

IRAQ AFTER MOSUL

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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FEBRUARY 28, 2017
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Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations



Available via the World Wide Web:
<http://www.govinfo.gov>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

WASHINGTON : 2020

40-419 PDF

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IRAQ AFTER MOSUL

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2017

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:05 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Bob Corker, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Corker [presiding], Johnson, Flake, Gardner, Young, Paul, Cardin, Menendez, Shaheen, Coons, Murphy, Kaine, Markey, Merkley, and Booker.

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

The CHAIRMAN. The Foreign Relations Committee will come to order. I know we normally start exactly on time. I was told one of our witnesses was stuck in security and not to show up until now, so I apologize to any of you who got here exactly on time.

Which one of you was stuck, by the way?

Dr. KNIGHTS. I have to own up.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. Well, I am glad you made it through, and I am glad—what was that? Yes, very good.

So the committee will come to order. I thank all of you for being here.

I want to thank our witnesses for testifying today. We appreciate your willingness to come before this committee.

I spent part of last week in Iraq, and I think it is quite clear that ISIS will soon lose all of its territory in Iraq. I think we are well on the way to making that happen.

As we sit here, Iraqis are returning to their recently liberated homes in eastern Mosul and security forces are fighting through western Mosul. I think it is pretty incredible to understand what ISIS is doing to booby-trap these homes as they go back, with bombs under their mattresses, behind the refrigerator doors. It is a pretty unbelievable situation.

It is worth commending the work the Iraqi security forces and the Kurdish Peshmerga have done in Iraq. American support has been crucial, but the Iraqis are liberating their own country. Their success is what brings us to the topic of today's hearing, what happens after ISIS.

There is reason for a degree of optimism in Iraq. In many ways, the unthinkable horrors of ISIS have unified Iraq against a common enemy.

I spent time in an IDP camp, and I know many of you have done the same thing, and met with Iraqis and with many different ethnicities supporting and relying upon each other, which was great to see.

But the same underlying problems that contributed to the success of ISIS still remain, and they will remain after the kinetic activity is underway and the re-stabilizing completes.

Prime Minister Abadi recognizes the need for decentralization, political reform, and control of the militias, but he has had trouble implementing solutions, and I think that trouble is going to continue. I know there is an election coming up in 2018, and my sense is many of the same issues that created this will continue.

The Shia militia are an enduring and existential problem for Iraq as they attempt to turn battlefield success into political success. Candidly, we are setting the precursor for, in some ways, a Hezbollah-like entity in Iraq, just like we have in Lebanon right now.

In many ways, Iran appears to be supportive of U.S. efforts to defeat ISIS, but I think we are all waiting for the day when our interests in Iraq no longer align with theirs and Iranian-supported militias attack American forces. I traveled to Lebanon after Iraq, and the parallels between Hezbollah and the Shia militias in Iraq are hard to miss.

With Iraqi elections coming in 2018, I think the big question is whether Iraq can unify behind their effort to rid the country of ISIS and finally move forward politically. Or, in a different scenario, could the underlying and unaddressed sectarian tensions in Iraq provide the background for an Iranian-backed militia leader to become prime minister? I think that is not out of the question.

For us, I think the questions focus on what steps we can take to ensure Iraq has the best possible chance of success. Part of that is a longer term security commitment to Iraq. Another part is the longer term political commitment.

I hope both of you can help us remember the lessons from the past and recommend what steps we should take going forward.

And with that, I would like to thank you again for appearing before the committee and turn to my good friend and ranking member, Ben Cardin.

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

Senator CARDIN. Mr. Chairman, first, thank you for making the effort to visit the region, particularly the countries that you visited that are very important to our campaign against ISIS, and we look forward to you sharing that information with the members of this committee.

During the recess, I had a chance to visit Mexico with Senators Merkley and Markey—we have to put you in different seats—with Markey and Merkley. And we had a chance to see firsthand some of the issues concerning that relationship, so it was, I think, a worthwhile period for us to get some on-the-ground information.

And I thank you for conducting this hearing. We have invested a great deal in Iraq. And as we are sitting here, Iraqi forces and police, Kurdish Peshmerga and Sunni tribal fighters, and an as-

sortment of other fighters have entered the next phase of the Mosul campaign.

Having secured the part of the city east of the Tigris, these forces enabled by U.S. training, weapons, intelligence, combat support, and coalition air campaigns have entered western Mosul, a critical stage in a month-long campaign to push ISIS out of its capital in Iraq.

Secretary Mattis has delivered to the President the plan to defeat ISIS, and I know we are all looking forward to that information being shared with us, so that we are all on the same page as to how we can defeat ISIS.

I must tell you, the Obama administration strategy of working by, with, and through Iraqi and Kurdish partners on the ground in Iraq to defeat ISIS is working, and we all hope that the Trump administration will be able to declare victory in our campaign to defeat ISIS.

We know that, in part, that will be thanks to the work of the previous administration's sound strategy of assembling an international coalition to carry out an air war, standing up significant programs to train and equip local forces, and insisting on accountability and inclusive local leadership.

No military campaign against ISIS will be successful in the long term if U.S. forces do the fighting. Iraqis need to own this fight, and the United States needs to support Iraqis in reclaiming their country and then rebuilding it. This is the only way to prevent the next ISIS.

Moreover, a stable, self-reliant Iraq is the only way to push back on the Iranian interference in Iraq. Iraq cannot become another fertile territory for expansion of Iran's nefarious activities or a land corridor linking Tehran to Damascus to Lebanese Hezbollah.

However, ISIS's pending defeat in Iraq does not mean that the Iraqis or we are prepared for the next phase of the fight. I spoke of my concern last year when we had a hearing and reiterate it again: the risk of a catastrophic success if we declare victory when ISIS is defeated on the battlefield. The war in Iraq will not be over because the underlying causes of instability in Iraq remain.

Communities are shattered. People are traumatized. Displaced people cannot return to cities riddled with ISIS mines and no job prospects, and Iran-backed militias operate with impunity. There is no social contract in Iraq between the government and the people, no trust and no confidence.

The government in Baghdad must demonstrate that it can be a government for all Iraqis regardless of ethnicity, sect, or geography. This means real power-sharing agreements with the Kurdistan regional government, decentralized governance that empowers Iraqi Sunni communities, and a national program of reconciliation, and reform of Iraqi security forces.

If the Iraqi leaders are willing to move in a responsible direction, the United States should be ready to support them.

A real plan to defeat ISIS in Iraq requires the Trump administration to devise, resource, and implement a reasonable, long-term policy for U.S.-Iraq partnership.

But here is the challenge. We heard just yesterday—we got a glimpse of what the Trump budget will look like, and I was ex-

tremely disappointed at least by the reports that the national security budget part and the Secretary of State is being cut. How are we able to be a partner if we are reducing our capacity to help in regards to development assistance and diplomacy?

Also, we hear from the Trump administration inflammatory statements like take Iraq oil, or dangerous statements like Muslim bans, which include Iraq, and are targeted at the very Iraqis that partnered with us to defeat ISIS. We tell them that they are not welcome in our country.

The President's executive order to the Pentagon asked for recommended changes in the rules of engagement. That also could concern the Iraqis, because that, to me, is meaning are we going to make more civilian casualties a price for getting ISIS?

So on one side, we are saying we want to partner with the Iraqis. On the other side, we talk about taking their oil, they are not welcome in our country, and there may be more civilian casualties in the way that we conduct our campaign. That is not a way that I think is conducive to setting up a partnership of trust that becomes critically important for defeating ISIS.

So I look forward to our discussion today with our witnesses as we try to come together, and I hope the last phase of defeating ISIS in Iraq and then working from what we have learned in that campaign to go after ISIS wherever we find them anywhere in the world.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, sir.

We will turn to our outstanding witnesses.

Our first witness is Dr. Michael Knights from the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Thank you so much for being here.

Our second witness is Mr. Hardin Lang from the Center for American Progress.

I thank you both that we would ask you to summarize your comments. Without objection, we will enter your written testimony into the record. If you could take about 5 minutes to summarize, we look forward to questions.

Again, thanks for coming through our security apparatus and taking time to be here today.

And if you would start, Dr. Knights, we would appreciate it.

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL KNIGHTS, PH.D., LAFER FELLOW,
THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE, BOSTON, MA**

Dr. KNIGHTS. Thanks very much, and apologies for near lateness. The security was doing a great job today, especially with suspicious sounding—foreign sounding—

The CHAIRMAN. The accent. I realized what happened, yes.

Dr. KNIGHTS. Yes, exactly.

So, Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, and the distinguished committee members, thank you for inviting me to testify at today's hearing on Mosul and the campaign against ISIS.

I am particularly proud to be appearing before you for the first time as a new American citizen, an immigrant, and an adopted son of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

At heart, we are here today because we know Iraq is important. ISIS knows Iraq is important. It has from the very beginning. Iraq is the center of ISIS's world and will continue to be so.

Iran also knows that Iraq is important. The regime in Tehran, the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism, has an ambitious agenda inside Iraq, seeking to establish Iranian-backed Shia militias as the protectors of the Shia community in Iraq.

We in this room know that Iraq is important as well, and that America's role in Iraq is equally important. Just 2.5 years after we withdrew from Iraq, Mosul fell and ISIS took a third of Iraq, and that is not coincidence.

Now the U.S. is back, and we are some months away from the full clearance of Mosul. But given the dramatic comeback staged by ISIS and its predecessors in Mosul in 2004, in 2007, and in 2014, one can justifiably ask what will stop ISIS or a similar movement from laying low, regenerating, and wiping out the costly gains of the current war? What can we learn from history?

The written testimony provides detailed summary of the findings from my late 2016 report called, "How to Secure Mosul: Lessons from 2008 to 2014," which draws on some of my own research in Mosul back then and work in Ninawa Province since then.

But suffice to say, we know in great detail what went wrong in Mosul and how to rebuild Iraqi security forces and community relations to lessen the risk of ISIS's resurgence. The trick is coaxing and supporting the Iraqi Government to take these right steps under the difficult political circumstances right now and going into the 2018 elections.

