future."

25 In Ukraine, as we well know, the Wagner Group poses a

1 very severe and immediate threat, not only in Bakhmut but
2 throughout the country. It is probably one of Putin's most
3 effective fighting forces right now, a mercenary, murderous
4 organization.

5 The argument that I have heard against it is that
6 designating Wagner as a foreign terrorist organization
7 complicates our interests in Africa because governments
8 doing business with the Wagner group could suffer sanctions
9 as a result of that business.

10 I think that is totally a bogus argument. I see no
11 valid reason not to designate Wagner as foreign terrorist
12 organization. Please give me your views. General Langley,
13 and then General Kurilla.

14 General Langley: Thank you, Senator, for asking that
15 question because I do need to message some of the
16 atrocities going on with the Wagner Group, not only in the
17 Central Africa Republic, but also in Mali since this past
18 summer. And they have been reported on by the UN
19 multinational force there of the atrocities and egregious
20 actions that are taken on the public. This is very
21 serious.

22 The Wagner Group, even though we know that to Yevgeny
23 Prigozhin, everything is about power and profit, but they
24 are inextricably linked to the Russian Federation. So, the
25 further they are on -- the more they are on the continent,

1 preying upon fragile governance will be a problem and
2 destabilizing across the African continent.

3 Senator Blumenthal: So, would you feel they should be
4 designated as a foreign terrorist organization?

5 General Langley: Well, Senator, I will just -- I will
6 say this, collectively --

7 Senator Blumenthal: They are foreign terrorist
8 organization, are they not?

9 General Langley: Senator, I think that is -- if we
10 have a policy representative, you know, I will stay out of
11 that. And I would like to just focus on what we need as
12 AFRICOM to be able to do this, and we do it in the
13 information space. But across all other -- the rest of the
14 whole of Government, we do have pressurizing things. And I
15 can take that into, if you -- or let me bring this up in
16 closed session.

17 Senator Blumenthal: Of course. Let me ask you both.
18 Maybe I can ask General Kurilla first. Israel is going
19 through domestic unrest, protests. I have been visited by
20 a number of members of the Israeli military on a number of
21 occasions, some personally, who feel that this unrest is
22 impacting their readiness. Do you have any views on that
23 topic?

24 General Kurilla: So, I talked to the Israeli chief of
25 defense often. I talked to him yesterday morning. What we

1 talk about is he is trying to ensure that his military
2 stays out of the political conversation.

3 Senator Blumenthal: Do you think that the recent
4 proposals for changes in their judicial system is in any
5 way undermining their readiness or preparedness?

6 General Kurilla: I think as you look at the Israeli
7 system, they have reserve units and that is where we are
8 seeing some of this manifest itself. But I do not want to
9 make a statement really on the judicial system without
10 knowing all the facts of what they are doing.

11 Senator Blumenthal: Let me ask to follow up, I think
12 it was Senator Mullin who was asking you about our Afghan
13 at risk allies. I have been a leading advocate of the
14 Afghan Adjustment Act. I have played a part in trying to
15 extract the translators, guards, security personnel.

16 My own son served there in the Marine Corps.
17 Actually, was able to get his translator out of
18 Afghanistan. But there are thousands still at risk with
19 targets on their backs. Having served there repeatedly
20 with great distinction, are we doing enough to get them
21 out?

22 General Kurilla: I think we have a moral obligation
23 to get those out. Again, we think the number is, you know,
24 I would defer to the State Department the exact number.
25 The State Department works the aspect of getting them out.

1 Once they come to us in Camp As Sayliyah, we provide the
2 in-processing, security, and basic life support for them.

3 Senator Blumenthal: I agree totally. We have that
4 moral obligation. Veterans groups agree steadfastly and
5 passionately about it. And I am hoping that not only we
6 will pass the Afghan Adjustment Act, but also take greater
7 measures to enable them to escape the persecution, torture,
8 and death that many of them are at risk.

9 General Kurilla: I do applaud our veterans groups
10 that are doing -- taking that action on as well.

11 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
12 Chairman.

13 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.
14 Senator Ernst, please.

15 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And gentleman,
16 thank you very much for your service and your leadership.
17 General Kurilla, just a few quick questions.

18 Some of this has been covered briefly by a number of
19 other Senators, but we do have the great powers that are
20 out there, very -- putting a lot of pressure on us in Asia
21 and in Europe. We also have competing priorities here at
22 home. We have got a financial crisis. We have got
23 Southern border issues.

24 And then the very sobering of fiscal outlook right
25 now. So, we are entering into an era where being able to

1 support defense with everything we have got has really
2 slowed down significantly. The belt is tightening and you
3 have heard concerns today.

4 So, I know that the NDS has directed the Department to
5 right size your forward military presence in your AOR. And
6 of course, doing that, accepting prudent risk as necessary.
7 So how has CENTCOM improved the economy of force in your
8 theater?

