

**THE U.S. ROLE AND STRATEGY
IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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CONTENTS

	Page
Hon. Bob Corker, U.S. Senator From Tennessee	1
Hon. Benjamin L. Cardin, U.S. Senator From Maryland	2
Hon. Anne Patterson, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC	3
Prepared Statement	5
Gen. John R. Allen, USMC, Ret., Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition To Counter ISIL, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC	12
Prepared Statement	14
ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD	
Responses of Gen. John R. Allen to Questions Submitted by Senator Rand Paul	53
Responses of Assistant Secretary Anne Patterson and Gen. John R. Allen to Questions Submitted by Senator Edward Markey	54

THE U.S. ROLE AND STRATEGY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2015

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:34 a.m. in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Bob Corker (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Corker, Risch, Johnson, Flake, Isakson, Barrasso, Cardin, Menendez, Shaheen, Murphy, Kaine, and Markey.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BOB CORKER, U.S. SENATOR FROM TENNESSEE

The CHAIRMAN. The Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

We thank very much our witnesses for being here. As a matter of fact, I will start met. I have very much enjoyed the service of Anne Patterson, who is not leaving. So I am not going to focus on her this morning, but we thank her for her professionalism and have visited her, as many have, in her various assignments around the world. And I appreciate so much her professionalism.

General Allen, I have to tell you we admire so much your service to our country over the last 43 years, your willingness to do what you have done most recently in the State Department, your direct, transparent, always helpful manner in dealing with all of us, and we wish you well as you move on to another chapter here very soon. You are very kind to be here. I know you do not like doing these kinds of hearings.

General ALLEN. I love them, Chairman, actually. [Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. As you know, we had planned to have General Allen in a closed session. And I have always found him to be so much more helpful to us in that type of setting just because of the tremendous knowledge you have about what is happening on the ground and your ability to communicate it effectively. I know that it was decided that we were going to have an open hearing in this manner, and I hope that will not inhibit you much, especially since you are on the way out the door. But we cannot thank you enough for your tremendous service to our country. Thank you.

General ALLEN. Thank you, Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Absolutely.

I know that General Allen will focus more on Syria and Iraq. Ambassador and Secretary Patterson will focus on the entire region.

Yesterday we had a 2½ hour session with Secretary Kerry. Secretary Patterson was a part of that or at least witnessed what was said. I know today she will have the opportunity to talk more broadly about the region. I know General Allen will focus more so on Iraq and Syria.

But, look, we are having a series of hearings. I think the American people and all of us are somewhat confused about what our efforts are. I know that many Americans believe that we are disengaged from the Middle East, and yet we still have 40,000 troops stationed in the Middle East in various capacities. We certainly have robust economic efforts that are underway and many other people-to-people type engagements that are occurring. So I think this gives us a tremendous opportunity to explore that for all of you to be open and honest with us about where we are. I am sure there will be some pretty strong questioning that will take place, but we thank you for being here.

And with that, I will turn to our outstanding ranking member, Senator Cardin.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND**

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I first want to join you in welcoming both of our witnesses. Secretary Patterson is doing an incredible job in a very challenging region of the world. Of all the regional secretaries, you picked the one with the most challenges. So thank you very much for your service. And I agree with the chairman and his observations of General Allen. We thank you so much for your service.

Let me, if I might, just quote from what Secretary Kerry said because I think he expressed our views of all the Members of Congress when he said about General Allen, "he has worked relentlessly to build a vision among diverse groups of nations and bind them together with a common purpose." General Allen traveled to more than 30 capitals around the world, in so doing, garnered international support for a multifaceted approach to attack and diminish the threat posed by this brutal terrorist group.

And I think, General Allen, I just really wanted to express the appreciation of the members of this committee for your incredible public service throughout your entire career and thank you very much for that.

As the chairman pointed out, we have had a series of hearings in regards to the Middle East. Some have been very specific in its focus. This one is more general as to the current challenges in the U.S. role and strategy in the Middle East.

I think first we need to underscore our interest in this region of the world. Yes, it is to stop the spread and use of weapons of mass destruction. It is clearly to underscore our commitment to Israel's security. It is for counterterrorism and the spread of violent extremism. It is good governance and respect for human rights. And that is one area that I have concentrated on because I think the United States makes it very clear that without good governance and respect for human rights, you cannot have long-term stability and security in a country. It is considering the energy resources in that part of the world. It is ensuring freedom of navigation and free

flow of commerce. And it is certainly ending the regional civil wars, recognizing that that is critically important not just for stability and security in the region but the humanitarian crisis that we see today from the refugees fleeing the civil war in Syria.

So against this backdrop of broad U.S. interests, then what are our objectives and what considerations should shape U.S. strategy going forward? And that is the purpose for today's hearing, to understand the strategies that the United States is employing. We certainly want to enable all citizens to live lives of dignity and equal opportunity.

So there are substantial challenges in so many countries in that region. We have now completed the Iran deal. What are the consequences moving forward? We do not expect Iran to change its behavior. How do we counter its problematic activities in that region concerning terrorism and its ballistic missiles operations? How do we deal with the problems in Yemen? How do we deal with the problems in so many other countries in that region? And I look forward to a robust discussion with our two witnesses today.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Cardin.

Our first witness is the Honorable Anne Patterson, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. Again, thank you for being here. Our second witness today is Gen. John R. Allen, Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL. We thank you.

You both have been here before. If you would summarize your comments in about 5 minutes. We have your written testimony. Without objection, it will be entered into the record, and we look forward to Q and A. And if you would start, Anne, we would appreciate it.

STATEMENT OF HON. ANNE PATTERSON, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Ambassador PATTERSON. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cardin, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today.

I am honored to appear with Gen. John Allen, our distinguished Special Presidential Envoy. We are both just back from trips to the region. I know you received a full readout of the Secretary's trip yesterday.

I have submitted a full statement for the record.

The roots of the unprecedented instability we are witnessing in the Middle East are deep and systemic. To protect U.S. interests amidst this volatility, we have to recognize and cope with the challenges that states across the region face: weak political legitimacy, ineffective institutions, an enormous demographic youth bulge, lagging economies, religious sectarianism, and a lack of consensus on the role of Islam in politics. Our most urgent priority is to combat ISIL, which is preying on weak states to terrorize citizens and to create a massive humanitarian disaster.

There are no easy or quick fixes for these daunting challenges. However, there are some success stories, notably in Tunisia, and I look forward to next week's ceremony to celebrate the National Dialogue Quartet's winning of the Nobel Peace Prize. We are deter-

mined to continue helping Tunisia stabilize its fragile democracy, grow its economy, and build its security institutions.

Likewise in Iraq, Prime Minister Abadi has made progress in reconciling Sunni-Shia differences and has courageously tackled corruption. We have a long road ahead, but we have stopped ISIL's territorial expansion and are helping stabilize areas liberated from ISIL.

The administration succeeded in signing an agreement to remove the biggest threat to our security: Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon. We are fully cognizant of the challenges ahead with implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The United States will lift nuclear-related sanctions only after the IAEA has verified that Iran has completed the required nuclear steps.

Building on the historic summit that President Obama held at Camp David in May, we are helping our gulf allies counter Iranian aggression by building our defensive military capabilities and by limiting Tehran's ability to support proxies like Hezbollah.

In Lebanon, we are strengthening the armed forces, targeting Hezbollah's financial support structure, and urging the government to elect a President.

Egyptians are voting in parliamentary elections, and we are helping Cairo fight ISIL affiliated terrorists in Sinai, strengthen its border with Libya, and create jobs necessary for political stability. At the Strategic Dialogue in August, Secretary Kerry emphasized the need for Egypt to improve its human rights record, and we will continue to press for expanding freedoms for the Egyptian people.

Secretary Kerry initiated meetings last week with Prime Minister Netanyahu, Palestinian Authority President Abbas, and Jordan's King Abdullah that resulted in a path to ease Israel-Palestinian tensions. We condemn the violence against both Israelis and Palestinians in the strongest possible terms and welcome the steps the parties have agreed to calm the situation.

Libyans are inching closer to a government of national accord due to the work of the United States, our European allies, and the U.N. A national unity government will give us the counterterrorism partner we need to stabilize Libya.

In Yemen, the Houthis and representatives of former President Saleh and President Hadi have agreed to direct consultations that we hope will begin soon. We are pressing the Saudi coalition to de-escalate its military campaign and ensure unfettered humanitarian access for assistance to the Yemeni people.

Syria has been the subject of intense U.S. diplomacy. There is no military solution, and the international community cannot afford a continuation of the status quo, which yields only unending humanitarian catastrophes and refugee flows. Russia's military adventurism is directly aimed at United States-supported moderate opposition forces and was prompted because the Assad regime was losing territory and control. But we know Moscow does not want an unlimited commitment in Syria.

As Secretary Kerry told you yesterday, he believes that now is the time to make a maximum effort to end the Syrian conflict. The solution can only come through a political transition. The Russian, Turkish, and Saudi counterparts we brought together last Friday in Vienna agreed on this, and in 2 days Secretary Kerry will bring

together a larger group to help begin a political process amongst Syrians to negotiate a political transition. We have no illusions about the prospects for success. Our differences with Russia, Iran, and the Assad regime are very substantial, but the benefits of ending this conflict and giving the Syrian people a government that respects them are even greater.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, the Middle East and North Africa is a deeply troubled region where profound challenges impede the better, economically successful, and politically stable future that the vast majority of people across the region fervently hope to achieve. At the same time, most of these countries are counting on the United States for support as they navigate this period of instability for security cooperation, for economic partnerships, and for a leg up in the 21st century.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Patterson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR ANNE W. PATTERSON

Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the challenges facing American diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa region. I am honored to appear before you today with Gen. John Allen, our distinguished Special Presidential Envoy. We are both just back from the region. I was with the Secretary in Jordan and Saudi Arabia over the weekend following talks in Vienna with some of our regional partners and the Russians on trying to find a way to end the war in Syria, a conflict that in many ways illustrates the challenges and threats we face in the region.

Mr. Chairman, the growth of violent extremist groups, particularly ISIL—that prey on societies with weak or failed governments and that draw on support from the region and around the world—is unprecedented and creating new threats. As a consequence, the region is experiencing large-scale humanitarian suffering as well as widespread destruction and economic collapse, undermining efforts to end the violence.

We have important national interests in the region to pursue, from counterterrorism cooperation to coordination on military issues to investment opportunities for American companies. The dedicated women and men at the State Department are engaged throughout the region and with the international community to press for steps toward peace and stability and promote urgently needed reforms in support of our critical national security interests. I will describe some of our policy challenges and opportunities—today and for the future—and will be glad to take your questions.

THE ROOT CAUSES OF REGIONAL INSTABILITY

Today's instability has deep roots in six challenges that occur in varying degrees across the region, including:

- *First, challenges to political legitimacy*—because so few of the region's governments have a consistent tradition of open, democratic elections where leadership can be challenged by an unfettered opposition;
- *Second, lagging institutional competence*—because many regional governments lack effective institutions to provide even basic public services. The most extreme example is Libya, where it became clear that the national government was extremely weak, with tribal, regional, and factional groups that the former Qadhafi government had corralled to hold the country together;
- *Third, demography*—because the region's economies cannot keep up with the rapidly growing population of young job seekers. Unemployed young men—lacking skills, adrift, and angry—helped lead the Arab Spring. Today, many of them are prime recruits for armed gangs or violent extremist groups that offer meaning for their lives and give them a sense of purpose;
- *Fourth, lagging economies*—because regional governments respond to the demographically driven demand for more jobs by expanding public sector payrolls rather than undertaking urgently needed reforms, adding to bloated government and stifling local economies;

- *Fifth, growing religious sectarianism*—because regional rivalries, most particularly between Iran and Saudi Arabia, have been manipulated to stoke tensions between Sunni and Shia Muslims. This rivalry is playing out violently today in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Lebanon. And the bitter sectarian narrative has emboldened extremists on both sides to pursue twisted interpretations of Islam; and
- *Sixth, the role of Islam in politics*—because there is little or no tradition of separation between religion and politics in most of the countries of the region, regional governments are struggling to find a widely supported consensus on the role of religious political movements and parties.

SYRIA

All of the long-term challenges I mentioned can be found in Syria. In the 4 years since the Assad regime launched a civil war on citizens seeking modest reforms, over 225,000 Syrians have been killed and 4 million Syrians have become refugees. About half of Syria's prewar population of 22 million people has been displaced. The conflict has become a magnet for violent extremists from around the world.

Our objectives in Syria remain clear: we will continue to degrade and ultimately defeat ISIL; we will continue to advance conditions to foster a negotiated political transition; and we will help Syrians lay the foundation for a free and pluralistic future—a future without ISIL or Assad.

Although other regional countries have been involved in this conflict, both Iran and Russia have been long-time supporters of the Assad regime, and their new military adventurism has been directly pointed at U.S.-supported moderate opposition forces. The dangers of the current situation are clear.

During our meetings on Syria in Europe and in the region last week, Secretary Kerry pressed the Russian, Saudi, and Turkish Governments on strategies to end the conflict and advance a genuine political transition. This group, as well as Foreign Ministers from other nations, will likely meet again this week to press forward on this dialogue.

We believe Russia's decision to intervene militarily in Syria is a losing bet. They know full well that there is no military solution to this conflict. Russia's choice of airstrike targets has been overwhelmingly in areas where ISIL is not operating or dominant; meanwhile, the regime's attacks on its own people help ISIL recruit fighters to its extremist cause. In contrast, the U.S. is leading a 65-member coalition against ISIL, its recruitment, financing, and propaganda efforts, as General Allen will describe, and we are supporting ISIL's opponents in the moderate opposition. The Secretary told Foreign Minister Lavrov that if Russia wants to effectively combat ISIL, it can contribute constructively to the international efforts already underway against ISIL. And the Secretary told Mr. Lavrov that Russia now has the responsibility to urge the Assad regime to stop brutalizing its own citizens and help advance a political solution. Our partners are relaying the same message.

Over the past months, we have been meeting with a wide range of Syrian opposition leaders, including members of the external and internal political opposition, the leaders and political representatives of major armed factions, and local governance bodies in Syria to encourage their consolidation around a unified set of principles to guide negotiations and a political transition in Syria that preserves public institutions. They are doing so, more than at any other time during the conflict. We hope to build on this greater unity to pressure the regime and its allies to enter into a serious dialogue on a political transition in Syria.

YEMEN

Yemen is one of the world's poorest countries and for years has been plagued by instability derived from the factors affecting other countries in the region. Conflict has broken out several times over the past 20 years following the unification of North and South Yemen, which ended a several decades-long division of the country but also set off a battle for power and influence by forces from both the north and south hoping to maintain their interests in a unified Yemen. In August 2014, Houthi rebels took Yemen's capital of Sanaa by force, derailing a political transition process that began after a 2011 uprising against ex-President Ali Abdullah Saleh. The Houthi militias, with support from Saleh-affiliated forces, forced out the internationally recognized government of President Abd Rabbu Mansur Hadi. In response to a plea from President Hadi to defend the Yemeni Government from Houthi advances, the Saudis initiated an air campaign in March 2015 with a 10-member coalition of predominantly Sunni Arab States.

Saudi Arabia is motivated by the threat to their territory, demonstrated by ongoing cross-border attacks perpetrated by the Houthis. To help defend Saudi border

security and restore the legitimate Yemeni Government, we have been providing logistical and intelligence support to the coalition through a Joint Combined Planning Cell in Riyadh.

We are working intensively to find a political solution for the Yemen crisis. In Riyadh last weekend, we again strongly urged the coalition to de-escalate its military campaign and to ensure unfettered humanitarian access, and we are pressing all Yemeni parties, both directly and through the United Nations, to return to negotiations without preconditions. There are some signs of progress that we will work to build on in the coming months. The principal parties in the conflict—the Houthis, representatives of former President Saleh, and President Hadi—have all signaled their willingness to engage in direct negotiations, based on U.N. Security Council Resolution 2216, adopted last April, and we believe that talks aimed at ending the conflict in Yemen could start very soon.

The U.N. has reported that over 2,500 civilians have been killed since March due to this conflict. We have pressed all sides to honor their obligations under international humanitarian law and to take all feasible actions to minimize harm to civilians. We have asked the Saudi Government to investigate all credible reports of civilian casualties resulting from coalition-led airstrikes and, if confirmed, to address the factors that led to them. Moreover, while we support Saudi Arabia's right to self-defense, we have repeatedly expressed our concern to the Saudi leadership that the continued military campaign is worsening a growing humanitarian crisis in Yemen. We continue to urge all parties in Yemen to allow for the unimpeded entry and delivery of essential relief and commercial items to the civilian population nationwide, including urgently needed food, medicine, and fuel, and to avoid attacks on infrastructure critical to responding to the humanitarian crisis.

LIBYA

Libya, a country with enormous petrochemical resources, has been in economic freefall and has become essentially lawless as rival factions compete for political power. U.N. Special Representative of the Secretary General Bernardino Leon, with support from the United States and our European and regional partners, has been working tirelessly to break the long stalemate between the competing Tobruk-based House of Representatives and the Tripoli-based General National Congress.

Despite the long list of challenges that Libya faces in the coming years, the Libyans are inching closer to a Government of National Accord due to these efforts. The parties still must approve the final political framework text and slate of leaders for its six-member Presidency Council. Both parties need to immediately endorse the final text and the slate of leaders to end the national crisis and help return Libya to a path of peace, stability, and prosperity.

EGYPT

Egypt, our long-time partner in regional peace and security, faces daunting economic and security challenges. While daily large-scale protests have largely come to a halt, Egypt faces an increasingly complex picture that includes ISIL-affiliated terrorists in Sinai and along its Libyan border, as well as emerging domestic terrorist groups.