I really want to focus on the key takeaway, which is that the mission to destroy ISIS's military and terrorist capabilities in Iraq must continue under a strong U.S. lead and under a multinational framework similar to today's Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve. It could be a NATO-led mission but CJTF-IR is bigger than NATO right now and involves a lot of non-NATO contributions. The U.S. lead is an important part.

So I want to focus on a couple things. Back in the old days when you would be in Iraq, you know, you had Americans and you had some Brits. Now when you go to the coalition command centers, you have the Australians, New Zealanders, Italians, French, British, Germans, Spanish, Canadians all making a very significant contribution. Bringing the world's largest economies and largest security assistance partners together strengthens our hand as we try to get the Iraqi Government to undertake political reconciliation and consensus approaches to security in the liberated areas.

It also ensures a good degree of burden-sharing with our international partners. Some of them can do things we cannot, like the Italians providing their specialist training to the Iraqi federal police, something that we would find difficult to do.

And also, many of these coalition partners are the very states that Iran is depending upon to be its major foreign investors. And to some extent, this makes it more difficult for Tehran and its militia proxies in Iraq to disrupt the involvement of the U.S.-led coalition or to threaten U.S. trainers.

We have all the mechanisms in place to continue security cooperation in Iraq right now: the Combined Joint Special Operations

Task Force, enhanced intelligence coordination, U.S. presence in the major Iraqi headquarters, and a sturdy train and equip effort. But we are about to shift now the mission into what is really the difficult part.

Fighting them as an army was the easy part. Now we are going to pursue the small ISIS cells into the ungoverned spaces of Iraq—mountains, deserts, river deltas, even the refugee camps, prisons, juvenile detention centers, and broken homes. These are the next places where we will be pursuing ISIS, and we need to do that through a rigid program with intelligence support to the Iraqi state, in particular focusing on the organized crime background, fundraising background, of ISIS, because that tends to be how ISIS comes back in places like Mosul, and preventing mass casualty attacks that stoke sectarian tensions in Baghdad.

Likewise, we need to bulk out the security forces because they are just too small right now to cover all the missions, all the borders, all the areas, like the oil-rich hub of Basra, which is currently being slowly taken over by militia control. And we also need to advise them on counterinsurgency, policing, and criminal justice reforms.

So closing with an analogy, the United States in Iraq is like an exhausted man who has pushed a large boulder up a hill and he is nearing the crest. It will be tempting to stop pushing and hope that the boulder's momentum might carry it over the top. But the lesson of 2011 to 2014 is that if we stop pushing, the boulder will grind to a halt and it will roll right back over us.

We have a chance, a very real opportunity, a second chance, a do-over. With the right formula, I think for thrifty U.S. involvement in Iraq, we have a very experienced national security team with masses of hard-won Iraq experience. We have a strong international coalition to share the load with us.

Now what we need to do is what Americans do best: Stick at it and make it work.

As Churchill noted, this is not the end or the beginning of the end, but it might be the end of the beginning. I personally have never had more confidence that the U.S.-led multinational coalition can work with Iraq's moderate leaders and security forces, and I think that our mission to defeat ISIS's military power and prevent its regrowth in Iraq is achievable.

So thank you very much for the opportunity to share some ideas with you today.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Knights follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL KNIGHTS

Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, and the distinguished committee members: Thank you for inviting me to testify at today's hearing on Mosul and the campaign against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). I'm particularly proud to be appearing before you for the first time as a new American citizen, an immigrant and an adopted son of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

At heart, we're here today because Iraq is important.

ISIL has known this all along. Their leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is an Iraqi. Their main base is Iraq and may remain in Iraq in the future. The territory of Iraq is connected to six of the Middle East's major states and represents a keystone that buttresses the region's geography. The population of Iraq includes the largest body of Sunni Arabs in the world living under a Shia-led government. As ISIL degenerates back into a terrorist group unable to hold major towns or cities it will view Iraq as a safe haven and later as fertile ground for a comeback.

Iran also knows that Iraq is important. The regime in the Tehran, the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism, has an ambitious agenda inside Iraq. Tehran seeks to exploit the justifiable fear of ISIL that is felt by Iraqi Shia majority in Iraq. Iran is trying to convince the Iraqi Shia that they are alone in their fight against ISIL, and that only Iranian-backed Shia militias can protect Iraq from ISIL's resurgence in the future.

We in this room know Iraq is important, and that America's role in Iraq is equally important. Just two and a half years after the U.S. military left the country, ISIL took over Mosul and a third of Iraq. ISIL's success and the complete and hasty withdrawal of U.S. military support to Iraq was no coincidence.

Three years ago I was testifying to Congress on the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), something I had been warning about since 2011¹ when the movement rebooted stronger after we killed their leaders the year before.

Back in 2013 it was hard to focus attention on Iraq, and it will be hard to focus attention on Iraq in a year's time, so we need to make smart choices now while we are still keenly focused on the threats to U.S. interests that are present in Iraq. These threats include not only ISIL but also Shia militias groups that parasitically exploit ISIL's presence and which make up part of the Iranian threat network discussed in this committee earlier this month.²

I've been focused on Iraq my whole career. I'm starting to see the cyclical nature of our policies.

We wake up to the nature of an urgent threat that has been allowed to grow unchecked. We make mistakes, then we do the right thing, but then we lose interest. The cycle starts again.

This is very clear in the case of Mosul and fight against ISIL and its forerunners. In early 2017, the Iraqi security forces are likely to liberate Mosul from ISIL control. But given the dramatic comebacks staged by ISIL and its predecessors in the city in 2004, 2007, and 2014, one can justifiably ask what will stop ISIL or a similar movement from lying low, regenerating, and wiping away the costly gains of the current war. What can we learn from history?

STABILIZING MOSUL: LESSONS FROM 2008–2014

In a recent Washington Institute policy paper on Mosul,³ I took a close look at the underexplored issue of security arrangements for the city after its liberation, in particular how security forces should be structured and controlled to prevent an ISIL recurrence. The paper draws on my interviews with Mosul security forces in the pre-2011 period, and extensive travel in Ninawa governorate both before and after ISIL.

Though “big picture” political deals over Mosul's future may ultimately be decisive, the first priority of the Iraqi-international coalition is to secure Mosul in very practical ways.

As John Paul Vann, a U.S. military advisor in Vietnam, noted decades ago: “Security may be ten percent of the problem, or it may be ninety percent, but whichever it is, it's the first ten percent or the first ninety percent. Without security, nothing else we do will last.”⁴

We can learn a lot about the vital next steps in Mosul if we look at two distinct periods of Mosul's recent history.

- Partial success when the U.S. paid close attention. In 2007–2011, the U.S.-backed Iraqi security forces (ISF) achieved significant success, reducing security incidents in the city from a high point of 666 per month in the first quarter of 2008 to an average of 32 incidents in the first quarter of 2011.⁵
- Catastrophic failure when the U.S. turned away. In 2011–2014, the trend reversed, until monthly security incidents had risen to an average of 297 in the first quarter of 2014. Shortly afterwards ISIL seized Mosul and a third of Iraq in June 2014.

DRIVERS OF SUCCESSFUL STABILIZATION IN MOSUL IN 2007–2011

Explanations for both the 2007–11 successes and the failures of 2011–14 are easily identified. In the earlier span, Baghdad committed to Mosul's stabilization and Iraq's prime minister (then Nouri al-Maliki) focused on the issue, authorizing compromises such as partial amnesty and a reopening of security recruitment to former regime officers. Elections produced a provincial council and governor with whom urban Sunni Arab Moslawis, as Mosul residents are known, could identify.

While the U.S. military was embedded in Mosul until 2011, the ISF achieved a basic “unity of command,” and key command positions were allocated to respected officers, including Sunni Arab Moslawis, in part as a result of U.S. urging. Available

government troops in Mosul were increased, including through significant local recruitment of Moslawis from poorer Sunni Arab neighborhoods.

THE ROOTS OF FAILED STABILIZATION IN MOSUL DURING 2011–2014

During the 2011–14 stretch, by contrast, ISIL's victory was assured by chronically deficient unity of effort and unity of command among Iraqi government, Kurdish, and Ninawa factions. Baghdad and the Kurdish-backed Ninawa provincial leaders worked at cross-proposes throughout the 3-year period.

Indeed, the military “command climate” set by Baghdad's politically appointed commanders resulted in security forces conducting operations intended to humiliate and punish the predominately Sunni Arab Moslawis. From the outset of Iraqi prime minister Nouri al-Maliki's second term in 2010, Baghdad tinkered with command and control in Mosul, undoing the reasonably depoliticized security structure that existed until that point. The constant shuffling of commanders destroyed the ISF's remaining cohesion.

A RARE SECOND CHANCE: THE STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY IN MOSUL IN 2017

Given the strategic opportunity posed by the future liberation of Mosul—an opportunity that may not come again—digesting and making use of these lessons is vitally important.

Assuming neither Kurdish Peshmerga nor Shiite militias flood the city, an outcome the coalition seems to have prevented, Moslawis may initially be more open to working with the ISF, following two and a half years under ISIL, than at any point since 2003. But Mosul residents will also be closely watching their liberators for signs of a return to 2014, with its punitive measures, restrictive curfews, and the widespread specter of arrest.

At the political level, Ninawa requires genuine pragmatic governing consensus, not just a shifting series of “enemy of my enemy is my friend” alliances. It is still early in the process but on this front the U.S.-led coalition has made a good start by bringing together Baghdad and the Kurds, plus the Ninawa provincial leadership for general dialogue.

A compact among these factions should consist of simple ground rules for future political conduct. In such an arrangement, the provincial council and any security coordination committee must be a consensus-based decision-making body.

HOW TO STRUCTURE MOSUL SECURITY FORCES

Likewise, the recruitment and management of local government bodies and police should formulaically reflect the pre-ISIL composition of the city's population. Major recruitment of urban locals to the police force, including returning minorities, is a priority.

