
IRAQ AT A CROSSROADS: OPTIONS FOR U.S. POLICY

Thursday, July 24, 2014

UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON
FOREIGN RELATIONS

113TH Congress, Second Session

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WITNESSES

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U.S. SENATE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
WASHINGTON, D.C.

1 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:04 a.m. in Room SD-419, Dirksen
2 Senate Office Building, Hon. Robert Menendez, chairman of the committee, presiding.

3 Committee Members Present: Senators Menendez [presiding], Cardin, Shaheen,
4 Coons, Durbin, Murphy, Kaine, Markey, Corker, Risch, Rubio, Johnson, Flake, McCain,
5 and Barrasso.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY

6 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Good morning. This hearing will come to order. Today we focus
7 on Iraq and U.S. policy options, but to fully examine the crisis in Iraq we must
8 acknowledge the broader context of developments across the region. Earlier this year I
9 held a hearing on the spillover from the Syria conflict to examine the implications of
10 continued violence in Syria and how it would impact the stability and security of
11 neighboring countries. Now we are seeing the very dangerous results of that spillover
12 with the advancement of ISIS, the increase in sectarian violence, underscored by the
13 dissolution of any real border between Iraq and Syria, and the designation by ISIS of a
14 caliphate across Syria and Iraq that is threatening to create a security vacuum in the
15 heart of the Middle East.

16 While today's hearing will not focus specifically on the regional threat posed by
17 ISIS or on U.S.-Syria policy, I want to take this opportunity to restate my long-held
18 position that we must enhance our support to the moderate Syrian opposition, the only
19 ones willing to challenge ISIS and other al Qaeda affiliates in Syria. It seems to me at

1 the end of the day supporting these moderate forces must be one pillar of a broader U.S.
2 policy in the region.

3 No one should be surprised that Iraq is the victim of this spillover, but we should
4 be extremely concerned by the rapid expansion of ISIS and alarmed by Iran's clear
5 involvement in Iraq. And we should be dismayed by the convenient alignment of
6 Iranian, Russian, and Syrian interests in response to recent developments, especially in
7 Iraq. At its core, this alignment is about self-preservation of rogue actors that seek to
8 maintain power by destabilizing others and keeping weak governments susceptible to
9 malign influence.

10 In my view, Iraq does not have to proceed down this path and it is up to Iraq's
11 leaders to chart a different course for their country.

12 I am deeply disappointed that, after years of U.S. investment in time and
13 resources, the loss of thousands of American lives, and the commitment of billions of
14 dollars to support Iraq's political development and the creation of a responsible, capable
15 Iraqi Security Force, that they deserted the communities they were responsible for
16 protecting, abandoned U.S. military equipment, and fled from ISIS fighters.

17 At the same time, ISIS's expansion across Iraq and its reception by Iraq's Sunni
18 communities and tribes would not have been possible except for the accumulation of
19 years of destructive sectarian, corrupt policies by the central government in Baghdad.
20 Iraq has the potential to be an economically prosperous, diverse, and politically
21 representative model for others in the region, but Iraqi leaders have focused on their
22 own sectarian and ethnic interests for too long, at the expense of building an Iraq for all
23 Iraqis.

24 The time is now for Iraq's elected leaders to form a national unity government
25 that is truly representative. I applaud the recent progress in nominating a speaker and
26 two deputy speakers for Iraq's parliament and today's promising news that a president

1 has been named. I encourage Iraq's leaders to continue this critical work and finalize
2 the government with leaders committed to leading an Iraq for all Iraqis.

3 While Iraq's leaders continue negotiations to form the next government, the
4 Department of Defense has completed the assessment of Iraqi Security Forces. I look
5 forward to hearing from our administration witness on the findings and
6 recommendations provided by U.S. advisers and plans going forward to counter the
7 threat from ISIS and Congress's role in this effort.

8 Let me take a moment to highlight the particularly dangerous situation of
9 minority communities in Iraq and particularly Iraqi Christians. I recently joined Senator
10 Stabenow in a meeting with Archbishop Bashar Warda from the Chaldean Diocese of
11 Erbil. His description of the terror that ISIS has inflicted in Iraqi Christian communities
12 is truly horrifying, and I hope that our witnesses today will share with us steps the
13 administration is taking to address the urgent and unique situation of Iraqi Christians.

14 Senator Stabenow has asked that I submit several letters for the record, which I
15 will do without objection, regarding the plight of Iraqi Christians, and I look forward to
16 working with her further on this critical issue.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

17 **THE CHAIRMAN.** I also want to acknowledge that the Iraqi Ambassador to the
18 United States, Ambassador Faily, is in attendance today, and we welcome him here. I
19 received a letter from the Ambassador following our meeting a few weeks ago asking
20 that Congress and the administration make the U.S. commitment to Iraq clear by
21 providing support and assistance to turn the tide against ISIS if the Iraqi government
22 takes steps to broaden its political base and accelerate the formation of the government.
23 Without objection, I will submit this letter to the Congressional record.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

1 THE CHAIRMAN. And I hope to hear from our administration witnesses today
2 whether or not they believe Iraqi leaders are capable, or able, I should say, to form a
3 more representative government, what is required to turn the tide against ISIS, and if
4 there is a new national unity government in Baghdad what should we do to
5 demonstrate support.

6 With that, Senator Corker.

7 **SENATOR CORKER.** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank our witnesses for
8 being here.

9 Iraq seems to be disintegrating as the terrorist organization ISIS now controls
10 Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, Fallujah, and much of Ramadi, parts of Baiji, Tikrit.
11 Though significantly outnumbered, ISIS managed to overwhelm entire divisions of the
12 Iraqi army, many of whom removed their uniforms and ran. ISIS also has claimed
13 credit for a recent string of bombings in Baghdad, is responsible for systemic
14 persecution of Christians, thousands of whom are being forced to flee their homes
15 under penalty of death if they do not convert and pay a tax.

16 The UN reports that last month was the deadliest in Iraq since 2008, with 2400
17 Iraqis killed, two-thirds of which were civilians.

18 For those of us who were here during the debate over the hard-won gains of the
19 surge, this is hardly an outcome that would have been imagined back then. Though our
20 intelligence picture in Iraq is woefully inadequate, the situation should not surprise us,
21 for two reasons. The crisis is connected to the disaster in Syria, which our country has
22 largely ignored. Strategic militants have long enjoyed freedom of movement across the
23 porous border in Anbar Province and had been in control of Fallujah and key parts of
24 Ramadi for months prior to the takeover of Mosul.

1 Since 2009, Maliki has systematically shredded and politicized the entire
2 structure of the Iraqi Security Forces, replacing competent commanders with
3 incompetent, yet loyal, commanders and creating a more sectarian institution that
4 scares the average Iraqi as much as ISIS.

5 Despite the connection to Syria, it is important to note that this is not just an
6 invasion from foreign fighters. ISIS simply cannot hold this much territory in Iraq while
7 maintaining operations in Syria without help on the ground. Whether we can look —
8 rather, we can look at this as a civil and sectarian war being exacerbated and exploited
9 by a growing terrorist threat. This is yet another signal of how badly Prime Minister
10 Maliki has alienated the Sunni population.

11 Even if Maliki leaves, without political reconciliation among Iraq's key
12 communities no amount of military support can make a difference. But on the other
13 hand, if we do not help the Iraqi government survive and hold territory now, there is a
14 possibility we will not be discussing political reconciliation in a few months because the
15 country could break apart.

16 Today in this hearing I hope we can confront this dilemma head on. I hope we
17 can start to identify the right mix of security assistance and political steps that will help
18 get the country back on the right track. I am open to working with the administration
19 to determine what we can do as a Nation to help shore up the defenses of the Iraqis and
20 encourage political reconciliation among its Iraq leaders.

21 I want to thank you for being here today. I look forward to this hearing and I
22 look forward to us weighing in on what we believe are the most appropriate steps
23 forward. Thank you very much..

24 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Thank you, Senator Corker.

25 Let me introduce our first panel. With us today is Deputy Assistant Secretary of
26 State for Iraq and Iran, Brett McGurk, who has just returned from a six-week trip to

1 Iraq, where he was assisting the embassy team; and Ms. Elissa Slotkin, performing the
2 duties of the Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, whose experience
3 on Iraq ranges from the intelligence community to the National Security Council to the
4 State Department, and now to the Defense Department.

5 Let me remind both of you that your full statements will be included in the
6 record without objection. I would ask you to summarize in about five minutes or so so
7 that the members of the committee can engage with you in a dialogue. With that, we
8 will start with you, Mr. Secretary.

**STATEMENT OF BRETT MCGURK, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF
STATE FOR IRAQ AND IRAN, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

9 **MR. MCGURK.** Thank you. Good morning. Chairman Menendez, Ranking
10 Member Corker, members of this committee: I thank you for inviting us to discuss the
11 situation in Iraq, with a focus on U.S. response since the Islamic State of Iraq and the
12 Levant attacked Mosul nearly seven weeks ago.

13 Let me first review the bidding on why this matters. ISIL is al Qaeda. It may
14 have changed its name, it may have broken with senior al Qaeda leadership such as
15 Ayman Al-Zawahiri, but it is al Qaeda in its doctrine, ambition, and increasingly in its
16 threat to U.S. interests. Should there be any question about the intentions of this group,
17 simply read what its leader, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, says. And it is important to pay
18 attention to what he says because we cannot risk underestimating the goals, capacity,
19 and reach of this organization.

20 Baghdadi in May 2011 eulogized the death of Osama bin Laden and promised a
21 violent response. ISIL training camps in Syria are named after Osama bin Laden. In his
22 audio statements Baghdadi regularly issues veiled threats against the United States,
23 promising a direct confrontation. And in his feud with Al-Zawahiri Baghdadi is clearly
24 seeking to lead the global jihad.

1 Additionally, ISIL is no longer simply a terrorist organization. It is now a full-
2 blown army, seeking to establish a self-governing state through the Tigris and
3 Euphrates Valleys in what is now Syria and Iraq. It now controls much of eastern Syria.
4 In January in Iraq it moved into Anbar Province, taking control of Fallujah, and on June
5 10 it moved on Mosul.

6 I arrived in Erbil, 80 kilometers east of Mosul, on June 7th and I will begin there.
7 In meetings with local officials from Mosul and with Kurdish officials on June 7th, we
8 received early indications that ISIL was moving in force from Syria into Iraq and staging
9 forces in western Mosul. We immediately asked and received permission from Kurdish
10 leaders to deploy Pesh Merga forces on the eastern side of the city, but the government
11 of Baghdad did not share the same sense of urgency and refused the deployments.

12 Iraqi military commanders promised to send nine brigades of force to Mosul in
13 response to our warnings. We stressed, however, that the forces might not arrive in
14 time.

15 On June 9th, the situation remained extremely tense and we continued to urge
16 the immediate deployment of additional security forces to protect against an ISIL attack
17 from west to east. In the early hours of June 10th, ISIL launched a complex suicide
18 bomb attack across a strategic bridge and poured forces into the eastern part of the city.
19 Iraqi resistance totally collapsed, which led to a panic and a snowballing effect
20 southward through the Tigris Valley and the cities of Tikrit, Samarra, and Bilad.

21 The result was catastrophic. Five divisions nearly dissolved and the approaches
22 to Baghdad were immediately under threat. I flew to Baghdad first thing that morning
23 with a focus on ensuring our people were safe, working with Ambassador Beecroft and
24 our team, and working with the Iraqis to ensure the northern approaches to Baghdad
25 were bolstered.

1 My written testimony sets forth in detail the critical elements of our crisis
2 response. We first made certain that our people would be safe, including contractors
3 working on bases outside of Baghdad, who were evacuated with the help of the Iraqi
4 Air Force. At the embassy and the airport, we rebalanced staff to manage the crisis and
5 brought in additional Department of Defense resources to ensure the security of our
6 facilities.

7 In parallel, at the President's direction we worked to urgently improve our
8 intelligence pictures throughout western and north-central Iraq, surging surveillance
9 flights, establishing joint operations centers and deploying special operations forces to
10 assist Iraqi units around the capital. These intelligence and security initiatives were
11 undertaken in parallel with regional diplomacy led by Secretary Kerry to better focus
12 attention on the serious threat.

13 We finally sought to stabilize the Iraqi political process, recognizing that this
14 attack took place at the most vulnerable moment, following national elections that were
15 held on April 30th in which 14 million Iraqis voted, but prior to the formation of a new
16 government. This process remains extremely challenging, but now has some traction.
17 A new speaker of parliament was chosen last week. He is a moderate Sunni Arab
18 named Salim Jabouri, elected with the overwhelming support from all major
19 components in the new Iraqi parliament.

20 Today, just about two hours ago the new Iraqi parliament elected Fuad Masum, a
21 distinguished Kurdish statesman, to serve as the new president of Iraq. He too was
22 elected overwhelmingly, with support from all major components in the newly elected
23 parliament. Iraqis are now proceeding along their constitutional time line to choose a
24 prime minister, which must happen within 15 days.

25 As the President has said, it is not the place of the United States to choose Iraq's
26 leaders. It is clear, though, that only leaders that can govern with an inclusive agenda

1 are going to be able to pull the country together and guide the Iraqi people through this
2 crisis.

3 The current situation today in Iraq remains extremely, extremely serious. ISIL
4 remains in control of Mosul and it is targeting all Iraqis — Sunni, Shia, Christian, Kurds,
5 Turkoman, Yazidi, Shaveks — who disagree with its twisted vision of a seventh century
6 caliphate. It has also joined in an unholy alliance with militant wings of the former
7 Baath Party, known as the Naqshbandi Network, and with some former insurgent
8 groups, such as the Islamic Army of Iraq.

9 Going forward, the Iraqis, with our support, must seek to split these latter
10 groups from ISIL and isolate ISIL and the hard-core militant groups from the
11 population. The platforms we have established through the immediate crisis response
12 are now providing additional information to inform the President and our national
13 security team as we develop options to protect our interests in Iraq. Any further
14 decisions in this regard will be made in full consultation with this committee and the
15 Congress.

16 Any efforts we take, moreover, must be in conjunction with Iraqi efforts to isolate
17 ISIL from the population. This is because, while we have a serious counterterrorism
18 challenge in Iraq, Iraq has a serious counterinsurgency challenge, and the two are
19 inextricably linked.

20 Based on my last seven weeks on the ground in Iraq, there is now a clear
21 recognition by Iraqis from all communities that substantial reforms must be undertaken.
22 This will require the formation of a new government, together with restructuring of the
23 security services. An emerging consensus in Iraq, which we can fully support, is a
24 functioning federalism consistent with Iraq's constitution, based on the new realities on
25 the ground and focused on the following five principles:

26 First, local citizens must be in the lead in securing local areas;

1 Second, these local citizens defending their communities must be provided state
2 benefits and state resources, perhaps modeled along the lines of a National Guard-type
3 force structure;

4 Third, the Iraq army must be restructured. Commanders who failed in Mosul
5 have since been fired and they have been replaced with new commanders who we are
6 working very closely with. The federal army should also focus on federal functions,
7 such as protecting borders, and rarely deploy inside cities, while providing overwatch
8 support when necessary.

9 Fourth principle: There must be close cooperation between local, regional and
10 national security services to gradually reduce operational space for ISIL, particularly in
11 Nineveh Province.

12 And finally, the federal government through its new parliament and a new
13 cabinet must work diligently on a package of reforms that can address legitimate
14 grievances from all communities and ensure adequate resources to these restructured
15 security services.

16 These five principles can begin to address many of the core grievances in the
17 Sunni majority areas of Iraq while also, importantly, denying space for ISIL to operate
18 and thereby protect the Shia majority and other vulnerable groups from ISIL attack.
19 Restoring stability and degrading ISIL will require a smart, integrated central, regional,
20 and provincial approach led by a new Iraq government with an appropriate level of
21 U.S. support and assistance.

22 Iraqi leaders from all communities have asked for assistance in implementing
23 this program and General Austin, our Commander of CENTCOM, is on the ground
24 today to further assess the situation and discuss concrete ways in which our assistance
25 might be effective.

1 This model of a functioning federalism is achievable and it is essential if we hope
2 to deny space for ISIL within the borders of Iraq.

3 I look forward once again to discussing more details in the answers to your
4 questions, and I thank you again for the opportunity to testify this morning.

[The prepared statement of Mr. McGurk follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

5 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Ms. Slotkin.

**STATEMENT OF ELISSA SLOTKIN, PERFORMING THE DUTIES OF THE PRINCIPAL
DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY, AND PRINCIPAL
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY
AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE**

6 **Ms. SLOTKIN.** Thank you. Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, and
7 distinguished members of the committee: I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the
8 administration's response to the current security situation. My remarks will focus on
9 what the Department of Defense is particularly doing.

10 I just want to foot-stomp some of the things that Brett just said. The U.S. does
11 have a vital national security interest in ensuring that Iraq or any other country does not
12 become a safe haven for terrorists who could threaten the U.S. homeland, our U.S.
13 citizens, or our interests abroad.

