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Why Food Security Matters  
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Chairman Young, Ranking Member Merkley, thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the importance of global food security to our national security, and for your strong support for America's development and diplomacy programs.

### **Food Security Is Critical to Our National Security**

The United States faces many threats to our National Security. These threats include continuing wars with extremist elements such as ISIS and potential wars with rogue state North Korea or regional nuclear power Iran. The heated economic and diplomatic competition with Russia and a surging China could spiral out of control. Concurrently, we face threats to our future security posed by growing civil strife, famine, and refugee and migration challenges which create incubators for extremist and anti-American government factions. Our response cannot be one dimensional but instead must be nuanced and comprehensive, employing "hard" as well as "soft" power in a National Security Strategy combining all elements of National Power, including a Food Security Strategy.

An American Food Security Strategy is an imperative factor in reducing the multiple threats impacting our National wellbeing. Recent history has shown that reliable food supplies and stable prices produce more stable and secure countries. Conversely, food insecurity, particularly in poorer countries, can lead to instability, unrest, and violence. Food insecurity drives mass migration around the world from the Middle East, to Africa, to Southeast Asia, destabilizing neighboring populations, generating conflicts, and threatening our own security by disrupting our economic, military, and diplomatic relationships. Food system shocks from extreme food-price volatility can be correlated with protests and riots. Food price related protests toppled governments in Haiti and Madagascar in 2007 and 2008. In 2010 and in 2011, food prices and grievances related to food policy were one of the major drivers of the Arab Spring uprisings.

These conclusions are based on my decades of experience while serving as a Marine around the world and from a lifetime as a steward of the soil on my family farm in Tennessee. I see food security strategy in military terms as either being "defensive" or "offensive". "Defensive" includes those actions we take to protect our agricultural infrastructure including crops,

livestock and the food chain here in the United States. Conversely, the “Offensive” side of food security takes the initiative to deal with food security issues overseas and this is where I will spend most of my time today.

There is a good reason for our success on the “defensive” here at home in ensuring our own food security. As my good friend and former Tennessee Deputy Agriculture Commissioner Louis Buck points out to me, American agriculture has always been about public/private enterprise. The Morrill Act of 1862 – showing our Country’s foresight and confidence in the future even in the dark days of our Civil War – created our Land Grant University model of teaching, research and extension. And equally importantly, we have a private sector that values individual initiative, unleashing an unparalleled vitality. With that vitality driving innovation, our farmers and ranchers leverage the expertise and information from the public sector to manage risks and seek profits from deployed capital. But above all, American farmers and ranchers are our “citizen soldiers” on the front lines here at home fighting to guarantee our food security.

America is also blessed with fertile soil, water availability, moderate climate, and the advanced technology to successfully utilize our abundance. Whether I walk the corn fields of Indiana or the cotton fields of Tennessee, I see agricultural technology in use that is amazing. Soon after I retired from the Marines and came home to the family farm, I climbed into the cab of a self-propelled sprayer. Settling into the seat was like strapping into the cockpit of one of the aircraft I flew, except the sprayer had more computing power and better data links. All these factors, public and private, natural and manmade, hard work and innovation, combine to provide the American people with the widest choices in the world of wholesome foods to eat and clothes to wear.

### **Enormous Challenges Face Us Around the World**

But sadly, the world now faces the largest humanitarian crisis since the end of the World War II, with over 800 million hungry, 500 million of them in countries in conflict, 65 million displaced from their homes, and more than 30 million people living on the brink of starvation. For the first time in a decade, deteriorating humanitarian conditions have led to an increase in the number of hungry people in the world. The conditions are going to get worse with total world population growing to over 10 billion, and with a “youth bulge” in the most fragile and food insecure countries. These conditions lead to hopelessness and despair among the most at risk populations.

Senators, during my military career I have seen those looks of hopelessness and despair in the faces of men and women scavenging in piles of garbage to find food for their families. These daily personal struggles to survive **do** create the incubators for terrorists and their supporters. According to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), “the overall risk of food insecurity in many countries of strategic importance to the United States will increase during

the next 10 years... In some countries, declining food security will almost certainly contribute to social disruptions and political instability.”

It was not that long ago, in our own country, that we had armed clashes over grazing rights and competition for water between crop and livestock communities. In fragile and conflict affected states, access to water, pasture, and agricultural land is often the spark that ignites conflicts between ethnic groups, tribes and clans. The lack of farming income, in turn, forces young men off the land and into urban slums, where their alienation makes them willing recruits for extremist organizations. Food insecurity is also a lever for those same extremist groups to exert control over the population and gain financial advantage from their control of food resources. I saw this in the early 90s during the conflict in Bosnia where groups with guns exercised power by seizing food supplies and controlling the distribution to the population.

We can see this in play today in such places as the Lake Chad Basin where a growing conflict between cattle herders, farmers, and fishermen competing for ever decreasing water resources brought on by climate change and misuse of water sources is providing openings for Boko Haram to establish themselves. I recently flew over Lake Chad and the decrease in lake’s area from the last time I visited is more than alarming.