At the operational level, requirements include stable nonpoliticized command appointments and much stronger unity and coordination among federal Iraqi, Kurdish, and local Ninawa security forces. The Ninawa Operations Command (NiOC), a three-star joint headquarters active since 2008, remains the most appropriate command-and-control architecture, but the concept needs to be implemented much more effectively than in the pre-2014 years.

Just as the U.S.-led coalition has successfully worked since 2014 to encourage Iraqi promotion to high command of talented Counter-Terrorism Service officers, the coalition should now use its influence and advisors to optimize NiOC's leadership and setup.

Such efforts should include the establishment of key coordination bodies on overall security policy, community relations, intelligence sharing, and checkpoint placement. To aid coordination, Iraq should be encouraged to locate NiOC as close as possible to the Ninawa Provincial Council and police headquarters, both in Mosul city.

HOW TO PREVENT ISIL RESURGENCE IN MOSUL

The 2007–2014 period provides clear lessons regarding some of the first steps that Iraq and the coalition should take in Mosul:

- Spread reconstruction and economic aid to poorer urban districts. For more than a decade, the city's reconstruction needs have been unmet, and the coalition should encourage Iraq to target reconstruction in the areas most likely to present havens for ISIL and other militant actors. This means greater focus on the poor Arab neighborhoods at the city's outer northwest, southwest, and southeast edges. These areas were consistently overlooked in the past and ISIL used them as incubators for its previous recoveries, employing an economic “class warfare” approach to recruit the poor.

- Don't overlook rural areas. Moreover, urban security must be linked to stabilization of rural militant "hotspots" like Badush, Ash Shura, and Tal Afar, from which a disproportionate number of ISIL fighters have come. ISIL's takeover of Mosul in 2014 was partly a rural versus urban backlash. This social schism needs to be minimized to deny ISIL space to re-grow.
- Treat ISIL as a major organized crime threat. Iraq needs to help develop strong capabilities in countering organized crime and for local governments in fighting corruption, given that ISIL will first reemerge in Mosul's criminal underbelly, as it did after the decimation of its predecessor, the Islamic State of Iraq, in 2010. The resurgence of ISIL in Mosul will either succeed or fail in the markets, the offices and the government departments where the terrorists will try to threaten, kidnap and kill their way back to prominence.

THE FUTURE ROLE OF THE U.S.-LED COALITION IN MOSUL AND IRAQ

The U.S.-led coalition can play a critical positive role in encouraging Iraq to place good leaders in charge of Ninawa security policies, support those leaders, and build a combined effort to prevent ISIL resurgence.

First, the U.S.-led coalition needs to itself act in a coordinated manner. The current coalition against the Islamic State is far more useful than a unilateral U.S. mission, drawing on key contributors such as Britain, Australia and New Zealand, Italy, France, Germany, Spain, and Canada, to name just a handful.

Such an alliance, including some of the world's largest economies and security-assistance partners, can help amplify diplomatic pressure in stressing the need for consensus approaches to Ninawa in discussions in Mosul, Erbil, Baghdad, Ankara, and even Tehran.

The alliance also ensures the fair burden sharing between the United States and other partners, many of whom are making very substantive efforts to do things that the U.S. cannot easily do (for instance, Italian Carabinieri support to Iraq's Federal Police).

EXTENDING COMBINED JOINT TASK FORCE—OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE

If the mandate of Combined Joint Task Force—Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF—OIR) were extended, the coalition's leverage could be expanded beyond the liberation of Mosul. The coalition should commit the United States to at least three further years of extraordinary security cooperation, subject to review and extension.

The aim would be to provide a bridge for this enhanced security-cooperation relationship into the new Iraqi government in 2018–22.

The message should be clear: the United States will not disengage from this fight after Mosul is liberated. In contrast to the hasty departure in 2009–11, U.S. officials would be committing to an intensified security-cooperation relationship with Iraq through the multinational framework of CJTF—OIR for the mid-term, in order to permanently defeat IS in Iraq.

Such an effort should entail ongoing contribution to a Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force—Iraq (CJSOFT—I), enhanced intelligence cooperation, continued U.S. presence in the Combined Joint Operations Command (CJOC), and a sturdy Build Partner Capacity (BPC) effort.

WHAT THE U.S.-LED COALITION SHOULD DO IN MOSUL

The above steps could greatly increase U.S. and coalition leverage for Ninawa's long-term stabilization. For instance, the coalition could stay directly engaged in the development of Ninawa-based security forces.

If the coalition continues to train and equip Iraqi army forces at the large bases near Baghdad, Taji and Besmaya, then Western governments will be better positioned to ensure Moslawi and Ninawa recruits are brought into the army in appropriate numbers, a key reconciliation metric. Similarly, the Italian Carabinieri training for the Iraqi Federal Police allows monitoring and influence over the development of new locally recruited Federal Police forces for Ninawa.

Specialized training initiatives could not only sustain coalition leverage but also directly assist in Ninawa's stabilization. Examples might include

- special forces and intelligence training for counterterrorism and counter-organized-crime operations;
- development of a "Counterinsurgency Center of Excellence for the Iraqi Army and Federal Police"; and

- development of border security and logistical capacities to support operations in ungoverned spaces far from existing logistical infrastructure, such as the Ninawa-Syria border.

KEEP PAYING ATTENTION TO MOSUL, NINAWA AND IRAQ

The coalition's attention is simultaneously the cheapest and the most important investment that can be made in Mosul. Keeping the Baghdad, Kurdistan Region, and Ninawa leaderships focused on stabilization, and keeping them communicating and coordinating, is the greatest contribution the coalition can make.

Notes

¹In early 2012 I assessed that the resurgence of Al-Qaeda in Iraq/Islamic State of Iraq had been underway since the spring of 2011. See Michael Knights, *Back with a vengeance: Al-Qaeda in Iraq rebounds*, in IHS Defense, Security & Risk Consulting, February 24, 2012.

²Defeating the Iranian Threat Network: Options for Countering Iranian Proxies, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, December 6, 2016.

³Michael Knights, *How to Secure Mosul: Lessons from 2008–2014* (Washington DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2016).

⁴Quoted in Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1988), p. 67.

⁵All incident data is drawn from the author's geolocated Significant Action (SIGACT) data set, which brings together declassified coalition SIGACT data plus private-security-company and open-source SIGACT data used to supplement and extend the data set as coalition incident collection degraded in 2009–11 and disappeared in 2012–14.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Thank you very much for that testimony.

Mr. Lang?

STATEMENT OF HARDIN LANG, SENIOR FELLOW, CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. LANG. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, members of the committee, thank you for the honor and the opportunity to discuss the situation in Iraq today.

Indeed, we stand at an inflection point in our policy in that country. While much of the military task will soon be accomplished, what comes next will be more complex to help the Iraqis recover and reconcile.

As we enter this phase, there are four urgent priorities and two enduring challenges the U.S. will face, and you, sirs, have both touched on many of those in your opening statements.

The first urgent priority is the humanitarian situation. The number of those displaced by the Mosul operation stands roughly at 160,000, far less than many had feared. But over 700,000 civilians remain trapped in areas controlled by ISIS, and the U.N. estimates that a quarter million could flee.

The ISF needs to secure aid distribution and evacuation routes for western Mosul, and donors will need to come up with more assistance. The U.N. is likely to need another \$570 million to cover the next phase of the operation.

The second priority is governance in a liberated Mosul. This was a top concern when I was in northern Iraq with everyone I spoke with last year. Given the large number of Iraqi players involved in Mosul's liberation, some of the clashes along ethno-sectarian lines are probable when the threat of ISIS recedes and various groups began to vie for control. An arrangement is needed to deconflict between these groups and reassure Mosul's population.

One option would be to declare a transitional period and appoint a high-level committee to oversee the administration of Mosul and the surrounding areas. The committee could include representa-

tives from Baghdad and Erbil, and a senior U.S. or coalition diplomat to help broker.

The third priority is stabilization. Coalition diplomats point to the return of displaced persons as a key indicator a liberated area or community has stabilized. But only one-third of those who have fled the fighting have returned home, so we are still looking at over 3 million who remain displaced. In short, stabilization lags dangerously behind the military campaign.

To date, the U.N. has led on stabilization. And while its efforts have been commendable, the counter-ISIS coalition should bolster its role, and the U.S. could deploy additional civilian contingency assets to support the U.N. effort.

The fourth priority is to reach an agreement with Iraqis about the residual U.S. or coalition military mission. The U.S. has more than 5,000 troops in Iraq. With their support, Iraqi and Kurdish forces have made impressive gains against ISIS, but these forces will need help to protect these gains for some time to come.

The follow-on mission should continue to train and equip our partners, and should maintain a presence in both Anbar and Ninewa to reassure the Sunni Arab communities that they will not be abandoned.

Unfortunately, Iraqi leaders are already under pressure to reduce the U.S. presence. At the moment, we still retain a tremendous amount of leverage inside of Iraq because of our military contribution, and we need to start talking to the Iraqis now about what comes next while we retain that leverage.

Looking beyond the immediate, a central challenge, an enduring challenge, will remain national reconciliation. Sunni Arab communities must be offered a tangible stake in the future of Iraq. To date, the U.S. strategy has been to nurture reconciliation through support for devolution of authority, recruitment of Sunni Arabs into the security forces, and legislation like the amnesty law that passed last August.

The U.S. should also encourage local attempts at reconciliation. Only 3 percent of donor money for stabilization has actually been spent on reconciliation initiatives, so there is clearly room to grow.

For their part, the Kurds have been amongst the most steadfast and effective partners against ISIS, and they will want to be compensated for their sacrifice at a time that aspirations for independence are running high.

A second enduring challenge is something that everyone has touched on so far, and that would be the Shia militia. Estimates of total Shia militia in Iraq vary from 100,000 to 120,000 forces at this stage. Most are organized under the banner of the Popular Mobilization Front and many are backed by Iran.

The Iraqi Government has passed legislation making the PMF an official component of the Iraq security forces, but the implementation process remains unclear. One option includes turning the PMF into a reservist force. Another is to fully integrate them into the ISF.

Now the U.S. could support either of these options for units that are not directly backed by Iran, but those that are backed by Iran will continue to pose a significant challenge, and we must be able to balance against them.