14 As the President has said, ISIL's advance across Iraqi territory in recent weeks,
15 and particularly its ability to establish safe haven in the region, poses a threat to U.S.
16 interests and the Middle East. I do not restrict my views and my comments today just
17 to Iraq, the geographic borders of Iraq. I do believe we have a real regional problem on
18 our hands.

19 As Brett has said, the situation on the ground is complex and fluid. We are
20 therefore taking a responsible, deliberate, and flexible approach to the crisis. But I do
21 want to be clear: There is no exclusively military solution to the threat posed by ISIL.

1 The Iraqis must do the heavy lifting. In the meantime, the Department of Defense
2 remains postured should the President decide to use military force as part of a broader
3 strategy.

4 Our immediate goals, as announced on June 19th, are to: one, protect the people
5 and property, our people and property in Iraq; two, to gain a better understanding of
6 how we might train, advise, and support the Iraqi Security Forces should we decide to
7 do that; and number three, to expand our understanding, particularly via intelligence,
8 of ISIL. All three are critical to any future U.S. strategy vis a vis Iraq.

9 To that end, we have done four things in the Department of Defense. We have
10 added forces to protect our people. The safety of our citizens obviously is our highest
11 priority. The Department has met the requests of the Department of State. As
12 described in the war powers notification we have transmitted, the Department of
13 Defense has sent what is called a Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team, what we call a
14 FAST Team, a crisis response element, and additional military assets and personnel to
15 reinforce security both at our diplomatic facilities in Baghdad and at the Baghdad
16 International Airport.

17 The Secretary of Defense has also ordered the amphibious transport ship USS
18 Mesa Verde into the Arabian Gulf. Its presence in the Gulf is added to other naval
19 ships, including the U.S. aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush, and provides the
20 President additional options to protect American citizens and interests in Iraq should he
21 choose to use them.

22 Number two, we have vastly increased our intelligence, surveillance, and
23 reconnaissance, ISR, assets. At the request of the government of Iraq, we have surged
24 ISR over Iraq since the fall of Mosul and increased our information-sharing activities.
25 These ISR sorties, which are up to 50-plus per day, give us a much better understanding
26 of ISIL operations and disposition and allow us to help counter — help the ISF counter

1 ISIL. We are now capable of around-the-clock coverage of Iraq and have been focusing
2 our efforts on ISIL-controlled territory as well as Baghdad. We have also sent in U.S.
3 assessment teams and stood up joint operations centers.

4 On June 19th the President announced these additional measures, including the
5 deployment of just about 300 additional U.S. military advisers to evaluate how we
6 might best train, advise, and support the ISF. These small teams of Special Forces are
7 working to evaluate the ISF in and around Baghdad in particular. The teams are armed
8 for self-defense, but they do not have an offensive mission. And then the two joint
9 operations centers, one in Baghdad, one in Erbil in Northern Iraq. They have both been
10 established to help support our efforts on the ground.

11 A quick word about the assessments. I know that is of interest. Secretary Hagel
12 and Chairman Dempsey received the draft assessment of the ISF last week from Central
13 Command. Department leaders are undertaking a deliberate and rigorous review of
14 the assessment, which will inform recommendations to the President. Meanwhile,
15 additional assessment work continues. As you heard, General Austin is on the ground
16 today with respect to the developing situation on the ground.

17 In closing, I just want to reiterate that we have a vital security interest in ensuring
18 that Iraq or any other country not become a safe haven for terrorists. We do need a
19 regional approach, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Slotkin follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

20 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Thank you.

21 Yesterday, during yesterday's hearing with the House Foreign Affairs
22 Committee, you both argued that the policy of the United States should be for a unified
23 Iraq with a strong Baghdad-based federal government. But many look and say that
24 what is happening on the ground is accelerating towards a breakup of Iraq because too

1 many of Iraq's communities no longer trust the Maliki government, and the question is
2 whether there is anything we can do to prevent it.

3 **MR. MCGURK.** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think we testified clearly and in my
4 written statement as well the model is a functioning federalism under the Iraqi
5 constitution. So nobody is trying to fit a square peg into a round hole that simply will
6 not work. There is a model within the constitution for this functioning federalism, in
7 which you recognize a very substantial devolution of authorities, the principles of local
8 security control. That is something that I found in my last seven weeks there is an
9 emerging consensus around.

10 Through the process of forming a new government, I think the details will be
11 fleshed out. I know General Austin is discussing some of these concepts as we speak,
12 particularly when it comes to restructuring the security forces.

13 So I do not think anyone is trying to create a strong central government that is
14 going to retain control all over the country. In fact, I think everybody recognizes now
15 that from the center out you are not going to be able to retain control in all parts of the
16 country, but also, most importantly, locals and tribes on their own also will not be able
17 to deny space for ISIL, because of ISIL's very significant military capability. So you
18 need a principle of local security control, but with a national resource base, and that is
19 all within the federalist model of the constitution.

20 **THE CHAIRMAN.** The question is, though, so a federalist model. The question is can
21 you even get to a federalist model the way things are evolving in Iraq?

22 **MR. MCGURK.** I think you can, because of —

23 **THE CHAIRMAN.** What needs to happen?

24 **MR. MCGURK.** Well, first we have to get a new government formed, and that is
25 very important because the new government will obviously be the body that directs
26 where the resources go.

1 **THE CHAIRMAN.** What do we envision the time frame of that being? It is past due,
2 right?

3 **MR. MCGURK.** Under the constitutional framework and the time lines, as soon as
4 there is a new president, which just happened, there is now a 15-day time line to charge
5 a prime minister to form a government. So we will know within 15 days the prime
6 minister nominee. Whoever that is, he then has 30 days to name a cabinet and present
7 the cabinet to parliament for a vote.

8 Those time lines, however, can be substantially accelerated. For example, under
9 the constitution once there was a speaker there are 30 days to name a president. They
10 did that in I think about 8 days. We are working very hard to accelerate those time
11 lines.

12 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Now, if it ends up being Prime Minister Maliki how do you think
13 that you keep this government together, this nation together?

14 **MR. MCGURK.** As I mentioned in my statement, as the President has said, it is not
15 our job to pick the leaders, but the leaders do have to have a very inclusive agenda and
16 pull the country together.

17 **THE CHAIRMAN.** I am not asking you to pick, nor do I suggest we should. The
18 question is that if that is the result by their own choice it seems to me that it is very
19 difficult, based upon what has happened so far, based upon Sunni responses to ISIS, at
20 least in the context of their grievances with the present national government, that — is
21 not the likely outcome of that to be more possible to see a divided Iraq?

22 **MR. MCGURK.** The prime minister will be chosen from the Shia political blocs, and
23 Grand Ayatollah Sistani, interestingly, over the last month has been very active, and he
24 has laid down some guideposts for how to form the next government: first, it has to
25 correct the mistakes of the past, meaning it cannot look anything like the current
26 government; second, you need new leaders that reflect a national consensus. We have

1 had that now with the speaker and the president, and so the prime minister will also
2 have to reflect that emerging national consensus. It remains to be seen whether the
3 existing prime minister could build such a consensus, but that remains very much in
4 question.

5 **THE CHAIRMAN.** You commented in the House hearing yesterday that options
6 being developed for President are more concrete and specific as a result of the U.S.
7 military advisers on the ground and increased intelligence collection. What guidance
8 have you received in terms of timing for these decisions and how will the political and
9 security conditions on the ground influence the President's decisions?

10 **Ms. SLOTKIN.** Well, as I said, the assessments came in last week. They are dense,
11 they are significant. So we are still working through those. After we have done that,
12 the President — I am sorry — the Secretary and the Chairman will make informed
13 recommendations to the President.

14 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Are you going to be able to tell us anything more than I read in the
15 New York Times, which is more than I knew before you came here?

16 **Ms. SLOTKIN.** I understand. I would caution against using a leaked half-report in
17 the New York Times as your basis for understanding it.

18 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Well, the absence of having information leads me to only publicly
19 reported resources. So when do you intend to come to us, in whatever setting, to advise
20 the Congress? You know, this committee has jurisdiction over arms sales, and my
21 reticence to arms sales to Iraq has in some respects been proven true when in fact we
22 have had much of our equipment abandoned and now in the hands of ISIS.

23 So unless you are going to give us a sense of where the security forces are at
24 moving forward, this chair is not going to be willing to approve more arms sales so they
25 can be abandoned to go to the hands of those who we are seriously concerned about in
26 terms of our own national security interests.

1 **Ms. SLOTKIN.** Sir, I understand and our intent is to come and brief Congress at the
2 time when we have piled through it ourselves. We have kept the Congress very
3 informed. I know I have been up at least twice a week for our committees. We are
4 committed to remaining in close contact with you and there is no attempt to hide it from
5 you.

6 **Mr. MCGURK.** I would just add, Mr. Chairman, I think we are in a race against
7 time, there is no question.

8 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Well, that is my point.

9 **Mr. MCGURK.** And one thing that we have found, first of all, by surging Special
10 Forces teams, by surging intelligence assets, as you mentioned, we do know an awful
11 lot more than we knew even six weeks ago.

12 Security forces around Baghdad and particularly north of Baghdad — I described
13 this in some of my written testimony — are trying to do some things to fight back. They
14 have taken nearly a thousand casualties in the last month. These units, particularly
15 units that we have relationships with, are fighting, they are capable. And those are the
16 types of units that we are looking at ways to further assist.

17 But again, this is all being discussed by the national security team.

18 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Well, you have influences here. My understanding is Assad has
19 been part of bombing ISIS in Iraq. Of course, you have Iran here. How is that going to
20 complicate or instruct what you might be willing to do?

21 **Mr. MCGURK.** it is part of the overall assessment, and I can just speak for my own
22 firsthand experience in the initial days of this crisis as ISIL it looked like was moving
23 down the Tigris Valley, and our information was very sketchy and there was a bit of a
24 panic throughout the Iraqi Security Forces and we had to bolster them and try to create
25 a circuit breaker so that that advance halted.

1 There was a security vacuum, that there is no question that our strategic
2 competitors sought to step in and fill. Iraq lacks any capacity to do deep strikes in their
3 border regions. Countries show up at their door and say, hey, we can help you with
4 that. The Iraqis have pushed back in some regards, but in some respects they have
5 accepted, they have accepted support.

6 **THE CHAIRMAN.** They have accepted Assad bombing, have they not?

7 **MR. MCGURK.** No, no. We have no indication that there is any coordination with
8 the Assad regime when it comes to security cooperation. But they are very concerned
9 about the collapse of their border, particularly the collapse of Al-Qaim, which was a
10 strategic border town which fell about three weeks ago.

11 **THE CHAIRMAN.** They have accepted Iranian support?

12 **MR. MCGURK.** They have accepted low-level Iranian support, there is no question,
13 yes.

14 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Senator Corker.

15 **SENATOR CORKER.** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 Just along those lines, how do you assess U.S. influence right now? I know there
17 are a number of other regional interests that are playing a role. I know that those of us
18 who have visited recently know that before this all occurred U.S. influence was at an all-
19 time low and really almost not present. I know that has changed some, but where
20 would you assess our influence to be in Iraq right now?

21 **MR. MCGURK.** Senator, since this crisis particularly in Mosul, we have been
22 embraced, particularly our military personnel who have come in. I was at the joint
23 operations center which we have set up now. I was there on Thursday speaking with
24 all of our military personnel there, all of whom have years of experience in relationships
25 in Iraq. We have been embraced by their military, particularly the Special Forces
26 assessment team.

1 The Iraqis have given us full access to their air space for our intelligence flights
2 we want to do. They have given us the legal requirements we need to be there. So we
3 have been embraced, and I think there is an opportunity because they certainly want
4 our assistance. They want our equipment, they want our training. Our FMS case is
5 about a — our FMS package is about \$15 billion total. They have paid about \$11 billion
6 of that. They put \$193 million in the Federal Reserve into that account just last week.

7 So the Iraqis are very eager under our strategic framework agreement for U.S.
8 assistance to be the backbone of their response. But of course, there are things that they
9 need to do as well and that is the conversation we are having with them.

10 **SENATOR CORKER.** Are there competing interests? I mean, as you are deepening
11 the relationship again and helping in the way that we are, are there conflicts or
12 competing interests that you are dealing with there on the ground?

13 **MR. MCGURK.** Yes, and in fact some of the tactics that the Iraqis pursue we totally
14 do not agree with. In fact, I think by moving in aggressively as we have over the last six
15 weeks we will increasingly increase our influence over some of those tactics.

16 We have advised the Iraqis, for example, not go into urban areas — lessons
17 that we learned. The Iraqis made a decision to go into Tikrit. We did not really support
18 that decision. We have advised the Iraqis since January not to go into Fallujah. They
19 have not gone into Fallujah. But there is a military conversation, which is a little bit
20 outside of my expertise and that is why General Austin is on the ground as we speak,
21 talking to their new military commanders.

22 Just a point on our influence. I have had a number of conversations with the
23 prime minister on down since January and have said: Your generals, Mr. Prime
24 Minister, are not telling you the truth about the situation. That clearly was true,
25 particularly in Mosul. Those commanders are now gone and they have appointed a

1 series of new commanders, who we happen to work very closely with, and we hope
2 that that type of relationship can continue.

3 **SENATOR CORKER.** I think that kind of involvement that we had and then we lost,
4 where we were able to have the shuttle diplomacy and have the kind of activity that is
5 now taking place, has helped create the situation that is on the ground, no doubt. On
6 the other hand, Prime Minister Maliki has not been the kind of prime minister to create
7 any kind of sense that a central government can resolve the ethnic and civil issues that
8 exist there.

9 Do you really believe, bottom of your heart, there is somebody in Iraq of the Shia
10 sect that can do that as prime minister if we move through this process?

11 **MR. MCGURK.** Senator, we have had extreme frustrations with the Iraqi
12 government, particularly over the last year, and that is one reason we have focused
13 most decisively on making sure elections happen, they happen on time, they were
14 credible. And they did happen. They happened on April 30th. They have created a
15 new parliament and through that parliament new leaders will emerge.

16 There are a handful of very capable leaders who may emerge as the next prime
17 minister of Iraq, but we are going to have to see. This will unfold fairly rapidly over the
18 coming days.

19 **SENATOR CORKER.** Ms. Slotkin, I know there was a little discussion between you
20 and the chairman relative to the assessment that is taking place. Can you just broadly
21 tell us of anything that you have learned over the last three weeks that you did not
22 know prior to the assessment?

23 **MS. SLOTKIN.** Sure. I think the thing when we put the assessors on the ground
24 that was the biggest open question, given the march ISIL had had across and into Mosul
25 and down, was what was the status of Baghdad? Would the ISF be able to successfully

1 defend Baghdad? That was our critical first question, especially given the size of our
2 mission there.

3 I think one of the early things that we saw as we got on the ground was that
4 there was a stiffening of the Iraqi Security Forces in and around Baghdad to protect the
5 capital, which we thought was critically important. So we certainly were not aware
6 until we got on the ground.

7 I do think some of the early indications are, frankly, mixed. There are some very
8 capable units that have high morale and that are willing and capable of fighting, and
9 there are other units where morale is lower, where there may not be as much capability
10 and willingness to actually fight. It is sorting out the details of that that we are working
11 on right now.

12 **SENATOR CORKER.** If you were to surmise after you do this assessment, what do
13 you think the range of options will be that will be presented to the President relative to
14 our activities militarily in Iraq?

15 **Ms. SLOTKIN.** I think, without crowding any decision space, all the military
16 options we could possibly consider have to fit into a much wider regional strategy that
17 is not a lead by the military.

18 **SENATOR CORKER.** Tell me what that means? I know you have said that in your
19 opening comments.

20 **Ms. SLOTKIN.** Sure.

21 **SENATOR CORKER.** I think most people in this committee have been concerned. We
22 had very, very strong support for efforts in Syria. Are you referring to Syria and Iraq?
23 Is that basically the region?

24 **Ms. SLOTKIN.** It is Syria and Iraq, given ISIL's march. But then in particular it is
25 making sure that we do not see a further spread. I mean, I know everyone was
26 concerned —

1 **SENATOR CORKER.** Jordan.

2 **MS. SLOTKIN.** Exactly. Jordan has been particularly a focus for us, given the
3 border area right there with Iraq. But this is part of the administration's attempt to try
4 and create this counterterrorism partnership fund to shore up particularly the neighbors
5 of Iraq and Syria, to make sure that they have a flexible way to respond to the threats, to
6 make sure we do not see that spread, and then to ask for funding for training the vetted
7 Syrian moderate opposition so we have some sort of attempt from the inside of Syria to
8 secure up those areas as well.

9 So it is impossible to just look at the ISIL threat at Iraq only because, as I said
10 yesterday, it is kind of like air in a balloon; you squeeze on one end, it just goes
11 somewhere else. We need a comprehensive approach outside in and inside out.

12 **SENATOR CORKER.** It is interesting you say that. I think people on this committee
13 have been saying for like a year and a half that when the time was right, when we could
14 have taken steps in Syria that could have prevented this, they were not taken. So now it
15 is interesting that the administration is looking at a regional approach. Is that solely
16 because now there is this counterterrorism issue, that the situation has gotten so bad —
17 it did not have to, but it has — it has gotten so bad now that it is a threat to the
18 homeland and that is the reason you are looking at a regional approach?