We welcome the Egyptian Army's military campaign against a growing ISIL-affiliated insurgency in Sinai and along the Libyan border. We are working to provide the Egyptians with both the equipment and the training required to make the difficult transition from a force focused on conventional warfare to one that can defeat a terrorist enemy using asymmetrical tactics. And we are focused on helping Egypt better defend its borders against terrorists. We will continue to urge the Egyptians to also provide economic assistance and compensation to the people of the Sinai who have been affected by combat operations.

Over the past 2 years, the Al-Sisi government has initiated economic reforms designed to control spending, increase revenues, and stimulate investment. Growth has increased and Egypt's credit ratings have improved, but reforms appear to have slowed in recent months. We are encouraging Egypt to sustain the momentum, and we have offered assistance to support Egypt's reforms and encourage economic growth.

But if Egypt is to recover and resume its leading role in the region, it will need to improve its human rights record. We welcome recent pardons for some democracy activists and journalists. However, at the Strategic Dialogue in Cairo on August 2, Secretary Kerry specifically raised—publicly and privately—our concerns about the radicalizing effect of continued restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly, as well as mass trials and the intimidation of civil society organizations.

Egypt's parliamentary elections have begun—with the U.S. supporting teams of monitors. The first phase of voting took place October 17–19; the second phase will take place November 21–23. The new unicameral legislature will seat 596 members, with minimum quotas for women and Christians.

TUNISIA

Since its 2011 revolution, Tunisia has taken remarkable and inspiring steps to build an accountable and representative democracy. Tunisia's democratic progress is an important counterpoint to those who assert that Islam and the Arab world are somehow incompatible with democracy. Tunisian Islamists, secularists, and many in-between are working together daily to negotiate and seek consensus for the benefit of their society and its future.

The Nobel Committee rightly recognized the National Dialogue Quartet recently with its Peace Prize. Next week, I will participate in a ceremony celebrating Tunisia's accomplishments by presenting an award to Houcine Abassi, who heads one of the organizations that made up the National Dialogue Quartet. In recent years, these organizations have promoted consensus-building and social cooperation by working across the spectrum of Tunisian society to advance dialogue and foster Tunisia's continuing democratic transition. Their inspiring achievement is an example for societies working towards an inclusive transition from dictatorship to democracy.

The consolidation of democratic governance will take time and patience as Tunisia builds its institutions and works to ensure the freedoms guaranteed to Tunisian citizens by their constitution. Despite historic legislative and Presidential elections in 2014 and the formation of a consensus government, the democratic transition and the country's security and economy remain fragile.

The economy was mismanaged for decades prior to the revolution, but the government has publically stated its commitment to reform. High levels of youth unemployment, feelings of marginalization, and instability in Libya are helping spur radicalization among young Tunisians. The administration strongly believes that we must help the Tunisian Government and people build their security institutions and help bring their economy into the 21st century.

THE GULF

The United States has a long and deep history of political, military, and economic ties with the GCC states. We continue to work with our partners in the gulf to attempt to solve problems across the region, including in Syria, Yemen, and Libya. Our military and security cooperation with gulf countries play an essential role in our efforts to fight extremist threats. Even with their substantial oil and gas, the gulf countries face the need to economically diversify, provide employment opportunities for a growing population of young people, and combat extremist messaging and recruiting.

Following the meeting at Camp David in May between President Obama and gulf leaders, the U.S. and the GCC reaffirmed our resolve to work together to strengthen regional security in light of the challenges our GCC partners must tackle, including Iranian aggression.

Secretary Kerry and his GCC counterparts convened on the margins of the U.N. General Assembly in late September to review progress since Camp David, including facilitating arms transfers, bolstering counterterrorism efforts, enhancing military preparedness, building cybersecurity capabilities, and establishing a GCC interoperable ballistic missile defense architecture. We will continue to deepen this cooperation with the GCC in the months ahead.

We also are also strengthening our bilateral engagement with key gulf partners. Just last weekend, Secretary Kerry and I were in Riyadh for one of his many meetings with gulf partners to discuss a way forward in Syria, follow up on Camp David, review efforts to improve gulf military capabilities, and discuss enhanced economic cooperation.

Additionally, we are expanding our economic cooperation with the GCC. For example on Monday, Secretary Kerry and Secretary Lew cohosted the first meeting of the U.S.-Qatar Economic Dialogue and last month Secretary Pritzker participated in the launch of the Qatar Investment Authority office in New York, which will facilitate \$35 billion in Qatari investments in the United States.

Bahrain is one example of the partnerships we have built in the gulf. It plays a critical role in broader gulf security, hosting the Fifth Fleet and U.S. Navy Central Command Headquarters, at a base that allows the U.S. Navy to cover 2.5 million square miles of ocean and seas, and ensure freedom of commerce and navigation in a vital waterway. Our naval presence is a critical piece of the regional security

architecture—without Bahrain’s partnership, the United States would require additional deployed military assets to defend against external threats in the gulf region. As a major non-NATO ally, Bahrain provides extensive basing and overflight permissions for the counter-ISIL campaign, participated in initial coalition airstrikes last September, and sent F-16 fighters to Jordan in February for anti-ISIL operations.

Over the past several months Bahrain has raided, interdicted, and rounded up numerous Iran-sponsored weapons caches, arms transfers, and militants.

But Bahrain will need to balance its legitimate security concerns with universal rights guarantees for its citizens, especially on freedom of expression and with the judicial system.

IRAQ

The United States is committed to Iraq’s success, including efforts to govern effectively and inclusively and ensure that all Iraqis have a stake in the country’s long-term campaign for security and stability. The Iraqi Government continues to face many challenges, such as decaying infrastructure, lagging social services, and security issues related to ISIL and the militias formed to combat it. These challenges are compounded by a dire fiscal crisis resulting from the steep drop in oil prices and the need for increased spending in the anti-ISIL campaign.

In addition to the efforts of the coalition and our military that General Allen describes, our support has been critical to many of Iraq’s achievements: the establishment of Prime Minister Abadi’s more inclusive government in September 2014; Iraq’s improved ties with its Arab neighbors; stabilization work in newly liberated territory to allow for the return of displaced families; and concrete steps toward decentralization of authority that will empower local communities.

In August, Prime Minister Abadi announced an ambitious reform program that aims to reduce corruption, improve service delivery, increase accountability, and empower local authorities. Abadi’s reforms were immediately and unanimously approved by the Council of Ministers. The reform program has gained the support of a broad cross-section of Iraqi society, including Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and others. The United States has stepped up with technical assistance, providing expertise to the government in order to help it manage its fiscal crisis and continue implementation of its plans for decentralization.

Reconciliation between Sunni and Shia Iraqis is a key component of our strategy. Regrettably, hardline voices continue to oppose much of Prime Minister Abadi’s efforts at reconciliation among the various Iraqi communities. However, U.S. support for the Abadi Government’s ongoing efforts to mobilize Sunni tribal fighters against ISIL and to reestablish services and facilitate returns in liberated areas—many of which are majority-Sunni—is critical in ensuring that Sunnis in Iraq and in the region feel they have a stake in the country’s future. The strong U.S. partnership with the Kurdistan Regional Government has helped shore up Iraq’s Kurdistan Region against the ISIL threat, and we continue to encourage cooperation between Baghdad and Erbil on the many common issues they face.

The United States is also helping to mitigate the humanitarian crisis caused by the fighting in Iraq. There are an estimated 247,000 Syrian refugees in Iraq, mainly in the Kurdistan Region, and 3.2 million internally displaced Iraqis. The United States has provided more than \$600 million in humanitarian aid for Iraq over the past two years and is the top donor for addressing this crisis.

As the coalition’s military campaign proceeds, we are working to ensure that areas liberated from ISIL’s control are secure, stable, and hospitable for Iraq’s significant displaced communities to return home. The United States has donated \$8.3 million to the UNDP stabilization fund for Iraq, and the coalition is helping lead efforts with the U.N. to support rehabilitation and the return of displaced civilians. To date, over 100,000 civilians have returned to Tikrit and surrounding areas, and we are already actively planning with the Government of Iraq and the international community for the stabilization of Anbar and other provinces.

IRAN

The October 18 “Adoption Day” of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) marks a critical juncture in ensuring Iran’s nuclear program will be exclusively for peaceful purposes as the JCPOA participants to the agreement begin to make the necessary preparations for the implementation of their JCPOA commitments. The intent of all JCPOA participants to move forward with implementation remains clear. As we have previously stated, however, the lifting of nuclear-related sanctions by the United States will only take effect once the IAEA has verified that

Iran has completed its required nuclear steps. It is now up to Iran to take the nuclear steps required by the deal.

The JCPOA is intended to remove the biggest threat to our security and that of the region—Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon. Yet Iran’s destabilizing activities in the region remain a serious concern. Iran has continued its efforts to prop up the Assad regime in Syria and continued its attempts to provide weapons, funding, and training to Hezbollah, the Houthis in Yemen, Shia militants in Bahrain, and Palestinian terrorist organizations in Gaza. Iran has also continued its provocative testing of ballistic missile technology, its use of naval mines, and other surface and subsurface weapons to threaten key areas of the gulf, and its malicious activity in cyberspace. We work vigorously with our regional partners to counter these activities.

Our ongoing efforts to push back on Iranian destabilizing activities fall into five broad lines of effort: First, we are undermining Iran’s capacity to execute attacks directly or through its partners and proxies by expanding our cooperation with and strengthening the capacity of regional partners. Second, we are working to restrict Iran’s ability to move men, money, and materiel for illicit purposes through sanctions. Third, we remain committed to Israel’s security and that of our other regional allies, and we continue to build up our partners’ capacities for self-defense against Iranian aggression. Fourth, we are working unilaterally and with allies to weaken and disrupt Hezbollah’s financial, commercial, and procurement networks. And finally, we are working to disrupt Iran’s relationships with its proxies by publicizing Iran’s meddling wherever we can, and are strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law in countries facing threats from Iranian proxy activities.

With the GCC in particular, we have developed a robust initiative to build on the historic summit that President Obama held with gulf leaders in May. This initiative represents a comprehensive approach to enhance our defense and security cooperation with GCC states and to advance our shared interests in the region, particularly countering Iranian aggression. Five working groups on Arms Transfers, Military Preparedness, Ballistic Missile Defense, Counterterrorism, and Cybersecurity have already met. A sixth working group, focused on countering Iran’s destabilizing activities in the region, will meet next week. We have already made important progress in these efforts, including securing consensus to design a gulf ballistic missile early warning system, an agreement to streamline arms sales to GCC countries, plans for a major multilateral military exercise, and steps to improve cybersecurity for critical infrastructure.

In parallel to our Camp David initiative with the GCC, we continue our close cooperation with Israel to maintain its qualitative military edge and strengthen its defense against Iran, its proxies, and other regional threats. We have provided Israel with unparalleled access to some of the most advanced military equipment in the world that no other country in the region has access to, including the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, and in cooperation with our partners in Congress, we continue to provide more Foreign Military Financing (FMF) to Israel than any other country in the world. The United States, through Department of Defense Authorities, has also invested \$2.9 billion in the Iron Dome system and other missile defense programs and systems for Israel.

In addition to the above measures, and even as the JCPOA is formally implemented, the United States will continue to enforce sanctions on Iran for its Iran’s human rights abuses, its ballistic missile activities, its support for terrorism, and its destabilizing activities in the region.

We will also continue to seek the immediate release of imprisoned Americans, Amir Hekmati, Saeed Abedini, and Jason Rezaian, and continue our calls on Iran to cooperate with the United States to determine the whereabouts of Robert Levinson, who went missing in Iran in 2007. We will do so until they are all reunited with their loved ones here in the United States.

MIDDLE EAST PEACE

We are deeply concerned about recent violence and escalating tensions between Israel and the Palestinians and are very troubled by the attacks in recent weeks. We condemn in the strongest possible terms violence against Israeli and Palestinian civilians. We extend our condolences to the victims and their families.

We have seen positive steps by both Israeli and Palestinian leaders to ease tensions and are hopeful that the violence will soon subside. We need to see an end to any statements that inflame tensions or incite attacks.

Secretary Kerry met last week with Prime Minister Netanyahu in Berlin and Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas and King Abdullah in Amman to discuss efforts to reduce tensions.

At the same time, the U.S. commitment to Israel's security remains unshakeable. Israel remains the leading recipient worldwide of U.S. Foreign Military Financing (FMF). The current 10-year \$30 billion Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and Israel, of which Israel currently receives \$3.1 billion per year, is just one example of our strong, ongoing partnership.

LEBANON

Lebanon has been without a President since May 2014, contributing to a paralysis of key political institutions at a critical moment. We have urged Lebanese leaders of every faction to put aside their differences, elect a President, and restore a functioning Cabinet that will fulfill its responsibilities and meet the needs of the people.

Meanwhile, we are doing everything we can to strengthen Lebanon's institutions, particularly the Lebanese Armed Forces. Lebanon is a member of the Counter-ISIL Coalition, and the Lebanese Armed Forces must have the equipment and training required to do the job. In September, we announced that we are doubling—to \$150 million—the amount of Foreign Military Financing to the Lebanese Armed Forces this year. These funds will allow the Lebanese Armed Forces to buy munitions, improve close air support, sustain vehicles and aircraft, modernize airlift capacity, provide training to its soldiers, and add to the mobility of armored units.

We share Congress's goal of putting pressure on Hezbollah by targeting the group's financial support infrastructure. The State Department and Treasury Department work together to identify Hezbollah operatives and witting supporters around the world, publicly designate them, and freeze their assets and make it impossible for them to access the international financial system. This means targeting individuals and companies around the world that provide support to Hezbollah. The administration will continue to work with Congress to advance this shared goal in the most effective way possible. Hezbollah's global terrorist activity, criminal enterprises, and military operations in Syria and elsewhere threaten global security and contribute to regional instability. Disrupting Hezbollah's far-reaching terrorist and military capabilities by targeting the group's financial support, commercial, and procurement infrastructure remains a top priority for the U.S. Government and has been implemented through the application of a range of U.S. Government authorities. We will seek to take action against any individual or entity wittingly providing support to Hezbollah, wherever they are located. U.S. Government agencies work closely together to expose and target Hezbollah's financial and commercial activities around the world and we press our international partners to support this effort.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, as I described at the outset today, the Middle East and North Africa is a troubled region where profound challenges stand in the way of the better, economically successful and politically stable future that the vast majority of people across the region fervently hope to achieve. At the same time, most of these countries are counting on the United States for support as they navigate this period of instability—for security cooperation, for economic partnerships, and for a leg up to the 21st century. This is America's role. This is what is expected by our partners in the region and beyond.

As I explained, the State Department is working very hard, and in partnership with dedicated professionals across our government, to address the conflict in Syria, to stabilize Iraq, and to mitigate the impact on our friends in Lebanon and Jordan. We are helping press the parties toward negotiations in Libya and in Yemen. We are taking steps to implement the Iran deal, while strengthening our partnership with the gulf countries to address Iran's continuing efforts to destabilize the region. We are continuing to work on our partnership with Egypt, particularly in strengthening its security and economic reforms. And, we continue to support Israel's security and urge the resumption of negotiations toward a two-State solution that will bring a lasting peace to the Middle East.

The United States is deeply engaged with the countries of the region because we have shared interests that are important to our national security and economic well-being. Our diplomats are involved in the painstaking details of negotiations to end conflicts and to build new, more stable partnerships. American vision and leadership is needed to help the region's leaders take the steps necessary to reform their political systems and their economies and provide hope for young people. With the funds provided by Congress, we are also able to provide critical support for societies in transition.

Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, members of the committee: We have to keep our long-term vision in mind. Even during these difficult days, there is evidence that irreversible changes are underway in the region. Investment in the

United States by our gulf partners continues to grow, reflecting confidence in our relationships. Unprecedented numbers of young people from the region are studying in the United States or in regionally based U.S. institutions. In some countries, women are seeking and attaining greater freedoms. And a younger generation of political leaders—many with extensive U.S. experience—are moving to positions of responsibility in government and business. Beyond the need to address current crises, all these trends speak to the continuing need for an American leadership role in this region.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to answering your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.
General Allen.

**STATEMENT OF GEN. JOHN R. ALLEN, USMC, RET., SPECIAL
PRESIDENTIAL ENVOY FOR THE GLOBAL COALITION TO
COUNTER ISIL, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON,
DC**

General ALLEN. Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, esteemed members of the committee, thank you for providing me this opportunity to update you today on the progress of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL. I will refer to it ISIL and Daesh, which is the Arabic acronym, as we go through the day.

I am honored to appear alongside today one of the premier diplomats of our time, Ambassador and Assistant Secretary Anne Patterson.

As the committee knows, the challenges in the region are great. I returned to Washington on Friday from consultations with our gulf partners and on the heels of a trip to Amman, Baghdad, and Erbil where I met with the most senior leadership for wide-ranging discussions on the counter-ISIL strategy. This, in turn, follows immediately on the heels of the U.N. General Assembly where President Obama convened a meeting of the Counter-ISIL Coalition and other key international leaders and groups engaged in countering violent extremism. It has been a busy time. And I might add that at the U.N. General Assembly, three other nations announced their membership and commitment to the Counter-ISIL Coalition, Tunisia, Nigeria, and Malaysia.

As I appear before this distinguished committee today, it is important to take stock of the dire situation that was unfolding a year ago. ISIL had advanced unimpeded into Iraq. U.S. Government personnel in Erbil and Baghdad were under severe threat, and ISIL laid siege to the Sinjar mountain where they intended to annihilate the Yazidi population. Mosul had fallen. Tikrit had fallen. And we witnessed atrocities unparalleled in our experience.

A year later, the coalition has applied significant pressure on this group, hitting ISIL with more than 7,500 air strikes, nearly 6,000 of which the United States has conducted, and taking out, as the Pentagon announced last week, just as a measure of the effect, 70 senior and mid-level ISIL leaders from May, roughly two every other day.