In conclusion, I believe that the United States maintains a significant interest in the future of Iran. The U.S. has spent over \$10 billion to fight ISIS in Iraq and Syria, and our goal should be to protect that investment and prevent the reemergence of a similar terrorist threat.

We should also seek to balance Iran's influence inside Iraq by bolstering Iraqi sovereignty. None of this requires the U.S. to nation-build, but we need to maintain a pathway for sustainable engagement.

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

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lang follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HARDIN LANG

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, Members of the Committee, thank you for the honor and the opportunity to discuss the situation in Iraq. The battle to retake the country from ISIS is one of the most dynamic foreign policy challenges confronting the new administration. Iraqi and coalition forces have already liberated most of their country and are now engaged in a fierce fight to recapture the western half of Mosul.

But major questions remain regarding what comes next. Indeed, we stand at an inflection point in our policy on Iraq. Much of the military task will soon be accomplished. The next phase will be more complicated—to help Iraqis recover, reconcile and seek solutions to what at its root has always been a political problem. As we enter this phase, I want to touch on four urgent priorities and two enduring challenges the U.S. will now face in Iraq.

The four urgent priorities are:

- 1) The humanitarian situation
- 2) Post-liberation governance of Mosul
- 3) Stabilization in liberated communities
- 4) Negotiating a follow-on military mission

The two enduring challenges include:

- 1) National reconciliation
- 2) The future of Shia militia in Iraq

WHY IRAQ MATTERS

First, let me be clear on one point. My remarks are premised on the assumption that the United States maintains a significant interest in the future of Iraq—one that merits continuing U.S. leadership and investment. As of last year, the U.S. had spent over \$10 billion to combat the ISIS in Iraq and Syria and deployed over 5,000 troops in Iraq alone to support that effort.¹ We made this investment because of the terrorist threat posed by ISIS to the United States and our allies. Once ISIS has been defeated militarily, a key objective should be to foster the degree of stability in Iraq necessary to prevent the reemergence of similar transnational terrorist threats. In this case, an ounce of prevention truly is worth a pound of cure.

A second U.S. objective in Iraq should be to balance Iranian influence. The 2003 invasion of Iraq ended the U.S. policy of dual containment of Iraq and Iran. It is not possible to return to the status quo ante. Iran will maintain significant sway inside Iraq for the foreseeable future, however, we can take steps to reinforce Iraqi sovereignty and independence and minimize the opportunity for Iraq to disintegrate or serve as a proxy in the regional competition for power. Working with long-standing partners in the Middle East to ensure that we are developing regional support for efforts to reinforce Iraq's sovereignty is vital for long-term U.S. interests.

None of this requires the U.S. to nation build or reconstruct Iraq, but it does mean that we should be prepared to protect the significant investment of the last two years through a continued military presence and targeted civilian assistance. We should share this burden by leveraging the resources of extensive membership of the counter-ISIS coalition and our partners in the region. This will only be possible if the U.S. remains engaged and willing to lead.

FOUR URGENT PRIORITIES

1) The humanitarian situation: While the number of those displaced by the Mosul operation has not been as high as many feared, the humanitarian situation remains serious. To date, roughly 160,000 civilians have been displaced due to fighting to retake the eastern half of Mosul and surrounding villages. Some 700,000–750,000 civilians remain trapped in areas still controlled by IS. The U.N. estimates that as many as 250,000 people could flee escalating fighting in the west of the city.²

Two weeks ago, U.N. relief operations were temporarily paused to the liberated eastern half of Mosul because of a deterioration in the security situation. Significant shortages of drinking water remain a primary humanitarian concern in eastern Mosul. The U.N. has also announced that food, fuel, and other humanitarian supplies are unable to reach western Mosul and ongoing military operations have closed off possible access points for aid.

More needs to be done to address the immediate humanitarian needs of those impacted by the fighting. First, the Iraqi Security Forces need to secure the distribution of aid in and provide evacuation routes from western Mosul as the offensive continues.³ Second, international coalition partners and other donors will need to increase their humanitarian assistance. The good news is that 97 percent of the July 2016 Mosul Flash Appeal has been funded. But the U.N. estimates it will need another \$570 million for the next phases of the Mosul operation.⁴

2) Post-liberation governance of Mosul: Perhaps the biggest challenge facing a liberated Mosul will be governance. The plan to restore governance is to be led by the current Ninewa governor in exile. This mirrors the process in other liberated cities, but he is not from Mosul and has no indigenous powerbase. Former governor Najafi remains a controversial and possibly disruptive figure. The Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government have discussed post-liberation arrangements at length, but have not yet reached a shared understanding, and Turkey's presence has complicated the situation. The lack of an agreed plan creates incentives for those fighting to create facts on the ground from whence they can negotiate on the day after.

The key will be to find an arrangement that gives the people of Mosul confidence, restores the relationship with the government in Baghdad and reassures the KRG that Kurdish equities will be protected. One option would be for the Iraqi government to announce a political transitional period lasting up to 18 months once combat operations have ceased. A high-level committee could then be established to support the governor and help oversee the administration of Mosul and surrounding areas during this period. That committee could include representatives from Baghdad and Erbil. A senior U.S. official—probably of Ambassadorial rank—should support the committee and help serve as a broker.

3) Stabilization in liberated communities: ISIS has left much of Iraq in ruins. Iraqis returning home have found their communities destroyed. The Iraqi government is overwhelmed by the task of rebuilding in areas already liberated from ISIS. As Special Envoy Brett McGurk stated last year, “Stabilizing areas after [ISIS] can be even more important than clearing areas from [ISIS].”⁵ He's right: After the fighting stops, there will be a crucial window to begin humanitarian aid and establish some basic services and governance. Failure to do so risks squandering battlefield sacrifices.

Coalition diplomats often point to the return of displaced people as the metric of success for stabilization. The total number of people displaced by the ISIS crisis grew to 3.3 million people in 2016 and now hovers at just over three million. While ISIS has lost over half its territory in Iraq, only one-third of those who fled their homes appear to have returned. This suggests that efforts to stabilize liberated areas lag dangerously behind the military campaign. To date, the U.N. has led on stabilization, and while its efforts have been commendable, the counter-ISIS coalition should bolster its role in this line of effort.

The first step would be for counter-ISIS coalition to strengthen its leadership for stabilization efforts. Currently, the coalition working group in charge of stabilization has few responsibilities beyond information sharing. One option would be to appoint a Baghdad-based coalition ambassador to serve as the civilian lead for stabilization on the ground. A coalition civilian lead could help integrate stabilization into coalition military campaign plans to ensure that there is a plan for the day after liberation.

Second, the United States should lead by example in supporting stabilization. The administration should deploy civilian contingency assets like the State Department's Bureau for Conflict and Stabilization and USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) to support U.N. efforts. OTI, in particular, has extensive experience working next to the military and through local authorities in conflict zones.

4) Negotiating a follow-on military mission: Finally, the single most pressing decision will be whether to keep U.S. soldiers in the country for a follow-on mission. The U.S. military presence in Iraq has expanded incrementally since mid-2014, and now includes more than 5,000 personnel at three air bases in Anbar and Ninewa and two Joint Operations Centers in Baghdad and Erbil.⁶ The overall mission has also expanded to include close air support, fire support, logistical assistance, high-value targeting, and embedded U.S. forces behind the frontlines.

But even after Mosul has been liberated, Iraq will still require U.S. support to ensure enduring security. With help from the American-led anti-ISIS coalition, the Iraqi security forces have made impressive gains against ISIS after suffering a breathtaking collapse in mid-2014. But Iraqi forces will need help to protect both their battlefield and organizational gains for some time to come. Unfortunately, negotiations over a U.S. follow-on force will take place at a time of declining American leverage. Iraqi leaders are already under pressure to reduce the U.S. military footprint. Prime Minister Al-Abadi has signaled his intent to do so immediately after the liberation of Mosul, so we need to start talking to the Iraqis now about the future of a U.S. military presence.

A follow-on mission should continue to train and equip our partners—especially the Counter Terrorism Service. But the final troop number must carefully balance military requirements against political realities in Baghdad. Insistence on a large force with a broad mandate and expansive rules of engagement could trigger Iraqi political backlash. A force somewhere between 3,000 to 5,000 troops should be sufficient. The key will be to maintain the U.S. footprint in both Anbar and Ninewa to reassure Sunni Arab communities that they will not once again be abandoned. The timeline for agreement is short: Iraq's 2018 elections could produce a prime minister less willing to cooperate with Washington.

TWO ENDURING CHALLENGES

1) National reconciliation: Over the long term, the key to lasting victory over the Islamic State and stability in Iraq will be national reconciliation. We have learned the hard way that American troops cannot provide long-term stability if Iraqi leaders cannot heal their divided politics. Sunni Arab communities must be offered a tangible stake in the future of the country. To date the U.S. strategy has been to nurture reconciliation through support for the devolution of authority to local government, the mobilization of Sunni Arabs into the security force, and legislation like the amnesty law that passed last August.⁷

Ultimate success or failure for reconciliation will rest with Iraqis. Outside actors like the United States should approach such efforts with humility and measured expectations. And yet the fact that these non-military dimensions are so vital to Iraq's future security and the fight against ISIS means that much more must be done.

First, the administration should consider additional resources to accelerate government decentralization.⁸ Second, it should also accelerate efforts to recruit Sunni Arabs into the security forces through the U.S. Department of Defense's Iraq Train and Equip Fund. Finally, the embassy in Baghdad should encourage recent local attempts at reconciliation. Two Shia leaders and a Sunni Arab political bloc have launched competing reconciliation initiatives. If these efforts are genuine, the United States should be prepared to nurture them where possible through increased diplomatic engagement and presence in Iraq.

For their part, the Kurds have been amongst the most steadfast and effective partners against ISIS. They will want to be rewarded at a time that aspirations for independence are running high. While this ultimate Kurdish objective does not appear realistic at this time, there needs to be a channel of communication with the KRG to discuss how they can be compensated for their sacrifice.