19 What do you think it is that has taken so long, with so many people crying out on
20 both sides of the aisle to, please do something relative to the moderate opposition in
21 Syria, knowing that there is no border there, knowing that it was destabilizing Iraq? Is
22 it this counterterrorism issue solely that has now caused the administration to look at it
23 regionally?

24 **MS. SLOTKIN.** I think the administration has been looking at this regionally for a
25 while.

26 **SENATOR CORKER.** But it has been looking at it.

1 **Ms. SLOTKIN.** Well, I actually do not think that is fair. I think that we have
2 invested heavily in some serious border security work with Jordan. We have done
3 programs with Lebanon, we have done programs with Turkey. This is not beginning
4 from anew here.

5 But I do think that the thing that surprised us, frankly, was the collapse of the
6 Iraqi Security Forces in and around Mosul and four divisions essentially melting away.
7 If you would have asked me that a year ago, I would have not assessed that. I think
8 that the spread of ISIL, given the number of foreign passport holders that we know
9 have traveled back and forth to Syria, western passport holders, it does focus the mind.

10 **SENATOR CORKER.** If I could just ask one last question, or make a statement. We
11 had a really, really strong vote here and a great debate on supporting the moderate
12 opposition, and I was glad to get the call that the White House is now looking at I guess
13 \$500 million in actual Defense Department support for these.

14 I have to say — and the first time I have said it out loud — I have now gotten to
15 the point where I question — I hate to say it — how effective that is going to be at this
16 point. I think there was a point in time when it could have been really effective. I now
17 question whether now at this point, with all that has happened, knowing that ISIS has
18 taken such a large part of the territory in Syria, I now question the effectiveness. And
19 yet the administration really feels like that small amount at this late date still has the
20 possibility to do real good in Syria.

21 **Ms. SLOTKIN.** Sir, I think you cannot fight something with nothing. So I think that
22 it is important to start.

23 **SENATOR CORKER.** Well, we have been doing that for a long time. So it is
24 interesting. So I agree with you and I think everybody here does. I guess the question
25 is can you fight something with almost nothing at this point, when it has festered into
26 this type of situation.

1 **THE CHAIRMAN.** And then we will have to move to Senator Boxer.

2 **Ms. SLOTKIN.** I do think it is important. We have put together a program that is
3 scaleable. You can start small and move up significantly in the numbers and scale of the
4 program, and we think it is critical that we start.

5 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Senator Boxer.

6 **SENATOR BOXER.** Thank you.

7 I look at things just a little bit differently than a lot of folks here. I think the Iraqis
8 had a chance of a lifetime and America's blood and treasure gave them that chance of a
9 lifetime, a chance at unity, a chance at peace, and with their natural resources a chance
10 at a growing economy. And clearly those of us, a minority of 23, who predicted this if
11 we went to war, we did not prevail and that is life. You do not prevail, so you move on.

12 And then later when then-Senator Biden, who was the chairman of this
13 committee, proposed more autonomy for the Sunnis and for the Kurds — oh. And by
14 the way, more than 70 Senators voted for that. The then Bush Administration laughed
15 at it, kind of like people laugh right now. That is a lot of laughing. And that was
16 turned away.

17 So the situation in Iraq I think is dire now, and I am not about to reinvest more
18 lives and treasure. The United States has sacrificed too much. The war cost us \$2
19 trillion. People predicted it would be over in weeks, months. More than 4400
20 Americans were killed, their families never the same, 32,000 wounded during the course
21 of the war. And we all know, and I praise Senators Sanders and McCain for battling to
22 get help for those who are suffering from physical and mental injuries.

23 So I am pleased that President Obama said unequivocally American forces will
24 not be returning to combat in Iraq, and I want to record to show that I will never vote to
25 send more combat forces in. You know, you get so many chances in a lifetime.

1 I want to ask you about the Kurds, both of you. I do not know which one. Either
2 of you could answer. The Kurds in northern Iraq have long been a strong ally of the
3 United States, and they have played an important role in countering the rapid advance
4 of ISIS. When I went to Iraq a very long time ago, the bullets were flying. The Kurds, I
5 found them to get what this was all about.

6 There is so much prejudice against the Kurds. The Kurdish militia offered to
7 support Iraqi Security Forces when ISIS began its offensive in Mosul. Kurdish forces
8 have kept much of northern Iraq out of terrorist hands. Kurdistan has become a
9 destination for hundreds of thousands of Iraqis fleeing from ISIS-controlled territory.

10 I have to say, as I watch Mr. Maliki I do not think he appreciates it. As the Iraqis
11 continue to work to determine their future, I am asking you, what role can the Kurds
12 continue to play, and should the United States acknowledge that the Kurds should have
13 a significant amount of autonomy? I think they have earned it, and I wondered what
14 the administration position is vis a vis the Kurds and more autonomy for the Kurds.

15 **Mr. McGurk.** Thank you, Senator. We are in a very active conversation with all
16 the Kurdish leaders about their future. There are some realities that they are grappling
17 with, the geostrategic realities and geographic realities, also their economic realities.
18 They need about \$14 billion to sustain themselves operationally. Their share of the
19 budget this year, which is pending in Baghdad, is about \$17 billion. We think there is a
20 deal there within the constitutional framework that is in the best interests of the Kurds
21 and also our interests both in northern Iraq and Iraq as a whole.

22 However, since this crisis began — and we recognize we are dealing with new
23 realities on the ground that we have to recognize and deal with. We have established a
24 joint operations center in Erbil to work with the Kurdish forces and with the Pesh
25 Merga to make sure, because they have about 1,000 kilometers now with ISIS on a good
26 chunk of their border and they are going to need some help.

1 But that will work most effectively if it is done in cooperation and coordination
2 with Baghdad, of course with us providing a mediating role where necessary. So we
3 are in a very active conversation with them. They have a good deal of autonomy now
4 and I am sure that they will ask for more through the government formation process,
5 and that will all be done under the constitution.

6 Vice President — Barzani has been on the phone a number of times with our Vice
7 President Biden to talk about these issues. President Barzani has made clear to us he
8 wants to act through the constitutional framework for resolving some of the disputed
9 boundaries in which the Pesh Merga has moved by necessity over the last six weeks.

10 So the short answer to your question, we are in a very active conversation with
11 the Kurds about this, and I am happy to follow up with you as it unfolds over the
12 coming months.

13 **SENATOR BOXER.** And the United States will support more autonomy for the Kurds
14 then, I assume?

15 **MR. MCGURK.** Well, through the government formation process there will be an
16 active debate. I will just say we very much support the Kurds on particular critical
17 issues. Baghdad about four or five months ago cut funding for salaries of workers in the
18 Kurdish region. We have made very clear that is completely, totally unacceptable and
19 that has to be reversed.

20 The Kurds have also done some things in some cases in which we have said that
21 might exacerbate tensions in a way that would not be particularly constructive. That is
22 why we are in a very active conversation. But we support autonomy within the
23 constitutional framework, certainly.

24 **SENATOR BOXER.** I am just saying, I do not know what the future is of that
25 constitutional framework, but we all hope it works.

1 The last question is: Are you confident we have adequate personnel on the
2 ground to truly protect our embassy and the Americans in Baghdad?

3 **MR. MCGURK.** Senator, yes. We have moved in substantial assets both to the
4 airport and also into the embassy. I was just there as late as Thursday and we are
5 confident that our defensive perimeters and everything, that our people will be safe.
6 Our Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security just visited Baghdad last week to do his
7 own assessment and we have also had teams on the ground from CENTCOM. This is
8 an ongoing assessment. And our intelligence assets have the entire, everything, all
9 around the perimeter of the city of Baghdad, the airport, and our embassy very well
10 covered. So we are confident.

11 **SENATOR BOXER.** Can you tell us how many people we have at the embassy, or is
12 that something that you do not want to discuss in open session?

13 **MR. MCGURK.** We have a total in Baghdad of about 2500 now.

14 **SENATOR BOXER.** Thank you.

15 Thank you.

16 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Senator Johnson.

17 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 Mr. McGurk, let us quickly go back to the Kurds. I have been made aware of the
19 fact that the Baghdad government is basically in arrears on the Kurds' budget by about
20 \$6 billion. Is that pretty accurate?

21 **Mr. MCGURK.** There are a lot of ways to do the accounting and the math.
22 Baghdad claims the Kurds owe them money, the Kurds claim that Baghdad owes them
23 money, and in that space is where a deal lies. I think that is going to be part of the
24 conversation in forming a new government.

1 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** If it is true that Baghdad owes them as much as \$6 billion,
2 would the U.S. support the Kurds' ability to export oil and obtain that revenue so they
3 can keep **THEMSELVES** going?

4 **MR. MCGURK.** We want to get as much oil onto international markets as possible
5 from all parts of Iraq, and that is something that we very strongly support. We worked
6 very hard over the last six months to get a deal on the table by which the Kurds would
7 have exported as much oil as they possibly could through some of the existing
8 arrangements, with the revenue-sharing allocations that exist. And that deal almost
9 succeeded, but it ran up against the election time frame, and once you had an election it
10 was very difficult to close the deal.

11 But I think we will be able to get that back on the table. But we want as much oil
12 from Iraq north to south onto international markets as soon as possible.

13 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** Now, I appreciate the fact that we are going through
14 assessments and we are studying the problem. But I want to — because you have to
15 recognize reality before you really develop a strategy. But I really do want to just kind
16 of compare where we are now versus where we were prior to the 2007 surge.

17 Mr. McGurk, you have been involved in this for quite some time. What was the
18 level of the Iraqi forces back in 2007? I really want some relatively quick answers here
19 because I want to get some data points.

20 **MR. MCGURK.** How do you measure the level?

21 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** How people were in the Iraqi Security Forces back in 2007?

22 **MR. MCGURK.** I do not have the figure, but it was not a highly effective force in
23 early 2007.

24 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** America, we had about 132,000 at the start of the surge and we
25 surged to about 168,000, correct?

26 **MR. MCGURK.** That is right.

1 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** What were we up against in terms of enemy fighters back in
2 2007?

3 **MR. MCGURK.** We assess that the main enemy then was al Qaeda in Iraq, which is
4 ISIL. It is the same organization.

5 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** And about how many people were we up against?

6 **MR. MCGURK.** These figures are always very difficult.

7 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** I understand.

8 **MR. MCGURK.** We had assessments of 6 to 8,000 at the time, but probably more.

9 **Senator Johnson.** So what do we think current ISIL forces are?

10 **MR. MCGURK.** Current, the assessments we have seen — but again they are very
11 difficult to measure — 15,000 or so, in Iraq far less.

12 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** But basically double that we had in terms of 2007?

13 **MR. MCGURK.** ISIL today, according to our assessments, is far more capable in
14 manpower resources, fighting effectiveness, than the AQI that we fought, yes.

15 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** That is my point. U.S. troop levels right now in Iraq are how
16 many?

17 **MR. MCGURK.** Total now about —

18 **MS. SLOTKIN.** We have inserted 775-ish and we have about 100 that were
19 associated with our Office of Security Cooperation.

20 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** So less than a thousand?

21 **MS. SLOTKIN.** Less than a thousand.

22 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** Less than a thousand now. Back in 2007, prior to a pretty
23 difficult battle, in terms of the surge we had 168,000 at the height of that. And ISIL now
24 is double the size that it was back in 2007 and they have some of our weapons, their
25 capabilities are much higher.

26 **MR. MCGURK.** That is right.

1 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** What was the size of the Iraqi military force in June of 2014,
2 prior to ISIL's move into Iraq? What was our estimate there?

3 **MR. MCGURK.** I do not have that figure, but I can get it for you.

4 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** Are we talking hundreds of thousands?

5 **MR. MCGURK.** Hundreds of thousands, but we try to look at capable and effective
6 forces, and one of the purposes of the assessment was to determine which units are
7 effective, which are ineffective. There are some units, quite frankly, that are totally
8 ineffective and there are some units that are highly capable and effective.

9 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** Ms. Slotkin, do you have that information?

10 **MS. SLOTKIN.** I think it is just shy of 200,000.

11 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** 200,000 prior to the intrusion or the invasion?

12 **MS. SLOTKIN.** I believe so.

13 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** How many now do you think there are? You said that they lost
14 four divisions. How many would that represent that have just melted into the
15 background?

16 **MS. SLOTKIN.** Again, I do not have the exact number, but it is probably closer to
17 160-ish.

18 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** Do you have any sense just percentage-wise of what percentage
19 of that force would have any effectiveness in terms of fighting?

20 **MR. MCGURK.** In terms of the dissolved units, it was about 30,000. The Iraqis have
21 since recalled about 10,000 and, according to our OSCI assessments, there are about
22 10,000 who have come back and are going through about a three-week training course
23 now.

24 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** The effectiveness of the Iraqi Security Forces versus U.S.
25 fighting forces? Not even comparable, right?

26 **MR. MCGURK.** You cannot even compare them, no.

1 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** We have got a real problem on our hands.

2 Can you — because we talked a little bit about the threat to our homeland that
3 ISIL in Syria and Iraq represent. Can you describe what the threat to the homeland is
4 because of the situation? Can you make the American people aware of why this
5 matters?

6 **MR. MCGURK.** What really concerns particularly our counterterrorism experts and
7 also concerns us is that this rise in very dedicated global jihadist fighters coming from
8 all over the world, many with western passports. In Baghdad, just this week there was
9 a suicide bomber. There was a German, there was an Australian. ISIL is able to funnel
10 about 30 to 50 suicide bombers a month into Iraq. These are, we assess, almost all
11 foreign fighters.

12 It would be very easy for ISIL to decide to funnel that cadre of dedicated suicide
13 bombers, global jihadis, into other capitals around the region, or Europe or, worse, here.
14 So that is a very significant, significant concern. They have training bases in Syria and
15 they are recruiting on social media and the Internet, and it is something that we have
16 never seen before.

17 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** A year ago the President declared the war on terror was over.
18 Do you believe the war on terror is over?

19 **MR. MCGURK.** I think we have a very significant fight on our hands with ISIL,
20 which we have to manage.

21 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** I have no further questions.

22 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Senator Cardin.

23 **SENATOR CARDIN.** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Let me thank both of you for your appearance here today and for your service to
25 our country. I certainly agree that the United States has a vital interest in containing
26 ISIS' growth and its threat to our homeland and to our allies. I also agree that we have

1 a direct interest in dealing with a government in Iraq that represents all the ethnic
2 communities fairly with an effective government that gives confidence to moderates
3 that their voices can be heard within the Iraqi government.

4 But it was interesting. I was listening to Senator Johnson go through some of the
5 comparisons on the strength of the terrorist networks, whether it is ISIL, ISIS, or
6 whether it is al Qaeda, or whether it is whatever. He was drawing a comparison over
7 the last seven years. But if you go back to before the U.S. troop invasion in 2001, at least
8 my understanding was there was virtually no al Qaeda, no terrorist network that was a
9 direct threat to our homeland, in Iraq. So it does raise a lot of the questions that Senator
10 Boxer raised initially, that our use of military force back in 2001 was ill-advised.

11 We do not want to repeat the mistakes that we have made in the past. That is the
12 reason I bring it up. But I started with the fact that we have vital interests in dealing
13 with the current circumstances that are on the ground in Iraq.

14 I know this hearing is focused on Iraq, but I want to move a little bit to Syria and
15 what impact the ISIS is having on the opposition effectiveness in Syria and whether we
16 are finding any of the support for the opposition strengthening ISIS' capacity within
17 Iraq. The network between the moderate Gulf Arab Muslim states in supporting the
18 opposition in Syria, are we confident that that is not finding its way to the terrorist
19 networks now operating in Iraq?

20 **Ms. SLOTKIN.** Obviously, the connection between ISIL — between the threat in
21 Iraq and Syria is pretty significant. I do not personally know of any reports of
22 opposition support then being funneled to ISIL. I think they are in a pretty bitter fight
23 against both the regime and the terrorists, who have taken over territory particularly in
24 eastern and northern Syria. So I do not have any reports of that equipment and that
25 support that has been provided getting into their hands, but it is always a risk.

1 **SENATOR CARDIN.** What precautions have we taken with moderate Arab states and
2 with our own support for the opposition in Syria to make sure that we are not finding
3 American support or moderate Arab state support ending up encouraging terrorist
4 activities now moving into Iraq?

5 **MS. SLOTKIN.** This is something obviously we talk to our Gulf partners about quite
6 a bit certainly over the period of the past couple of years, and we just urge them to
7 make sure, similar to the way we do end use monitoring, that they have some way of
8 telling who they are providing things to, in what capacity, etcetera, etcetera. We urge
9 them to follow up the way we would want them to follow up.

10 **SENATOR CARDIN.** Mr. McGurk, what impact is the impasse in Syria, the failure to
11 be able to have a workable plan in Syria, impacting stability in Iraq?

12 **MR. MCGURK.** It is a very good question, Senator. The Iraqis since the beginning
13 of the Syria crisis — and this is really all Iraqis — have had a different conception of the
14 Syria crisis than we have had. They have been very concerned that, based upon their
15 own experience, that were you to see the fall of the Assad regime, that it would unleash
16 just chaos on their borders. And they take what is happening within that frame.