With 18 coalition members, having trained more than 14,000 Iraqi and peshmerga soldiers to date, we have denied ISIL freedom to operate in over 30 percent of the populated territory in Iraq held just last August. And the iconic city of Tikrit has been liberated, and 75 percent of the population has returned. ISIL has been almost completely pushed back from Bayji where Iraqi aircraft flying

U.S.-supplied F-16s have provided close air support to operations on the ground. And four columns of Iraqi troops are closing in on Ramadi, the capital of the Al-Anbar province, which we anticipate in the coming months will be the next liberated city.

As this coalition knows, the situation in Syria is no less challenging, as Ambassador Patterson has just mentioned, and the Russian presence has further complicated matters completely, which Ambassador Patterson will also address with us in the questions and answers. The United States continues to support ground forces in northern Syria to take back territory, and we now have cut off ISIL from all but 68 miles of the 600-mile border with Turkey. And today, some of those forces are within 30 miles of ISIL's nerve center, if you will, its capital, Raqqa.

But beyond the military aspects of the campaign that will inevitably receive the most attention, we must not forget the pressure that we exert against this group along other mutually supporting lines of effort. While we have taken back ISIL's primary border crossing from foreign terrorist fighters traveling between Turkey and Syria, we must stress that the Turkish border is the last line of defense in combating this phenomenon. As I have already mentioned, we are working with Turkey and local partners to clear ISIL from the final 68 miles of the border and prevent the further infiltration of foreign fighters, though the Russian incursion into Syria will likely make this more complex.

We need all nations working together at each link in the chain of the movement of foreign fighters from the point of radicalization, to the point of violence, and to the point of return and rehabilitation.

You will also recall earlier this year in May, our armed forces conducted a special operations raid on ISIL's finance, oil, and antiquities emir, Abu Sayyaf. We took from the raid 7 terabytes of information, hard drives, thumb drives, DVDs, CDs, and paper, and the exploitation of that information and material is giving us important insights into the organization of ISIL and its economic portfolio.

As ISIL continues to brutalize and extort its population for cash, the coalition is coordinating efforts to stabilize areas liberated from ISIL's grasp. Several nations, including the United States, with the support of Congress, have made sizable contributions to a fund for immediate stabilization in Iraq, which we created with the U.N. Development Program. This multinational fund, multilaterally supported, has enabled Iraqi authorities to respond quickly to urgent needs requiring Iraqis to reestablish critical and essential services such as water, electricity, and medical services.

The ravaged communities ISIL leaves in its wake bear witness to ISIL's true nature, one we are actively working with coalition partners to expose, ensuring that an Arab face and a Muslim voice is our messaging strategy. Just one example. The State Department's Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications have managed a multimedia campaign of testimonies from ISIL defectors, generating some 900 news articles and reaching an estimated population and an audience of 90 million.

To that end, we as a people must never ever accept that organizations like ISIL can become the new normal. We must never lose

our moral outrage at what we have seen this organization do and is doing every day.

Taking the fight to ISIL requires that we be flexible and patient in our efforts. It also requires close coordination with this committee and our colleagues in the Congress so that we can constantly evaluate our tactics and strategy and that we are resourcing them appropriately.

I want to thank you, Chairman, and Ranking Member Cardin for this opportunity to continue this process of coordination and consultation. And as I end this term, I wanted to tell you, sir, I enlisted in the service when I was 17 and I spent my adult life in the military. But I have spent the last year working closely with the State Department. And I want to thank this committee for the support that it has given to the State Department, the Foreign Service, and the magnificent professionals in that organization. And when I thank Americans and when I thank those who serve today, I call on Americans to not just thank our men and women in uniform. They should be thanking our diplomats and our employees of the State Department as well, sir. Thank you for that support.

[The prepared statement of General Allen follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GEN. JOHN R. ALLEN, USMC (RET.)

Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, esteemed members of the committee, thank you for providing me the opportunity to update you on the progress of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL. I am happy to be here with my esteemed colleague, and one of America's premier diplomats, Ambassador Anne Patterson who serves as the Department's Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs.

As this committee knows, the challenges in the region are great. I returned to Washington on Friday from consultations with our Gulf partners, on the heels of a trip to Amman, Baghdad, and Erbil, where I met with their most senior leadership for wide-ranging discussions on the counter-ISIL strategy. This in turn follows immediately on the U.N. General Assembly where President Obama convened a meeting of the Counter-ISIL Coalition and other key international leaders and groups engaged in countering violent extremism. It has been a very busy time.

Since I began serving in this role in September of 2014, I have traveled to more than 30 Coalition capitals, with some of those capitals repeatedly, over my tenure. During that time the Coalition has grown and we have added more countries and international organizations to our ranks, and I am happy to say that the Coalition is now 65-strong. Last month, we welcomed our three newest members—Nigeria, Tunisia, and Malaysia—three key nations joining the global effort against ISIL's attempts to expand its influence in new regions. There are other nations similarly preparing to join this unique partnership.

As I appear before this distinguished committee today it is important to take stock of the dire situation that was unfolding one year ago. ISIL had advanced unimpeded into Iraq. We were seeing atrocities, more horrific than any I have ever seen or even could have imagined: the beheadings, the crucifixions, the electrocutions, the drownings, and of course the one that I believe focused the collective horror and rage of the world, the nightmarish burning, the immolation, of Captain Moaz al-Kasasbeh, the Jordanian pilot captured by ISIL, who stands as a hero to us all. He and his family remain in our prayers.

At the same time a year ago, Erbil and Baghdad were under severe threat as ISIL advanced rapidly on those cities—key locations where U.S. Government personnel are located. Tikrit had fallen. Kirkuk was threatened. The Mosul Dam, critical strategic infrastructure on the Tigris River, had been taken. ISIL had also laid siege to a place few had even heard of before in this country or in the West, a place called Sinjar Mountain, where ISIL intended to annihilate the Yazidi population.

A year later, the Coalition has applied significant pressure on this organization, hitting ISIL with more than 7,500 airstrikes—nearly 6,000 of which the United States has conducted—and taking out, as the Pentagon announced last week, some 70 senior and mid-level ISIL leaders since the beginning of May—that is one killed every 2 days.

We have also removed from the battlefield, in both Iraq and in Syria, over 2,600 vehicles and tanks, over 400 artillery and mortar positions, and nearly 6,500 fighting positions, checkpoints, buildings, bunkers, staging areas and barracks, including 30 training camps. However, we are not naive, the task is daunting and this fight is far from over.

Coalition strikes are hitting personnel and infrastructure that ISIL relies on for command and control, financing, logistics, and propaganda. Even as they replace their leaders and facilitators, our air strikes are forcing ISIL to change the way they communicate, the way they move, reinforce and resupply.

With 18 Coalition members having trained more than 13,000 Iraqi and peshmerga soldiers to date, we have denied ISIL the freedom to operate in over 30 percent of the populated territory in Iraq they had held last August. The iconic Sunni city of Tikrit has been liberated and 75 percent of the population has returned. ISIL has been almost completely pushed back from Baiji, where the Iraqi Air Force is flying U.S.-supplied F-16s to support operations on the ground. And four columns of Iraqi troops are closing in on Ramadi, the capital of Anbar province, which we anticipate in the coming months will be the next liberated city.

Iraq's Prime Minister Abadi has also proved to be a strong partner, the moderate leader Iraq has needed to help forge a national unity. He has empowered local Sunni leaders like the Governors of Anbar and Salah ad-Din to ensure Sunnis have a role in securing their communities and live with dignity in Iraq. Abadi's ambitious reform agenda and efforts to root out corruption are critical to the national reconciliation process. And we understand too well that to successfully defeat the scourge of extremism one must fight for political reform and inclusion as ardently as one pursues the military battle. Our continued support to the Iraqi Government and to Prime Minister Abadi is essential.

There is no question that this is going to be a long-term conflict and there is much work remaining, but we will succeed in degrading and ultimately defeating this organization. We must make clear that any aura of invincibility that surrounded ISIL has been shattered. ISIL is not invincible; it is defeatable, and is being defeated—by brave Iraqis, Sunni, Shia, Kurdish, and minority groups—defending and taking back their towns, cities, and ultimately, their country, with the support of the United States and our Coalition partners.

As this committee knows, the situation in Syria is no less challenging, and the Russian military operations there have only complicated matters further. The United States continues to support ground forces in northern Syria to take back territory, who have now cut ISIL off from all but 68 miles of the nearly 600-mile border with Turkey. This progress has been essential to our fight against ISIL. These forces have liberated Kobane from ISIL in the west, connected with others who expelled ISIL from Tal Abyad—the group's primary border crossing with Turkey—and have now cleared al-Hasakah from ISIL in the east toward Iraq. Today some of those forces are within 30 miles of the group's nerve center—its capital, if you will—in Raqqa.

We must not forget the Turkish Government, a critical partner in this fight, which recently increased its participation in the Coalition, opening its bases to U.S. and other Coalition members, and conducting air strikes on ISIL targets inside Syria alongside other Coalition aircraft. This cooperation has already had an impact and will continue to have a significant impact on our operations in Syria, reducing the transit time to just 18 minutes from up to 4 hours from bases in the gulf.

These and other military aspects of the campaign will inevitably receive the most attention. But as I have seen in the four previous Coalition efforts with which I have been involved, it will ultimately be the aggregate and cumulative pressure of campaign activity over multiple, mutually supporting lines of effort that will determine the campaign's success.

It is for this reason that when I visit a Coalition capital and meet with a Prime Minister or a King or a President, I describe the Coalition's counter-ISIL strategy as being organized around multiple lines of effort: denying safe haven to ISIL militarily and providing security assistance to partners on the ground; disrupting the flow of foreign terrorist fighters; disrupting ISIL's financial and economic resources; providing stabilization support to newly liberated areas; and countering ISIL's messaging—or defeating ISIL as an idea.

First and foremost, the immediate and generational challenge presented by foreign terrorist fighters evokes nearly universal concern in my conversations with Coalition partners.

While we have taken back ISIL's primary border crossing between Turkey and Syria, we must stress that the Turkish border is the last line of defense in this equation. As I already mentioned, we are now working with Turkey and local part-

ners to clear ISIL from the final 68 miles of that border, and ultimately prevent the further infiltration of foreign fighters.

Since the passage of U.N. Security Council Resolution 2178 that the United States led in September of last year, 22 countries of the Coalition have upgraded their legislation to create greater barriers for traveling to Syria and Iraq. At least 34 countries have arrested foreign fighters or aspirants, and 12 have successfully prosecuted them. We need all nations working together at each link along the chain—from the point of radicalization, to the point of violence, and to the point of return and rehabilitation. We are, however, deeply concerned that the Russian intervention into Syria will further complicate, indeed exacerbate, the foreign fighter problem. Many of the gulf leaders with whom I met recently predicted Russian actions in Syria will even more increase the flow of foreign fighters to the region.

The kind of information sharing that has helped on foreign fighters has also allowed the Coalition to make significant gains in squeezing ISIL's access to financial resources and networks in both Syria and Iraq, and more broadly globally.

You will recall earlier this year in May, our Armed Forces conducted a Special Operations raid on ISIL's finance, oil, and antiquities emir, Abu Sayyaf. We took from the raid seven terabytes of information—hard drives, thumb drives, DVDs, CDs, paper—and the exploitation of that material is giving us very important insights into the organization of ISIL and its economic portfolio.

It was from information yielded in this raid that our Coalition aircraft hit 26 targets just last week in Syria and Iraq, including most importantly the Omar oil field in Deir-ez-Zor, which yielded ISIL up to \$5 million per month. Among our targets were other oil refineries, command and control centers, transportation nodes, and cash distribution sites, making it one of the largest set of strikes since launching the air campaign last year. And pressure will continue to build.

As ISIL continues to brutalize and extort its population for cash, the Coalition is coordinating efforts to stabilize areas liberated from ISIL's grasp. Stabilization is central to our long-term success as we eliminate threats and help local communities recover and provide a safe, welcoming environment for their displaced populations.

The Italians are leading an effort to train an effective Iraqi police force that can ensure the safety and security of liberated areas. The Canadians have stepped forward to ensure protections and programs for women and girls are incorporated. Several nations, including the United States with the support of Congress, have made sizable contributions to a fund for immediate stabilization in Iraq, which we have created with the U.N. Development Program. This multilateral fund has enabled Iraqi authorities to respond quickly to the urgent needs of returning Iraqis, such as water, electricity, and health care. Germany and the United Arab Emirates are helping organize contributions from more than 20 Coalition partners to provide support for this fund.

The ravaged communities ISIL leaves in its wake bear witness to ISIL's true nature, one we are actively working with Coalition partners to expose, ensuring there be an Arab face and Muslim voice in our messaging strategy. The State Department's Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications helped manage a multimedia campaign of testimonies from "ISIL Defectors," generating some 900 news articles, reaching an estimated audience of 90 million people worldwide.

The United Arab Emirates has launched a joint messaging center with the United States in Abu Dhabi called the Sawab or "Right Path" Center, which is coordinating and driving counter-ISIL messaging activity in the region, combating ISIL's efforts to recruit foreign fighters, raise funds, and terrorize local populations. As we learn from Sawab's operations, we are institutionalizing best practices and helping others grow capacity, including setting up new messaging centers in Malaysia, Nigeria, and Tunisia, as well as in Saudi Arabia with the OIC, and in Brussels with the EU.

Over the past year, the Coalition has sought to send a clear message, a message to ISIL and a message to the world: "We refuse to observe and stand idly by its atrocities. We reject its toxic, false ideology and doctrines. And we abhor its vicious and continual assault on human dignity."

To that end we as a people must never, ever accept that organizations like ISIL can become the new normal. It cannot become the new normal. We must never lose our moral outrage at what we have seen this organization do and is doing every day, and what it intends to do to the people that it subjugates, and to the people of this country and in this room if left unchecked.

Taking the fight to ISIL requires that we be flexible and patient in our efforts. It also requires close coordination with this committee and with your colleagues in Congress, so that we are constantly evaluating our tactics and strategy, and that we are resourcing them appropriately.

I thank you for the opportunity to continue that process of coordination and consultation today, and I look forward to taking your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Thank you very much.

I think I will start with Secretary Patterson. You know, with especially what happened with the Iran nuclear agreement, there has been a renewed effort to try to understand what our Middle East policy is and for Congress to play a role in that. I think the administration is attempting to do the same right now.

As I look at Libya where we basically went in for the short term and left a country ungoverned, still ungoverned in many ways, as I look at Egypt where we had folks that were trying to cause the country to become not a secular country but one that was very focused on religious ideology, and so someone comes in to change that, and then all of a sudden we are not really helping them. We are holding back support because we do not like the way they did it because of human rights issues.

In Iraq, we had in 2011 a check-the-box mentality. We are done with Iraq and obviously we are back in in a different way now.

In Syria, our policy has been Assad must go, and yet Assad is there and we really have not done much to cause Assad to go.

We had extended testimony yesterday on Yemen. We are for the folks who are supporting the government, but not really for them.

In Iran, obviously we have just totally turned the tables relative to our relationship there, and obviously they are going to be at the table on Friday if they accept.

In Israel, somebody that has been a longtime friend, it is hard to tell whether the administration is friend or foe at present.

And, I just wonder if you might lay out for us what sort of the Middle East vision has been for the administration, and if that has changed in recent times because of circumstances, what it is today because it is really hard, as you look at all the pieces, to understand if there is a congruent Middle East policy and something that we might learn from the administration today, at least what that is.

Ambassador PATTERSON. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Obviously, as I said, it is a deeply troubled and deeply conflicted region. But I do think that we have certain overriding principles in the region, and the first is our counterterrorism policy. That has obviously been a challenge and an increasing challenge in Libya and other places in the region and Yemen as well. I would say that is our first priority.

The second is human rights and democracy and economic growth. And we have tried to promote those. I think they are very much under the radar, particularly some of our economic policies at this time, to promote entrepreneurship, to promote employment, to try and get some of these enormous youth bulge issues that are destabilizing the region. So that is also a key element of our policy.

And then finally, I think I would be the first to admit, Mr. Chairman, that we have been absolutely absorbed by the crises in the region such as ISIL in Syria and in Libya, and we have been unable in many respects to implement successfully these longer term strategies and focus on the underlying difficulties in the region.

Let me point out, however, that I think we have made very considerable progress in some parts of North Africa. I think relations with our gulf allies have improved quite dramatically due to the work on the Camp David summit and our security guarantees and

trying to reassure them of our permanent commitment to their security. So I think there are some positive elements that we can point to in our policy.

But again, I would be the first to admit that we have been quite absorbed by crisis management during this administration.

The CHAIRMAN. My sense is that 3 years ago maybe the administration had one view of the Middle East, and today that has evolved to a degree. Have there been shifts, if you will, that might enlighten us relative to how the administration is looking at the region just because of these crises that you are talking about?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Mr. Chairman, I think if I had been here 3 years ago—and I was in Egypt 3 years ago—I think there was a perhaps overly optimistic impression that we could focus on democracy promotion and economic growth in places like Egypt and North Africa and even in the Levant. That has proved to be exceedingly difficult.

So over the past 3 years, our focus has really changed to the counterterrorism initiative, which was always a high priority, and essentially to develop what General Allen is carrying out which is a coalition to fight ISIL and other terrorists in the region. We should not forget about the persistent presence of al-Qaeda in Yemen. So I would say we have evolved.

The CHAIRMAN. General Allen, this Friday there was a meeting that I know Secretary Kerry seemed very optimistic about yesterday in our closed briefing. It is hard to square for me anyway. It is hard to square sort of the facts on the ground with the potential for some grand diplomatic solution on Friday when you see Russia's efforts, it seems, have been more toward the Free Syrian moderate groups than they have toward ISIS. You have got Iran on the ground there working with them.

I am wondering if you have any thoughts about, from your perspective, since your military background is so extensive and so respected—as you look at the facts on the ground today, where do you see a diplomatic solution going in Syria that is reconcilable and ends up being something that represents United States national interests?