Executives surveyed at the World Economic Forum highlighted in their 2016 Global Risk Assessment the likely impact of climate change on food security and noted that the “simmering tensions between social groups are more likely to boil over into community violence. Armed non-state actors, including insurgencies and terrorist groups, will be able to leverage this new source of insecurity (stresses on water and food) as an additional grievance on which to build their narratives, finding new recruits among those made destitute.”

This is an especially serious issue in the Middle East and North Africa. The Center for Climate and Security, a non-partisan think tank of national security and military experts – where I serve as a member of its Advisory Board – identified a significant connection among climate change, drought, natural resource mismanagement, food security and conflict in the region in its seminal “Arab Spring and Climate Change” report. In that region, a “Catch 22” phenomenon is occurring. Egypt, for example - heavily dependent on the global wheat market - is highly vulnerable to bread price spikes that result from countries like China panic-buying in the wake of their wheat harvests being devastated by extreme weather events (and countries like Russia cutting off wheat exports for the same reasons). Other nations in the region, like Syria under Assad before the outbreak of civil war, have tried to grow wheat locally and unsustainably, to avoid Egypt’s dilemma. But that hasn’t worked.

Coupled with climate change-exacerbated extreme drought from 2007-2010, Syria's agricultural practices (and malpractices) decimated the country's water table, left millions of Syrians "extremely food insecure," and displaced around 1.5 million farmers and herders, heightening the likelihood of tension and conflict in the country.

### **Empowering All Our National Security Tools**

I grew up in the Marine Corps with now Defense Secretary Jim Mattis; there is no one in whom I have more personal confidence and trust as a steward of our Nation's security than him. He has time and again forcefully advocated using the totality of American power – diplomacy, development, and military – to prevent conflicts and ensure our security.

Another fellow Marine, General Joe Dunford, Chairman of the Joint Chief of the Staff sets the tone for those continuing to serve in uniform; he has said, "There's no challenge that I'm currently dealing with that the primary factors in our success won't be diplomatic, economic. And certainly, even in our campaign in Iraq and Syria, USAID plays a critical role in stabilization, to secure the gains that our partners are making on the ground in Syria and Iraq, as one example. But, every place I've been over the past 15 or 16 years, in Iraq and Afghanistan, a key partner has been USAID."

Our other military leaders are following their lead. There is a strong consensus that America's civilian programs – as key interagency partners – must not only be adequately resourced but also empowered to more effectively engage private sector expertise and investment. Military officers are speaking up in support of funding for the State Department and USAID because they recognize that the military alone is not sufficient to ensure our national security, sustain global economic growth, and tackle development challenges like the growing food insecurity.

The 2016 Rand Corporation Report: "Lessons from Afghanistan" provided lessons learned on the Pentagon's Task Force on Business and Stability Operations and noted: "For an innovative, entrepreneurial organization within government, success is about finding a delicate balance— between freedom to take risks and necessary oversight, between quick-turn project delivery and long-term development outcomes, and between pursuing a disruptive business model and remaining a team player. Thus, we recommend that the U.S. policy community plan for future organizational solutions to address the lessons from Afghanistan." In the words that a Marine would use, we need all our national security partners empowered to be more agile with an improved capability to "improvise, adapt, and overcome" the challenges faced.

In addition to our nation's highest-ranking officers currently serving, I joined more than 150 retired three- and four-star flag and general officers – all members of the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition's National Security Advisory Council – in writing to Congress to urge

support for the International Affairs Budget and renewed American global leadership. For us the bottom line is our diplomatic and development professionals, public and private, have the expertise and resources to help tackle the root causes of conflict – by empowering smallholder farmers to increase their productivity, improving maternal and child health, and helping rebuild dysfunctional economies among other important efforts.

And it is not just about employing our own national programs, it is also about participating as a member of the global community. I recently traveled with a UN Foundation group to observe the United Nations employment of hard and soft power against a simmering conflict in the Central African Republic (CAR). There the combination of international development programs (soft power) as well as military force (hard power) is addressing the root causes (population, climate change, extremism, food insecurity) of conflict. Support by the United States of such world community efforts reduces the need to deploy our own military forces. We must remember that American Military interventions require the expenditure of our most precious national resource—the blood of those who serve.

### **Food Security Advances America’s Economic Interests**

Food security is critical to reducing conflict, but it is also vital to establishing economic security. Almost no country – from South Korea to India to the United States – has achieved rapid economic development without first investing in agricultural development. And we know from our experience that smallholder farmers can become productive and escape poverty once they gain access to education, markets, and technologies.

That is also my personal story—in my family’s history this step enabled my grandparents and parents to rise from a lineage of small-acreage subsistence farmers to the American Middle Class, to feed and educate our family, and to live with dignity. American and world efforts to tackle global poverty have been successful. Since 1990, global extreme poverty has been more than halved with over a billion people lifted out of poverty.