17 There is a Kurdish dimension to the Syria crisis. There is a central government in
18 Iraq to the Syria crisis. There is a tribal dimension to the Syria crisis. And it has just
19 accelerated the centrifugal forces that is tearing at the fabric of Iraq. So it is very hard to
20 even state the impact that the Syria crisis has had in Iraq, in particular the rise of the
21 suicide bombings and car bombings, all of which we assess are ISIL. They come month
22 after month and they are targeted — and this is ISIL's doctrine and ideology; you can go
23 back to their writings of Zarqawi in 2004 — to tear at the fabric of Iraq, to attack Shia
24 civilians in their marketplaces, their playgrounds, their mosques, repeatedly, to attack
25 Sunni tribal leaders who disagree with them. And that is why in February almost 86
26 percent of the suicide bombings that ISIL brought into Iraq were all focused on the

1 Euphrates Valley and Anbar Province, attacking Sunnis who disagreed with their
2 ideology. And then to attack the Kurds in the disputed boundary territories in the
3 north. That is what ISIL is trying to do.

4 We go that suicide bomber number down to about five to ten a month in 2011-
5 2012 and last year and this year it went up to 30 to 50 a month, and it has a devastating
6 effect on the entire psychology of the country.

7 **SENATOR CARDIN.** Do we have any numbers, the numbers of Iraqis since June who
8 have been displaced, either within Iraq or outside in other countries?

9 **MR. MCGURK.** Immediately, in Mosul there are about 500,000 IDP's, and since this
10 crisis really started earlier this year the IDP number is over a million.

11 **SENATOR CARDIN.** Are they in Iraq or are they in Iran or are they in other countries?

12 **MR. MCGURK.** Most of them are in Iraq and most of them have fled to the Kurdish
13 region in the north. We have worked very closely with our regional partners and with
14 our UN partners in Iraq to manage this crisis. Secretary Kerry after he was in Baghdad
15 went to Paris to meet the foreign ministers of UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, and then
16 went to Riyadh to see King Abdullah in Riyadh, and the Saudis right after that meeting
17 very generously contributed \$500 million to the UN agencies working in Iraq, which
18 was a much needed contribution.

19 We have contributed since the crisis began in Mosul about \$18 million, and we
20 are working very closely, particularly with our Kurdish partners, to manage the crisis.

21 **SENATOR CARDIN.** I take it that very few of these people have returned because it is
22 not safe at this moment?

23 **MR. MCGURK.** Yes, that is right.

24 **SENATOR CARDIN.** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 **SENATOR KAINE** [presiding]. Thank you, Senator Cardin.

26 **SENATOR FLAKE.**

1 **SENATOR FLAKE.** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 How long have we known that ISIL was a threat to the extent that they are now?
3 How long has the State Department assessed it as a threat?

4 **MR. MCGURK.** We have known this organization since 2003. It is Zaraqawi, al
5 Qaeda in Iraq. We have known it. We have watched it.

6 **SENATOR FLAKE.** I know we have known it, but at what point did we think that
7 there was a threat that they would take over Mosul?

8 **MR. MCGURK.** Well, in Mosul they have had this modus vivendi in which they
9 run racketeering schemes and they self-generate funding for about \$12 million a month
10 in Mosul. We have known that has been going on. Their open assault into Mosul, we
11 did not have indications of that until a few days beforehand.

12 **SENATOR FLAKE.** Just a few days before that. When did we give warning to the
13 Iraqi government that this was a threat, or did they — has their intelligence network
14 been sufficient to know this before it was a problem?

15 **MR. MCGURK.** It is a very good question, Senator. In fact, we have been giving
16 warnings and expressing concern to the Iraqi government about the security
17 environment, not just in Mosul but in northern Ninevah, going back about the last year.
18 And it was a part of the conversation that I know our Vice President had with Prime
19 Minister Maliki when Maliki was here in November.

20 We have been very concerned about it and trying to work with the Kurds and
21 with the Iraqi Security Forces in those areas to have some coordination, because ISIL
22 comes through that border crossing south of a town called Rabia, and they have filled
23 that space gradually over the last year.

24 **SENATOR FLAKE.** Without our military there actually conducting ground
25 operations, our efforts have been in the diplomatic field, one, to try to convince the

1 Iraqis to be more inclusive and to not give rise to this kind of activity or space for that
2 kind of activity to happen, but, two, to warn them and help them combat this.

3 It seems to me we have been spectacularly unsuccessful in the diplomatic arena
4 in that regard. Do you have any response to that? Or how hard are we working there?
5 What intelligence do we have? Are we passing it on? Is the Iraqi government simply
6 unresponsive? What has been the issue here?

7 **MR. MCGURK.** In terms of intelligence cooperation, sharing with Iraqi forces and
8 cooperation with Iraqi forces, right now as we speak it is at a level we have not seen
9 since our troops left in 2011. So there is some opportunities there for us.

10 Since we really started focusing on the al Qaeda-ISIL threat in Iraq, really going
11 back to last summer, you can see some statements that the State Department issued
12 about Baghdadi, the fact that he is the leader of al Qaeda in Iraq, he is now in Syria, and
13 ISIL is an increasing threat to Iraq. We have developed platforms with the Iraqis to try
14 to develop a better intelligence picture. But a lot of it was slow going.

15 On the political side, we were very focused when the crisis began in Anbar to
16 make clear, very clearly, that any tribal fighters rising up against to fight this group will
17 get full benefits and resources of the state. The Iraqis also agreed to train about 1,000
18 native Fallujans. They gave them three months of training and then they actually
19 mobilized and there was an operation in northern Fallujah and, quite frankly, those
20 fighters lost, and they lost because the ISIL networks, particularly in Fallujah, with
21 snipers, with IED's, with their military sophistication, is able to overmatch any tribal
22 force that comes to confront it. That is the situation right now.

23 It was also the situation in northern Ninevah, because we do have tribal contacts
24 up there with the Shamar Tribe, which is the main tribe up there. And over time, given
25 the infiltrations from Syria, given the amount of force that ISIL can bring to bear, it was
26 very difficult for locals to stand up to them.

1 **SENATOR FLAKE.** You say cooperation with the Iraqi government was slow in
2 coming. Where does the fault lie with that? Was it slow — were we slow to recognize
3 the threat of ISIS or was the Iraqi government simply slow to heed the warnings that we
4 were giving or the cooperation that we offered?

5 **MR. MCGURK.** I think we started moving fairly aggressively in the summer. The
6 Iraqis wanted to do things on their own. They did not want our — they did not really
7 formally request direct U.S. military assistance until May, although there was a
8 conversation about the possibility of such assistance earlier than May. But the formal
9 request came in May.

10 The Iraqis are very proud of their sovereignty. We have a strategic framework
11 agreement with them which allows us to do an awful lot. But the notion of flying
12 surveillance drones over Iraqi skies, quite frankly, was something that was
13 controversial at first. So we had to develop the mechanisms and the procedures for
14 doing these things, and we have those now well in place.

15 **SENATOR FLAKE.** Our role in Congress, one of our main roles, obviously is to
16 provide funding for these conflicts, for intelligence, for diplomatic efforts. Aside from
17 thousands of lives lost, we have spent about \$800 billion at last count in Iraq, just in
18 Iraq. What can we tell our constituents that we have gotten out of that? Where are we
19 now that we would not be had we not spent \$800 billion?

20 **MS. SLOTKIN.** I think, as Senator Boxer said, we gave them an opportunity and we
21 hope that this is not the end of the story in Iraq. We believe that there is still an
22 opportunity for the Iraqis to form a government and do something about this problem,
23 and we are urging them to get on with it.

24 I think that we still believe in a way forward in Iraq. They just have to take the
25 opportunity.

1 **SENATOR FLAKE.** Is it possible at all in the State Department's view to move ahead
2 with Maliki in charge? Will there be sufficient trust, any trust, in the Sunni population
3 that he will be inclusive enough, his government? Or does our strategy rely on
4 somebody else coming in?

5 **MR. MCGURK.** Again, it is going to be very difficult for him to form a government,
6 and so they are facing that question now, now that the president has been elected, to
7 face the question of the prime minister. Any prime minister in order to form a
8 government is going to have to pull the country together. So whoever the leader is is
9 someone that is going to have to demonstrate that just to get the votes he needs to
10 remain or to be sworn into office.

11 So that is something that is going to evolve fairly rapidly over the coming days.
12 Again, there is a 15-day time line to nominate a prime minister, and then whoever the
13 nominee is still has to then form a cabinet and present it to the parliament to form a
14 government.

15 The speaker of the parliament, again, was elected overwhelmingly with support
16 from all major groups, as was the president, and we would anticipate the prime
17 minister. As we have said, as the President has said, it has to be somebody that has a
18 very inclusive agenda and that can bring all the component groups together. Otherwise
19 he will not be able to govern.

20 **SENATOR FLAKE.** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

21 **SENATOR KAINE.** Thank you, Senator Flake.

22 Senator Coons.

23 **SENATOR COONS.** Thank you. I want to thank Senator Menendez for chairing this
24 hearing, and Senator Kaine and Senator Corker for your leadership on this committee
25 as well, and thank our witnesses for your testimony today. I will follow on Senator
26 Flake's questioning in a moment.

1 I share the administration's ultimate goal as you have just been testifying to of
2 encouraging the creation of an inclusive Iraqi government that is supported by all of
3 Iraq's different sectarian groups, that has some hope of a secure and stable Iraq going
4 forward, given how much has been sacrificed over how many years.

5 But I will also renew a theme you have heard from several Senators, that I do not
6 support a return of active U.S. combat troop presence in Iraq. I am concerned about the
7 security of our embassy and our personnel and I am very concerned about the region
8 and about some of our vital regional allies. So first I think we do need to deal with
9 defeating ISIS and the regional threat here in the regional context, as you testified. And
10 I think it is imperative that we have to find a way to move forward that has some
11 reasonable chance of resolving the ongoing crisis in both Iraq and Syria to the best
12 interests of the United States, of Israel, of Jordan, of Turkey, of all of our regional allies.

13 First, on the point you were just discussing, what do you see as the prospects, the
14 path forward for a political solution here in these next 15 days? Have you met with
15 anyone who strikes you as a promising potential prime minister, who really could
16 bridge these divides? Given reports of high-level delegations of Iranian military
17 officials and diplomats meeting in Baghdad and in Najaf, I am concerned that there are
18 fewer and fewer realistic chances of a broad-based, inclusive government being formed,
19 given active interference and engagement from Iran.

20 **MR. MCGURK.** I can speak a little bit to the process. This was Iraq's third national
21 election they held on April 30th. It was one of the best elections they have held in terms
22 of the turnout. In 2006 it took about seven months to form a government and an
23 extremely difficult process, and what they did was they built this very bloated
24 government with every seat filled and then voted it into office. In 2010 it wound up
25 being the same thing. It took nine months, and again they built a very bloated structure
26 and then swore it into office.

1 This year, this time, they are proceeding quite differently. They are moving
2 through their constitutional time line — speaker, president, now prime minister. It is
3 moving much faster than ever before. Nine months in 2010. We are less than three
4 months out from the April elections and we are now on the step for the prime
5 ministership.

6 I would be hesitant to put time lines on it because it is a very complicated
7 process. The 328 members in the Iraqi parliament represent the entire spectrum of
8 political thought in Iraq and so it is very difficult to get full unity on any one person or
9 any one issue. So there will be a very strong debate. It is not beanbag, the political
10 process there. Now they are starting to focus on the most critical question of who is
11 going to lead the question as the chief executive.

12 SENATOR COONS. Your riveting description of the fall of Mosul suggests that a
13 lack of urgency, a lack of reality, about the situation on the ground was outcome
14 determinative, led to a failure to act in a timely way and to ISIS sweeping across much
15 of the center of the country. Do you think there is a sense of urgency, a sense of reality,
16 both as to the defense posture that ISF now faces and to the political challenges that
17 they face?

18 **MR. MCGURK.** Yes. There is a culture in Iraq that sometimes folks do not want to
19 give their leaders bad news, and sometimes we are the ones who have to deliver the
20 bad news and say, you face a very urgent situation. Mosul was a good example of that.
21 The generals up there were not saying that it was particularly urgent. So we are often
22 the ones that have to do that.

23 Now, given the information we have, given the relationships we have on the
24 ground, military relationships, we are able to give them a very clear picture of the
25 situation they face. The relative tactical success they have had in clearing some of the
26 highways north of Baghdad — and relative because it remains very difficult, but the

1 highway — it is Highway 1 that goes all the way, up north through the Tigris Valley
2 from Baghdad to Samarra. They did clear that. That was partially on their own, but
3 partially because we helped them with some information. Then the next stretch, from
4 Samarra to Tikrit, the same thing. As I mentioned, we did not advise them to go into
5 Tikrit City itself because that is a very difficult military environment to operate in.

6 But again, that is why General Austin is on the ground, to discuss with their new
7 commanders, who we have very good relationships with, and with the Iraqi political
8 leaders how we can better approach this going forward in a more cooperative way.

9 **SENATOR COONS.** Ms. Slotkin, there has been widespread reports of Sunnis sort of
10 bristling under ISIS rule. They are extreme, they conduct not just terror attacks and
11 suicide bombings and targeted assassinations, but they also are imposing a particularly
12 harsh form of sharia. What prospects are there for outreach, for reengagement with
13 elements of the Sunni community that might assist the Iraqi Security Forces, might play
14 some role in rising up against ISIS in a replay of what happened previously?

15 **Ms. SLOTKIN.** I think we have seen this story before in our own experience in Iraq,
16 that many of these groups who may give tacit support to terrorist organizations in their
17 neighborhoods, as soon as there is some prospect of turning against them and they
18 know they have some support from their central government to do it, then they will
19 turn on them. They do not like living under sometimes the sharia law that has been
20 imposed on them.

21 So I think the prospects are still there. But I think ultimately it will come down to
22 whether they feel like they have a partner in the central government of Iraq, there is
23 something to break away for. And that is up to the Iraqi government. The new
24 government will have to attract the Sunnis away from ISIS and ISIL and towards them.
25 The security forces have to be a part of that, but at the end of the day it is about a
26 political compromise that they strike in Baghdad and lure those Sunnis away.

1 **SENATOR COONS.** I am particularly concerned about our vital ally in the region
2 Jordan, absolute their both military and economic and strategic stability, given the flood
3 of refugees that they have already been taking in as a result of the Syrian crisis, and
4 about the open, increasingly porous borders. What concrete steps are we taking to
5 reinforce and to ensure the stability and vibrancy of Jordan, and how does the
6 announced intent to deliver support to the vetted moderate Syrian resistance strengthen
7 that?

8 **Ms. SLOTKIN.** I think the most important thing is that the Jordanian military is a
9 very capable military force. So we are very focused on the threat right on their border,
10 but so are they. They have reinforced their troops on their border with Iraq, and we
11 have a very close relationship, military to military relationship, with the Jordanians and
12 talk with them on a daily basis.

13 Again, because of the Syria crisis the U.S. already had a robust presence in the
14 country. We have F-16's there, we have a Patriot battery there. We have a \$300 million
15 FMF program. We do education with them. It is a strong relationship, one of the
16 strongest in the region. So I feel confident that we are doing everything we can in
17 response to any request that they have to help them with their situation on the border.

18 I think the idea of supporting moderate, vetted opposition in Syria is only more
19 positive. We need — the United States needs capable partners and platforms in the
20 region to deal with this very fluid threat. The Jordanians are a big part of that and so
21 will the Syrian moderate opposition.

22 **SENATOR COONS.** Thank you.

23 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 **SENATOR KAINE.** Thank you, Senator Coons.

25 Senator Risch defers his questioning for now to Senator Rubio.

26 **SENATOR RUBIO.** Thank you. I appreciate that.

1 Let me begin with my — I think our priority for everyone here is the safety and
2 security of our personnel, including Department of Defense personnel and certainly the
3 State Department personnel at the embassy, given recent events. So there has been
4 increased reporting that the ISF is increasingly linked or intermingled with Shia militia
5 forces, that some of these Shia militia forces are actually now wearing ISF uniforms, but
6 it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between a Shia militia fighter and an
7 ISF personnel.

8 We have seen open source reporting that the Shia militia could pose a threat to
9 our personnel, including potentially our military trainers and others. Can you briefly
10 describe, number one, how we assess the threat of these militia and what are we doing
11 to mitigate the risks that they could pose to our personnel, given the fact that they are
12 now basically embedded and intermingled with the Iraqi Security Force personnel that
13 we are working side by side potentially with?

14 **Ms. SLOTKIN.** Sure. This is exactly what we were trying to assess by going over
15 there and looking unit by unit in and around Baghdad at things like command and
16 control, morale, and in particular infiltration of Shia militias. Grand Ayatollah Sistani
17 put out a very public call for volunteers to join the military, so one thing we watched
18 very closely was as all these new folks came in where would their allegiances be?
19 Would they respond to the commanders of their unit or someone else?