General ALLEN. Well, Chairman, as we have said before in our conversations and I have attempted to portray, this is one of the most complex situations that I have seen in my career. The ground in Syria is rife with conflict in a number of different levels and in a number of different directions. Much, of course, of what we see in Syria, if not virtually all of what we see in Syria, is a direct result of the Assad regime, a direct result of during the spring of 2011 when legitimate voices of the Syrian people called for reform, rather than to listen to those voices and perhaps embrace the opportunity for reform, he turned on them.

And that created the situation that we see today, which is that large segments of the population, which we might call moderate Syrian, are seeking to defend themselves. Elements of the population have gravitated toward al-Qaeda. So al-Qaeda has put down roots in the country in a very serious way, Jabhat al-Nusra, and that ISIL found itself free to incubate, if you will, to create the organization that it has today, which nearly pushed Syria over the edge and nearly pushed Iraq over the edge.

So we have a very complex environment on the ground which, until just recently, the last several months, I did not see that we had many options frankly in terms of being able to influence the ground. And in the aftermath of a couple of things, which is our work with Syrian elements that we could, in fact, work with, having taken back much of the Syrian-Turkish border, that has given us options both in terms of closing off that border but having access to Syrian partners with whom we can deal. As well, Turkey is now in this game in a way that we had not seen just months ago, and that I think has given us a platform regionally to have options.

And so at this particular juncture, we are trying to develop the situation which is to contain, ultimately degrade and defeat Daesh, which is a strategy in and of itself. We have policy objective to seek to reduce the violence in the region and to undertake some kind of a political transition away from Assad. And the connective tissue, we hope, between the two of those, the strategy on the one hand and ultimately the policy objective on the other, is to do what we can to support the Syrian elements within the population that can both defeat Daesh and be credible voices in the political transition.

So I think Secretary Kerry is trying to leverage that opportunity. I think the Russians have both given us an opportunity and a challenge in that regard, and I am not giving the Russians any credit for what they have done. But the point I am trying to make is that the Russians are going to find themselves, I think in the relatively near future, in a very difficult situation. It is going to be very difficult for them to disengage or ultimately to justify their presence in Syria and for a whole variety of reasons. And I can be more expansive on that, if you like.

But I do not think Assad is in a particularly strong place. I think the Russians intervened because Assad was teetering on the edge. I think the Russians are attempting to assist him to be stable and perhaps to protect and recover the Alawi heartland. And we had hoped that the Russians would help us to reduce the violence in Syria. But I think what they are discovering relatively quickly is that if they are not part of the political transition, for a long term, they are going to be part of the problem, and that problem is going to come to roost for them in ways that will make it very difficult.

So it is a complex situation at various levels, and I think what Secretary Kerry is seeking to do is to leverage any potential opportunity that we have right now to begin the conversation that can put in place a process of political transition.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Well, thank you again very much, both of you, for your testimony.

First, Secretary Patterson, I just want to underscore one point you made with a comment, and that is that one of our objectives is good governance and human rights issue. And as we start to talk about a negotiated settlement in Syria, if President Assad is not held accountable for his war crimes, it will be a clear message that we are going to see this scene play out again somewhere else in that region. And I just urge you that the way that the United States must provide leadership is to make it clear that we understand Syria's future will be without Assad. That has been a clear

message that we have made. But it is also important that President Assad be held accountable for the atrocities that he has committed against his own people.

You said in your testimony that we believe Russia's decision to intervene militarily in Syria is a losing bet. They know full well that there is no military solution in this conflict.

General Allen, you have said the same, that we have to move toward a diplomatic resolution—and in Russia's case, they clearly have intervened militarily to bolster the Assad regime. All the information that we have seen is that the interest in ISIL is secondary at best, and that their primary interest has to do with the stability of the Assad regime, which is contrary to a lot of our military interests in that region.

So Secretary Carter indicated yesterday before the Senate Armed Services Committee that changes to the U.S. strategy are underway. General Allen, can you share with us how our military strategies in the region are being reevaluated, recognizing that there is no military solution here? We need to get a diplomatic solution. How do we readjust our military strategy in order to reach that objective?

General ALLEN. Thank you for that question. I would say a couple things.

First, we see Daesh as a regional issue. We try not to view Daesh as a segment that is in Iraq and a segment that is in Syria. And as is the case, in an environment where we had to deal with Daesh—my point a moment ago. I talked about how far we have come in a year where Daesh was, for all intents and purposes, splintering Iraq in an irreconcilable way, had already done enormous damage to Syria. We really took them on head on, for all intents and purposes. And the intent of the first year of this coalition and our operations was to grind them to a halt, stop their momentum, and set the conditions ultimately to begin the process of containing, degrading, and defeating them. And that is really what has been underway for the first year.

And I think what Secretary Carter is referring to is that we find ourselves now in a position where we are able to bring pressure to bear on Daesh, if you will, around its periphery. So, for example, the bilateral agreement that we have entered into with the Turks to facilitate the closure of the border, the final 98 kilometers of the border, to empower Syrian opposition elements to drive on and to pressure Raqqa, to empower Syrian elements to push south from Hasaka, to pressure other Daesh areas, in Iraq to see that the peshmerga, who have been so effective, continue the process of pushing out and interdicting key lines of communications between Mosul and Raqqa, to recover Bayji, to pressure and recover Ramadi—all of those activities is what we are seeking to accomplish simultaneously.

Senator CARDIN. But is it more complicated today because of Russia's military escalation in Syria?

General ALLEN. Not really. Not really. The Russians are operating primarily in the northwest of Syria and along the spine of Syria, which is well west of most of Daesh. We would have been, I think, happy if the Russians had truly joined us in what they said they were going to do, which was to deal with Daesh. But the

vast majority of the targets that they are attacking and the vast majority of the assistance that they are providing is to stabilize the regime and to attack other elements of the Syrian population besides Daesh. And that would have been helpful, but that is not what is happening.

Senator CARDIN. In regards to the anti-ISIL campaign, Russia's presence has not been a major problem. In regards to dealing with the underlying problem in Syria, the fact that they are so active in fighting the opposition, I assume, Secretary Patterson, that does present a challenge for us?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Yes, sir, Senator Cardin. But it may also present an opportunity, and that is what the Secretary is trying to leverage. I think it is important to remember that Russia went into Syria because Assad was weak and under very considerable pressure from a variety of directions. And I think they will soon find out that the entire Sunni world is against them. We have heard from many of our gulf partners that in terms of jihadis and extremists, they have not seen anything yet because they will be drawn into Syria in even greater numbers to fight against the Russians. And, of course, the Russians have their own problems with domestic extremism and on their border. So they may find out that this is not such a good deal as they had anticipated.

Senator CARDIN. Secretary Patterson, switching gears to Iran for one moment, in the post-Iran deal environment, can you share with us what steps are being taken to deal with the fact that Iran is moving, I think, more promptly than we had anticipated in order to obtain sanction relief? We know that they participate and sponsor terrorist activities. What steps are being taken to trace Iran's activities, which will be enhanced by sanction relief, and to counter their nefarious activities working with our partners to make it clear that we will not tolerate that type of activity?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Thank you, Senator Cardin.

Chairman Dempsey testified in front of this committee some months back, and what he said was I thought very well put, which was along the lines of the nuclear agreement is just one of the elements or the nuclear capacity one of the elements that we have great concerns about.

The first step we have taken, Senator Cardin, is to work very closely with Israel and with our GCC allies to help them combat this Iranian threat. And we are under no illusions about what Iran is doing in the region. And, in fact, some of their activities have stepped up in recent months. But we are working with our GCC colleagues on issues like protection from cyber incursions. We are working with them on an antiballistic missile defense system. We are working with them on things like special forces training. We have a very robust intelligence-sharing effort with our GCC allies and, in fact, have helped them counter some Iranian terrorism, extremist terrorism, on their soil. So we have a lot of activities underway. We have a very specific intelligence focus. We, of course, have our large military presence in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Aden. So we are very mindful of Iranian adventurism in this region.

On the financial side, we have continued to designate—I think we have designated 44 designations since this was underway. So I think we are taking steps to—

Senator CARDIN. Will be monitoring their activities, considering sanction relief will give them an opportunity perhaps to help their own people but also to increase their terrorist activities and sponsor—

Ambassador PATTERSON. Very much so. We think when the money is released—the Iranian economy is simply in shambles, and there will be a very great demand I think to provide for their own people and to rebuild energy infrastructure and other public services. But we are very mindful that some of this money could be directed at their activities, for instance, in Yemen or in Bahrain, and we will be watching that closely.

Senator CARDIN. Prepared to take action, I assume.

Ambassador PATTERSON. Very much so, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Johnson.

Senator JOHNSON. Secretary Patterson, thanks for your service. General Allen, thank you for yours.

Prepared to take action. There is a pretty interesting article written by Brett Stephens in the “Wall Street Journal” yesterday talking about Iran violations of U.N. Resolution 2231 and the new demands made by Supreme Leader Khamenei. I guess I would like to get your reaction to that.

You know, the test firing of the new generation ballistic missile called the Emod—Mr. Khamenei’s demands, as he wrote, were best described by Yigal Carmon and Ayelet Savyon and the Middle East Media Research Institute. Demand one: the United States and Europe must completely lift, rather than temporarily suspend, economic sanctions. Demand two: sanctions against Iran for its support of terrorism and its human rights abuses must also go. Mr. Khamenei is changing the timetable for Iran to ship out its enriched uranium and must modify its plutonium reactor in Arak, changing the timetable on that. And he also reiterates his call for a huge R&D effort so that Iran will have at least 190,000 centrifuges when the nuclear deal expires.

Secretary Patterson, you said that the administration is under no illusions about what Iran is doing. It seems like that whole agreement—I think you are under an illusion. You really delude yourself in terms of what Iran is really going to be planning on doing here. They have been emboldened by this agreement. I am not seeing any kind of modification to the positive of their behavior. I see it to the negative.

General Suleimani, days after the agreement was reached, flying to Moscow. Then we see Iran and now Russia cooperating in Syria. By the way, I do not see them wanting to disengage from Syria. I think they want to be embedded.

So how are we going to act?

Ambassador PATTERSON. So, Senator Johnson, let me try and answer this question about Iran. We know that there are enormous tensions within the Iranian Government, from Rouhani, who was elected—I will not exactly say a reformist agenda, but at least he realizes that the Iranian people have to see some benefits. And

again, the economy was in an absolute shambles. They had to respond. Sky-high inflation rates, a contraction of 25 percent in the past few years. So there was enormous incentive to try and restore the economy. And then there are the hardliners from 1970 who really have not evolved since 1979. So there is enormous tension in their body politic, and that we will see playing——

Senator JOHNSON. But again address the actual behavior that we are going to see.

Ambassador PATTERSON. Let me——

Senator JOHNSON. We are about to see tens of billions of dollars being interjected——

Ambassador PATTERSON. Let me address——

Senator JOHNSON [continuing]. Into the economy possibly but in the military of our self-proclaimed enemy. How is that going to turn out well?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Let me give you one example.

Senator JOHNSON. And what is going to be the reaction?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Let me give you one example, and that is the ballistic missile. And I read Mr. Stephens' article. I actually read Mr. Stephens a lot.

So we think it is entirely possible that this is a violation of the U.N. resolution that you mentioned. And how this is handled is we have gone to the Security Council. We asked for an appointment of a group of experts. This is the procedure. The experts will report back to the Security Council, and then we will decide what action to take.

Senator JOHNSON. And we will continue to lift the sanctions. We will allow tens of billions of dollars to be injected into the military——

Ambassador PATTERSON. Senator Johnson——

Senator JOHNSON [continuing]. Of our self-proclaimed enemy. Correct?

Ambassador PATTERSON. I agree.

Senator JOHNSON. Are we going to stop that any way, shape, or form?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Well, there is a snapback. We can stop the sanctions relief at any time.

Senator JOHNSON. Will we? The question is will we.

Ambassador PATTERSON. Of course, if they are in violation.

Let me also say about the ballistic missile defense. Here is where we are trying to work with our allies. We have worked the GCC countries very intensely in the past few weeks to develop a regionalized ballistic missile defense system. So we are taking steps with Iran, but we are also taking steps so our allies can better counter these aggressive steps by Iran.

Senator JOHNSON. So we are looking at an arms buildup in the Middle East as a result of the Iranian deal is what you are basically describing here.

Is the administration happy with the results? Is the administration happy with what Iran's actions are following the Iranian agreement?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Senator Johnson, the administration is under no illusions, nor is anyone——

Senator JOHNSON. It seems as though they are.

We were told yesterday that Iran actually wants a secular Syria. Do you agree with that? Do you think Iran wants a secular Syria? Do you believe that is true, that Iran is looking for a secular Syria? Is that why they are involved in Syria?

Ambassador PATTERSON. I do not ???know??? whether they are looking for a secular Syria or a religious Syria. What they are looking for is a Syria that protects their interests and particularly their access to Hezbollah.

Senator JOHNSON. General Allen, again, I appreciate your service. I realize that as a military man, you have certainly been constrained. It is complex. I have been told by a number of people, you know, military experts—I am not one—that although difficult and obviously with sacrifice, if we were really willing to bring everything we could bring to bear against ISIL or Daesh, we could defeat them militarily relatively easily. But again, we have been constrained by the fact that we certainly will not put boots on the ground. We have not really got a coalition that is really putting the type of military assets to bear against ISIL. What would it take? I mean, is that true? Is what I am hearing false? I mean, do we have to be patient? Or do we have to be patient because we are not willing to bring the assets to bear to actually defeat them sooner rather than later?

General ALLEN. To be very clear, of course, it is the role of the chairman and the Secretary to bring these kinds of recommendations to the President. So that is out.

Let me make a couple of points.

The United States has unparalleled military power in the world today. It is enormously effective. Our capacity to generate and to deploy that military power is unquestioned and irresistible, if we chose to do that.

In dealing with this crisis, you have to ask yourself one of two questions. The first is to do it yourself or to empower the indigenous forces to do it for themselves. The result of the first is that you find yourself with large numbers of your forces and large numbers of casualties and some extended period of time on the ground in an area that is already destabilized and with the very great likelihood that the kinds of antibodies that will be formed against the United States there will make it very difficult if not impossible for us to pull out in any short period of time.

The alternative, though, is to empower the indigenous forces, which is the course that we have taken. It is less satisfying up front because we have not been able to deliver the massive capacity of the American military machine against this enemy. And we would love to crush these folks. Please let me finish, Senator.

So in doing that, what we are seeking to do is to build the capacity of those indigenous forces, whether they are Iraqi Security Forces or they are the tribes or they are our partners on the ground in Syria, in whatever way possible so that when the solution is ultimately achieved, it has been achieved by the people that have to live with it. And that is a very effective way of doing it as well.

The first gets you the outcome that you look for in a relatively quick process, but the tail end of that is a very difficult outcome. The other takes longer to gain momentum and ultimately to

achieve your objectives, but when you have achieved your objectives, it is the people themselves who have achieved that objective. And that is what we seek to accomplish in this case.

Senator JOHNSON. Just very quickly. What about the middle ground, assembling a coalition like we did with the first gulf war where, yes, the United States provided about two-thirds of the troop strength, about a half a million soldiers, but coalition partners, about 250,000. Coalition partners paid for 85 percent of their effort. That was a true coalition that was obviously very effective. We are really not assembling that type of coalition. If we did, just a real quick question, how quickly and what would the troop level be? What would we need to actually defeat ISIS sooner rather than later?

General ALLEN. I will not speculate on the troop-to-task requirement there. I think we can simply assume that if a coalition sought to put together the kinds of combat power that was put together for Desert Storm, the outcome would be different than it is today. But the result of the liberation of Kuwait was that we were able to hand Kuwait right back to the Kuwaiti people who then ultimately governed it. We do not have that kind of a partnership on the ground in Syria, and we are desperately attempting to hold on and to develop the capacity of the Government in Iraq so that it in the end is able to govern a territorially restored and a sovereign Iraq.

So we are seeking an outcome of two different environments, two different operational environments. And the one coalition worked very well for that moment, and President Bush was wise and his administration put that together very well. This is a different environment, an environment where, when we are done, we want the solution to this crisis to have been handled and ultimately solved by the people that have got to deal with it to begin with.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Before I move to Senator Menendez, on U.N. Security Council Resolution 1929 that Iran definitely just violated—I do not think there is any question about that—we know that Russia is going to block any action being taken. I know you are going through the steps that are necessary, but we know they are going to block. And I think what the vast majority of people on the committee want to know is: knowing that we know the outcome before it starts, that there will not be sanctions, there will not be penalties put against Iran because Russia will block them, we want to know unilaterally what the United States is going to do because we know functionally nothing is going to happen at the U.N. I think that is the question we all have. I think you will have another letter coming from the vast majority of us soon wanting you to spell that out. So I think there was a little bit of a—

Ambassador PATTERSON. Confusion there. Okay, sir. Yes, absolutely. I mean, we know that Russia is going to block this. So the real question is, Senator, unilateral sanctions.

The CHAIRMAN. That is right. And there is not a snapback around this particular issue.

Ambassador PATTERSON. No, no. But we will go through the process at the U.N. Security Council and the panel of experts and then decide what we are going to do.

The CHAIRMAN. All of which we know will lead to a dead end, and therefore, we are going to have to take unilateral action or we are going to begin the process by letting Iran violate on the front end of the very agreement that was just negotiated. I mean, that is kind of where we are. And we know that. And so we would like something a little more clear coming from the administration.

Senator MENENDEZ.

Senator MENENDEZ. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me thank both of you for your service to our country. I truly appreciate it. And I want my questions to be viewed with the full respect that I have for both of you, but trying to pierce the veil of optimism and understand where that optimism flows from because both of your testimonies were pretty optimistic.

I would like, Madam Secretary, for you to explain to me not where supposedly the confluence of Russia's and Iran's interests are with us in Syria but where they diverge.

Ambassador PATTERSON. Senator Menendez, they diverge in all sorts of ways.

Senator MENENDEZ. Give me some examples.