9 General Kurilla: So, thank you, Senator. CENTCOM is
10 85 percent smaller than at the peak in 2008. That was in
11 the midst of two conflicts. After the withdrawal from
12 Afghanistan, even in 2022, we reduced by 15 percent, post-
13 Afghanistan withdrawal.

14 What we require in CENTCOM is a sustainable and
15 sufficient force structure to be able to accomplish the
16 missions we have been given. Again, I go back to if there
17 is one place that can derail the NDS, it could come out of
18 CENTCOM with a flash point.

19 Senator Ernst: Yes, I absolutely agree with that. I
20 know the President, during the Afghanistan withdrawal, told
21 us that if we withdrew from Afghanistan, there would be a
22 windfall of resources to prioritize China. So, what
23 resources did this action free up in our budget, and then
24 how did DOD reinvest those?

25 General Kurilla: I really, Senator, would defer to

1 OMB and the Department of Defense on any cost savings. But
2 I believe those resources were then moved to against the
3 higher priority of INDOPACOM and EUCOM.

4 Senator Ernst: Okay. Thank you. And I would be
5 willing to bet there weren't as many cost savings maybe as
6 we would have thought. But you -- different topic, but you
7 have heard a lot of discussion about the Abraham Accords
8 today.

9 I also am a co-chair with Senator Rosen on the Abraham
10 Accords caucus. And I am very proud that our legislation
11 on air and missile defense cooperation did get passed last
12 year in the NDAA, and it does help our partners with their
13 security burden.

14 So, you have talked a little bit about this, but when
15 you are implementing this or trying to implement this
16 integration framework, what challenges are you running into
17 now that we might be able to iron out without legislation,
18 and is there an area where we might need legislation?

19 General Kurilla: I can tell you where we are right
20 now. We are making progress. We are going towards a
21 shared air picture between a group of countries. And the
22 challenge we have, though, is if there is Chinese equipment
23 that we cannot integrate.

24 And so, whether that is a radar or whether that is an
25 actual air defense system, we can't let that touch our

1 network based on the -- on what we know about the Chinese
2 equipment. And so, it just is not compatible with it
3 either. So that is the one challenge that we have to be
4 able to do that.

5 And so, I am not sure what legislation -- the
6 legislation that could help us potentially is how do we get
7 FMS faster so they don't have to choose to buy a Chinese
8 system.

9 Senator Ernst: Excellent. And this has been a
10 discussion as well about FMS and whether it should be the
11 jurisdiction of Armed Services or another committee here in
12 the United States Senate. And that is something for us to
13 iron out. So, you don't necessarily need additional
14 authorities for implementation then, that you are aware of?

15 General Kurilla: I believe I have all the authority
16 they need right now, ma'am.

17 Senator Ernst: Okay. I would just encourage our
18 partners in that region to buy American. And maybe that is
19 the message that we need to send.

20 General Kurilla: I would be happy if they just bought
21 Western.

22 Senator Ernst: Western -- well, compatible --

23 General Kurilla: It would be great with all of our
24 systems.

25 Senator Ernst: No, excellent point. Excellent point,

1 General. I do want to thank you for your tireless efforts
2 to build partnerships in the region. I was recently on a
3 CODEL where we visited Israel, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,
4 and the UAE. And I heard over and over again your name
5 mentioned specifically, and we described that or we have
6 described that in the past as leadership by walking around.

7 And you did state earlier that you spend 50 percent of
8 your time in the AOR, and I know that that is greatly
9 appreciated by our partners. So, thank you for doing that.
10 Truly appreciate your leadership. Presence is power.

11 And General Langley, I know that you are out there and
12 engaged as well. I do have a question I will submit for
13 the record for you. It deals with a 127 ECHO program,
14 which I think is incredibly important in your region to
15 maintaining stability.

16 So, thank you, gentlemen, very much. My time has
17 expired. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

18 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator. Let me note that
19 the vote has begun and recognize Senator Sullivan.

20 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
21 Gentlemen, thank you for your service, testimony today.
22 Very much appreciate it. And your team members behind you.
23 I know how much they put into these kind of hearings.

24 General Langley, I want to begin by also mentioning,
25 we probably are getting the picture, we had a number of

1 Senate CODELs to the region recently. I think that is
2 actually important. I was part of the CODEL with Senator
3 Rosen and seven U.S. Senators to the Abraham Accords
4 countries.

5 Started in Morocco. Really impressive ally, one of
6 our longest standing allies anywhere in the world. I don't
7 know to what specificity you can provide thoughts, and
8 maybe this is kind of even against your own interests, but
9 it did occur to me that I think it is time to have AFRICOM
10 headquarters in Africa, somewhere. Morocco, I think they
11 would be a great candidate. What do you think about that?