20 I think that is what we have been trying to figure out, and I think the picture,
21 honestly, is mixed. In some areas we have good morale, strong adherence to command
22 and control through the military channels, and in other places it is more of an open
23 question. Those are the kinds of units that we do not want to be working with and why
24 we are taking this very sort of deliberate approach.

25 **SENATOR RUBIO.** Well, but there is the real risk, is there not, that Shia militia that
26 are there could easily — could just as easily be the ones firing on our embassy and on

1 our personnel as ISIL personnel could be, unless they are somehow otherwise
2 constrained?

3 **MR. MCGURK.** Senator, the Shia militias are something we watch very closely.
4 There has been a ceasefire. The Shia militias have had a ceasefire in place since 2009
5 against their own government forces, a ceasefire. We have not had any attacks from
6 Shia militias since 2011. But it is something that we watch extremely closely.

7 The assessment assessed every unit around Baghdad and, without getting into
8 the details, some units are infiltrated and dangerous. Some of them, however, are very
9 capable, very effective, and have close relationships with us.

10 **SENATOR RUBIO.** I wanted to get to a broader question, and you touched upon it in
11 your statement and you do even more so in the written statement that you have
12 submitted. But here is the question that we get from people, and that is people are
13 outraged by what is happening, especially the reports coming out about the different
14 things that ISIL is doing. By no means is this a group that is popular and I think
15 Americans understand this is a terrible, radical group of violent individuals.

16 That being said, public opinion polls and just from the phone calls we get in our
17 offices, the attitude of much of the American public is it is a mess, but it is their problem,
18 let them figure it out. I have personally said that this is not even about Iraq at this
19 point; it is about the long-term security of the United States, and that the threat that ISIL
20 poses to the U.S., especially if they are able to establish a safe haven of operations
21 similar to what al Qaeda did, in fact even worse than what al Qaeda was able to do in
22 Afghanistan.

23 But I was hoping that from the administration's point of view and from the State
24 Department and the Department of Defense's point of view you could perhaps use this
25 as an opportunity to explain to my constituents in Florida why this matters to America,
26 why something happening halfway around the world, in a country that people, quite

1 frankly, think increasingly perhaps we should not have gotten involved in? Why does
2 this matter? Why should people care about what is happening in Iraq, given the
3 problems we have here at home?

4 **MR. MCGURK.** Thank you, Senator. Let me say a couple of things. I of course
5 address the ISIL threat in my written and opening statement, and that is a very serious
6 counterterrorism threat, and that is number one.

7 But these are vital, vital U.S. interests in Iraq. Number one, the counterterrorism,
8 the al Qaeda threat. Number two, just the supply of energy resources to global markets.
9 Iraq through 2035 will account for 45 percent of all of the growth in oil energy exports.
10 If Iraq were to collapse in a major civil war and sectarian war, the effects to our own
11 economy here at home would be quite serious.

12 Every single fault line crossing through the Middle East — Arab-Persian,
13 moderate-extremist, Shia-Sunni, Arab-Kurd — everything meets in Iraq. So were ISIL
14 to get into, for example, the mosque city of Samarra, which it wanted to do, and to
15 unleash a cauldron of sectarian violence, it would spread throughout the Middle East,
16 with devastating effects for our economy here at home.

17 So vital interests at stake, from al Qaeda to energy resources and our own
18 economy, are at stake.

19 **SENATOR RUBIO.** Thank you.

20 Did you want to add something?

21 **MS. SLOTKIN.** I would just foot-stomp the ISIL threat. They are self-funded. They
22 have control of significant territory. They are tested in battle. They are a serious threat.
23 And while we do not assess right now that they are doing distinct homeland plotting,
24 they have certainly said rhetorically — they are open about it — that they are coming
25 for the United States.

1 In my experience as a Defense official, I do not want that to fester. I want to do
2 something about that.

3 **SENATOR RUBIO.** I thank you for that. I think you have done a good job of
4 outlining the reason why we should care and why this matters. This is not simply about
5 Iraq. This is about the United States.

6 Could you then briefly — if I brought some people in here from Florida or they
7 are watching or I were to share this video, could you explain to them what our plan is?
8 What are we doing? What are the two or three things that we are doing to address this
9 threat, which as you have described is a very significant one to our country? What is
10 the plan?

11 **MR. MCGURK.** Let me focus on ISIL. We need to do three things. We need to
12 strangle their entire network. That means their foreign fighter flow in particular. We
13 just had a meeting all day yesterday with the Turks to focus on that. We have to
14 strangle their foreign fighter flow network into Syria.

15 Number two, we have to begin to deny space and safe haven and sanctuary,
16 which they have in Syria, which gets into why we are training, planning on, hoping to
17 train the moderate opposition with a train and equip program.

18 Number three, we have to help the Iraqis take control of their sovereign space, to
19 do that, as I explained in my testimony, a functioning federal system in which we do
20 recruit locally, with local tribal structures, but with the resources of the central
21 government, because there was a conversation about recruiting tribes, which is what we
22 want to do. But we have to recognize that unless the local people and local tribes have
23 the resources of the central government or national-based resources, they are not going
24 to be able to defeat this organization.

1 **SENATOR RUBIO.** What are we specifically doing and going to be doing to crush
2 their networks and prevent them from having safe havens? Operationally, what are we
3 going to do to accomplish those goals that you have outlined as part of our plan?

4 **MR. MCGURK.** Well, I can speak to the Iraq portion of this, and this is why since
5 this crisis began in early June we immediately surged in a significant surge of
6 intelligence assets into Iraq, to get a better picture of the situation. We put Special
7 Forces on the ground to get eyes on. We are now at the point where we have collected
8 all the information and we have a fairly concrete, precise picture, and we are coming up
9 with options for doing just that. So this will be an ongoing conversation with this
10 committee and the Congress over the days and weeks ahead.

11 **THE CHAIRMAN** [presiding]. Senator Shaheen.

12 **SENATOR SHAHEEN.** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 Thank you all for being here. I want to follow up a little bit on the line of
14 questioning that Senator Rubio was following and your response, because you
15 mentioned in your testimony, Mr. McGurk, that we need to work with our partners in
16 the region, especially Turkey, to seal the border to Syria from foreign fighters and ISL
17 recruits. So can you talk a little bit more — I know you are limited to some extent, but
18 — about how this is proceeding and what other partners we might engage to address
19 this concern?

20 **MR. MCGURK.** Thank you, Senator. We have some experience in doing this in the
21 late 2006, 2007 time frame, where it was the same foreign fighter network. At the time
22 they were all flying into Damascus, going to Aleppo, and following a rat line into Iraq.
23 We squeezed it. We did an anaconda strategy to squeeze the entire network from the
24 source capitals, where they were getting on airplanes, to get them off the airplanes.

25 We are now doing a similar effort, and Ambassador Bradtke is Senior Adviser at
26 the State Department under the CT Bureau, focused on the foreign fighter network. It is

1 two parts. Turkey has a very long border. It is very hard to control. But Turkey is
2 doing some things to strengthen their own border and focus on this problem. But also
3 the source capitals in which young military-age males are getting on airplanes and
4 going to certain airports in Turkey.

5 So we are working very carefully through our entire inter-agency and the folks
6 that are really expert in this, with the source capitals in which people are getting on
7 airplanes and coming into Syria, and with the Turks. It is Europe, it is North Africa,
8 and it is the Gulf region.

9 **SENATOR SHAHEEN.** Can you talk about how long we have been doing that and
10 whether we are seeing any results as a result of that effort?

11 **MR. MCGURK.** Senator, we have been doing it for some time now. I can follow up
12 with you after speaking with the experts dealing with this and have a written response.

13 **SENATOR SHAHEEN.** I would appreciate that, and probably sharing it with the
14 committee would be very helpful as well.

15 You also talk about the tremendous effort on the part of the Kurdistan
16 government to accommodate the internally displaced people fleeing from other parts of
17 Iraq. I wonder if you could talk about the extent to which the government in Baghdad
18 recognizes the strain this is causing and has been willing to work with the Kurds at all
19 to help address this.

20 **MR. MCGURK.** One promising sign, Senator, in what is a very dark landscape — I
21 want to be very clear. This humanitarian situation is extremely serious and it is
22 heartbreaking, particularly when it comes to the Christian minorities and other
23 vulnerable groups. I met with the Christian leadership in Erbil and Baghdad
24 throughout my last trip about how we can do a better job helping these people, who are
25 under a very serious threat.

1 The Iraqi government could do more to help the Kurdish Regional Government,
2 particularly with state resources and state funding. The Iraqi parliament, which is just
3 meeting because it just convened for the first time, it is a brand-new parliament. It has a
4 brand-new speaker. The first session really was yesterday, and one of the first things
5 they did, first they all united in condemnation of what is happening to Christians in
6 northern Nineveh Province. And they also formed a very broad committee from all the
7 major groups to figure out how to direct state resources — and remember, Iraq has
8 significant resources. There is a budget pending in the parliament for \$140 billion, and
9 that is something that the government has to tap into to help these people.

10 So they just formed a committee yesterday to figure out some things to do, and
11 we are obviously actively engaged with them to try to influence that process.

12 **SENATOR SHAHEEN.** So does the selection of a Kurdish president help with this
13 effort?

14 **MR. MCGURK.** Certainly. We look forward to working with the new president,
15 with President Fuad Masum, on these issues. Again, he won an overwhelming victory
16 on the vote today on the floor of the Iraqi parliament. So it is a good step forward. But
17 we work with all the Kurdish leadership in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, and also in
18 Baghdad.

19 **SENATOR SHAHEEN.** But I would assume that, given his election, that he might have
20 some influence in the parliament that could be very helpful. Has he made statements
21 about the need to help address what has happened to Christians?

22 **MR. MCGURK.** Well, he was just elected as I was coming over here in the car. So I
23 have not seen the statements that he has made yet. But we will be immediately working
24 with him and, again, all the leaders to get the resources up to the north that the Kurds
25 need to deal with the humanitarian crisis.

1 **SENATOR SHAHEEN.** Finally, again I think this is for you, Mr. McGurk, but, Ms.
2 Slotkin, if you would like to weigh in, please do. One of the things that has not gotten a
3 whole lot of attention, but has — you mention it in your testimony and certainly we
4 have seen it in other places where extremist Islam has been in charge — the plight of
5 Iraqi women and girls has borne the brunt of a lot of the violence as they have advanced
6 through Iraq.

7 Can you talk about what we can do and what is being done to help address this?

8 **MR. MCGURK.** Well, first, Senator, the fact that you are asking the question is
9 number one, because we have to put international focus and attention on this very
10 serious problem. In Mosul the situation with ISIL goes from bad to worst. They have
11 first gone after the Christians, then they have gone after Kurds. They are now going
12 after women and particularly young women.

13 This is a serious international problem. The government of Iraq, the foreign
14 minister of Iraq, wrote a letter to the Secretary General of the United Nations asking for
15 international assistance against this threat to their people. So it is something that we
16 need the entire efforts of the entire world to focus on, because, frankly, the Iraqis cannot
17 deal with it on their own.

18 So first we have to give it international attention. Then we have to find a way to
19 really address it. But in my testimony, particularly in Mosul, where ISIL is setting up
20 really its capital of its caliphate — that is what it is trying to do — we have to find a way
21 to work effectively with local tribal forces to be able to make sure that they can stand
22 effectively against ISIL, which right now frankly they cannot, and the Kurdish Pesh
23 Merga forces, because Mosul is in a pocket in the Kurdish region, and eventually federal
24 forces, to be able to slowly squeeze and take back these areas.

25 This is going to be a long-term effort, but, especially for the sake of the people
26 living in these areas, we have to give it everything we have.

1 **SENATOR SHAHEEN.** Finally, I am almost out of time, but this may have been asked
2 and I apologize if you have already answered it. But there was a report in the New
3 York Times on July 13th that suggested that only about half of Iraq's operational units
4 are capable enough for us to advise them. Can either of you speak to whether —
5 without revealing classified information, whether we are concerned about this, the
6 substance of this report being accurate?

7 **Ms. SLOTKIN.** Sure. It was mentioned briefly and I just cautioned against relying
8 solely on a leak in the New York Times. That was a critical thing that we were looking
9 at in these assessments. They are still in draft. I think what is accurate is that the
10 picture is mixed. I do not know if it is exactly half, but I think that we are finding units
11 where that is a real problem and units where it is not a problem.

12 And we are trying to understand how to process that. What does it mean if
13 certain units we can work with and they are ambitious and they want to do things to
14 take back their territory and others are not the right units for us to be working with.
15 What should our policy be in that case? That is complicated and that is why we are
16 taking our time to think about it.

17 **SENATOR SHAHEEN.** Thank you.

18 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Senator McCain.

20 **SENATOR MCCAIN.** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

21 Ms. Slotkin, we learn more from the New York Times and from the Wall Street
22 Journal than we do from any briefing that we have ever had with you. I do not agree
23 with you very often, but I certainly do agree with your statement you cannot fight
24 something with nothing, because that is what we have been doing, nothing.

25 This situation in Iraq was predicted by us and predictable, and now we find
26 ourselves in a situation where, Mr. McGurk, the Director of Intelligence, the Director of

1 the FBI, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and the Attorney General have all stated
2 publicly that the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS or ISIL, whichever one you want
3 to call it, pose a direct threat to the United States. Do you agree?

4 **MR. MCGURK.** Yes.

5 **SENATOR MCCAIN.** You do agree. Well, would you agree that Iraq and Syria are
6 now effectively one conflict, that we cannot address ISIS in Iraq without also addressing
7 it in Syria, and vice versa, particularly with reports that we see, published reports of
8 equipment that was captured in Iraq now showing up in Syria?

9 **MR. MCGURK.** I think it is one theater. It is the Tigris and Euphrates Valley
10 theater, yes.

11 **SENATOR MCCAIN.** So you do believe that this caliphate, the richest and largest base
12 of terrorism that I know of, is both Iraq and Syria, this enclave?

13 **MR. MCGURK.** That is exactly what it is trying to do. It is trying to establish that.

14 **SENATOR MCCAIN.** Have they achieved it pretty well so far?

15 **MR. MCGURK.** Since June the Iraq-Syria border has more or less collapsed.

16 **SENATOR MCCAIN.** So that means really then, if we are going to take action in Iraq
17 we should also take action in Syria; would you agree?

18 **MR. MCGURK.** Again, these are all options that are being looked at, Senator.

19 **SENATOR MCCAIN.** I am just wondering if you would agree with that. I am not
20 asking whether you are examining options or not.

21 **MR. MCGURK.** I think, Senator, as I mentioned, in order to really get at this
22 network and learning from the past with al Qaeda in Iraq we have to squeeze the entire
23 network. That is the foreign fighter flow, that is denying safe haven in Syria, and
24 helping the Iraqis control their sovereign territory.

25 **SENATOR MCCAIN.** So if we did initiate an air-to-ground campaign without
26 including Syria, they would have a sanctuary in Syria. Would you agree with that?

1 **MR. MCGURK.** One of the reasons — and again, I would defer to my colleague
2 Elissa — but we are focused on training the moderate opposition, to have a force that is
3 able to deny safe haven and deny space to the ISL networks in Syria.

4 **SENATOR MCCAIN.** Well, probably so. But the Secretary of Defense and the
5 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff have both stated publicly that the Iraqi Security
6 Forces are not capable of regaining the territory they have lost to ISIS on their own
7 without external assistance. Do you agree with the Secretary of Defense and the
8 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs?

9 **MR. MCGURK.** The Iraqi Security Forces have moved a little bit out of — we had
10 the snowballing effect —

11 **SENATOR MCCAIN.** I am again asking if you agree or disagree with the Secretary of
12 Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, who both stated publicly that the Iraq
13 Security Forces are not capable of regaining the territory they have lost to ISIS on their
14 own without external assistance. Do you agree or disagree?

15 **MR. MCGURK.** They cannot conduct combined arms type operations, which is
16 what it would take, without some enabling support.

17 **SENATOR MCCAIN.** So since we all rule out boots on the ground, that might mean
18 use of air power as a way of assisting them. Would you agree with that?

19 **MR. MCGURK.** Senator, all of these options and potential options for the President
20 are being looked at and, as Elissa said, we are not going to crowd the decision space.

21 **SENATOR MCCAIN.** How long have we been, quote, "looking at" them now, Mr.
22 McGurk?

23 **MR. MCGURK.** Well —

24 **MS. SLOTKIN.** Sir, the assessments came in last week.

25 **SENATOR MCCAIN.** So the assessments came in last week. How long have we been
26 assessing?

1 **Ms. SLOTKIN.** I think we assessed for two solid weeks.

2 **SENATOR McCAIN.** Oh, I think it has been longer than that since the collapse of the
3 Iraqi military, Ms. Slotkin.

4 **Ms. SLOTKIN.** I think the President made his announcement on June 19th and then
5 he instructed that assessors go to Baghdad. They flew there and began their
6 assessments immediately.

7 **SENATOR McCAIN.** I see. And so far we have launched no air strikes in any part of
8 Iraq, right?

9 **Ms. SLOTKIN.** That is correct.