Ambassador PATTERSON. The Iranian presence there, of course, as I believe I mentioned, is to ensure a role, a continuing role, for Hezbollah in the region. That is obviously a high priority. The Russians are there not only to shore up Assad but also to exert regional influence and to preserve their naval base at Tartus. So those are two obvious ones in which they differ.

Senator MENENDEZ. So what I am trying to understand—and I believe there are more that they diverge on because when I listen to the administration, I hear the aspirational goals of the convergence of Russia's and Iran's interests in Syria that somehow make them potential partners. And it seems to me that if what Russia wants, for example, is the permanency of their naval base there and influence—I do not know about the region because that is one of my concerns here, what we are allowing after 45 years of Democratic and Republican administrations seeking to close the door on Russia's sphere of influence in the Middle East, it seems to me like we are swinging it wide open. And that is a concern.

And so if Russia just wants its base and influence in Syria, that is something that I am sure we would have negotiated without having to have gone to the depths of the crisis we have. If Iran truly wants a secular Syria, which I find incredible to believe, then that is something we could have negotiated for some time. We did not even need a nuclear accord for that. So I find it difficult to understand how Iran and Russia are going to end up with the same end goals that we have at the end of the day, which is Assad has got to go at some point and now it is after a transition. We want a unified country. We want a country that all people can live in.

So how does that reconcile with Russia wanting greater influence in the Middle East, which is the message he sends when he has Assad visit him in Russia? That message is you have to come through me at the end of the day to the region. And so all of a sudden, we see regional partners flocking to have conversations with Russia, whereas basically their conversations were largely with us and our partners in this coalition.

So I think we are opening the door to an influence that is not going to serve us well.

Ambassador PATTERSON. Senator Menendez, I respectfully think the prospects for Russian influence in the region are exaggerated. Our allies in the gulf, for instance—and a number of them have paid visits to Moscow recently—live pretty securely, very securely under a large United States defense umbrella that protects them from Iran and from other threats. They know, because they are not stupid, that the Russians cannot replicate that. They know that the Russians may supply some military equipment, but they also know that the partner of choice for their military development is the United States. So while, yes, we see them pay visits to Moscow, I do think that the chances for Russian penetration of the area are frankly exaggerated.

Senator MENENDEZ. Okay, so you do not have that concern. If all Russia wants and all Iran wants is the same main goals as we want, why have we had to have thousands of people die, millions displaced, and at the end of the day, we could have negotiated the same opportunity that we are now talking about negotiating with these two countries?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Senator Menendez, I do not think we ever said that we had the same goals. I think what we said is there could be a congruence of interests that could well, in fact, be temporary—

Senator MENENDEZ. At the end of the day, if your interests ultimately do not end up in the same goals, how does the endgame end up being the one that you want to see? You are inviting these two countries to engage with you because at the end of the day I would have thought that the end result of what we want is going to be shared by these two countries. If not, why would you ask them to be involved if the end goal is not going to be achieved with them?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Well, from a practical matter, Senator, they are there on the ground. So they have to be involved in the process. And I think, of course—

Senator MENENDEZ. Okay. So before they were on the ground, when Russia now got engaged—and by the way, you said that Iran is going to need all this money for domestic purposes, but Iran has upped its participation in Syria even in the midst of the economic difficulties it faces, which is counter to the argument that when they are flush with money, that they are going to use that all domestically because when they are lacking money, they are still engaged in upping the ante as they are with Hezbollah and their participation inside of Syria.

Ambassador PATTERSON. Senator Menendez, the Iranian and Russian involvement in Syria is nothing new. So this is, yes, a question of degree and a question of acceleration, but it is certainly nothing new. They have both been there for years and they have been active for years. And it is not a question that our interests coincide across the board. It is a question—and this is what Secretary Kerry is trying to do is to find an opening that he can leverage and not just with the Russians and the Iranians. Remember the Saudis and the Turks and a wide range of Europeans who are being decimated, who are being very seriously affected by this ref-

ugee crisis, are also involved in this process and trying to find an opening through when he can move a diplomatic solution.

Senator MENENDEZ. Well, the purpose of leverage is to come to the ultimate goal that you have. And you have said to me that while they may have interests, at the end of the day, they do not share our ultimate goal. So I find it difficult how we get to the ultimate goal of what we want to see in Syria with partners who do not share our ultimate goal, who may have interests, but at the end of the day, their interests may not be sufficient to ultimately be assuaged or taken care of and then still have our ultimate goal. I do not get it.

But let me just make one comment because my time is up and I want to be courteous to my colleagues.

On the question of Iran's ballistic missile tests, this is a critical test of the administration's willingness to challenge Iran when it violates international norm. And if it fails to do so, it will send Iran a message that the international agreement that they signed can also be challenged and violated with impunity. And I do not see the difference because you have Security Council resolutions that call for Iran not to have had the missile test that it did. It freely did it, blatantly did it. And it seems to me that Iran's view is that the expectations or aspirations of the United States to make it a partner will ultimately overlook their violations, and if that is the case, we are in an incredibly dangerous period.

So I hope that regardless of what happens at the U.N., which—I agree with the chairman—will be a dead end, that we are poised to act by ourselves and hopefully in concert with other countries who may feel the same as we do in actions that send a very clear message to Iran because otherwise the nuclear agreement is bound to be broken time and time again.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Flake.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you and thank you for your testimony.

I would like your candid assessment. And I am not making a value judgment on the direction it seems that we are going. I am not sure that we have that many options. But we are talking now on the transition in Syria, which would be started with Assad in place, but would not end with Assad in his place. How realistic is that assumption that we can back a transition like that and assume that he will begin the process but not end the process?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Senator Flake, I think yesterday the Secretary said that it would be extraordinarily difficult—this process. And we have been trying to do a version of this, and many of the elements in the transition process were laid out in this Geneva Accord several years back.

But I think there is certainly renewed impetus to undertake this again with the Russian involvement, with the refugee crisis in Europe. Sure, I think it will be very hard. But Assad cannot remain in place because he is fundamentally destabilizing, and we will not be able to effectively combat ISIL if Assad remains in power. But it is going to be hard, of course.

Senator FLAKE. General Allen, do you have any thoughts there?

General ALLEN. I agree with the Assistant Secretary. I think this is going to be difficult, but I think beginning the process of the conversation is worth the effort frankly.

Senator FLAKE. Assistant Secretary Patterson, give some sense of where the EU is and how much more motivated perhaps they are now after the refugee crisis has reached its kind of peak—hopefully its peak? How much more motivated are they to help seek a solution with our partners there?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Well, they seem very focused on it, shall I say. Yesterday, there was a meeting in Paris that Tony Blinken attended and then there is this meeting in Vienna that will involve not only the EU but also the major European powers. So I think the refugee crisis, which has potentially very disruptive effects for Europe—I think we have seen a renewed interest on their part.

Senator FLAKE. General Allen.

General ALLEN. They are very focused on it, Senator. And I think that the concerns that they have, both in terms of the effect on their societies, their border control—all of those things, I believe have focused them very significantly on this, which is not just an issue for Europe, but it is also an issue of their renewed willingness to work with us within the coalition as well.

Senator FLAKE. Do they have any demands that we do not have? Are they entering in with the same—obviously, they understand the difficulties, as you put it, of starting this process of diplomacy here. But are they comfortable with what seems to be the framework given the reporting that we have seen that we would be comfortable with a transition period that would start with Assad remaining in power? Are our European partners comfortable with that?

General ALLEN. Well, it is difficult to make a generalization for all our European partners, but I believe that the process that Secretary Kerry seeks to undertake will take us through the modalities for that transition. And there will be various voices that will be raised in that process as to whether, yes, to go immediately or goes during the transition or has gone by the end. That will be worked out as a modality in the process. But I strongly believe that our European partners, whether in the coalition or just the EU as an entity, are keenly interested in this political process. We are clear that this is not going to be resolved in a military sense in Syria. And if this is an opportunity, if this is the moment when that conversation can begin to bring all of the relevant external players to the table to begin that conversation, this is an opportunity that we should seize.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks to our witnesses.

Since the beginning of the war on ISIL in August 2014, we have seen United States troop deployment levels increase. We have seen deaths of U.S. citizens, first the execution of American hostages after the bombing began in August 2014, then the death of American servicemen who were deployed in the area, not combat-related deaths, and then sadly the death of Master Sergeant Wheeler last week. We have seen ISIL growing into more countries, originally

Iraq and Syria, but now ISIL claimed presence in Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, Somalia. And then we have just deployed troops to Cameroon to counter Boko Haram, which has claimed an alliance with ISIL. We have seen the acceleration of the worst refugee crisis since World War II with the Syrian refugees fleeing Syria in camps in neighboring nations. We have seen inflamed violence between Turkey and the Kurdish populations in Turkey and northern Syria. And now we have seen the Russian military entrance in an accelerated way into the theater in Syria.

We had testimony yesterday in both Armed Services and Foreign Relations hearings from Secretaries Kerry, Carter, and General Dunford, and while some of that was in a classified setting, I am going to be delicate about the way I describe it. The thrust of the testimony seemed to be, as I listened to both sets of testimony, that we are about to and it has been reported that we are considering—we are about to additionally escalate U.S. military activity against ISIL and that that will have a cost and that will likely take some time.

Would you agree that the stated mission that the United States has of defeating ISIL is one that is going to take some significant period of time?

General ALLEN. Senator Kaine, I agree with that, and we have said that all along. The countdown of issues that you have presented us, the witnesses, are an accurate accounting, and those are going to have to be addressed not just with regard to Daesh but more broadly, as the Assistant Secretary has sought to portray this morning, in the context of regional stability and ultimately addressing some of those causal factors that create the instability that give rise ultimately to organizations like al-Qaeda and Daesh because as you correctly point out, the emergence of what we would call “global ISIL” has been less about the spontaneous development of ISIL as an organization that we know in Iraq and Syria than it has been the potential for the creation of connectivity between existing groups in various places, each of which emerged from the fabric of society there because of various causal factors. So the ability of Daesh to gather them together in a network is something that we are obviously very attentive to right now with the idea of how we can both deal with the branches, deal with the network while we continue the process of dealing with the platform, which is the core ISIL platform in Iraq and Syria.

Senator KAINE. While I do not mean to undermine the fact that there have been some successful efforts that the United States has undertaken—I am going to get to one of those in a second. I go through the litany just to show that frankly since August 2014, the ISIL threat has been growing and mutating and spreading, and that means that the United States effort vis-a-vis ISIL, which this Congress should oversee and in my view authorize, is going to also have to grow and spread and it is likely to take some time.

But let me move to an area where we have been successful but even success has its challenges, and that is in our partnership with the Kurds. I was in Erbil in July and was very impressed with the cooperation between the United States and the peshmerga in military operations in northern Iraq. And then in Ghaziantep discussing our operations there, we had some success in working with

the Kurds in northern Syria as well. But no success does not have the worm in the apple. There has been an inflamed tension between our NATO ally Turkey and the Kurds right on that border and atrocities back and forth across the border.

How do we propose to maintain the partnership with the Kurds in northern Syria that has been somewhat successful militarily while also maintaining the level of cooperation we need to with Turkey to shut the border and do the other things that they are doing to battle ISIL?

General ALLEN. That is one of the most complex challenges that we face right now. We discovered the potential for the relationship with the YPG last year when you will recall Khobane was unfolding. And the many different defenders of that city were supported successfully. Many defenders. It was not just Kurds. There were others in that city as well. And in the aftermath of that discovered that the Syrian opposition elements in that area, Kurds and others, could, in fact, be empowered and advised ultimately to deal with Daesh, to recover the border, and to seal the border from infiltration from Daesh from Turkey into Syria.

At roughly the same time in July, when we completed the agreement with Turkey to open their airbases and to close the final 98 kilometers of the border, that is when the problem with the PKK lit off inside Turkey. And you are correct. Turkey is an old friend. It is a treasured NATO ally, and the PKK went to work inside Turkey once again, and the Turks responded. And we supported the Turks. PKK is a designated organization. And the Turks did, in fact, take steps to defend themselves. But we worked with the Turks in a very delicate, diplomatic process for us to maintain the relationship with the PYD and the armed wing, the YPG, south of the border so long as there was no aggression across that border one way or the other. And we have worked very hard to try to manage that.

There has been some reporting very recently that there might have been some. We are not entirely sure that is accurate, so we are watching it very closely because of the implications in Ankara and the potential tension that we have with the Turks over this real opportunity to take advantage of the capacity of opposition elements in Syria that can, in fact, liberate large segments of the population and the region from Daesh.

So we are going to watch this very closely, and it requires that we acknowledge the very delicate, diplomatic relation that we have with Turkey over this issue. And Turkey, of course, is attempting to defend itself from the PKK, at the same time manage the border and our relationship with relationship with the YPG. And I think we have worked well with them at this point.

Senator KAINE. Just one last point. I would like to underline ????? made by colleagues about the importance of United States action against Iran vis-a-vis the missile test. I actually have a slightly different diagnosis than my colleagues, but almost an identical prescription. I think that the missile test was less about threatening the United States as it was about the internal battle in Iranian politics. A big chunk of the Iranian Government love this deal and a big chunk of the hardliners hate this deal. One of the chief negotiators of the deal was threatened on the floor of the Iranian

Parliament by a member of Parliament saying, we will kill you for what you have done. And that tension between the hardliners who hate the deal and the reformers who want to achieve the deal—I think that explains the missile test.

I do think we need to take action immediately to show that we are not going to be pushed around, and it will be the test of our willingness to implement the deal. And we need to do it in a way that empowers the reformers who want the deal and further marginalizes the hardliners who oppose it. And this is especially important from a timing standpoint because of Iranian elections in early 2016. So I agree that we need to take strong action.

The CHAIRMAN. If I could, since you brought that up, I think one of the concerns that many had with the Iran deal is that it is not a country that controls its infrastructure in the same way that we do. And Soleimani—

Senator Kaine. That assumes a fact not in evidence, Your Honor.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes. But the point is I think that probably you are right. But the fact is there is an incongruence there within the country that means that some factions would want to cheat and do some things as they did. And I agree the prescription is the same. We need to push back.

I think that the administration could be frozen like they have been with Syria with decision memos, decision memos, decision memos, and no action. I fear that is what is happening right now on this particular issue. And hopefully, collectively we can push so that that does not become reality here soon.

Senator Cardin. Mr. Chairman, let me just point out. I think there is unanimity I would think on this committee to the point of making sure that Iran is held to the strictest compliance with all of its international agreements. It really does not involve whether we support or oppose the Iran agreement. We want to make sure that there is strict compliance. And the violation of the U.N. resolution, the clear violation of the U.N. resolution, requires U.S. action with our willing allies to make it clear that we will not tolerate that type of infringement regardless of the reasons why the Iranians did it.

The CHAIRMAN. And I would say regardless of where people were on the actual vote on the agreement, it is an agreement that is now in place. I think all of us want to ensure that Iran does not get a nuclear weapon.

So with that, Senator Isakson.

Senator Isakson. I want to associate myself with the remarks of the chairman and the ranking member both on the Iranian deal. Regardless of my vote or anybody else's vote, we have to be steadfast in seeing to it that they live up to their side of the bargain. If we do not, we are a paper tiger and there will never be any good diplomacy. Period.

I want to follow up on what Senator Kaine said in his timeline about 2014 and ISIL, and I want to take it back one additional year to 2013 because it was October 2013 when the administration declared it was going to make a limited strike against Assad because he crossed the redline that had been drawn in the sand in Syria. The Congress, not this committee, I might add, but the Congress kind of backed up on that and did not give him the support.

And the administration, although they could have gone ahead and made a limited strike under the War Powers Act, decided not to. So we became a paper tiger at that particular point in time. That was in 2013.

In 2014, ISIL knew we were getting ready to leave Iraq open in terms of any American troops being left there. We created a vacuum in Iraq, which ISIL immediately filled by claiming territory. We are taking some of it back now with our coalition partners, but the fact is we took a terrible setback because we withdrew entirely from Iraq.

So the beginning of my statement is, I think we have made a mistake—we, Republicans and Democrats, the administration, and Congress—by backing away from doing a military lesson in Syria in 2013 when we had the opportunity and there was a clear line that had been drawn in the sand.

I understand the need for diplomacy and I prefer diplomacy any time over war. I lose every war I ever have with my wife. With diplomacy I sometimes can win. So I think it is important to have a good diplomatic solution. But diplomacy only works when there is a threat of force otherwise.

Yesterday in the Armed Services Committee, General Dunford and Secretary Carter said that the door was open for more—and I quote—“direct action against ISIL.” That is an “eyes of the beholder” type statement, but at least it sends the signal that they may be looking at other options in terms of ISIL. And I think ISIL is the focal point upon which a military action or an expansion of military action is not only appropriate but instructive in helping us with diplomacy everywhere else, personally.

The spoils of war and ISIL has won in terms of the refugee issue. I just got back from Greece and Italy where we have seen a half a million refugees, 70 percent of them Syrian middle-class people, flowing through Greece trying to get into Europe. The Hungarians are closing their border. We see a crisis of immense proportion going all the way to the country of Sweden. It is going to get worse next year than it is this year simply because of things that are taking place now.

So my question—I am making a speech, and I apologize for that. But my question is if we do not consider forcefully and practically the use of force against ISIL to wipe them out militarily or to send such a clear signal to them they are going to be wiped out so that they back away, that cancer is going to continue to grow because you cannot reason with somebody that would cut off your head, burn somebody in a town square, destroy the antiquities of history of a country, or kill humanitarians. You just cannot do it.

And I think we have got a great Air Force. I think the air strikes are fine, but you do not win this with air strikes. And we cannot let that cancer continue to grow because if we do, no diplomatic solution in any Middle Eastern problem is going to help.

So I would just like for you to comment for just a second not necessarily on my premise on this but on what was said yesterday by General Dunford and Secretary Carter and if you believe a possibility to have a more robust military action against ISIL would have a positive result.

General Allen.