2) The future of Shia militia in Iraq: One of the biggest threats to reconciliation remains sectarian Shia militias. Estimates of the total Shiite militiamen in Iraq vary widely from 100,000–120,000—mostly organized under the banner of the Popular Mobilization Front (PMFs). Roughly half of the PMF units were formed out of pre-existing Iraqi militias, while the rest are new formations mobilized in response to Grand Ayatollah Sistani's 2014 fatwa.⁹ A large proportion receives direct Iranian backing. Many of the Iranian-backed militia were responsible for killing some 500 U.S. troops from 2003–2011.¹⁰

U.S. policy towards the PMF has evolved. In 2014, U.S. refused to provide them military support, but since mid-2015, American policy has evolved to include air and other support for those PMF units not beholden to Iran.¹¹ On November 26, the Iraqi government passed legislation making the PMF an official component of Iraq's security forces with equal status to the army,¹² but there has been little movement by the Iraqi government to implement the November legislation. Iraq's president

has indicated that there are several possible options including turning the PMF into a reservist force, or full integration into the existing structure of the Iraqi armed forces.

However, PMF leaders exercise considerable political influence inside Iraq. There is a very real risk that the PMF could take root as a Hezbollah-style Iranian proxy. Such a development would threaten Iraqi sovereignty and undercut attempts at national reconciliation. There are no easy solutions to managing the threat posed by Iranian-backed PMF units, but the U.S. could play a constructive role in facilitating the demobilization or integration of the remaining PMF units into the ISF.

Notes

¹“The Islamic State and U.S. Policy”, Christopher M. Blanchard and Carla E. Humud Congressional Research Service February 2, 2017.

²International Organization for Migration, “IOM Iraq: Displacement Tracking Matric Counts 133,302 Displaced from Mosul Operations,” January 6, 2017.

³Emily Anagnostos, “The Campaign for Mosul: February 1–21, 2017,” Institute for the Study of War.

⁴OCHA Iraq, “Iraq: Mosul Humanitarian Response,” February 17, 2017.

⁵Brett H. McGurk, “Global Efforts to Defeat ISIS,” Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, June 28, 2016.

⁶Nancy Youssef, “U.S. Pushes for More Bases to Fight ISIS in Iraq,” The Daily Beast, April 7, 2016.

⁷The White House, “Joint Statement by the United States of American and the Republic of Iraq,” Press release, April 14, 2015.

⁸USAID Iraq, “The Path to Stability and Security: A Lesson in Decentralization, Cooperation, and Coordination From North Babil.”

⁹Jack Watling, “The Shia Militias of Iraq,” The Atlantic, December 22, 2016.

¹⁰Kenneth Katzman, “Iran’s Foreign and Defense Politics,” Congressional Research Service, February 6, 2017.

¹¹Kenneth Katzman, “Iran’s Foreign and Defense Politics.”

¹²Asharq al-Awsat, “Iraq Parliament Passes a Law Legalizing PMF,” November 27, 2016.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you both.

Just based on the people you talk with, you get no sense that there is not a longer term commitment, do you?

Every U.S. official I am talking to understands what you just said about the fact that we have to be there for some time. You get no sense of that from any one you talk with, do you, to the contrary?

Mr. LANG. No, sir. I guess the question is the need to actually sequence and start the negotiations as soon as possible while we are still at this moment of high-level leverage.

The CHAIRMAN. I think they understand what needs to be left behind. I think those conversations are underway, and I get no sense, just for what it is worth, that there is anyone who wishes to have another 2011 type activity.

I would just like to ask, are you all getting any different signals from anyone?

Dr. KNIGHTS. So it is true that there is a new understanding and willingness to continue the mission, including with the coalition partners as well as U.S.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, no question.

So let me ask you this. The Kurds are obviously moving toward independence. We spent a great deal of time with them. I know they are not quite as strident with their conversations with Abadi, but they are very strident when it comes to us here and certainly very strident in Kurdistan.

Give us a sense of the impact of that, should they move to further cause themselves to be independent from Baghdad.

Dr. KNIGHTS. So at the moment, the discussion in Kurdistan around independence I think has a very economic flavor. There is

an understanding that, if relations with Baghdad break down, the Kurds would lose access to a number of economic aid supports.

They would also potentially have more complicated access to international security assistance and that they might well face greater legal challenges exporting their oil.

I do not detect inside the Kurdish leadership a near-term ambition to push quickly for independence, nor to negotiate a kind of amicable divorce over a period of 5 to 10 years with the Baghdad government.

The CHAIRMAN. Do you want to say anything to that?

Mr. LANG. No, I would only add that, at the moment, when one spends time in Kurdistan, you get the feeling that there is a tremendous amount of internal housecleaning that needs to be done. There is a lot of political friction and difficulties between the different Kurdish parties, and much of the economic state-building program in Kurdistan is on hold.

So in terms of Kurdistan becoming a viable state any time in the immediate future, again, there seems to be a separation between the rhetoric that we hear from the Kurds and then the closed-door conversations about what they really think is in the realm of the possible.

The CHAIRMAN. I think the fact that they would have to ship their oil through Turkey and could very well become a sub-state of Turkey, if they are not careful, obviously causes concern. And so to have a nonamicable relationship with Iraq would be very much not in their interests.

Let me ask you, the PMF, one of you mentioned those that are aligned with Iran certainly should not be a part—look, most of them are aligned with Iran, so, I mean, there is a law that has been passed relative to the Popular Mobilization Forces. It looks like they are going to be a part of the security infrastructure there. They are very much aligned with Iran, most of them. There are a few that are not, as you alluded to, Mr. Lang.

But I mean, this is a fact of life there. I am just wondering, I do not see this not being a fact of life. Are you guys sensing there is some different outcome that may occur with the PMF other than them being part of the security infrastructure there?

Mr. LANG. I think the real danger at this stage would be if you see the PMF or elements of the PMF, particularly the three or four large ones that are backed directly by Iran, to the extent to which they remain outside of the ISF, and I think that there probably is a degree of intention inside of them to do so, that becomes a danger point.

And then for us, it is the nature of the investment that we make in Iraqi security forces going forward to serve as a balance against that that becomes crucial.

Dr. KNIGHTS. And I would add that the PMF are very splintered. They are very difficult to consolidate under one electoral banner or under one command and control arrangement.

So splintering them down into their irreconcilable elements, like Katai'b Hezbollah or Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, versus other elements related to the shrine militias, and even Badr—there is always the potential that a group like Badr, which is the largest PMF entity,

could be mainstreamed over time and could be broken down into subcomponents with a clever policy.

Also anywhere where the Iraqi security forces are present, they are able to effectively counterbalance the PMF presence. In a place like Basra, for instance, where there have been no major Iraqi army units since 2013, we have seen true break down and true militia control.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Cardin?

Senator CARDIN. I want to thank both of our witnesses.

There is no question that we have made a great investment in Iraq, and it is in our national security interests to make sure that Iraq becomes a stable country and does not become an Iranian client state, which is one of the fears I think many of us have.

We do not want to see the type of collapse we saw in the Iraqi security forces that we saw in 2014. So it does require the attention of the United States and our coalition partners in order to give Iraq a chance for a national government to represent all of its people and a security force that can maintain the security in the region.

So I want to point out a couple challenges we have and then see what you think we should be doing.

One challenge is whether we will get Iraqi cooperation on the maintaining of our troops or our military presence in their country. There are political considerations here.

When the President's executive order named Iraq as one of the countries where we would not accept refugees, that makes it difficult for the Iraqi Government to work with the United States on the continued military presence. Or when statements are made about taking Iraqi oil, that certainly is not conducive to the type of political support that we need from the Iraqi Government.

I might also add the January 28th executive order that is reviewing the rules of engagement, because it is clear that as you change the rules of engagement, the chances of more civilian casualties become greater, which again raises the risk factors of the ability of the Iraqi Government to cooperate with our coalition partners.

So I put that out there as challenge one, and whether we are moving in a direction that is going to make it impossible or difficult for us to get the type of cooperation from the Iraqis for a continued presence.

And secondly, the trust factor, we spend a lot of money on military. That seems safe under the Trump proposed budget that we will see soon. But the other side of that coin is how do we help them rebuild their nation? How do we help them get an economy that is moving for all of its people? How do we deal with governance support from the point of view of our development assistance, whereas we now see budgets that are being suggested by this administration that could have deep cuts in that aspect of our national security?

So with those two challenges, how do you see us dealing with this challenge so that we can, in fact, be a partner to Iraq?

Mr. Lang, if you would start? Or, Dr. Knights? Whoever wants to start.

Mr. LANG. On the question of Iraq cooperation, I mean this really is the fundamental issue in terms of maintaining a residual force for a follow-on mission.

And you raised the issue of the executive order and the ban on seven countries. The Iraqi Parliament responded to that and pushed quite hard for a similar ban inside of Iraq on Americans, and it put Prime Minister Abadi in a very difficult position where he was forced to sort of override the Parliament and to not action that piece of legislation.

Prime Minister Abadi is already in a reasonably weak position, and the last thing that we need to do is to sort of fan the flames of anti-American sentiment inside of Iraq, particularly for those political forces that are backed by Iran and that would like to see us leave.

So I could not agree more that those kind of statements have been deeply unhelpful, not just from a political sense, but also morale. There was one point where the sort of commander of the counterterrorism service, which is one of our most valuable partners inside Iraq, his family is living in the United States. And when the order came down, it was unclear to him whether he would even be able to come back to visit.

So these sorts of things probably they do more harm than good, in terms of our negotiations going forward.

On the trust factor for rebuilding, yes, at this stage, we are at an inflection point. There are going to be some critical issues, particularly short-term stabilization, that are going to need work to follow-on and lock in some military gains. Those are activities that should fall to civilians. There are key offices like the Office of Transition Initiatives in USAID or CSO in the State Department that do this kind of stuff.

There is about \$2 billion pledged to do some of this work over the last summer, but it hasn't as of yet made its way into a pipeline to actually impact on the ground. And it is hard to see that, if we are not there to lead with economic assistance going forward, how we are going to be able to rally the rest of the coalition to do the same.

Senator CARDIN. Dr. Knights?