10 **SENATOR McCAIN.** And you stated before that we did not have sufficient
11 information to know which targets to hit, is that correct?

12 **Ms. SLOTKIN.** I think we have radically improved our intelligence picture.

13 **SENATOR McCAIN.** But at the time in your view we did not have sufficient
14 information capability in order to launch air strikes?

15 **Ms. SLOTKIN.** I think that, given our extremely deliberate process about launching
16 any air strike, we would —

17 **SENATOR McCAIN.** You know, it is interesting. I asked do you think at that time we
18 did not have sufficient information to launch air strikes against ISIS.

19 **Ms. SLOTKIN.** I think, given the standards the United States has for dropping
20 ordnance, no, we did not have the intelligence we would ever want at that time.

21 **SENATOR McCAIN.** I find that interesting because none of the military that I have
22 talked to that served there and even those who flew there — they are absolutely
23 convinced, as I am, that when you have convoys moving across the desert in open
24 terrain you can identify them and strike them. We know that they were operating out
25 of bases in Syria, out in the open in the desert. So those of us who have some military

1 experience in the efficacy of air power, we heartily disagree. And that is not just me. It
2 comes from military leaders who served there.

3 Mr. McGurk, published media reports indicate that the Islamic State has an
4 estimated 10,000 foreign fighters, 7,000 in Syria and 3,000 in Iraq. Does that sound
5 right?

6 **MR. MCGURK.** These estimates are very difficult to discern, but that is an estimate
7 that we routinely see, yes.

8 **SENATOR MCCAIN.** And of those foreign fighters, many of them are from European
9 countries, right?

10 **MR. MCGURK.** Yes.

11 **SENATOR MCCAIN.** Who when returning to their countries do not require a visa to
12 come to this country, which is why, as I say, the Director of National Intelligence, the
13 Director of the FBI, and the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Attorney General
14 have all stated that this poses a direct threat to the United States of America.

15 In light of that, do you think we are — so far, that we have had a proportionate
16 response to that threat?

17 **MR. MCGURK.** I just want to say on the direct threat, if that is a direct quote from
18 them I obviously defer to them on the quote. One thing that we have done, I want to —
19 in your questioning of Ms. Slotkin. When this crisis started the Iraqis had zero Hellfire
20 missiles in their arsenal. We have delivered them since this crisis began in June
21 hundreds of Hellfire missiles. And with our new intelligence, with the joint operations
22 center, the Iraqis have deployed those missiles with precision and accuracy. It has made
23 a difference, and I would be happy to follow up to —

24 **SENATOR MCCAIN.** Excuse me. What difference has it made?

25 **MR. MCGURK.** Well, it blunted some of —

1 **SENATOR MCCAIN.** Certainly not in the area that — areas of Iraq that the ISIS has
2 been able to gain control over.

3 **MR. MCGURK.** It began to blunt some of the momentum. Seriously, we certainly
4 have a lot more —

5 **SENATOR MCCAIN.** You did not really believe that they could take Baghdad, did
6 you? No one in their right mind would.

7 **MR. MCGURK.** In the initial days of this crisis, there was a very deep concern that
8 Iraqi Security Forces could in the approaches to Baghdad substantially weaken and that
9 was a real concern of ours.

10 **SENATOR MCCAIN.** Well, there might have been on your part, but it certainly was
11 not on those of us who understand Iraq and population and Shia and Sunni.

12 Well, Mr. Chairman, I have overstayed my time. I thank you, but I really agree
13 with you, Ms. Slotkin, when you said you cannot fight something with nothing. You
14 are exactly right.

15 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Senator Kaine.

16 **SENATOR KAINE.** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 Odds and ends because most of my questions have been asked already by my
18 colleagues. But give me the status on the safety of the American embassy in Baghdad
19 and our consuls in Iraq?

20 **MR. MCGURK.** Senator, thank you. It is our foremost priority. It is something we
21 watch every day very closely. That is why we have rebalanced our security apparatus at
22 the embassy. We have brought in substantial Department of Defense capabilities into
23 the embassy and into the airport. Our Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security was
24 there last week, and we feel very confident about the protection of our people. But it is
25 something that we watch literally every second of every day.

1 Our knowledge and our understanding of the defense of Baghdad in particular is
2 night and day different from where it was just six weeks ago.

3 **SENATOR KAINE.** Because of the deployment of the advisers, as you were
4 discussing?

5 **MR. MCGURK.** Yes.

6 **SENATOR KAINE.** Let me ask about this, the Iranian influence in Iraq. Beyond
7 political influence, how about Iranian expenditures in Iraq, whether it is to back up the
8 military or provide training and assistance? What is Iran doing in Iraq right now that is
9 costing them money?

10 **MR. MCGURK.** I do not have a figure on the expenditures. All I can say is that the
11 Iraqis again, they want the U.S. to be the backbone of their military force, and that is
12 why they have looked to the FMS program to be that backbone. Where we have
13 developed relationships with Iraqi military officers, even in times of extreme crisis, it
14 has proven essential. An example in my testimony is that when we had to get about 500
15 contractors out of Bilad it was the Iraqi Air Force, even despite the extreme crisis they
16 were dealing with, that flew their own C-130's with their own pilots to get our people
17 out. That is the kind of relationship that we need to continue to invest in.

18 **SENATOR KAINE.** I just want to, because I am going in a particular direction with
19 this. You do not have an expenditure figure on what Iran is spending in Iraq, but are
20 they likely spending significant resources or is the influence just more kind of more on
21 the political and relationship side?

22 **MR. MCGURK.** They are expending resources. They were particularly concerned
23 about the defense of Samarra, where the Golden Dome Al-Askari Mosque is. And in
24 the early weeks of the crisis they did invest resources to try to protect that area of
25 Samarra.

1 **SENATOR KAINE.** The reason I am asking this question is separately we are having
2 this intense discussion about the Iranian nuclear negotiation and what is the effect of the
3 sanctions on Iran and to what extent any sanctions relief is giving them breathing room.
4 And we are being told from many quarters that the Iranian economy is still suffering
5 very greatly. They seem to be pretty deeply in in terms of expenditures in Syria and
6 they seem to be pretty deeply in in terms of expenditures in Iraq, and that makes me
7 think either they are incredibly stretched or maybe their economy and resources are a
8 little bit stronger than some of the reports to us suggest. And that is relevant in terms of
9 the negotiations that are underway with respect to the nuclear program. I will follow
10 that up with others.

11 This is a question that you might not be able to answer on the record, and if so I
12 will submit it — or in public — I will submit it for the record. What are the efforts
13 under way by the United States to disrupt ISIL financing?

14 **MS. SLOTKIN.** Sir, I think we should take it off the record if you do not mind, just
15 in a classified session. I would be happy to provide that to you.

16 **SENATOR KAINE.** We have had testimony in these hearings before about some kinds
17 of financing that I think can be talked about publicly. They do extortion, they do
18 kidnapping. They go to merchants and say: Pay us X. That has been discussed
19 publicly. But there has also been reports about others who are funding ISIL operations,
20 often others — maybe not the government, but people who are connected with
21 governments that are allies of ours. And I would like to know in a classified setting —
22 and we will submit a written question — what are we doing to disrupt ISIL financing?

23 The persecution of the Christian minority in Iraq, like the persecution of any
24 religious minority, is of significance. Could you talk about your recent discussions on
25 the persecution of Christians when you were in Baghdad, Mr. McGurk?

1 **MR. MCGURK.** Thank you, Senator. I went to the home of the Chaldean patriarch,
2 Archbishop Sako in Mansour in Baghdad, to discuss this directly with him, and then
3 also in Erbil with Bishop Warda. It is an extremely serious situation. What is so
4 inspiring when you visit them is that Archbishop Sako shortly before I saw him had just
5 had a service with about 500 worshippers from across the city of Baghdad in his church.
6 This past Sunday he had a service in which Muslims and Christians came together in
7 his church to say: We are all Christians, we all stand for the Christians, we are all Iraqis,
8 these are all our people, to stand against ISIL.

9 Bishop Warda in Erbil is focused on the refugees that have left Mosul and he has
10 asked us for some specific help with the Kurdish Regional Government to ensure they
11 have the protection they need, and that is something that we followed up with
12 President Barzani immediately after that meeting, to ensure that they do have that
13 protection. And it is something we are working on every day.

14 But it is a very serious situation, and it reveals, what is happening to the
15 Christians in Mosul, it reveals what ISIL is all about and why it is such a threat to the
16 region and to us.

17 **SENATOR KAINE.** Again, we should feel deeply — since the United States stands so
18 strongly for religious liberty, we should feel deeply about the persecution of any
19 religious minority. Mass has been said in Mosul for more than 1800 years, but for the
20 first time that has been broken. Weekly mass is not being celebrated there. That is a
21 pretty significant thing.

22 I have been critical of us, the Senate, for slowness in ambassadorial approvals,
23 but I will just put one on the administration. You also have got to get us names. And I
24 will just say this for the record: The Ambassador at Large for International Religious
25 Freedom post has been vacant since October of 2013. The White House has not sent us a
26 name, at a time in the world, whether it might be Christians or Ahmadiyya Muslims or

1 Jews in some nations that are suffering because of the persecution of religious
2 minorities. And sadly, while the U.S. is an example of religious diversity, we see these
3 persecution of minorities probably on the increase in the world.

4 It is a core value of ours. We have such a good story to tell. That should not be a
5 position that is vacant. I encourage the administration to send us a nominee promptly.

6 With that, Mr. Chair, I have no more questions.

7 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Senator Markey.

8 **SENATOR MARKEY.** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, very much.

9 I would like to focus on the role of energy resources in the conflict with ISIS and
10 in the Iraqi leadership's struggle to maintain a workable political system. ISIS has taken
11 over the oil fields near Mosul and Tikrit and continues to have its sights set on the Baiji
12 oil refinery, Iraq's largest. The group continues to control oil fields in northeast Syria.
13 Smuggling this oil into the black market has reportedly brought ISIS millions in
14 revenues, perhaps a million dollars a day it is being reported.

15 With the group's ambition to take on the trappings of an actual state, how does
16 capturing energy resources and infrastructure fit into their broader strategy?

17 **MR. MCGURK.** They need the resources to survive. One reason they are coming
18 with everything they have at the Baiji refinery is because they need the energy resources
19 that are stored in those tanks in order to keep Mosul running. The Baiji refinery battle
20 has now been going on for a month. There is a unit of Iraq's Counterterrorism Service
21 Forces there, people that we know and that we have trained, who have been fighting
22 incredibly heroically.

23 ISIL has sent waves of car bombs and suicide bombers at the refinery. So far the
24 Iraqis continue to hold it, although it is a very desperate struggle. But strategic
25 desperately needs these resources to, as you said, be able to build —

1 **SENATOR MARKEY.** What further steps need to be taken in order to protect against
2 ISIS taking over the Baiji refinery? That is a critical moment in the whole struggle if
3 they are successful in doing that, the largest single refinery in the country. What can be
4 done, what needs to be done, in order to prevent that from happening?

5 **MR. MCGURK.** Well, in fact, as I mentioned briefly in the answer to some of
6 Senator McCain's questions, when we did get the Hellfire missiles into the country one
7 of the first places they were deployed was around the Baiji refinery, to begin to clear out
8 some of the attacking ISL fighters. So that is one example.

9 As we continue to assess the situation in Iraq, we have identified particular
10 strategic sites that we are concerned about and that we want to make sure the Iraqis
11 have whatever capabilities they might need to be able to defend them.

12 **SENATOR MARKEY.** Let me move on to the Kurdish Regional Government in the
13 north. The Kurds are sitting on an estimated reserve of 45 billion barrels of oil and have
14 now captured the oil fields around Kirkuk as well. They appear to be more and more
15 intent on selling their own oil abroad without coordinating those exports through the
16 central authorities in Baghdad, and Baghdad seems unwilling to equitably distribute the
17 country's oil resources.

18 How can we help the Iraqi government to better manage its energy resources
19 and preserve a federal system that works for all Iraqis? Right now that seems to be
20 collapsing and the collapse is over the oil revenue issue. How can we play a bigger role?

21 **MR. MCGURK.** Well, this is something where we can play a direct role, and it is
22 one reason we had to get through the election and start to get a new government
23 formed so we can get some traction on this issue. Again, the numbers really tell the
24 story. The Kurds need about \$14 billion in order to really sustain themselves. Their
25 own exports right now, they approach a little less than half of that probably. That will
26 change over the future.

1 The budget that is pending in Baghdad, that is before the parliament, is a \$140
2 billion budget. The Kurdish share of that would be a little more than \$17 billion. So the
3 numbers really tell the story and the numbers give the trade space for how we can work
4 out a deal.

5 Again, there are new realities on the ground that we have to deal with, but it is in
6 the interest of all Iraqis to export as much oil as possible under a revenue-sharing
7 framework, particularly for the Sunni areas of Iraq, which do not have any of these
8 natural resources. And that is the type of compact that I think a new government, and
9 particularly the new parliament, which has proven to be very effective — and they just
10 set up a committee to try to resolve this — can get some traction on.

11 But we have to be actively engaged because we are the one neutral broker
12 between all of these parties, and without us they will not get there.

13 **SENATOR MARKEY.** Again, oil is always at the core of this? Cherchez the oil, that is
14 pretty much what it is all about. That is why the British wanted the country constructed
15 the way it was. They wanted those oil resources, especially up in the north, added,
16 even though it was going to cause longer-term instability. But that is what they were
17 fighting for. That is what they were demanding in those negotiations 80 years ago, 90
18 years ago. And we are still living with the consequences of those decisions.

19 Let me just move on then and ask, what is the current relationship between ISIS
20 and al Qaeda? What has happened to that relationship in the course of especially the
21 last three or four months?

22 **MR. MCGURK.** Well, it is my understanding al Qaeda in Iraq, of course, was
23 Zarqawi's group and it had pledged adherence and allegiance to al Qaeda central in
24 Pakistan and Afghanistan. When it moved into Syria it split into two groups, the Al-
25 Nusra Front and what has become the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

1 The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant had ambitions across border between
2 Iraq and Syria and that is something that senior al Qaeda leaders such as Zawahiri did
3 not agree with and he issued an edict saying: I do not agree with that; you should all
4 work as one, or ISIS should work in Iraq and Nusra works in Syria. And Abu Bakr Al-
5 Baghdadi said: I do not agree with you on that, so I am going to go my own way. And
6 that is what led to the split.

7 But ISIL is proving to be in many ways even more effective in terms of
8 organizing and developing a state structure than even core al Qaeda, and that is why it
9 is more than just a terrorist organization. It certainly does not have the global reach in
10 terms of terrorist capacity as core al Qaeda, but it has the sophistication to develop what
11 is really becoming a state-like sanctuary for a global jihadist movement. And Baghdadi
12 has now made clear he is reaching for the mantle of the global jihad and trying to
13 recruit those who share that ideology from all around the world.

14 **SENATOR MARKEY.** So what does that competitive dynamic between the leaders of
15 both groups ultimately potentially lead to?

16 **MR. MCGURK.** Well, the risk is that, in terms of that competition, they will look to
17 external attack plotting in order to do spectacular type attacks to further draw
18 worldwide recruits. That is the risk.

19 **SENATOR MARKEY.** I think you have already answered the questions about
20 recruiting. Let me just ask a final question and that is about Iraqi forces' capacity to
21 defend their own civilians. Could you just give us a brief summary of where you
22 believe they are right now in accomplishing that goal?

23 **MR. MCGURK.** Well, one reason I said in my testimony, we have a
24 counterterrorism challenge; Iraq has a counterinsurgency challenge. A
25 counterinsurgency challenge means they have to be able to control their own

1 population, and that is why they have to recruit locally and work with tribes that
2 control local areas.

3 Right now that has really broken apart, and it has broken apart for a number of
4 reasons, but primarily the force that ISIL is able to bring to bear in some of the Sunni
5 areas of Iraq. They go after anybody that disagrees with them. They have a bit of an
6 alliance with the Naqshbandi and the Baath Party networks, but even that is starting to
7 fray. So this is why we have to work with the Iraqis to be able to protect their
8 population against the most violent groups and then work on the political compact to
9 make sure that all areas of Iraq have the resources they need to sustain themselves.

10 **SENATOR MARKEY.** Again, I want to commend you for your focus on diplomacy. I
11 agree with Ryan Crocker that it is not too late for diplomacy, but we just have to be
12 intervening in a very, very aggressive way to make sure that diplomacy is truly given a
13 chance to be successful.

14 Thank you so much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 **SENATOR KAINE** [presiding]. Thank you, Senator Markey.

16 Thank you to the witnesses. We will leave the record open until 5:00 o'clock
17 tomorrow for the submission of questions. We would appreciate your prompt
18 responses. Thank you for your testimony.

19 We have a superb second panel and I would ask them to come forward now. As
20 we are setting up for the second panel, let me just let all know who we will have. We
21 are fortunate to have: former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Jim Jeffrey, who is currently at
22 the Washington Institute on Near East Policy; Lieutenant General Michael Barbero, who
23 served nearly four years in Iraq over three tours. General Barbero has traveled to Iraq
24 six times in the last year while serving as the Director of the Joint Improvised Explosive
25 Device Defeat Organization. Finally, no stranger to the committee, Dr. Ken Pollack,

1 who has been a respected voice on Iraq and the Gulf from his time in the CIA, the
2 National Security Council, now at the Brookings Institute.