General ALLEN. Senator, I absolutely agree with what you have said. I have been around a little while, and I have never seen anything like this organization before in the depths of its depravation and its depravity. And this is an organization that we obviously have to deal with.

I think the testimony yesterday from General Dunford and Secretary Carter pointed to recommendations and thoughts that they are going to provide to the President of the United States on the potential means to a deal or to enhance the means by which we want to accomplish the ends and direct action, as I was describing earlier, the idea of pressuring Daesh simultaneously around its periphery, which is we are setting ourselves up to begin to do that. One of the values of direct action is going after the nervous system inside. This is where no one on the planet does it better than we do, the targeted, direct action strike force-supported raid. And I will not go into the operational details associated with it, but I think that that is frankly a positive development in the thinking conceivably for how to deal with Daesh.

And I will just make one key point. When our special operators entered the Abu Sayyaf compound last year, killed him and the other two that were in the meeting with him and wiped out his personal security detachment, and then arrested his wife, Um Sayyaf, who was responsible for the slave trade of ISIL, and liberated the Yazidi sex slave and took 7 terabytes of information off the compound, it was not because we just did that raid spontaneously. You can imagine that as we did in Afghanistan every night 10 to 15 times across the country, it was a well-developed mission, which had the very high likelihood of success when properly supported, and it not only accomplished the military objective. It accomplished an extraordinarily important intelligence objective as well. And other ISIL leaders have met their end directly as a result of the sensitive site exploitation coming out of the Abu Sayyaf raid. And I believe that is what the Secretary and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs were describing yesterday. And if they are thinking in those terms and making that recommendation to the President of the United States, then I would certainly support it.

Senator ISAKSON. Well, I appreciate your answer because I am up in 2016 for reelection, and a lot is going to happen between now and next November. But this is one person that is going to be a voice and a vote for a more aggressive stance against ISIL to see to it that we go after the enemy of all mankind, not just of the United States of America. And I know once terrorism came and that genie got out of the bottle, you are never going to put it back in. But, by golly, we should not tolerate it. We should give every effort the United States can do to destroy it in the most robust fashion possible.

And I think it helps with diplomacy in Syria if you separate that action away from the Syrian people and Assad and target it strictly on the enemy which is ISIL which is Syria's enemy, as well as our enemy.

General ALLEN. That is exactly correct, sir. I absolutely support your comment.

Senator ISAKSON. And I know my time is almost up, but I want to thank Ms. Patterson for a statement you made, which was, I

think, very telling and very honest and very candid, which you always are. The chairman asked you the goals of the administration in the Middle East, and you said counterterrorism, human rights, economic growth, and then you said all of which we are pursuing but we are being limited because of ISIL and we are kind of in a series of crises management in the Middle East. And I thought that was a very honest answer because if you take any front page of any newspaper in America and go from day to day, it is another crisis in the Middle East, different from the crisis we had the day before. So counterterrorism and things like that are impossible to have strategies on when you are reacting on a daily basis to the forces that are at work.

So I hope as a country we will use our military strength as an example of why diplomacy is a far better way to reach solutions in the Middle East than military solutions, but if we have to, we are prepared to do whatever it takes to see to it that the United States enforces and respects human rights and the rule of law in every nation in the world. Thank you very much, Ms. Patterson.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Murphy.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the witnesses.

Last month, I got the opportunity to visit the men and women who have been running our train and equip program in the region. I have opposed this program from the start, thought it was destined to fail, but they, frankly, were doing a pretty miraculous job, incredibly capable people with a mission that was very, very difficult. And one of the reasons that it was difficult—and they testified to this, and there has been plenty of open reporting to say the same—was that we were recruiting individuals to fight only one of their two sworn enemies, that we were asking people to sign up to fight ISIS and essentially foreswear fighting Assad with our help. And thus, it was very difficult to recruit and ultimately was going to be difficult to control the forces that we had trained in the battle space.

And so there is all this open reporting now—and Senator Kaine referred to it—about increasing our support for the so-called vetted moderate Syrian opposition, whether it be with increased weaponry, whether it be with embedded special forces, or with air strike capability.

And I guess my question for you, General Allen, is has anything changed. Can we successfully support the moderate Syrian opposition so long as our support comes with a significant string attached to it, that we will only support them if they are only fighting ISIS, or is the only way for us to be effective in an increased level of support for the opposition to admit that we need to help them fight ISIS, and we need to help them fight Assad at the same time?

General ALLEN. The President has been clear that it is not his intention to support the moderate Syrians in a “go to war” strategy against Assad. We sought to support the moderate Syrians to be able to defend themselves. We have sought to support the moderate Syrians so that they could carve an area within Syria in which they were relatively secure, and to support the moderate Syrians to fight and ultimately assist us in defeating ISIL.

But either the reality or the perception that they can only fight ISIL has been an impediment, and it has been difficult obviously in both the recruiting and in the development of the commitment necessary from Syrian elements to be committed to the program. And that was one of the difficulties with the T&E program. The groups that we are supporting today beyond the adaptation of the T&E program as it will evolve over time, but as we have evolved in the last several months the support to those other elements within Syria that we have found have the capacity both to fight and the will to fight has been by virtue of their location in Syria. Primarily our focus is on Daesh and their focus is on Daesh. So at this particular moment in the development of our relationships, this has worked out to our benefit.

Senator MURPHY. Secretary Patterson, does the administration have the authority to open up a front against Assad, should that be the recommendation in order to effectively recruit individuals into the moderate Syrian opposition or effectively coordinate with them? Is there the belief that there is legal authority right now to make a decision to empower the Syrian moderate opposition to fight both ISIL and Assad? Is this a legal question, or is this simply a strategic question?

Ambassador PATTERSON. It is a legal question, Senator, and one that I am not qualified to answer really. But there are important legal elements of that, and we can certainly get somebody up here to answer that question for you.

Senator MURPHY. But the State Department has not made a determination that it does not have the legal authority. This is an open question within the State Department? Is that what you are suggesting?

Ambassador PATTERSON. I would rather not speculate on that because it is a very complex legal issue and one that I have at least been on the periphery of very considerable discussion. So I would like to get somebody up here who is qualified to respond to you.

Senator MURPHY. General Allen, I thought you did about as good a job as I have heard anybody do in explaining the roots of the problem in the region. Of course, there is a military component to the fight against ISIL, but in the end, you cannot solve this problem unless you solve the underlying political realities of the region, which drive people to these extremist groups.

And, Secretary Patterson, you talked about what is happening in Baghdad today, and I think you had some level of optimism. During that same trip, I got the chance to go to Baghdad, and I am not sure that I walked away with the same level of optimism about Abadi's willingness to reform. Sort of the reforms that he has suggested have been fairly paper thin. We have been hearing for a very, very long time about a Sunni national guard that they cannot get their act together to begin. The military is still effectively 95 percent Shiite. There is really no understanding now of how if we were able to take back Ramadi, that there would be an effective multisectarian or Sunni-led military force that could hold it.

So the question is, I guess, for either of you. But it just does not seem like we actually have the leverage with Abadi right now to get him to take those tough steps to fully integrate the military to give the Sunnis some participation in a force that would ultimately

hold these areas once we take back. Tell me what we need to do in order to get Abadi to take the next several steps. It is not just enough to replace a handful of Deputy Prime Ministers. He has actually got to make a commitment to reform the military, and that is not happening yet.

General ALLEN. Let me make some broad comments. I was just in Baghdad and had the opportunity to meet with the Prime Minister, his national security advisor, and the Minister of Defense and Interior. I do believe that Prime Minister Abadi has been and continues to be a partner we can work with, given his predecessor and given the realities that we face today. He is an individual that we should be publicly and openly supporting, and I do not suppose that your question did otherwise. But he is someone that deserves our support. He has been very clear and open in his intent to institute these reforms, and frankly, he is encountering a lot of headwind in Baghdad right now in attempting to undertake these reforms because many of the very individuals that would be the most affected by those reforms are uniting politically to oppose those reforms. And it has created not just opposition to the reforms themselves, it has created an environment in which his status is even more tenuous.

I think the important dimension that we should be aware of is that the support from Najaf has been very important for him. His Eminence the Grand Ayatollah, Ali al-Sistani, and the Marja'iyya have been very supportive of him. And that has given him some real capability to move this forward. But many of the folks that will be affected the most by the reforms are the ones who are either individually or collectively making it difficult for him to institute those reforms. But he remains committed to them. They are not going forward as fast as we would like. They are not having the kind of penetration that we would like, but he remains committed to those reforms.

Let me talk just briefly about Ramadi because I think it is really important. Ramadi and the campaign in Al-Anbar benefits from lessons that we have learned in Salah ad-Din province with respect to Tikrit. And you are, in fact, correct, that much of the four columns that are converging on Ramadi right now are populated by troops that are Shia in orientation. And we had hoped that greater Sunni recruitment into the armed forces would come about. The conditions just are not there right now for the Shia population either to be contacted in large quantities or to be recruited in large quantities into the security forces.

But the governor in Al-Anbar is a Sunni. He is very supportive of his relationship with Prime Minister Abadi. He has a provincial chief of police who has done a great deal to recover the Sunni police of Al-Anbar. They are being trained. They are being equipped. They are being prepared, along with tribal fighters from Al-Anbar, to be the force that ultimately enters Ramadi once it is cleared to be the hold force that provides security to the population, that prevents the reemergence of Daesh in that population.

So in the context of clearing forces, just by virtue of the dint of the demographic makeup of the Iraqi population, we are going to see a preponderance of Shia on the ground clearing the city. But we are already posturing the Anbari police and the tribal elements

to come in right behind that ultimately to hold the ground and to secure the population. This is something we have learned from Tikrit, and this is something that we seek to apply in the follow-on aspects of the counteroffensive. And it is difficult, but it is an area where we are gaining ground I think.

Senator MURPHY. You all have an impossible job, but it sort of sounds like this is a record that we have heard before, the lack of political progress inside Baghdad and the lack of ability to integrate the military. I just hope that we are thinking of new means of leverage to try to change the dynamics inside Baghdad because I worry that we will be back here a year from now telling the same story about the political headwinds against Abadi having not changed. A difficult job, but I thank you for doing it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Risch.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Allen, as the Special Envoy to Counter ISIL, I thought you probably just a few minutes ago made as direct, clear of an explanation as possibly can be made as to why this is important to the people of the United States of America in fighting the most depraved group that exists on the planet today and will go down in history as that in modern times. So I appreciate that. I think we all need to be more articulate in why this is important to America and to Americans. So I appreciate that.

The second point that you made and I think most Americans do not fully appreciate is you described the military might of the United States. And I could not agree with you more. Most Americans do not understand just how powerful this country is when it comes to military might and how far we exceed every other nation on the face of this planet. And that is, it is not by a little bit. It is by a tremendous amount. No one can stand to us if it comes to that. We do not want it to come to that. We are not that kind of people. We want people to mind their own business and to go about their lives and to do good things and be humanitarian about it. But we occasionally get in a position where we wind up having to do something. And I think certainly ISIL is something that is demanding more and more of our attention in that regard, and that is unfortunate but it is a fact of life.

The problem with the extension of what you have just said is because we have this military might, it begs the question of "so what?" If everyone else in the world is convinced that we will not pull the trigger, what difference does it make? And I cannot tell you how much I have the feeling that the Russians are convinced of that. After watching what they did so brazenly this late summer, July and August, in Syria and coming in and doing what they have done, they have got to be convinced we are not going to pull the trigger.

Here we have a group that we have chosen to support, as you have described, not to support to do certain things, but certainly to defend themselves. The Russians have come in and, as they have always done, they have used deception and denial, and they have attacked the very group that the United States of America has put under at least this umbrella that Anne Patterson has just de-

scribed of defense. They have come in and they have attacked them brazenly. And what have they said when they were challenged? They said, oh, well, we are really after ISIL. Well, you know and I know because you have seen the same material that I have that their minimal attacks on ISIL are window dressing when it comes to what they are doing. I mean, they are beating the heck out of Assad's opposition. That is what they have done.

So people are going to look at this, and they are going to say, well, yes, the United States has all this might, but what are they doing in response to an attack on their friends that they have chosen to help? They are going to have the war planes stay 20 miles away. I suspect if you were in charge there, you would not let that happen. But that is where we are with the situation, and something has got to change. You guys are in charge of this. I do not know how you are going to do it, but something has got to change.

One of the problems we have, I think, is the fact that there is probably—and I have got to be careful how I say this, but there has been at least some acknowledgements in some areas that the White House feels that their legal ground may be tenuous. And I know, Secretary Patterson, you have just said this is not your bailiwick and you cannot answer the question. And I am sure that is true, also with you, General Allen.

Senator Kaine has been a real leader on this issue. And that is before we can make these kinds of decisions, we got to know what kind of legal ground we are standing on. And there are two legal issues here involved. Number one, making war on Assad who we have said we want to see removed. Well, by what international standard or law are we saying we can do that? Here you have a country that is set up. Now, first of all, there is not anybody that disagrees that Assad is a bad guy and should go. But you still got to have legal authority to do that. And I have yet to hear a clear legal description of how we can justify doing that. I think that issue has got to be resolved if we are going to continue to be a nation of laws, as we claim we are.

And secondly and just as importantly is the legal question of by what authority is the second branch of Government doing this. Senator Kaine has been eloquent in his descriptions of reticence on a lot of our part that this resolution from way back is being used to now use military force in Syria. This is a long, long way from what was authorized to be used against al-Qaeda way back when. And I think that has got to be resolved.

I think once those two are resolved, I think there is going to be a much clearer path forward to getting a tactic and a way of accomplishing the goals that you have set. I think the administration has been clear in their goal. They want Assad to go. They want peace in Syria. But we ain't getting there. And so I think these two legal questions have got to be resolved.

Well, my time is almost up. Let me just conclude with this. Secretary Patterson, with all due respect—and I mean that sincerely—I have heard you now over the last couple of days talk about how overstated the influence of Russia is in the region and, more importantly, how overstated it is as to how quickly their abilities and their respect is growing in the region. And you deny this by just saying, well, it is your opinion that that is overstated.

With all due respect, everything around you, all the media, all of the people we meet with in the region very much counter this. I quoted to you what a former Ambassador from Saudi Arabia said yesterday that directly counters what you have said, and you pooh-poohed that and said, well, he does not speak for Saudi Arabia anymore. I think this is a dangerous, dangerous position for the United States to be in if they are taking the position of, oh, this is going to away. This is no big problem.

So with that, my time is up. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the time.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

The one question that I hope we will get to at some point—the comments you made at the first part of your statement I agreed with strongly. But Europe, which is being decimated, if you will, by the refugees, seems to not share our concerns. I mean, they've tepidly, if at all, are even involved in trying to deal with the issue of ISIS and ISIL. Almost no involvement in Syria. So it is fascinating to me that relative to our involvement—that to me is fascinating.

But with that, Senator Markey.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, very much.

General Allen, can you talk a little bit about the attitudes of the Shiite leaders of Iraq in terms of reincorporating Sunnis into the leadership in the country? We all know now that the single biggest mistake was the Bush administration decision to just remove not just the generals in the army but all officers that had anything to do with ensuring that there would be some continuity, you know, this deba'athification was taken so far that it polarized the Sunni community. So we know that the handpicked leader, the Shiite leader Maliki, back in 2006 that he unfortunately harbored those same sentiments and treated the Sunni population in a way that only continued the acceleration of that sense of isolation that the Sunnis have in that country.

So can you give us a little bit of an update right now in terms of—let us take Tikrit. As Sunnis return to Tikrit, are they now allowed to assume leadership roles in the government in Tikrit? And could you give us kind of an outline of what those leadership roles might be that they have been given if that is in fact happening?

General ALLEN. It is an important question because it goes to the issue ultimately of reconciliation, which is, if you will, the social-human aspect of what we are seeking to do in a material sense, which is to restore the territorial integrity of Iraq. We have to do that in a human manner as well.

Senator MARKEY. My wife was the chief of behavioral medicine at the National Institutes of Health, and she always said there are two choices in life. One is reenactment. Very bad. It leads to escalation. The other is reconciliation where you hear the other side. And countries are like individuals.

General ALLEN. That is right.

Senator MARKEY. They have the same pathologies. And in the absence of ongoing interventions, the underlying pathology almost invariably recurs.

So if you could give us a little summary of Tikrit. What has happened since the Sunnis have begun to repopulate?

General ALLEN. I will take the question, but I will answer it as well because I want to give you some statistics, but I do not have those off the top of my head.

But Tikrit is an example of where we would love to see the entire conflict end up. First of all, there is a Sunni provincial governor in Salah ad-Din who has worked in partnership with Prime Minister Abadi in the process both of the recovery of Tikrit but also now the repopulation of Tikrit. We, the coalition, worked closely with the Iraqi interagency, led by the Germans and the Emiratis, of course, with the Americans deeply involved in the process, of helping to move funding with the Iraqi Government into the repopulation of Tikrit. About 75 percent of the population has gone home, well over 200,000 of the individuals, primarily Sunni, who were displaced as IDP's from Tikrit. So the process of clearing the city was largely done by PMF and—

Senator MARKEY. PMF is—

General ALLEN. The Popular Mobilization Front.

Senator MARKEY. It is just an acronym test?

General ALLEN. The Popular Mobilization Force, which are the forces that were called to the fatwa of the Grand Ayatollah last year. And so the Iraqi Security Forces and the PMF cleared Tikrit, which is largely a Shia clearing force.

Immediately behind that clearing force came in elements of the Sunni police and tribal elements to secure the city, which then permitted the return of the Sunni population, 75 percent, 215,000 or so by this point. The Iraqi central government, a Shia government, lined up the interagency to provide the restoration of essential services in conjunction with the work of the coalition. And what we see there, to your point, Senator, where there are difficulties with reconciliation at a legislative level, at the national level, the kinds of return that we get with the right kinds of a sequencing of the support to the Sunni population and the reestablishment of Sunni leadership on the ground creates the effect of reconciliation—

Senator MARKEY. So are the Sunnis now running Tikrit effectively?