These efforts pay dividends for the U.S economy. Today, 11 of our top 15 export markets, including Germany, Japan and South Korea, are former recipients of U.S. foreign assistance, as well as being among our staunchest allies. Many of the fastest growing economies reside in the developing world and those markets comprise almost 60 percent of global GDP, a threefold increase since 1990. These developing countries also account for more than half of all U.S. agricultural exports.

In 2016, the U.S. exported nearly \$135 billion of agricultural products supporting 1.1 million full-time American jobs, making these developing markets an important source of our jobs and economic growth. When our economy is strong, it amplifies the awesome power of our military might while deterring our enemies from undermining America’s national security and

economic interests abroad.

### **Maintain U.S. Leadership in Agricultural Development**

Today, America is well positioned to maintain our global leadership in the fight against hunger and poverty, ultimately helping to bring much needed peace and stability to a volatile world. To achieve this goal, the United States should sustain America's focus and investment in agricultural development and do it in the right way over the long term.

While serving in the Pacific, I traveled to the island of Ponape in the Federated Republic of Micronesia, formerly the Caroline Islands in the South Pacific, to attend, as the U.S military representative, the inauguration of their new President. These islands were the scene of much combat in World War II and afterward the United States was heavily involved in reconstruction and development. However, the people were soon plagued with diabetes and other food related health issues. When I asked the reason, the American consul replied that instead of helping the people develop a healthy, sustainable agricultural and fishing-based economy, we taught them how to open cans of imported food which created massive unintended consequences.

We know that a robust agricultural support system requires constant "care and feeding." Failure to establish and maintain such infrastructure and services as irrigation systems, soil conservation programs, storage and transportation facilities, and research and extension services, because of threats or lack of funding, can exacerbate food insecurity, increase instability, and intensify conflict.

As another expert in business development, Gerry Brown, who served on the Department of Defense's Task Force on Business and Stability Operations with Louis Buck, notes, farming is not just a profession but a way of life. Part of fighting and winning against violent extremists is convincing the local population that the government cares about, and will defend, the local population and their homes and possessions from their enemies. For example, crops such as dates in Iraq and raisins in Afghanistan have significance beyond the income they generate for the farmers. They are national symbols and restoring and protecting them can convince local populations that the government has their best interests at heart.

I also spent some time in Djibouti, on the Horn of Africa, where I saw an example of how infrastructure, even the most basic, can have a major impact on reducing the conditions for insurgency. We were in heavy combat in Afghanistan at the time with a limited amount of forces available for deployment to the Horn requiring an Economy of Force operation there. One of the most effective military task forces, at the least cost, I have seen employed was one composed of a well drilling attachment and a veterinarian team. The task force operations began by drilling a well closer to the village reducing the time and effort required

for the women of the village to obtain water for their families. The veterinarian vaccinated the goats reducing disease and the mortality rate while increasing the health and value of the herds. The combination of easier access to water and an increase in the economic base generated confidence in the government reducing the conditions for building an insurgency.

Continuing in this vein, let me talk about “Feed the Future”, a current program that is contributing to our national security. It is America’s global hunger and food security initiative and was signed into law with widespread bipartisan support from Congress. It has helped smallholder farmers increase production and productivity through country-led, results-based strategies. Feed the Future has helped lift more than 9 million people out of poverty and prevented the lack of food in childhood from permanently stunting the growth of nearly 2 million children. In FY2016, the initiative helped nearly 11 million farmers in developing countries adopt new technologies like high-yielding seeds. As a result, these farmers made more than \$900 million in new agricultural sales and stimulated nearly \$630 million in new agricultural loans.

With farming accounting for nearly 55 percent of total employment in places like sub-Saharan Africa – and the agricultural sector representing the single largest employer of the labor force in lower middle-income countries – empowering smallholder farmers in developing countries is the most effective way to reduce hunger and poverty, build resilience, generate inclusive economic growth, and achieve long-term stability.

Actions taken now to increase agricultural sector jobs can provide economic opportunity and stability for those unemployed youths while helping to feed people. A recent report by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs identifies agriculture development as the core essential for providing greater food security, economic growth, and population well-being. Repeatedly, history has taught us that a strong agricultural sector is an unquestionable requirement for inclusive and sustainable growth, broad-based development progress, and long-term stability.

In summary, a food security strategy is critical to our overall national security. While many challenges face us, America and our global partners have the capability to meet those challenges by employing all the elements of our national power to include diplomatic, developmental, economic, and, yes, military when required; a balanced, thoughtful melding of soft and hard power. Now is the time to take a long-term approach, make the needed changes in agencies and organizations supporting our overseas engagements, address climate change, and support and sustain our commitment to global food security. By doing so, we can help countries transition from aid-recipients to full-fledged partners, moving toward the day when they will no longer depend on foreign aid.

In my view, failure to act will jeopardize the progress we have made, risk continual recurring

food crises that grow terrorists, and allow development of conflicts that will eventually require deploying the men and women of our military.

Thank you again to the Chairman, Ranking Member and the Committee for inviting me to speak. I look forward to your questions.