3 This is a superb panel and we are glad to have everyone here. Let me just, to the
4 panel and the audience, I apologize. The challenge of being on the second panel,
5 everybody comes and has a million questions and then about lunch time races off, and it
6 is unfortunate that all will not be here to hear you live. But we really do appreciate you
7 being here today because your experiences each give you something very important to
8 add.

9 Your written statements, which were very strong, will be obviously included in
10 the entire record. We would like to ask each to take about five minutes to summarize,
11 and I will have you speak in the order I introduced you, beginning with Ambassador
12 Jeffrey and moving from my right to left. Ambassador Jeffrey, welcome.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES F. JEFFREY, PHILIP SOLONDZ DISTINGUISHED
VISITING FELLOW, THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY**

13 **AMBASSADOR JEFFREY.** Thank you very much, Mr. Acting Chairman.

14 To follow up on what we heard this morning, the establishment of the Islamic
15 State by the ISIL in Iraq and in parts of Syria is changing the geostrategy of the entire
16 Middle East and represents a dramatic setback to U.S. policy and interests and requires
17 an immediate response from Washington. The situation is complicated by the fact that
18 in the fix we are presently in in the Middle East we have not one, but two, hegemonic
19 radical forces in the region, from Gaza to Iran, that are trying to upset the established
20 order throughout the Middle East, and we have to deal with all of them in a
21 comprehensive way.

22 The President's plan to support a unified Iraq in this crisis as laid out on June
23 19th is reasonable, but over a month has gone by, as we discussed earlier today, and
24 very little has happened. In government formation, we have had two important but
25 secondary steps, the selection of the speaker and the selection of a president from the

1 Kurdish community. Those are important, but those are basically the preliminaries.
2 The key issue is the selection of a prime minister and a new government.

3 Meanwhile, on the ground, while the initial ISIL drive on Baghdad and on the
4 strategic areas has been slowed, we are seeing new offensive capabilities by that
5 organization. The Institute for the Study of War came out yesterday with a survey of
6 attacks, both suicide and what we call VBIED's, vehicle bombs, inside Baghdad and
7 efforts to try to cut off the city. Senator McCain was right that you cannot take
8 Baghdad, but, as almost happened to us with over 100,000 troops in 2004, you can
9 isolate the city, and they seem to be trying to do that.

10 Meanwhile, they are pushing against the Kurds all along the 400-mile front from
11 the Iranian border to north of Mosul and they are trying to seize strategic infrastructure.
12 Baiji we talked about, but also the Haditha Dam west of Ramadi and the Mosul Dam on
13 the Tigris River to the northeast of Mosul. These are extraordinarily important
14 infrastructure targets for them. So we do have an offensive threat from that
15 organization.

16 The President's plan is based upon, above all, a new inclusive government. As I
17 said, while we have done the preliminaries with the speaker and with the president, we
18 have not gotten to the key issue of who is going to govern the country, because the
19 prime minister essentially governs the country. In my view the inclusive government
20 that the President has correctly said is a prerequisite to any real action cannot be a
21 government headed by Prime Minister Maliki. He simply has not shown the ability to
22 bring in the Kurdish and the Sunni communities, and that is needed right now because
23 there is a huge division of both trust and geographic division in the country today.

24 We also need to encourage the Kurds, as Mr. McGurk described in some detail,
25 to remain within the republic and try to regain trust among the Sunnis. Again, I see this
26 as only possible if we have a new prime minister and a new government.

1 Simultaneously, I think that, while the President is right that we cannot do a
2 major campaign until we get an inclusive government that can provide essentially
3 people on the ground, local forces, we need to do limited strikes. General Dempsey
4 talked about some of the possibilities, going after key leaders and strategic
5 infrastructure. We need to do a little bit of that now, in part to encourage everybody to
6 come together.

7 Mr. McGurk talked about the Sunni tribes that are outgunned by — that are
8 trying to fight ISIS, but they are outgunned. Helping them would not be undercutting a
9 new government. The Kurds are fighting all along the front and they need help. We
10 heard about some of these highly trained, effective Iraqi units that are still in the fight,
11 particularly north of Baghdad. They could benefit from help, too.

12 We are striking al Qaeda right now in Pakistan, Yemen, and with direct actions at
13 times in Somalia and Libya. I see no reason why we could not, if we have the targets
14 and we are getting the data now, start doing some strikes both in Iraq and in Syria.

15 Meanwhile, we have to be ready, though. If this does not work out, if the
16 Iranians remain influential in Baghdad, if Mr. Maliki remains in power, if the groups
17 cannot come together, we have to start thinking about how are we going to deal if we
18 do have three separate entities — a Kurdistan that will be a magnet for Kurds
19 throughout the region; effectively a Taliban-like Islamic State in the middle of the
20 Levant; and a rump Iraq that is ever more under the control or under the influence of
21 Iran. That is a huge new problem for us if we do not act very, very quickly.

22 So my bottom line here today, sir, is that we need to act as quickly as we can.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Jeffrey follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

23 **SENATOR KAINE.** Thank you, Ambassador Jeffrey.

24 General Barbero.

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL D. BARBERO, LIEUTENANT
GENERAL, U.S. ARMY [RETIRED]**

1 **GENERAL BARBERO.** Thank you, Mr. Ranking Chairman, Ranking Member Corker.
2 Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the situation in Iraq and some options moving
3 forward. I will focus my comments on the security sector, the Iraqi Security Forces, and
4 some recommendations therein.

5 But first I would like to start with several observations on the current situation.
6 Time accrues to the benefit of ISIS. While we assess, they maintain the momentum, they
7 grow stronger, and their hold on the population intensifies. ISIS has established control
8 across a contiguous area in both Syria and Iraq and, as we discussed in the previous
9 panel, it must be considered as an Iraq-Syria front.

10 ISIS poses a formidable regional threat. What is most frightening is as they
11 swept into Iraq they continued their expansion into Syria. They did not have to thin the
12 lines to do that.

13 The Iraqi Security Forces have regrouped. However, these forces have serious
14 fundamental flaws and will require significant assistance to be able to undertake
15 counteroffensives to dislodge and roll back ISIS control.

16 Finally, ISIS is an existential threat to both Baghdad and the Kurds. The Kurds
17 have a 1,000-plus kilometer border or front with ISIS and they are largely on their own.

18 Chairman Menendez asked at the outset, what is required to turn back the tide of
19 ISIS? Well, it is clearly the Iraqi Security Forces. But my estimation is in their present
20 state they cannot successfully meet this ISIS threat, let alone mount a major and
21 effective counteroffensive without significant assistance. The capabilities necessary to
22 counter ISIS do not exist today in Iraq and they will not likely materialize on their own.

23 I am not talking in the future about ground combat forces from the United States.
24 I am talking about advising and assisting in certain key areas. Let me cover those. The
25 first is intelligence, and we have started that, developing tactical intelligence and

1 targetable, actionable intelligence on the ground. We have started that. Now we need
2 to turn that into action.

3 But the second intelligence component is the ISIS network in Iraq, Syria, and
4 their regional supporters must be a national collection and analysis priority for our
5 entire intelligence community.

6 Second, we should establish a training program for the ISF to develop sufficient
7 combined arms capability in order to effectively conduct offensive operations to
8 dislodge ISIS from the areas they now control. The ISF has been largely a checkpoint
9 army. Since 2011 their operations have been defensive in nature, static in disposition,
10 and disjointed in execution. They need training.

11 Third, they need assistance in establishing an effective wartime sustainment
12 structure and process. Their existing one is a peacetime system and they have
13 experienced significant decline in equipment readiness over the years, and this will be a
14 daunting process, but it can be done.

15 Fourth, they require changes to their command and control network. As we
16 know, the system now in place is one put in by Prime Minister Maliki of area
17 commands directly reporting to him. As we have seen, there needs to be changes in
18 commanders and changes to develop an effective combat command and control
19 capability.

20 Fifth, the ISF continues to need weapons and equipment. We have done some
21 good work to rush some equipment there, but we need to do more. Just this week Iraq's
22 Ambassador to the United States lamented the slow pace of our support when
23 compared to the rapid support from Iran and Russia. We should quickly approve, ship,
24 and enable material support to Iraq.

25 Sixth, we should support the ISF with air strikes in order to degrade ISIS
26 capabilities. But let me be clear. You cannot air strike or drone strike your way out of

1 this. Air strikes must be part of a cohesive and coherent counteroffensive in order to
2 attack ISIS.

3 Seventh, we should support the Kurds and enable them to defend against this
4 existential threat from ISIS. The Pesh Merga are an effective, determined, well led force.
5 However, they are lightly armed and underequipped. They are stretched very thin,
6 and when ISIS turns on them they will be outgunned and overmatched.

7 Now, there is a complex relationship between Baghdad and Erbil. I understand
8 that. But why would we not, from a purely tactical and security perspective, why
9 would we not rapidly enable the Kurds to defend northern Iraq from ISIS, prevent the
10 oil-rich north from falling into ISIS hands, and force ISIS to fight on two fronts in Iraq?

11 Finally, this all depends on two things: a willing partner in Baghdad that is
12 willing to accept these changes and to help develop an effective ISF; and second, as we
13 all discussed, there must be a political climate where the Sunni and Kurds feel
14 accommodation for them and they could join in a unified military action.

15 In conclusion, it is an existential threat to Iraq. The longer we wait to decide on
16 our response to Iraq's request for support, the stronger they become. Finally, if the
17 prevention of an ISIS-controlled Iraq is in the national interest of the United States, then
18 we should act to aid and enable Iraq and the Kurds to defeat this threat as quickly as
19 possible.

20 Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity.

[The prepared statement of General Barbero follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

21 Thank you, General Barbero.

22 Dr. Pollack.

**STATEMENT OF KENNETH M. POLLACK, SENIOR FELLOW, SABAN CENTER
FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY, BROOKINGS INSTITUTE**

1 **DR. POLLACK.** Mr. Chairman, Senator, it is always a great honor to appear before
2 this committee.

3 I want to start by talking a little bit about some of the realities that we face in
4 Iraq, because I think they are critical in understanding where we are and what the
5 possibilities are moving forward. I want to just talk about two. First, we need to
6 recognize that American influence in Iraq has attenuated very significantly, to the point
7 where I would argue that at this point the United States' interests exceed our influence.

8 Second, we need to come to grips with the fact that what we face in Iraq today is
9 a civil war. Iraq is not on the brink, it is not sliding into it. It is a civil war, and the
10 dynamics of intercommunal civil wars now apply, and those make intervention by third
11 powers very difficult.

12 With that in mind, I think that the current approach of the administration, with a
13 few tweaks, is probably the best one plausible. It is the only one, and that is the idea of
14 forging a new political leadership and reforming Iraq's political system. It is the only
15 option that we have that does offer the prospect of ending Iraq's civil war in a matter of
16 months rather than years, and of preserving American interests in a whole variety of
17 other ways.

18 But nevertheless, we need to recognize that it will be very difficult, and it goes
19 well beyond merely replacing the current Iraqi political leadership. It is going to mean
20 restructuring Iraq's politics in a way that will encompass the desires and aspirations and
21 the fears of all of Iraq's communities, and that is not going to be easy.

22 If it fails, Iraq's civil war is going to roll on and, as I have already suggested, the
23 dynamics of an intercommunal civil war were to take hold and those are very hard to
24 break.

1 But we will have some options. Unfortunately, those options are all awful. I
2 think the first one is to recognize, as any number of us and some of the Senators have
3 made the point earlier, that Iraq and Syria are now a single civil war. And the problem
4 that we will face in Iraq is that we will have a very complex situation. We will be
5 looking to support both moderate Sunnis and moderate Shia against their extremists
6 and hoping to forge a new peace between them. That is very hard.

7 Syria offers a little bit of clarity, in that we hate the regime, are not looking to
8 support them in any way, and that at least opens up the prospect of developing a Syria-
9 first policy, by which we would build a new Syrian opposition army that might be able
10 to defeat both the regime and the extremists, stabilize the country, and serve as both a
11 bridge and a model to Sunni moderates inside Iraq.

12 I see that option as entirely feasible, but it is not guaranteed to work and it is
13 several steps beyond what the United States has been willing to consider so far. In fact,
14 it will take years if it works at all and it will require a commitment of resources,
15 probably including air power, that the U.S. has so far been unwilling to make.

16 If we are not willing to commit that level of resources to actually bring the civil
17 war to a close, another option is partition, something that has been talked about very
18 frequently. I will say that I think that if we do not bring this to a rapid close we will
19 find that partition is the de facto outcome in Iraq. It will be divided up into a Sunnistan
20 and a Shiastan and the Kurds will undoubtedly go their own way.

21 The question for us would be, can we find ways to turn de facto partition into de
22 jure partition and somehow use it to bring about peace. Again, I think that is possible,
23 but nevertheless it will be extremely difficult, far more difficult than I think many of its
24 pundits and partisans around town are making it out to be. In fact, I would say that
25 there is a dangerous mythology suggesting that partition of Iraq could be quick and
26 easy and relatively bloodless.

1 In fact, Iraq's communities remain deeply intermingled. The different militias
2 have made claims on territory currently held by the others. The fear that overwhelms
3 Iraqis will remain and, what is more, dividing up Iraq's water, oil, and other resources
4 will be enormously difficult. So the likelihood is that trying to bring about partition will
5 take years and hundreds of thousands of lives lost.

6 The last alternative that we will have will be to follow a policy of containment, of
7 trying to prevent the spillover from the Iraqi-Syrian civil war onto Iraq's other
8 neighbors and from harming American interests in the region in that way. Again, this is
9 certainly a possible alternative for the United States, but we need to remember that
10 containment is exceptionally difficult. It has rarely succeeded in the past, and I think
11 that the fall of Mosul is perhaps the most graphic illustration of just how hard it is to
12 contain the spillover from one civil war from affecting another.

13 The last point I would make is simply that to do nothing would be the worst
14 choice of all.

15 Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Pollack follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

16 **THE CHAIRMAN** [presiding]. Well, thank you all for your testimony. I am sorry I
17 had to step out, but we had the benefit of having your testimony in advance.

18 Let me ask you, Ambassador Jeffrey, if Maliki is the problem and Maliki
19 somehow rises to be prime minister again, what is the course of events for us?

20 **AMBASSADOR JEFFREY.** First of all, it is not going to be easy for him to hang on as
21 prime minister, because he will need the votes, as Mr. McGurk said, of at least part of
22 the Sunni community and part of the Kurdish community to get above the 165 that is
23 needed. What I fear is that there will be a long delay, and that is what we had in 2010,

1 where he will be the acting prime minister for many months and people will get more
2 discouraged.

3 So I think the first thing is for us to press for this process to go forward, because I
4 think that most Iraqis, including many of the Shia parties, do believe that they need a
5 new leader. If he does stay in power, then our options are far more along the lines that
6 Dr. Pollack has suggested at the end, of containing the problem and dealing with Iraq
7 and Syria from Jordan, from Kurdistan, with Turkey to the extent that is possible, to try
8 to both contain the danger and go after some of these ISIL elements that we think are
9 threatening us or threatening the stability of the region.

10 It will be very hard to work with a government in Baghdad that does not have
11 the buy-in of the Sunnis and the Kurds, and it will not be possible to assist in any re-
12 takeover of those Sunni areas by an army that does not represent the people of the
13 region.

14 **THE CHAIRMAN.** And if the flip side of that happens, that in fact he does not
15 continue as prime minister, what are the immediate things that the next government
16 will have to do in order to create the type of national unity that can fight ISIS and not
17 have the country disintegrate?

18 **AMBASSADOR JEFFREY.** I have my own list. We all have lists, and frankly the Iraqis
19 have their lists as well, Mr. Chairman. But a few things are crucial. First of all, to keep
20 the Kurds in there has to be a deal. Brett McGurk — on oil. Brett McGurk talked about
21 some of the options. He has negotiated a lot of them — they are ready, they are on the
22 shelf — that would give them a bigger slice of overall resources while bringing them
23 back into the system. That is very important.

24 There needs to be real revenue-sharing. They already have tried this. Up until
25 recently, the Kurds were getting 17 percent. Some of the either oil-producing provinces
26 — Basra, Kirkuk — or those with a lot of pilgrims — Najaf — were getting slices of the

1 Iraqi central government budget to execute their own programs, and they were very,
2 very successful, particularly in Najaf and Kirkuk. So there is a model also on the shelf
3 to have more economic federalism.

4 So it is not just lists of things. If you want inclusiveness you get rid of the guy
5 who represents a lack of inclusiveness. That will do more than any action plan. If you
6 want to have economic federalism, then you introduce financial and energy policies that
7 will see to that. And if you want to have a security force that is capable of doing what
8 General Barbero said, let us have a new defense minister who actually does have
9 command and control over his forces, which is not the case now.

10 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Dr. Pollack, do you have anything to add?