General ALLEN. Yes, they are.

Senator MARKEY. So you are saying, in other words, essentially if this was the United States of America, they would have elected a Sunni mayor at this point because it is overwhelmingly Sunni. I am just talking about the functional political leadership inside of that city now in a larger confederation with the rest of the country. Is it now Sunni-run effectively, picking up the garbage, the police, the—

General ALLEN. By and large it is.

Senator MARKEY. By and large it is.

General ALLEN. And the intent with Ramadi is to do exactly the same thing.

Senator MARKEY. Well, I think that is an important real message to get out, that there is a success story there. But I think perhaps you could give us more detail, a written explanation, of where we are.

General ALLEN. We will do that.

Senator MARKEY. You are both great public servants, and I thank you for your work in Pakistan especially. I worked with you.

Let us move over to Yemen, if we could, and political reconciliation over there, how you view the Saudis, how you view the likelihood that they could move toward some form of political reconciliation so that we can de-escalate this military confrontation that promises the same kind of results in Yemen that we are seeing in Syria right now. So talk to us a little bit about the Saudi Arabians, what their attitudes are, and what we are doing to press them into thinking more about a negotiated resolution politically of this conflict.

Ambassador PATTERSON. Yes, Senator. First, let me say that I think there are some hopeful signs under the U.N. auspices that the Yemenis among themselves will come together in some kind of process. But we talk to the Saudis all the time about this. So when the Secretary was there a few days ago, this was, of course, an issue on the agenda. We have urged the Saudis to improve humanitarian access to Yemen. That is a very urgent priority. And things have become marginally better as more fuel has come in.

But, Senator, there are issues that go really to the heart of Saudi Arabia's security, which are the attacks on their border, the cross-border attacks and cross-border incursions. And of course, we have been assisting them in resisting that and providing certain facilitation so that they can resist that more effectively.

But we are very concerned about the situation there. The likelihood of a humanitarian disaster and incipient famine seems very acute. Again, I think we are reasonably optimistic because, frankly, many Saudis understand. Most Saudis understand that this cannot go on much longer because it is going to turn the Yemeni population against them and because they are going to be responsible for rebuilding the country, and it is going to be very costly in terms of both influence and resources.

Senator MARKEY. I thank you both.

And if I can say to you again, General, if you could just tell the Iraqi Government how much this committee would like to believe that there is a metric inside of Tikrit and other liberated cities, that you can report back to us in terms of the number of public officials, the amount of control, the amount of Sunni leadership that is unquestioned inside of those cities, that would help us a lot to see that progress was possible. And the same thing is true with the Saudi Arabians. We need a metric here that they are actually moving in a way that we have evidence in Yemen and that it is not just going to be a repetition syndrome again where we are having this Shiite-Sunni thing just play out and that they are not taking, where they have opportunities, a diplomatic alternative.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you both for being here today and for your service.

I just returned from Germany and Greece where we got a chance to see firsthand what is happening with the refugees in Europe and also to talk to them about their perspective on Syria and the Middle East. And I think it is fair to say that the Germans would say that they have been contributing to the effort in the Middle East to fight ISIS. I wonder if one of you could detail—given Senator

Corker's raising that concern, if you could detail what exactly our European partners are doing to support the effort against ISIS?

General ALLEN. We are organized within the coalition along five lines of effort. There are a large number of our European partners who have contributed ground forces to the training mission and to the advising mission, and a number of them have contributed aviation assets for strike operations in Iraq primarily and are considering strike operations in Syria. And the French are striking in Syria along with us.

They have also provided leadership to a number of the other of the lines of effort. The counternarrative is—the British are leading that effort, and many of our European partners are participating in working closely on the countering of the narrative of Daesh.

The Germans are leading the stabilization effort and are championing the development of the UNDP funding facility for immediate stabilization, which is the money that goes immediately behind the clearing effort to begin to restore essential services. The Germans have been very important to the process of leading that, in partnership with the Emiratis.

Within the Stabilization Working Group, the Italians have been very forthcoming in volunteering their Carabinieri, which are some of the finest police on the planet. And they are leading the training of the Sunni police to be the follow-on force behind the Shia clearing force. That has been an extraordinarily important contribution.

The Dutch are co-leading countering the foreign fighter effort, along with many other members of the coalition, as the Italians are co-leading the effort on countering Daesh finances.

And within each one of those lines of effort, there are multiple coalition members, many European members, who are prominent in that process of helping.

So our European partners are deeply, deeply embedded and deeply committed inside the coalition to our collective effort ultimately to defeat Daesh.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Assistant Secretary Patterson, several people have raised the issue of refugees, and I certainly believe that the number and flow of refugees poses a real threat to Europe, to the European Union, and that it is important for us to figure out what we can do to support the efforts with the humanitarian needs and the relocation needs of the refugees.

Can you detail what our gulf partners are doing to help with the refugee crisis?

Ambassador PATTERSON. I can certainly say that they have provided very considerable funding to address the refugee crisis, certainly in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

I think the issue you are getting at is the resettlement of some of the Syrian refugees in these gulf countries. And this is an issue that we have discussed with them any number of times. They argue that they have taken in tens of thousands of these refugees. I think the answer to that is that they are people that are legally there as guest workers and not under refugee status. That is really the distinction. So we continue to have this discussion with them.

And of course, if I might say so, we have put well over \$4 billion into this effort primarily in Jordan and Lebanon, which are the two

most seriously affected countries. And we continue to, for want of a better word, fundraise with all our allies consistently on this. You all have been quite generous on this issue too.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, I certainly agree that Jordan and Lebanon and Turkey have all taken in more than their share of refugees, but for some of the other gulf countries, Saudi Arabia, UAE, other countries, not only have they not taken in refugees, but they have also contributed, as I understand, only intermittently to the financial need to address humanitarian efforts around the refugees. And so while they may have committed funding, that funding has not always been forthcoming. And I would hope that we would do everything possible to try and urge them to join Europe and the rest of the international community in doing everything we can to support the refugees.

Ambassador Patterson, you started talking about Tunisia, which is one of the few bright spots in the Middle East in terms of the potential for a functioning democracy. Can you talk about what more we should be doing to support Tunisia?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Senator Shaheen, I went to Tunisia about 2 weeks ago and it was not too long after the terrorist attacks. And the effect of these two attacks on the museum and on the beach with European tourists was absolutely devastating. You could see empty hotels, empty museums, empty planes.

So we have to step up our efforts there. And we are stepping up our efforts in terms of loan guarantees and economic assistance. If I might make a plug, we sent to the Congress a greatly enhanced financial package for Tunisia this year. We are trying to help them with economic reforms, and we are trying to help them, very importantly, because this is an area in which we specialize, to build up their security forces and their counterterrorism capacity to identify these terrorist threats. It is going to be hard because they are next door to Libya. And this young man had trained in Libya who committed one of these attacks and was a lone wolf. But our focus, at least in the short run, is on building up their security forces and their counterterrorism capacity. They have over a million Libyans in Tunisia at this time. So they are also taking the brunt of these ungoverned spaces. But we will do everything we can.

Mr. Gunichi is here this week, and then next week we are going to honor some Tunisians with the Nobel Peace Prize, including their national labor leader.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Is our assessment that the biggest threat to Tunisia is the chaos in Libya?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Yes, that is our assessment, that there will be spillover from Libya and the terrorist attacks that will emanate from Tunisia. Tunisia, Senator, has the highest per capita number of jihadis, of extremists in the world per population. So there are also issues in Tunisia with countering violent extremism, with reintegration, with better education and job creation. All these issues we are trying to help on that obviously need urgent attention.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Once again, we appreciate your service and your patience here today to answer our questions.

General Allen, I want to deal with the impact that the Syrian conflict is having on one of our key strategic partners in the region, Jordan. We have talked about the refugee issues and the impact the refugee issues is having on the humanitarian international crisis, but also on the impact on surrounding countries. Jordan has taken in an extreme number of Syrian refugees.

With Russia's military presence now in Syria, the question becomes whether there will be additional destabilizing activities that could increase the number of refugees. This is a particular concern in southern Syria, which has not seen much activity of late, but with the Syrian concern about the strength of the opposition and now being emboldened by Russia's military presence, there is a fear that there could be activity against the civilian population in southern Syria that could very well increase the number of refugees going to Jordan.

Do we have a strategy to make sure that one of our key strategic partners, Jordan, has our help in deterring that type of activity in Syria?

General ALLEN. I will answer, if the Ambassador would like to as well. But the answer, Senator, is yes. It is very important to us. The security of Jordan is extraordinarily important to the United States and to the region. We are very attentive to the demographic laydown of the population in southwest Syria, which is directly adjacent to, if you will, the heartland of Jordan. I was just there, just spoke with the head of their intelligence service and also their chief of defense. They are very focused on it. We are also with them very focused on this issue. I will not get into the operational details, but I will assure you, Senator, that that is a major point of focus and interest for the Department of Defense and for the Department of State, sir.

Senator CARDIN. Good. And I would encourage you to do that.

Ambassador Patterson, do you want to—

Ambassador PATTERSON. Let me just add, sir, that as you say, that the moderate opposition in southern Syria has been, more or less, holding its own, and they do provide a first line of defense against ISIL incursions. I would say that refugee flow, yes, is a very serious concern but also potential incursions by ISIL. And the government is very worried about that. Over the past year, Senator Cardin, we have been trying to accelerate weapons deliveries. We have an extremely large military assistance mission there in all its elements, shall I say. We have stepped up border security. They need a lot of help on the border. I think we have got a briefing plan up here on that particular issue in the next week or so. And there are other plans in the pipeline to shore up Jordanian security because, as you say, Senator Cardin, it is an absolute essential U.S. ally and critical to regional stability and frankly critical to Israel's defense.

Senator CARDIN. And I would just point with the Assad regime's history of its attack on an innocent population, the fact that ISIL is a threat to that region also could be used as a justification for increased regime activities in that region against the population,

causing not only the direct loss of life but also the flow of additional refugees into Jordan, which would be very destabilizing. So I appreciate that we have that under control.

Ambassador Patterson, I want to ask one additional question in regards to your seeing positive steps by Palestinian leaders in regards to dealing with the terrorist activities in Israel, the innocent loss of life by lone wolf type attacks, using knives and cars. There have been some positive steps between the Israelis and Palestinians and with the U.S. on suggestions for the Temple Mount. I do not know what you are referring to when you say positive steps by Palestinian leaders. Mr. Abbas has been very reticent to condemn the individual attacks in a regular way. Where do you see positive steps by the Palestinian leaders?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Well, Senator Cardin, I think the Secretary is in constant contact with President Abbas. And I would agree with you that some of his statements in the last—regarding these unsettled times and the Temple Mount, Haram al-Sarif, have been less than reassuring. But we are constantly in a dialogue with him on these issues and urging them to take a positive role. I think there was progress over the weekend between Jordan and Israel to reduce the tensions on the Temple Mount, and those will play out over the next few weeks. But I can assure you the Secretary is deeply involved with all three players in this effort right now with Jordan and Israel and the Palestinians to move this process forward.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Just three quick questions, Ambassador Patterson, I wanted to clear up. I know that Senator Risch and Senator Kaine and others talked about legal authorities. But I think what they were referring to—and clarify, if you will, when we say there is a debate within the State Department about the legal authorities, you are not talking about the domestic legal authorities relative to Assad. It is international law that you are focused on. Is that correct?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Again, I hesitate to go here. But I have been on the periphery again of many conversations on this, and there has been a great deal of discussion among our attorneys about just this issue. And that is why I would like to get them up here to have them discuss on the international law aspects and what I would call some evolving areas.

The CHAIRMAN. And I would assume that if the administration felt that domestically it needed some authorities to do things, they would come and ask for that. Is that correct?

Ambassador PATTERSON. I am sure that is true, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. So I just do not want to leave the impression here that somehow because you are relying upon the O1 authorization to go against ISIS, that somehow lack of actions here are keeping you from carrying out what you want to carry out in Syria. It is the international law component.

Ambassador PATTERSON. Exactly, Senator. And I certainly did not mean to imply that. You are quite correct. It is the ambit of international law that we were discussing.

The CHAIRMAN. And you see no constraints at present relative to domestic law. And if you chose, if you felt like international law allowed you to go in against Assad for some reason, then you would seek, I assume, domestic authorization to go against Assad because the 01 authorization does not authorize you to do that.

Ambassador PATTERSON. Senator, I know we would seek from the Congress whatever our specialists in this area told us to seek.

The CHAIRMAN. And so today—I just want to be real clear about this—Congress in no way is inhibiting the administration’s ability to carry out what it seeks to carry out in Syria or in Iraq today.

Ambassador PATTERSON. That is my understanding, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. Secondly, I just do not want this conversation to go in a direction I do not think what you intended and certainly not what I am.

There is a memorandum of understanding, I understand, that has been developed between us and Israel. We have not seen a copy of it yet. I wonder if you might describe what the memorandum of understanding—what the contents of it are.

Ambassador PATTERSON. There has not been one developed, Senator. Are you talking about the military assistance memorandum of understanding? It does not expire until 2018.

The CHAIRMAN. I understood that some memorandum had recently been developed between the administration and Israel.

Ambassador PATTERSON. That is not correct. I think what you saw in the press was some—there had been some, if I might say, desultory conversations about this, but the discussions have not really started. And of course, the current one is still in effect, which provides for \$3.1 billion a year.

The CHAIRMAN. And just on that note, I know that there have been a lot of discussions about us ramping up, if you will, efforts toward weaponizing other countries in the Middle East. We have got about a \$6 billion FMF budget; \$3.1 billion of it goes to Israel; \$1.5 billion, I think, roughly goes to Egypt, your former post. Just out of curiosity—so that is \$4.6 billion, if I do my math correctly. So how are we allocating those FMF funds in a way that do the things that we talked about at Camp David?

Ambassador PATTERSON. Well, most of the gulf allies—they pay cash, and they often go through the FMF system—FMS system, the foreign military sales system. But they also, to the extent they can, do direct commercial sales with suppliers.

But on the FMF, I would say that our FMF budget is limited. I would love to have more for my countries, Jordan and Lebanon being very high priorities. Jordan is now a major recipient of FMF to the tune of slightly over \$300 million a year. We need to give more FMF to Tunisia to build up their security forces. So it would be very useful to have more of it.

But most of the security enhancements with the gulf—all of them that I can think of—are basically directly with U.S. suppliers or through our FMS system, and they purchase them directly.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you for that.

Senator CARDIN. On that point, we do have a new memorandum of understanding with Jordan.

Ambassador PATTERSON. We do, Senator.

Senator CARDIN. And how would that affect the allocation of the existing—

Ambassador PATTERSON. Well, basically the Congress raised the top line. There will be pressures this year I think between some worthy recipients in the Middle East region about allocating these funds. And we will, I think, work that out with members of this committee and other members. But, yes, there is tension between, for instance, recipients such as Jordan and Tunisia who both need stepped-up military assistance. And I do not want to forget Lebanon in this as well. They have also been victimized by ISIL, and their security forces have done a good job and are very worthy of our continued support.

Senator CARDIN. Mr. Chairman, I would just point out we do not know how this budget agreement and the allocations are going to be allocated, but I would hope that we would be transparent with this committee as to the requests that are being made through the appropriation process so that we can have a unified front in allocating the resources in the most effective way to achieve U.S. objectives.

Ambassador PATTERSON. I certainly think we have been transparent, and we can certainly schedule a briefing at any time you might desire. We can schedule one right away about some of the tradeoffs. But we are going to have to make some hard choices, and the security situation for our allies in the region is very concerning.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

General, I referenced Europe earlier, and obviously Europe—people have used words. You know, the whole context of it is changing because of the refugee crisis. The genesis of much of that is coming out of Syria. I know Secretary Kerry yesterday alluded to the fact that our interests and Europe's interests and many of the Sunni Arab countries' interests—all of these things will be putting pressure on Russia apparently, per Secretary Kerry, to align with us, if you will, relative to what is happening in Syria.

I must be missing something, but we are all horrified by the massive amount of refugees that exist, the biggest humanitarian crisis since World War II. I know that, obviously, Europe directly, far more than any other portion of the world, is being affected by that. But I do not see the same effort, if you will, relative to Syria.

Now, I know you mentioned some things in Iraq, and I may have missed something. But I do not see Europe near as focused on the crisis in Syria as we are, and I wonder if you might just illuminate. Maybe that is a false impression.

General ALLEN. I would ask the Ambassador to come in with me on this.

We are going to meet next week in Brussels at a small group level, 23 key partners from the coalition, where we intend to talk about Syria, the developments there, and how we might anticipate those developments unfolding so that as a coalition we can be more helpful.

I think one of the principal differences—first—I am sorry—let me back up. If we were to list for you the bilateral European—and we can seek to do this, in fact—the bilateral European assistance to Syria, I think you would find that it is not insignificant. And that is not just in supporting the U.N. in its appeals for humanitarian

assistance, but also specific assistance to elements of the Syrian population. They, of course, have smaller capacity than we do and less money that they can contribute, but per capita it is not insignificant. And we find that in southern Turkey, there are other European partners there who are, in fact, working directly through NGOs to the Syrian population.

The CHAIRMAN. If I could just for a second.

General ALLEN. Sure.

The CHAIRMAN. It is very rare that I would interrupt you.

So Europe GDP-wise, actually as a whole, they are as significant as we are. So I hear you on the humanitarian piece. But the root of the refugee crisis is what is happening in Syria relative to Assad bombing his own people and what is happening with ISIS. And I guess what I am missing here is we are outraged by that. The committee is outraged. The American people are outraged by that. I do not understand the disconnect between the tremendous impact on Europe and the lack of effort, if you will, on their part to do something kinetically or in other ways directly to ISIS. I do not get it.

So certainly I agree with your comments relative to who ISIS is and certainly we all collectively understand the threat they are to the world. I do not understand why Europe itself does not see that when they are so directly impacted.