Dr. KNIGHTS. So very quickly, it is clear that we must have no more self-inflicted wounds when it comes to Iraq. We need to leave no opening for the Iranian-backed movement to cut us out.

But it is also clear, the fact that we survived this January problem shows our value to the Iraqis.

If we are going to continue our presence and our mission there in Iraq, we need to stress the continuity of the mission—not a new mission, not a new mandate, not a new agreement, the same one that we are operating on right now. If we create even an inch of daylight between us and the Iraqis, we will get thrown out again. We need to maintain and stress the continuity of the mission.

And one of the things that Prime Minister Abadi has learned, I think, over the last couple years is it is much easier to do things informally than formally in Iraq. So anything that we can do to keep it quiet is good.

In terms of rules of engagement, I maybe would push back a little bit. There is a difference between prompt civilian casualties that happen because you drop a bomb on them by accident and a very large number of civilian casualties that often happen if you let

a battle drag on for months rather than weeks. A place like Ramadi is a great example of that.

I think, in many ways, by loosening the rules of engagement slightly, you might well save more lives in the long term. And I think we have definitely seen that since 2014.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Johnson?

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I just want to do some rough numbers. I do not need anything specific.

But you talked about in your testimony, Mr. Lang, the PMF force is somewhere between 100,000 and 120,000. What is the size of the Iraqi security force? Similar? Just rough numbers.

Dr. KNIGHTS. No, the Iraqi security forces would be far larger than that when you add them all together, maybe around 530,000.

Senator JOHNSON. 530,000. How many are engaged in the battle of Mosul right now?

Dr. KNIGHTS. So the battle of Mosul should be around 70,000.

Senator JOHNSON. Okay. We have about 5,000 U.S. troops.

Dr. Knights, you were talking about what a really expanded, committed coalition we have. How many troops do we have of our committed coalition partners?

Dr. KNIGHTS. I do not have an exact figure on that.

Senator JOHNSON. A couple thousand?

Dr. KNIGHTS. Yes, it would be a couple thousand. It would probably be slightly smaller than the U.S. when you added everything together.

Senator JOHNSON. The committed coalition is probably under 10,000.

Dr. KNIGHTS. Yes, absolutely.

Senator JOHNSON. What do we have in terms of the number of Peshmerga involved or available?

Dr. KNIGHTS. "Involved" is a difficult concept because they are running the entire frontline between the Syrian border and the Iranian border. But in terms of being involved in active combat operations, it is almost zero right now.

Senator JOHNSON. Okay. So how many are involved right now, in terms of holding the line, then?

Dr. KNIGHTS. There is probably say about 200,000 Peshmerga on the frontline.

Senator JOHNSON. Okay. And ISIS, what are the current estimates of their fighting force now?

Dr. KNIGHTS. It is only ever a guess, but maybe under 8,000 up in the Mosul area.

Senator JOHNSON. Okay. So we literally have hundreds of thousands massed against about 8,000, so we should be able to win that battle.

So then we do talk about the residual force. Going back to 2011, which I think is still just a blunder of historic proportions, bugging out of there, the talk was leaving somewhere around 20,000 troops.

In hindsight, would that have stabilized the situation? Would that have been enough U.S. troops to help stabilize—again, look, you both are testifying that Iraq is incredibly important for the region. It is surrounded by all these countries. Stabilizing Iraq, leav-

ing a stabilizing force, I do not think things would have spun out of control.

So would that have been enough to stabilize that situation?

Dr. KNIGHTS. I think it would have done, because ultimately, when you look at the kind of impact that a small number of advisers are having right now in a number of key headquarters, we can have a pretty transformative effect with a fairly small number of people put in the right place.

And basically, ISIS taking Mosul was a fluke. ISIS taking a third of Iraq was a fluke. They thought they were just going to do a prison breakout. They ended up accidentally taking over a third of Iraq.

You know, that rottenness might not have been as extreme within the Iraqi security forces if we had a residual mission.

Senator JOHNSON. So is our residual mission more of a challenge today than it would have been in 2011? Or because we have the committed coalition, we have the Peshmerga, in many respects we have a common enemy in ISIS right now, is it going to be easier to have a residual force?

Dr. KNIGHTS. I think we have some factors playing to our advantage. The Sunni community in Iraq I think is seeing exactly how bad ISIS is and there is not a lot of sympathy left for them.

I think, likewise, we have created a breakpoint between the 2003 to 2011 experience, invasion, occupation, et cetera, and this new mission of helping the Iraqi security forces against the common enemy of pretty much all Iraqis.

So I think we are in a slightly better position now, and particularly having the international coalition there, all those nations, whereas before it basically was just U.S., U.K., and a couple small countries.

Senator JOHNSON. Have Iraqis understood and also learned the lesson as well, that if they do not come up with an agreement, if we do not have a stabilizing force and committed coalition, things are going to just fall apart again? Or do they think they built up there, the Iraqi security forces are going to be able to take care of this without a committed coalition of the West?

Mr. LANG. Senator, just to break down a couple points there, my sense of this would be that within the Iraqi security forces and in certain members of the national security establishment inside of Iraq, and also the Peshmerga, clearly, there is an understanding and an appetite for the U.S. to remain.

The question is, as that question moves into the political realm and into the political crisis in Baghdad, where Prime Minister Abadi is sort of straddling these—

Senator JOHNSON. Okay. I have limited time.

What do you think is the estimated size of a residual force of U.S. troops to stabilize that situation? Do you think 5,000 is going to do it? Ten thousand total coalition partners?

Dr. KNIGHTS. I would say around 5,000 with an equal number of coalition partners could have a very significant effect and could be sustainable.

Senator JOHNSON. And then, finally, when we talk about development and potential U.S. foreign aid, the oil is flowing in Iraq now,

correct? What percentage of the oil fields are open and producing revenue that ought to pay for that redevelopment itself?

Dr. KNIGHTS. Pretty much all of them. You know, there are a few very small ones that were under ISIS that are still damaged, but pretty much everything else is operating. And the Iraqis are now bringing in about \$5 billion a month, which allows them to meet their operating budget and their payroll.

Senator JOHNSON. So maybe they can even fund the stabilizing forces as well? They have revenue coming in. This is not a failed economy anymore. They stabilized what is their primary economic resource: oil. And the first goal of stabilization is to make sure that oil stays flowing.

Dr. KNIGHTS. And that is why we have to build up the security forces again, so they can protect things like Basra, the one and only main oil exporting hub for federal Iraq.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Menendez?

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I appreciate our witnesses. Let me just make a prefatory remark that while these hearings of private citizens who come from very distinguished backgrounds and think tanks are important and illuminating, I hope that sometime soon the administration will nominate individuals that the committee can consider, so we can actually get people from the State Department to speak to what some of our strategy and plans moving forward are, because, in the absence of that, it is very difficult to think about how one formulates policy here.

So I hope that that will happen soon.

Moving back to Iraq, let me just say that President Trump inherited a campaign that has made some significant gains to oust ISIS from its strongholds. And while we may, indeed, be on the verge of some major military successes to liberate cities and people from ISIS's brutal stranglehold, lasting peace and stability can be far more elusive.

And while the President has previously claimed to know more about ISIS than the generals, the Pentagon's view in its new plan requested by the President indicate there is a lot of work to be done.

Now both of you have indicated this work requires significant attention, resources, and commitment from Iraqis, the United States Government, and coalition partners. I think everyone on this committee, and I think you, would recognize the importance of leadership and critical decision-making.

We have yet to see anyone nominated for critical positions at the State Department, including a Deputy Secretary. The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs currently has an Acting Assistant Secretary and no principal Deputy Assistant Secretary.

With these critical positions vacant, there has been no policy guidance for dedicated, nonpartisan civil servants and Foreign Service Officers to execute.

Equally if not more troubling, the administration is reportedly weighing devastating cuts to the foreign assistance budget, which

would include cuts to Iraqi programs, including police training, judicial reform, education, economic development programs that make the Iraqi population more stable and resilient to ISIS's warped ideology.

With the recent announcement of the Principals Committee reviewing the Defense Department's revised ISIS strategy, it looks alarmingly like the State Department, our agency tasked with leading diplomacy and policymaking, is being undermined and sidelined.

So my question is, what impact does that have on our ability to execute plans successfully in Iraq? Will significant cuts to the State Department and USAID undermine efforts to promote long-term stability in Iraq? And I invite either one of you to speak to that.

Mr. LANG. Last year, in my last trip to Iraq, and then also again going down to CENTCOM and speaking to folks, one of the things that was quite notable was the extent to which the campaign, the military campaign, the way in which it was being conceived, stopped at the kinetics. So the rest of it, the stabilization, the development, the key pieces that need to come next to sort of lock in what the military is doing, is just not a set of issues that the military was prepared to deal with or function on.

And there was very little sort of connectivity back through the State Department. They had to go all the way up the chain of command and down to start having that conversation.

In much of my testimony, one of the things we were talking about recommending was, in essence, a little bit of a diplomatic surge into Iraq. We are probably going to need some additional people of ambassadorial rank to sort of serve in key positions to help manage some of these problems going forward.

And the idea that the State Department does not have the kind of budget that is required to do this, we are looking at budget cuts where we might not have the staff to help execute this, may explain why some of these elements of engagement along civilian lines of effort have taken some time to kick in, probably too long at this stage.

Senator MENENDEZ. Dr. Knights, are you interested in—

Dr. KNIGHTS. Well, I am not the expert on this, but we should only focus on the State Department civilian lines of effort if we are going to be able to do them right. And from having been in Iraq a long time, if you cannot get out of the Embassy, if you cannot move, if you cannot meet people, it is a waste of time anyway.

So in some ways, if we are going to do the diplomatic surge, it has to include accepting risk. It has to include perhaps reestablishing out-stations in places like Hilla, where we killed off our little sort of consulate there back during the withdrawal days. And it left us with gaps all over the country by pulling these things in Kirkuk and Hilla and other places back.

So if we are going to do a civilian surge, we need to really do it seriously because there is no in between. It is either an ineffective mission that costs a lot of money, or it is an effective mission that is going to cost a lot of money and require risk. Try to do the in between, and you get nothing.