12 General Langley: Senator, this has come up numerous
13 times in the past.

14 Senator Sullivan: I know, and it has been blocked by
15 some members of the committee. And they are always like,
16 well, we don't know where to put it, so let's keep it in
17 Germany. That is not a good answer, right?

18 Come on, we don't know where to put fricking CENTCOM's
19 forward headquarters, but we chose Qatar. So, like, real
20 countries make real tough decisions. What do you think we
21 should do? I don't think that is a good answer, which is
22 too tough. Too many good countries, so let's keep it in
23 Germany. What do you think?

24 General Langley: Senator, I see the -- I see some
25 utility being on the continent, but at this time, just with

1 our processes of getting down to visit to numerous
2 countries has been beneficial. As far as how we are laid
3 out now, I think we are right sized. Because when we are
4 in Europe, there is other partners there in proximity that
5 we can plan --

6 Senator Sullivan: What about like a CENTCOM is
7 headquartered in Tampa and has a forward headquarters in
8 Qatar. What about a forward headquarters for AFRICOM
9 somewhere in --

10 General Langley: Senator, I can talk about that in
11 closed session because we do have something established --

12 Senator Sullivan: Okay. Let me, both of you keep
13 talking and the military loves the phrase, whole of
14 Government, all instruments power. We have been talking
15 about critical minerals, which is really important and a
16 big part of the discussion.

17 How much sense does it make for the United States to
18 shut down our critical mineral production capacity, as a
19 Department of Interior has done in Alaska, and then you
20 guys come here and say, boy, oh boy, we sure got to work on
21 critical matters.

22 Do you think that is smart, like we have not you guys,
23 but other agencies literally shutting down -- There is
24 something called the Amber Mining District in Alaska, one
25 of the resource rich, critical mineral areas of the world.

1 We had an environmental impact statement, EIA, seven years,
2 \$10 million, ready to go.

3 And then the Department of Interior came in and
4 reversed that and said, hey, America, Alaska, start all
5 over. We will keep getting critical minerals from China.
6 Were you guys informed of that? Were you informed of that
7 interior making that idiotic national security decision?

8 General Langley: No, sir.

9 Senator Sullivan: Do you think it makes sense for us
10 to look at areas of critical mineral capacity in America
11 and say, ah, we are not going to do that because lower 48
12 environmental groups don't like it. You would think that
13 makes sense from a national security perspective to shut
14 down our critical mineral production when this whole
15 hearing has been about critical minerals? Does that make
16 sense? General, in your personal opinion?

17 General Langley: Senator, I am just here to pass a
18 cautionary tale about China and their illicit activities on
19 the continent of trying to corner the critical --

20 Senator Sullivan: But if we can help uncorner it by
21 producing our own, doesn't that make sense?

22 General Langley: Senator, I don't have a position on
23 that.

24 Senator Sullivan: Come on, General, you do have a
25 position. You just don't want to say it. What is your

1 personal opinion on that? Does it make sense to produce
2 more critical minerals in America if we have them?

3 General Langley: Senator, we can discuss that in that
4 closed session about essentials for --

5 Senator Sullivan: This is the problem, you talk all
6 instruments of power, whole of Government, and we don't do
7 it. And again, that is not you, but it is Biden, it is the
8 Administration. It is national security suicide, and we do
9 it every damn day. We have shut down resource development
10 in our own country. It is idiotic.

11 That is the right answer, by the way. Real quick,
12 General Kurilla, you mentioned Iran taking, you know, shots
13 at our troops. Are we retaliating against them? I think
14 one of the lessons we learned, you know, when they were
15 providing very sophisticated IEDs to kill and wound
16 thousands of Americans in the 2005, 2006, 2007 timeframe,
17 that that was a bad signal to let them just kill our
18 people, the best and brightest in America.

19 I am sure you lost soldiers to the Quds Force, IEDs.
20 And until we killed Soleimani, which I think was a really
21 important message, we weren't retaliating. So, I hope
22 either covertly or overtly, when these guys are trying to
23 kill Americans, which they are pretty good at and they do a
24 lot, that we are sending messages like, all right, you want
25 to try and kill Americans, game on.

1 What are we doing to retaliate against these guys?

2 General Kurilla: Senator, I am prepared to retaliate
3 overtly, but also not all responses are overt.

4 Senator Sullivan: Okay. But can you assure this
5 committee that we are not just letting them try to attack
6 Americans? You have already mentioned that they are --
7 without some form of retaliation.

8 General Kurilla: Senator, we have all the capability
9 to be able to retaliate. But not all retaliations are
10 overt.

11 Senator Sullivan: Good. Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
12 Chairman.

13 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Sullivan. And
14 thank you, gentlemen, for your testimony. We have a vote
15 on, so I would encourage all my colleagues to vote, and we
16 will reconvene within about 15 minutes in SVC-217 for the
17 closed session of this hearing. I will now adjourn the
18 open session. Thank you.

19 [Whereupon, at 11:47 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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