General ALLEN. Chairman, I do not know that Europe does not see that. I know quite a few European leaders, and the horror that they express not just at the distress of a huge segment of the population which has taken to hoof because of the conditions in the region, but also the stress that now their own society is having to bear as a direct result of the presence of large numbers of refugees and societies where economically there are already difficulties and large unemployment numbers. Europe is under a lot of pressure.

The CHAIRMAN. I understand all the societal issues, but why are they not more involved in the root issue?

General ALLEN. In many respects the same reason that we are not, and that is that we did not have options in Syria to take action against Daesh in the way that we now can and the way that we now will until just a few months ago. Europe has been deeply involved with us from the beginning with regard to Daesh in Iraq because we had platforms that we could create in Iraq where many of the European countries sent their troops at not insignificant cost and treasure, but certainly with the expectation that there could be casualties here. We have not been complacent at all with their security. But many European partners have invested not insignificant numbers of their young men and women into the training and advising process and their aviators are flying in the skies over Iraq every single day, and some of them are flying over Syria. And I expect that as time goes on, as we continue to build our military options on the ground in Syria, we may well find that we will have other European partners join us in that process.

We are in an active conversation with many of our European partners about the potential for them to relocate and to join us on the ground in Insurlik. That is a base that has become available to us. And while we have not got answers back—we have just started the process of asking—we would love to see European partners and our Australian colleagues, who were with us in all of

these fights, to join us at Insurlik because when the time comes for us to really bear down on Daesh in Syria and to close the border with Turkey, it is much easier for us to fly 15 minutes to get to the border of northern Syria than 4½ hours coming out of the gulf. And so that conversation is open. The Europeans are considering our request. Whether they do or not, it is a complex answer. It is not just as simple as go to Turkey. They have got bilateral relationships in the gulf that are old and have been cultivated in order for them to deploy.

So I want to be very clear that my sense of the European commitment both to the coalition at large in the sense of expressing the outrage of the community of nations is loud and it is constant from our coalition partners, but also the tangible, physical, the human commitment and the monetary commitment to the coalition has not been insignificant either. The opportunity to do things in Syria has not been nearly as available to our European partners as has been the opportunity for them to participate in a very credible, real, open, and visible way in Iraq. And I expect that as time goes on and as more opportunities become available to us, we may well see our European partners become more kinetically involved in Syria.

The CHAIRMAN. So I know you have referenced Insurlik a couple times, and we all thank you for your efforts to create the conditions where Turkey would be willing to let us use that.

But over the last 60 days, you say conditions have changed. That is obviously one of the changes. What are some of the other conditions that have changed that will make it much more easy, if you will, for Europe to be much more kinetically involved in what is happening in Syria?

General ALLEN. Beyond the potential contributions for aviation, we may well see that if we do more in terms of supporting some of the groups in Syria, we may see some European counterparts be willing to join us in that process. And whether it is to provide additional equipment or provide additional training and support—and I want to be very careful about some of the operational details in this forum that I would discuss with respect to those options. And I am happy to go offline with you on both of those. We may well see that we have European partners willing to do it.

And it is not just about Turkey. It is about the south as well. What we are seeking to do is to create pressure on Daesh across its entire periphery, and there may be opportunities in the south, as well as in the north, where our coalition partners, our European coalition partners, could in fact play an important role, and I am thinking special operations, but I will not become more specific than that.

The CHAIRMAN. I mean, we have seen, you have seen, others have talked about what Russia has done on the ground relative to, quote, “our friends.” Do you see a situation developing where Russia would concentrate its efforts solely on ISIS and not on the more moderate groups that, quote, “are our friends”?

General ALLEN. No, I do not see that at all, Chairman. I think the Russians are not there to deal with ISIS.

The CHAIRMAN. So if you will, that 180 degrees contradicts what Secretary Kerry said yesterday—180 degrees—in that he does see

us having the focus together on ISIS. Again, that is why I asked in my opening comments or made the comments about the facts on the ground. The facts on the ground are that Russia is killing our friends. And you do not see them moving away from killing our friends to focusing like we are on ISIS. You do not see that happening.

General ALLEN. I want to be very clear that the way you phrased the question, which was that Russia would focus exclusively on ISIL, I do not see that they are going to do that because Russia, in the end, is there to stabilize Assad and, if you will, the wolf closest to the door for Assad is Jabhat al-Nusra and other elements, Jaish al-Fatah and some of the Syrian opposition elements that we have relationships with. Those are the ones that are the greatest threat. Those are the ones where the Russians are, in fact, providing support to both the regime's ground forces and Hezbollah and Iranian-supported elements. They are providing that capability to first stabilize the situation and probably ultimately to recover the Alawi heartland. At this juncture, we have not seen and we will not, I think, see a large-scale Russian investment in going after ISIL because it has to do what it came there to do, which is to prevent the collapse of the Assad regime.

That does not mean eventually that they will not join us in a larger investment of their resources in dealing with Daesh, but for now I think very clearly—while we had an expectation that we would partner to deal with Daesh, that the Russians would play a role in the reduction of violence and the reduction of the conflict and then play a role constructively with us in creating a political transition, we have not seen any of that.

And so for now, the coalition is going to continue to remain focused on and will bear down on Daesh as an entity while the Secretary is taking the steps necessary with this potential opportunity to try to create that conversation where the Russians could conceivably join that conversation, to set the conditions for the potential for transition.

But for now, the Russians have got to do what they came there to do, and that is stabilize Assad. And to do that, they have got to attack those forces that are the greatest threat to Assad. Daesh is somewhere down the pike for them, as far as I am concerned. And I think the Russians are going to start feeling some serious pain on this. The regime forces are not doing that well under Russian close air support. They are underperforming, and I think the Russians are definitely dismayed by the performance of the regime forces under both Russian artillery support and aviation support.

There are other groups within Syria that are beginning to amass their capabilities. As Secretary Carter said yesterday, the Russians are catalyzing a unity between groups that we might not otherwise have wanted to happen. But they are doing it for survival purposes to fight the Russians and to defend themselves against a ground offensive by the regime. And also, we are seeing probably somewhere between 50,000 and 80,000 refugees that are beginning to emerge because of direct Russian support of the regime elements in Hama and Homs province and Aleppo. I mean, we could see an entire new wave of refugees coming from the Russian incursion here.

This is not a great strategic move on their part. This is a move to prop up one of their oldest overseas allies, perhaps their only overseas ally at this point, taking Cuba off the table. And they are going to find this is going to become very, very difficult. Already the support that they are giving is not providing the kind of outcome that they had wanted. And so they are probably going to find in the very near future, since they are not going to be able to resolve this militarily, that they want to start to think about a political resolution. And that is why it is important for them to seriously getting involved in this conversation that the Secretary is trying to set up. He sees this as an opportunity.

The CHAIRMAN. And I am in no way, at your last public hearing, trying to draw you into conflict with the Secretary. I will say it is my strong impression—and I will use those words so that it can be challenged. My strong impression is that the Secretary believes that a fundamental first step is for Russia to stop killing those that are our friends. And that is why I have said in the past and said yesterday that the facts on the ground today, which you are alluding to right now, do not lead one to believe that on Friday there is going to be a lot of progress because there is just such a difference in what their goals are, which I think was said many times here today, but maybe was not focused on as clearly as we are right now in this conversation.

General ALLEN. Chairman, I do not disagree with the Secretary's point. I think the Secretary's point is very important. Look, Russia is going to suffer from this incursion in ways they cannot even begin to imagine. We thought we had a good handle on what the foreign terrorist fighter access was going to be coming out of Turkey into Syria. Everywhere I have gone in the gulf and everywhere I have talked to our Arab partners, every one of them is saying the potential for a re-sparking of the global jihad is enormous as a direct result of this. So when Secretary Kerry says in order for this to move forward, they have got to stop killing our people, what he is saying is they have got to stop killing the moderate Syrians who are, in fact, the political hope for the future in Syria. We are going to have to deal with al-Qaeda eventually. That is Jabhat al-Nusra. That is a big organization. And we are going to have to deal with Daesh. But when the Russians stop killing the moderate Syrian opposition, which is both their hope for the future, as well as our hope for the future, then perhaps we can get to where we need to be. But they are going to have to feel some pain on this, and I think they are going to relatively soon.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, listen, thank you for those clarifications. We appreciate so much your service to our country and for being here today in an open setting. We do look forward to following conversations even after your retirement to help us think through these issues. I appreciate you being such a tremendous asset to me in this position. I really do.

Ambassador Patterson, we thank you for your continued professional service in the toughest area of the world right now that we are dealing with relative to competing interests. And thank you for being here today and the way you are.

With that, the record, without objection, will remain open through Friday. If you all would fairly speedily answer any ques-

tions that come forward at that time, without objection that is the way it will be.

And the meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:00 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF GEN. JOHN R. ALLEN TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR RAND PAUL

Question. Do you think the ISIL threat to U.S. national security is severe enough to warrant the President seeking an AUMF from Congress?

Answer. Last February, President Obama developed and transmitted to Congress an AUMF proposal that reflects bipartisan input, contains reasonable limitations, and would provide the administration with the flexibility necessary to successfully pursue the armed conflict against ISIL. The President's draft AUMF includes a 3-year sunset, does not authorize "enduring offensive ground combat operations," does not include a geographic limitation, and repeals the 2002 Iraq AUMF.

The administration looks forward to continuing to work with congressional leaders in both Chambers, and we remain open to reasonable adjustments that are consistent with the President's policy and that can garner bipartisan support. A new authorization would show our troops, our allies, and our enemies that we are united in our resolve to degrade and defeat ISIL.

Question. In the testimony you gave on October 29 you stated that Russia's intervention in Syria will leave them in a quagmire and affect them domestically. Does that same rationale not also apply to the United States? Should your dire warning for Russia also be considered by the United States since recent administration proposals would put U.S. boots on the ground?

Answer. A comparison cannot be made between U.S. and Russian actions in Syria. As we have consistently said, the answer to the Syrian conflict cannot be found in a military alliance with Assad—but rather, through a broadly supported diplomatic initiative aimed at a negotiated political transition, consistent with the Geneva Communique. Russian officials have said publicly that they agree the only solution in Syria is a political transition, although they bomb the moderate opposition that must be part of that political solution.

We have consistently urged Russia to focus its efforts on ISIL and to use its influence with the Assad regime to support a genuine political transition. However, thus far Russian actions in Syria have been to prop up the regime—their ally in the region—which only further inflames the conflict and places Russia in the middle of a civil war in the Middle East and against the vast majority of the Syrian people. In doing so, Russia is making itself a target for violent extremists in Syria, from within Russia, and from other parts of the world. The Russians have stated publicly that in excess of 2,000 Russian citizens are fighting for ISIL in Iraq and Syria today. Russia is also isolating itself from the large majority of the countries in the region—including Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf States, Jordan, and others.

In contrast, the United States is working with a Global Coalition of 65 partners, which continues to focus on fighting ISIL. We will continue to provide a range of assistance, in coordination with international and regional partners, to moderate opposition elements to bolster their ability to withstand the pressure they are currently under and achieve a political transition that is responsive to the Syrian people.

Question. The administration sees ISIL/Daesh as a regional threat. Do you see any rationale by which the United States would conduct air strikes or ground military operations in other countries other than Syria and Iraq?

Answer. We remain focused on achieving our objectives in Iraq and Syria—ISIL's principal source of strength. ISIL's core in Iraq and Syria is the foundational platform from which ISIL draws its organizational strength, resources, and capabilities. We believe that degrading and defeating ISIL at its core will discourage and disrupt the activities of ISIL's global reach and of those groups which have claimed an affiliation.

That said, we are extremely concerned about ISIL's ability to cooperate with other violent extremists outside of Iraq and Syria as well as its ability to spread its violent ideology. Most of these groups are preexisting groups or have emerged from local contexts and then exploit local grievances and instability to gain recruits. To

counter these groups, we are working through bilateral relationships and with a range of partners through our existing counterterrorism platforms.

Question. Congress allocated half a billion dollars for the train and equip mission and the administration spent close to half of that on the failed program. Even President Obama spoke publicly on his reluctance to embrace the Syrian train and equip program.

As a former senior military leader, what strategic advantage did this failed program provide when it was known most Syrian rebels wanted to fight Assad first and the most dedicated fighters had already decided to fight for al-Qaeda? Why was this program proposed when it was known the United States would be working with the least motivated Syrian rebels?

Answer. The Department of Defense clearly acknowledged that it faced challenges with the train and equip program and that is why the administration has taken steps to refocus the program on equipping and enabling capable partners on the ground that have already proven they are motivated to take Syrian territory from ISIL. The successes won by these partners have enabled us to look beyond the initial opportunities we had when we started the program.

From the program's inception, we have continually reviewed our progress, acknowledged challenges, and worked to determine how we can improve our efforts in support of our partners on the ground. Throughout this period, working with our coalition partners, we have also pursued other efforts to partner with and enable capable ground forces motivated to take back Syrian territory from ISIL. For example, we supported the counter-ISIL fighters in Kobane, allowing them to take back a key border crossing and press deeper into Syrian territory controlled by ISIL.

Building on that progress, the Department of Defense is now providing equipment packages and weapons to a select group of vetted leaders and their units so that over time they can make a concerted push into territory still controlled by ISIL. We will monitor the progress these groups make and provide them with air support as they take the fight to ISIL. This focus on equipping and enabling will allow us to reinforce the progress already made in countering ISIL in Syria.

RESPONSES OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY ANNE PATTERSON AND GEN. JOHN R. ALLEN
TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR EDWARD MARKEY

Question. Assistant Secretary Patterson and General Allen, General Allen testified that after Iraqi Security Forces and predominantly Shia militias cleared ISIS forces from Tikrit in March the Government of Iraq reestablished local Sunni leadership there, that the local leadership is providing essential services, and that the national government ministries are providing the local leaders with required resources. General Allen further testified that Tikrit is a model of how to sequence actions to clear ISIS from Iraqi population centers, restore local governments that represent the population, and that the Iraqi Government is working to replicate this model in Ramadi next.

Please provide greater detail on the restoration of government leadership in Tikrit that is representative of Tikrit's people. This should include a description of local governing structures, what services they are providing, and the extent to which local people are employed in efforts to rebuild their communities. Please include information about structures that link the national government with Tikrit's local authorities, the level of resources that the national government is providing to them to pay for essential services during transition, and what the national government is doing in conjunction with local authorities to plan toward long-term national government resourcing of Tikrit at levels on par with Iraqi cities in areas of the country where Shia populations are predominant.

Finally, what metrics are we, our international partners, and the Iraqi Government using to judge whether reestablishment of representative local authority in Tikrit has been successful and how are those metrics being incorporated into future planning for other areas?

Answer. The Salah ad-Din provincial government consists of a Provincial Council (PC) and Governor's office. The council consists of 29 people who were elected in 2013; these members in turn elected the PC chair and vice chair, the Governor, and his two deputies. The PC works with the Iraqi Council of Representatives (COR), and the Governor's office has a direct line to the Prime Minister. The governor and the PC both coordinate directly with federal line ministries.

Due to the Iraqi budget crisis precipitated by the drop in oil prices and the conflict with ISIL, the central government is facing a \$20 billion budget deficit and is limited in its ability to provide support to any of its provincial governorates. Despite

this financial crisis, the Salah ad-Din provincial government, working closely with the central government, has been able to implement several development projects with funding from the provincial and central government, augmented by \$6.5 million in funding from the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization (FFIS), a fund to which the United States has contributed \$8.3 million.

The current stabilization and reconstruction projects provided by the government of Salah ad-Din through line ministries include the restoration of drinking water and electricity to Tikrit City and surrounding districts; the direct supervision of the returnees and provision of shelter; distribution of food with the assistance of UNDP; the restoration of local police and security forces and establishment of check points; coordination with international organizations to restore health clinics; and coordination with UNICEF and Ministry of Education to set up portable classrooms.

Tikrit has allowed us to test resources and mechanisms set up for stabilization, and we have seen significant progress since that city was liberated from ISIL in April. The Government of Iraq and the provincial governor are leading efforts with the coalition and the U.N. to support rehabilitation and stabilization. The most credible metric that can be used to assess the success of these efforts is the return of IDPs, and already approximately 75 percent of Tikrit's population has returned, with over 100 businesses reopening as the community begins to rebuild. Tikrit University is expected to open for classes within the next few weeks.

Beyond Tikrit and its surrounding areas in Salah ad-Din province, provincial governments, in coordination with the Government of Iraq and with the support of the United Nations and coalition, are actively planning for the stabilization of other newly liberated areas. The Ramadi stabilization plan, for example, is the result of close collaboration between the Anbar Provincial Governor and the Government of Iraq, and offers a credible plan for restoring security and basic services once Ramadi is liberated from ISIL.

Question. What is the process for adjudicating any claims that Sunni residents of Tikrit have made for rights violations by the forces that cleared Tikrit, or against the security forces that currently operate there?

Answer. Accusations of abuse by security forces are investigated by the Citizen Service Office, chaired by the Assistant Governor of Salah ad-Din. It is worth noting that there are no significant reports of abuse by security forces in Tikrit. Salah ad-Din officials report that the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) who cleared Tikrit have been very accommodating of Sunni residents, and many Sunni tribal leaders actively coordinate with the PMF to maintain security. The relationship between the local Sunni population and the security forces currently operating in Tikrit is good. In fact, many Sunni residents recently participated in local festivities of the Shia Muslim commemoration of Ashura, a demonstration of positive cross-sectarian engagement.

Question. What is the demographic breakdown of security forces personnel currently operating in Tikrit, including military and police? What percentage of them are natives of Tikrit?

Answer. There are no official statistics on the sectarian composition of the Iraqi Army; however, most of the local police forces in Tikrit are from Salah ad-Din. Several thousand Sunni volunteer fighters from the Jabouri tribe are also involved in security operations in Tikrit.