Senator MENENDEZ. I cannot imagine, at the end of the day, doing all of the military elements necessary and then what you

need to do to hold ground, to continue to create the authority over those jurisdictions that you have reacquired, and not to have the civilian entity that is necessary for the follow-on of governance in those areas that can hopefully lead to a better day.

In the absence of that, we are just talking about a perpetual engagement in Iraq that seems to me has no follow-on. So I understand what you are saying about safety and security in order to be able to do it. But at the end of the day, if we do not provide the wherewithal for that to happen, I cannot imagine us doing anything but having troops on the ground for a very long period of time.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Young?

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Chairman.

Thank you for your testimony, gentlemen.

The title of today's hearing, "Iraq After Mosul," we need to develop a strong plan. We have to properly resource that plan.

Mr. Lang, you hit on two prongs, the two most obvious prongs of proper resourcing—we need money, sufficient financial resources. We also need personnel, so we need to nominate appropriate personnel. And then we need to expeditiously consider those nominations and move them through the hearings.

I find it ironic that anyone would criticize this administration for not putting forward people to properly staff up the State Department yet we continuously delay consideration of some of these nominees.

To his credit, President Trump signed a presidential memorandum on January 28th directing the development of a comprehensive plan to defeat ISIS. Defense Secretary Mattis reportedly briefed top Trump administration officials yesterday on that plan. You know, I trust Secretary Mattis and his military counsel.

However, we know that a sound military plan is not enough. Just yesterday, the leaders in the House and the Senate received a letter you no doubt are familiar with from over 120 general and flag officers indicating that we have to elevate and strengthen our diplomacy and development efforts if, in fact, we are going to keep America safe and secure.

I will quote from that letter. "The military will lead the fight against terrorism in the battlefield, but it needs strong civilian partners in the battle against drivers of extremism—lack of opportunity, insecurity, injustice, and hopelessness."

So in short, a strategy that fails to address the political, economic, and ideological conditions that are really sort of root causes of so much of this conflict is a shortsighted strategy. It is one that will not be successful in the long term.

Do you both agree with that assessment? Yes or no? You can elaborate very briefly, if you would like.

Mr. LANG. Yes, I would agree.

Dr. KNIGHTS. I think you have to have security first and then you do the rest. Without security, you have nothing. You have no basis to work off.

I think the best that the U.S.—the thing they are best at is security cooperation. That is what the Iraqis value the most. That is what gives us the most punch and value there.

So even though I do believe we do need to put nonmilitary aid into Iraq, I do not think we are good at it. And unless we get good at it, that should not be our main focus.

Senator YOUNG. Which is a fantastic point, and all the more reason that this committee needs to continue to work on reforming our efforts in a bipartisan way over at the State Department. I know we have dealt with human trafficking, rights of women and girls, trade and energy in Africa, made numerous strides, but there is much more to be done. I think everyone recognizes that on this committee.

Would you both agree that promoting effective and representative governance in Iraq is an essential element of a strategy for the sustainable defeat of ISIS? Yes or no is fine.

Mr. LANG. Of course.

Dr. KNIGHTS. Yes, but it is more important to have representative local security forces than to have some kind of perfect local or national system of government. Iraqis want security above anything else. We can handle other stuff down the line.

Senator YOUNG. You acknowledge we are not seeking perfection. We are seeking to manage a very difficult situation right now.

And would you both agreed that disrupting the flow of foreign fighters outside of Iraq and Syria, providing humanitarian relief, working with regional partners to disrupt ISIS's finances and exposing ISIS's true nature are all important elements of a successful strategy with the due understanding that there could well be other important components as well?

Dr. KNIGHTS. Yes.

Senator YOUNG. Okay.

Mr. LANG. And these are elements that will take on increased importance as the sort of major military aspects of the campaign in Iraq and then hopefully in Syria begin to wind down.

Senator YOUNG. And you no doubt agree that the plan should address public diplomacy, information ops, cyber strategies to isolate and delegitimize ISIS and its radical Islamist ideology.

Dr. KNIGHTS. Yes, but defeating them on the battlefield is more important.

Senator YOUNG. In the near term?

Dr. KNIGHTS. I think in all terms, because, ultimately, what made them so attractive was the fact that they were seen as winners. Us defeating them on the battlefield and keeping them from reemerging on the battlefield is critical.

The thing you are getting from me is it is important to attack their ideology, et cetera, et cetera. That is important. But what is more important is to show them to be losers, to beat them on the battlefield publicly, and to prevent them from——

Senator YOUNG. Which undermines their ideology.

Yes, Mr. Lang?

Mr. LANG. Absolutely. I think the military success is the critical piece of the puzzle. It robs them of the content.

The piece on the cyber strategy and exposing their true nature, it is just something that we have never been particularly great at, and we need to probably do a little more work.

But also, there is a real question of, are we the right entity to do that, the United States? And how much more of that needs to be done by partners in the region who may have a little bit more credibility with those audiences?

Senator YOUNG. So you have acknowledged to varying degrees in various ways that we have to fully fund all instruments of national power to sustainably defeat ISIS, the scourge of this barbaric ideology. And presumably, to close here, you would agree with now-Secretary Mattis' formulation when he was commander of CENTCOM that if you do not fully fund the State Department, then he is going to need to buy more ammunition. Do you agree?

Dr. KNIGHTS. Yes.

Mr. LANG. Yes.

Senator YOUNG. All right. Thank you.

I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Senator Shaheen?

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you both for being here today.

Mr. Lang, you alluded to the reaction to the President's travel ban in response, I think, to a question from Senator Cardin. But I want to just phrase it another way.

Do you think that this kind of a travel ban makes it harder for Prime Minister Al-Abadi to resist those hardliners within Iraq, particularly those who seek closer relations to Iran, as being something that they believe is preferable to the U.S.?

Mr. LANG. Ma'am, I think it particularly undermines his ability to push back politically against that very group, because, in essence, what many of those political leaders are saying, or representatives of the sort of PMF who are associated with Iran, is, see, we told you so. This really is where the Americans are.

That coupled with the talk of taking the oil has reverberated inside the Iraqi body politic.

Secretary Mattis did yeoman's work in terms of pushing back against that on his recent visit, but it would probably be a good thing if we could hear that also from the Commander in Chief.

Senator SHAHEEN. And, Dr. Knights, you are nodding. Do you agree with that?

Dr. KNIGHTS. Absolutely.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. And again, this is territory that has also been covered, but I think it is worth repeating in terms of the proposal from the administration to increase defense spending by \$54 billion and take a lot of that funding out of the State Department and other nondefense agencies, many of whom who are responsible also for security.

Several years ago, Secretary of Defense Mattis, who at that time was serving as the commander at CENTCOM, was testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee. And he said, I quote, "If you do not fund the State Department fully, then I need to buy more ammunition."

So in your opinion, if we are really serious about defeating ISIS, does it make sense for us to weaken the State Department and their ability to help follow up on the military campaign? Either one of you.

Mr. LANG. Senator, I think it will undermine our ability to carry forward the next elements of the campaign in a significant fashion.

I would sort of caveat that remark and a point that Dr. Knights made about the need to be able to move outside the wire on the part of the—

Senator SHAHEEN. Sure.

Mr. LANG. —civilian agencies. And there are organizations inside the U.S. Government who are pushing to do that sort of thing.

But I think that if we do not do this, we are going to get locked into sort of a long-term counterterrorism mission that really does not have a political end to it.

Senator SHAHEEN. And just to go back to your point, Dr. Knights, about defeating ISIS on the battlefield, what happens to that effort, that goal, if we continue to have the conflict in Syria, the civil war there, that provides an opportunity for ISIS to go back across the border. And so even though we may have pushed them out of territory, as we did earlier, they have the ability to come back.

So how should we be thinking about that as we are thinking about our efforts on the battlefield?

Dr. Knights?

Dr. KNIGHTS. So it is clear that when we lost Mosul, or when the Iraqis lost Mosul in the summer of 2014, that had a significant cross-border element to it, and that is going to continue. They are going to have a safe haven over in Syria for a while longer than they have it in Iraq, which means that we need to prioritize the creation of border security forces in Iraq again, and it means that we need to be able to support them to do things like wide area surveillance and quick reaction force out in the western desert of Iraq and on the Syrian border with Ninawa Province where Mosul is.

That is one of the ways we need to evolve the security cooperation program from where it is now, fighting conventional battles, to where it is then, being able to do these kind of long-range operations in the desert and other remote areas.

Senator SHAHEEN. Should we take any special significance from the visit by the Saudi Foreign Minister to Baghdad this past weekend? So the first visit by a Saudi Foreign Minister in almost 27 years?

Dr. KNIGHTS. I think the Saudis are reaching out in a number of directions to try and calm down their regional environment, and Iraq would be one of those areas. But I do not think anything really goes very far between Iraq and Saudi Arabia for very long. They are probably just doing the absolute minimum.

Mr. LANG. Senator, the only caveat I would offer to that observation, I do think it is significant that the Foreign Minister made the visit, and I think it is something that we should reach out to and try to cultivate and continue.

One of the things that I think we would like to see going forward is that the Gulf states help to pay or play a more significant role in stabilization of the development and recovery activities inside of Iraq.

Now, of course, this is going to be difficult, and they have a dim view, obviously, of the sort of association of government in Baghdad and Iran. But the fact that the trip was made is not insignificant.

Dr. KNIGHTS. Debt forgiveness is really what the Saudis and the GCC need to do with Iraq, fully finishing off that old debt. But I think Saudi presence on the ground or involvement is kind of toxic in Iraq when done at the local level.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you all.

The CHAIRMAN. Just for what it is worth, I think people on the inside viewed it as a very significant trip. Iran has tried to execute him three times. He risked his life to be there. And I think it was viewed as far more significant than is being stated today.

Secondly, just in response to what is happening in Syria, General Townsend is conducting both operations and, I will say, is most impressive. So I think the questions relative to what is happening there, I mean, it is being looked at as one, it is being conducted as one, and my sense is they understand full well the essence of Senator Shaheen's question.