11 **DR. POLLACK.** I would just add one point to I think the excellent points that
12 Ambassador Jeffrey just raised, which is that I think the United States needs to do a lot
13 more to put on offer to the Iraqis, to make clear what we would do to help them if they
14 actually took the steps that we are looking for. Right now my sense from Iraqis is we
15 are demanding a great deal from them, but we are not actually letting them know what
16 we would do for them if they took what are actually very difficult steps for them.

17 That gets to Ambassador Jeffrey's point about how we need to be pressuring
18 them, how we need to be pushing this process forward. Getting rid of Prime Minister
19 Maliki is going to be very difficult and I think the Iraqis need to understand in much
20 more concrete terms, rather than the more vague promises that they seem to be hearing,
21 at least that they are hearing, from the administration about what they would get if they
22 did it.

23 **THE CHAIRMAN.** General Barbero, I am really hesitant to continue to authorize sales
24 or to approve sales — it is to administration to authorize them, but to approve sales —
25 when I have seen what has happened so far with some very critical armament that has
26 fallen to the hands of ISIS as a result of it being abandoned on the battlefield. So how,

1 in light of your comments that we need to respond to Iraqis' requests for help, which I
2 assume in part is possibly air strikes, but also they are looking for equipment, how do
3 we create the safeguards so that if we are going to help we do not end up having our
4 weaponry fall in the hands of ISIS and used against the very forces that we want to
5 defeat them?

6 **GENERAL BARBERO.** Mr. Chairman, as you look at every conflict there has been — it
7 is not an antiseptic environment where — you will have loss of equipment. It just will
8 happen.

9 **THE CHAIRMAN.** But not to the tune that —

10 **GENERAL BARBERO.** Not to the tune that we had, not with the rout in Mosul, I
11 agree, and I share your concern and dismay over that. I think from this assessment we
12 look at which are the good units of the Iraqi Security Forces and we invest heavily in
13 them with advice, training, whatever they need, and then take a hard look at what they
14 have asked for and what we are willing to share with them and make some decisions.

15 But a senior Iraqi military leader last week said to me: Where is America? The
16 Russians are performing and supporting us. The Iranians are here. We want the
17 Americans. You are our friends.

18 They are frustrated. We can ship all the Hellfires we want. They have three
19 fixed-wing aircraft to fire Hellfires. It sounds great, briefs well. You cannot, as I said,
20 air strike your way out of this.

21 So I would pick the right units from this assessment and I would invest in them
22 with the weapons and equipment that we feel that would help.

23 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Well, I would say to the Iraqis, billions of dollars, hundreds of
24 lives, that is where America has been. And I would also remind them that they were
25 unwilling to pursue a status of forces agreement which might have created the
26 wherewithal to continue to solidify the Iraqi Security Forces. So I think they have to

1 think about the decisions that they have made, not to relive them, but to instruct them
2 moving forward.

3 Senator Corker.

4 **SENATOR CORKER.** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 Again, thank you for being here. I think a lot of times our second panels are
6 actually better than the first, but by that time people have other business. You are more
7 independent voices, and again we thank you so much for your help.

8 Dr. Pollack, you responded, facially anyway, when Senator Menendez just
9 mentioned that they were unwilling to pursue a status of forces agreement. I was just
10 wondering what you were hoping to say, but did it instead with an expression?

11 **DR. POLLACK.** I think that what was going through my head, Senator, was that
12 that was a moment when I think both the United States and Iraq both failed each other
13 and themselves. It was a moment when I think that Prime Minister Maliki was at best
14 ambivalent about whether or not he wanted an American presence, which history has
15 proven would have been beneficial to him. And I think that it was a time when the
16 United States was ambivalent at best about whether or not it wanted to stay, and I think
17 that history has once again proven that it would have been better had we done so.

18 **SENATOR CORKER.** I know our focus needs to be on the future, but I know
19 Ambassador Jeffrey had sort of a give and take publicly in writing with folks regarding
20 this. Is that your impression of what happened during that time, just very briefly? I
21 want to move on to some other things.

22 **AMBASSADOR JEFFREY.** Very briefly, the administration, following the
23 recommendation of its military leaders and my recommendation, in 2010 offered to
24 keep troops on. In essence, the Maliki government and most of the political parties
25 except the Sadrists agreed to have troops. We got hung up on the question of a status of
26 forces agreement. Maliki was reluctant to do this. Iyad Allawi, who controlled the

1 Sunnis in parliament, said that he would not move any further than Maliki would
2 move. That undercut how we had done the deal back in 2008 when we had gotten the
3 earlier agreement, and, frankly, time ran out.

4 In terms of how enthusiastic the administration was about it, I had my
5 instructions, which were to try to get an agreement.

6 **SENATOR CORKER.** I notice — thank you both for that clarification — that there has
7 been sort of a discussion of the order of steps that need to take place, and there has been
8 a heavy emphasis on getting the right political situation. I think all of you agree with
9 that. Some of you would like to see us go ahead and take some steps now.

10 Let me ask you, General, what do you think — what are some of the elements of
11 debate that are taking place now relative to, if you were guessing — and my guess is
12 you actually talk with some of these people from time to time — prior to us knowing if
13 they are going to have an inclusive government, someone other than Maliki, what do
14 you think are some of the elements of the debate that are taking place inside the
15 administration relative to taking some small steps, not something sustained, but some
16 of those small steps that I think you have mentioned might build morale at a minimum
17 and maybe stave off some of the steps that ISIL is taking?

18 **GENERAL BARBERO.** I think there has been a reliance on this, as Ms. Slotkin said, a
19 very deliberate process, in a very exigent situation. This process has in my view become
20 a way to not take action, and we are in a situation where ISIS, as I said, is an existential
21 threat to Baghdad, the Kurds, and in the region, and they are gaining strength.

22 I think there has been discussion of air strikes, and you can take air strikes on
23 targets without having precision if you see these entities out in the desert. That will
24 only be for fleeting effects. You must have — it must be part of a sustained effort. So
25 just doing air strikes or drone strikes can have some effect, but it will not be lasting or
26 decisive.

1 I think there is great reluctance to reintroduce American forces. I get that. I
2 understand. But if this is an existential threat, if, as we have heard, it is in the national
3 interest of the United States, this situation, and if the Iraqi Security Forces are the way to
4 deal with this, and these Iraqi Security Forces are not prepared or capable of dealing
5 with it, then it is a dichotomous situation. You cannot close that circle without some
6 external assistance to these forces.

7 So I hope it is not a question of if we should support the Iraqi Security Forces and
8 introduce the steps that I said; it is a question of when and, now that we have had this
9 assessment, how quickly.

10 **SENATOR CORKER.** So the fear would be paralysis through purposeful long-term
11 analysis. That would be the fear, just analyzing this forever and not taking action.

12 I also agree with you there is some reticence to get back involved too militarily.
13 But things are dissipating quickly.

14 Let me ask you this. Maliki obviously, he may not have been a good prime
15 minister, but he understands the debate that is taking place in our country and knows
16 that him being gone, while we might not have laid out as quickly — and I think it is a
17 great comment from you for us to share with them specifically what we would do if
18 they had this inclusive government. I think that is a great point.

19 But can you tell if there is any leveraging taking place by Maliki right now,
20 knowing that we are not going to get involved in any kind of big way if he is still there?
21 Is there any activity that is occurring there relative to him trying to leverage us in other
22 ways?

23 **AMBASSADOR JEFFREY.** Dr. Pollack might have information as well. I think that,
24 first of all, he points out correctly that he did very well in the last elections several
25 months ago, winning personally 700,000 votes, which was even more than he did in
26 2010. His party came in first. Under the constitution, he should be given by the new

1 president selected today within 15 days an opportunity to form a government. And
2 under the constitutional process, if he cannot form it — and I think it will be hard for
3 him to form it — after 30 days the mandate has to pass to another party.

4 Now, that is a lot of time to consume doing this. I think that as a minimum he is
5 going to want to play this out. He also may feel that in the end the Americans, having
6 sent, what was it, 775 additional forces to Iraq, are ready to help them out regardless of
7 what happens. Again, I think I and many others have said under certain circumstances
8 right now striking ISIL where they pose a danger is important, but we cannot provide
9 the whole gamut, the whole breadth of support that they need absolutely unless we
10 have an inclusive government that can bring in the Sunnis and bring in the Kurds, and
11 it will not happen with him, sir.

12 **SENATOR CORKER.** Just one last question. I know my time is up and I know all of
13 us probably have to be places. But I know there is discussion — and you have said this
14 — about this being a regional approach and Syria and Iraq obviously having no border
15 between them any more. What are some of the dynamics on the Syrian side that as we
16 look at this regionally — I know you are just focused on Iraq now — that complicate,
17 with Assad being in power there, complicate our ability to look at it regionally?

18 **DR. POLLACK.** I am glad to start, Senator. I think one of the most obvious
19 problems is the one that I have already mentioned, which is that when you look only at
20 Syria we look at it and we say, we do not like the Assad regime, we want it gone,
21 therefore the question is simply how best to help the opposition. When we look at Iraq
22 we have a situation where you have a Shia group in charge of the government, they are
23 likely to remain in charge of the government, and we are going to want to maintain
24 good ties with them. Simultaneously, we have got a Sunni opposition that includes
25 some people we really dislike — ISIS and the militants — and others who we very

1 much like. So there is a complexity that is involved, and therefore any support to one of
2 these groups becomes complicated by the opposite effect that it has with the other.

3 So if we are providing enormous support to ISIS oppositionists in Syria,
4 inevitably some of that support is going to flow to opposition — to Sunni groups in
5 Iraq, some of whom we may not like. The more that we are helping the Maliki
6 government in Baghdad, the more it is going to be seen by folks in the region as
7 supporting the wider Shia cause, which also encompasses the Assad government.

8 Obviously, that is only the tip of the iceberg. There is a lot more to talk about.
9 But we do need to recognize the complexity that has now been introduced into this
10 situation by having simultaneously civil wars in Iraq and Syria that are by and large
11 merged, which the region sees in a very simple way as a Sunni-Shia fight, but which we
12 see in a much more complex way.

13 **SENATOR CORKER.** Would anybody like to add to that?

14 **GENERAL BARBERO.** If I could, Senator. As far as a regional approach, we know
15 that ISIS is — they are awash in money. But the way to choke these organizations is to
16 go after their financing. Now, for the near term they have got plenty of that. However,
17 we know there are regional actors supporting them, supporting ISIS, and we should
18 employ, as I said in my statement, our intelligence community to identify those actors
19 and then use every tool we have in the inter-agency — Department of Commerce,
20 Department of Treasury — to go after those actors and these sources of funding.

21 We know, have a good idea, where it is coming from. Let us identify them and
22 target them as part of a regional approach to this growing problem.

23 **SENATOR CORKER.** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Thank you all for being here.

25 **THE CHAIRMAN.** One last set of questions. General, you served in Iraq. You led our
26 mission to train and equip Iraqi forces. When U.S. forces left Iraq it seemed that Iraqi

1 forces were on their way to becoming a capable force. So the question — that begs the
2 question: What happened? Why did the ISF's capability and capacity erode so quickly?

3 **GENERAL BARBERO.** Senator, tough question, and it is tough to see what has
4 happened, and it is tough to see what has been happening over the last few years. I
5 have been back to Iraq many times over the last year since I left active duty.

6 But the ISF was built to handle a low-level insurgency and our goal was to get
7 them to a state where they were good enough. Frankly, when I was there in 2009 and
8 '10 and into 2011, the assumption we had as we did our development plan, there would
9 be a residual force of advisers and trainers to continue this development. We knew — I
10 did an assessment in the summer of 2010 for then-General Odierno, which we briefed to
11 everyone in Iraq and every Iraqi leader, saying: Here is where your forces are going to
12 be in December 2011. We wanted to convince them and show them the capabilities and
13 the shortfalls of their forces.

14 The shortfalls we identified, some were very obvious. They would not have —
15 they could not control their own air space nor defend it. But we said: You have a
16 sustainment problem, your military readiness of your equipment is in a death spiral.
17 Unless you do something very seriously, you will not be able to field an army. Your
18 command and control structure is not workable. This peacetime for command and
19 control of the population directly to the prime minister, it has to change. You do not
20 have an NCO corps.

21 What I think most fundamentally is, you have not — we told the Iraqis: You
22 must invest in training. Good armies train continuously. And we did not see that
23 before we left and I have not seen any evidence of that since then.

24 So the short answer is the development that needed to take place with the Iraqi
25 Security Forces from December 2011 to July 2014 has not taken place. We can go back
26 and forth about advisers and trainers, but they just have not developed as they should.

1 **THE CHAIRMAN.** So if that is the case, then what will advisers now be able to do at
2 this stage that will make a difference on the ground with Iraqi forces?

3 **GENERAL BARBERO.** Well, when we were on the ground with them and advising
4 and training, it did make a difference. I think first we can stop the bleeding. They are
5 under severe duress with the VBIED campaign that has started in Baghdad. Indirect
6 fire is coming. ISIS is not going to let up. So we need — if this is in our interest, then
7 we need to get something in there to help them, A, stop the bleeding, and then start
8 building these forces.

9 But this will not take weeks or months. This is going to take a while to get them
10 to a state — as I said in my comments, unless we have an Iraqi government that is
11 willing to accept these changes and willing to emplace these changes into their structure
12 and the way they do business, then I would question whether we should do it.

13 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Two last questions. Can air strikes alone — I think you alluded to
14 this in your answer to one of Senator Corker's questions. But can air strikes alone make
15 a difference in pushing back ISIS, or would doing them now just be in essence giving
16 the Iraqis a boost?

17 **GENERAL BARBERO.** Air strikes can make a difference, tactical difference. They can
18 help enable Iraqi forces. They can help relieve pressure. They can help degrade ISIS
19 capabilities. But my point is we cannot think that just through air strikes and drone
20 strikes we can solve this problem or, I would argue, even hold it in abeyance. They
21 would make a difference. It would not be a decisive difference.

22 **THE CHAIRMAN.** So the flip, the other side of this, then is the training and assist so
23 that the — but the Iraqi forces, can they possibly recover the country, even with the
24 training and assisting?

25 **GENERAL BARBERO.** I think they could.

26 **THE CHAIRMAN.** You think they could?

1 **GENERAL BARBERO.** I think they could.

2 **THE CHAIRMAN.** We are talking about what period of time?

3 **GENERAL BARBERO.** Months. It is not going to happen overnight.

4 **AMBASSADOR JEFFREY.** Senator, if I could support General Barbero. I have seen it
5 myself. I was in Vietnam as an Army officer in '72. The South Vietnamese Army, when
6 the North Vietnamese regular army invaded for the first time, they started melting
7 worse than Mosul. Millions, billions of dollars of U.S. equipment was lost within days.
8 Then when we started air strikes it changed the psychology of those forces almost
9 overnight, and within three months they had recovered almost the entire country.

10 We saw in Libya, we saw in Kosovo, and we saw in Bosnia where air strikes can
11 provide lightly equipped, sometimes not too well trained forces the difference in taking
12 on better equipped forces. As Brett McGurk I think three times described earlier today,
13 dealing with the Shamar Tribe up near Mosul, dealing with the people, and I know
14 Governor Delami is still holding out in Ramadi, a Sunni governor, against ISIL, they are
15 outgunned. He described how they had volunteers to go into northern Fallujah, but
16 they lost in a battle to ISIL because the ISIL people were better equipped and better
17 trained.

18 So a combination of air strikes and advisers, not boots on the ground, can make a
19 huge difference, sir.

20 **THE CHAIRMAN.** One last question for you, General. are you surprised by the
21 alarming reports of Iraqi Security Forces' abuses, infiltration by Shia militias, and lack of
22 accountability? And how do we engage with the Iraqi forces to deal with those
23 challenges?

24 **GENERAL BARBERO.** Senator, I was in Erbil and Baghdad in late May, so the
25 developments in Mosul and what has happened after that I think was a shock in Mosul
26 and Baghdad and Washington. I was shocked by it.

1 But as I drive around Baghdad or Basra or other places over the last year, it is a
2 checkpoint army. I have said that. You cannot take on an ISIS if you have been in static
3 positions on the defense and not trained for offensive operations.

4 What is troubling is as you ride up to these army checkpoints there are Shia
5 religious banners almost at every one across Baghdad, certainly in Basra. So there must
6 be a fundamental change in the nature of these forces, not only the government, but the
7 forces, to allow participation by Sunni and Kurds in this unified effort that it would
8 require.

9 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Well, I appreciate your insights. I am not a military guy, but I will
10 say that when an American soldier who volunteers joins he fights for a cause, for a
11 principle, for a set of values, and he fights for his Nation, he or she fights for their
12 Nation. If the job is just a job, then it does not turn out the same way. And it is difficult
13 to get an Iraqi army if you do not feel you are fighting for the totality of a country —
14 Shia, Sunni, and Kurd. That is a real problem. And that is a real problem.

15 Anyhow, I appreciate all of your insights as we grapple with the choices we have
16 to make.

17 This record will remain open until the close of business tomorrow. With the
18 thanks of the committee, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:42 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]