Senator Paul?

Senator PAUL. Thank you for your testimony.

Mr. Lang, you mentioned in your testimony there was no real need for nation-building, and yet you also say we need to take a lead on economic assistance. How does that go together? That sort of sounds like the same thing to me.

Mr. LANG. Senator, I understand the question.

The piece of this that I am talking about most deliberately and immediately is the line of effort on stabilization, and these are sort of short-term, immediate quick impact projects that are designed to basically get communities to start to talk to each other and provide a little bit of governance, a little bit of assistance, a little bit of employment in the immediate wake of the fighting.

I mean, these are things the military will tell you are required to sort of lock in any sort of gain that they are making.

Senator PAUL. So you are differentiating short-term economic assistance from long-term, in saying that nation-building is long-term assistance and short-term is not. You know, I think that could be a distinction. It might be a definitional thing.

But we have been there 10 years, so we have given quite a bit of aid. It is hard to argue that a little bit of short-term assistance is not on top of a trillion dollars' worth of nation-building, both military and nonmilitary. We have spent a lot of money over there, which goes back to a couple points.

One point, they are not a destitute country. They have oil, and, by golly, they ought to rebuild their own country. We can be of some help stabilizing things, but it is not our responsibility to rebuild everybody's country.

Look, we are out of money. We are \$20 trillion in the hole, so everybody comes forward and says how great it would be if we rebuild every country. Look, I have a bridge that is 50 years old in my state I would like to replace. We build and bomb so many bridges around the world, we do not have any money left over for ourselves.

So we do have problems at home that we need to think about, and we need to think about how long are we going to keep doing this. A decade, two decades, three decades, 50 years, 100 years?

Dr. Knights, you mentioned that there were a lot less attacks during 2007 to 2011. I am guessing we were probably averaging, what, 50,000 troops or more? We had a bunch of people there during that period of time. The surge was basically 2000, going on in 2007 still.

And then when we had less people there in 2011 to 2014, the sectarian differences came forward. You know, Sunnis were pushed out of the army, out of positions, government, et cetera. I think all of that is true, which goes back to my question again.

The sectarian differences have been there for a thousand years, and we can paper over them maybe when we are there. Maybe we are of assistance in that. But you think at some point their own self-interests in saying that—you know, one of the points you made about regionalizing police and/or military makes perfect sense. In the Sunni regions, you ought to have a Sunni colonel overseeing a Sunni region. In the Kurdish region, the Kurds should oversee it. In the mixed regions, maybe a more mixed force. You think they would know that. And they had the disaster.

I guess, how long are we going to do it? And can we do it? You know, can we paper over the differences of a thousand years? Or maybe it is going to take them kind of sorting out their differences.

You know, the longer we stay, the more Americans are seen with disregard, you know? We say we do not want too many because they will not like us interfering in their stuff. Well, maybe we need to have a lot of diplomats be of assistance, but maybe we do not need to have large troop forces in the country.

I mean, look, I do not understand. There are 8,000 ISIS left. You have 500,000 in the Iraqi army and they cannot take care of 8,000 soldiers? You have 200,000 Peshmerga. You have another 600,000 Turks. You have armies everywhere. And you have 8,000 people and somehow Americans have to be in the middle of it?

We become a target, and we end up engendering sometimes more than we accomplish. So I would just say we ought to think through how long this is going to be.

And I guess to Dr. Knights, how long do you think we have to stay? And are they not going to learn lessons about the sectarian strife that ends up bringing them down?

Dr. KNIGHTS. I think on both economic assistance and on security assistance, we have reached a place where maybe we are doing things the right way right now.

So on economic assistance, we are not in there rebuilding all the bridges and building the whole power sector. We are helping them to get an IMF economic reform program. We are helping them to get bonds from the international community, so they can borrow at decent rates without bond guarantees. These things do not cost the sorts of amounts they used to when we were trying to rebuild the actual infrastructure of the country, but they help Iraq a lot. So it is a lot of bang for the buck.

Senator PAUL. Is their economy not able to borrow money?

Dr. KNIGHTS. No, because of the major political risk associated with being in the midst of a huge war.

But also, when it comes to the security cooperation, Iraqis down at the local level do understand that you have to have mixed security forces that reflect the local population. But when you are interacting with federal agencies at the center of the country and you get down to the nitty-gritty of who ends up being the police chief in that place, that is where sometimes a little bit of U.S. involvement can make a lot of difference in the picking of the right people to run the right places. And this only requires a couple of core people based out of this headquarters, a hundred people based out that headquarters.

We are not talking about the huge numbers of people or the huge amounts of money there used to be. We have learned a new way to operate, and it has been very effective since 2015.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Murphy?

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me just quickly maybe try to put a finer point on a concern that continues to be raised about President Trump's budget blueprint that proposes cutting State Department and USAID by somewhere in the neighborhood of one quarter to one third of its present funding. Two things are happening this week. One, this budget blueprint is being released. And second, General Mattis' recommendation on a new counter-ISIS strategy is being delivered to the President.

The CHAIRMAN. Yesterday.

Senator MURPHY. Yesterday, right.

And so there are really only two options here. Either Secretary Mattis recommended a massive cut in State Department and USAID funding and it is being implemented by the President in this budget recommendation, or he did not recommend a massive cut to USAID and State Department funding that will have an effect on Iraq and the President is ignoring those recommendations.

Those are effectively your two alternatives, and both of them are deeply disturbing. Both of them run contrary to almost every piece of advice this committee has gotten from people that understand what is going on, on the ground.

So I just want to put this in context, and I assume we will figure out the answer to that question as the President reviews the plan and makes it known. But neither option looks terribly palatable.

To both of you, on this question of the importance of military activity versus political reconciliation, you both said things in your testimony that interest me, and I will put them both to you and let you respond.

Dr. Knights, you have repeatedly emphasized the priority on military success as a key to destroying ISIS's narrative and to getting to all the other things we want to do. But we have had two big military successes in Iraq since 2003. We defeated Saddam Hussein, and then, through the military surge in 2007, we effectively rendered Al Qaeda in Iraq sort of temporarily impotent. But because there was no political reconciliation, those forces sprang back to life.

And so does that not speak to the fact that, in fact, the most important thing is being able to achieve some long-term political reconciliation?

And to Mr. Lang's point, you made an interesting comment about the fact that the United States might not be the appropriate interlocutor to try to bring the two sides together. But if not the United States, who is? Because all the other players in the region have a dog in the fight between Shia and Sunni, right? They have a favorite player in that contest.

So I love the idea of outsourcing political reconciliation to someone else, but I am not sure who that is. And, to me, that argues for a much bigger presence and a prioritization on political reconciliation, contrary to what Dr. Knights is suggesting, which his recommendation seemed to end, effectively, with achieving military success.

Dr. KNIGHTS. So I will frame it this way. As you know, I have spent a lot of time in Iraq. I have seen what effect politics have on local and national security.

You talk about sequencing. My point is that we can do security cooperation right now. We are quite good at it, and we can deliver it right now, and it is needed right now, and it is what gives us leverage right now. And it is what probably allows us to maintain a residual presence in the country and to span over perhaps into the next Prime Minister's term in Iraq from 2018 onward. So that is why we have to get that bit right, right now.

Building Iraqi security forces is about more than winning battles, defeating this ISIS now. It is about preventing them from coming back. It is about preventing the Shia militias from taking over.

It is a little bit controversial to say this, but I think the reason why ISIS took over a third of Iraq, took over Mosul, is not because of Sunni disenfranchisement. It is not because of alienation at the local level. It is because the Iraqi security forces were not good enough. That is the reality. That is what happened. I watched it day after day after day.

And we lost control of local security in Iraq between 2009 and 2014. That is the problem. Local people looked at ISIS and they said they are strong. The security forces are weak. They did not say "I wish the constitution could be amended so the Baath Party was not illegal anymore." You know, they were focused on nuts and bolts local issues.

We need to develop security forces first to control the place, stop ISIS from coming back, stop the Shia militias from taking over, stop people from being afraid, then move to the next stage of some finer points of the politics and the building of the nation.

Senator MURPHY. Mr. Lang, just quickly on that second point?

Mr. LANG. Sir, let me just clarify. What I meant is that we need to be humble in terms of the role that we can play as an external actor on facilitating reconciliation. I clearly think the U.S. is going to have a key role in this going forward, and it is one that we are already playing through various civilian assistance programs, on decentralization, et cetera.

The only issue is we could probably be doing more of it if we had a bigger diplomatic presence, and we can do it in a way that may bring in other actors and quietly be behind the scenes, as opposed to sort of taking responsibility for it.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, sir.

Senator Gardner?

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, to Dr. Knights, I thought that was a very well-stated answer when you talked about what happened in 2009 through 2014. So thank you for sharing with us your thoughts.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for holding this hearing.

I wanted to talk a little bit about—and I apologize if this has been discussed already—about a report that RAND Corporation released earlier this year, in January 2017. They said this in the report: “In 2016, violent Sunni extremists have more groups, members, and safe havens than at any other point in history. To date, U.S. efforts have not reduced the Islamic State’s terrorism capability and global reach.”

Do you agree with that statement? And if so, could you provide some additional detail?

Mr. LANG. I think it is hard to argue that the ability of the Islamic State to both mount attacks outside of its area of operation and to influence others to undertake those kind of operations does not decrease as they lose the territory they control in Iraq and Syria.

So my sense of it is that, at least that part of the report, that particular section, may sort of overstate the case in terms of the significance of the kinds of military defeats that they are suffering inside of Iraq. That said, obviously, a tremendous amount of attention needs to be paid to other theaters in which ISIS is operating.

I mean, we have seen engagement on what is happening in Libya. There are issues in Egypt and elsewhere. We have to be truly concerned about foreign fighters heading back to Tunisia. So there is a lot of work to be done.

But I think it would be a mistake to underestimate the impact that robbing them of a capital of a caliphate in Iraq has had.

Senator GARDNER. Dr. Knights?

Dr. KNIGHTS. So the war in Iraq and Syria has sucked in a number of combatants that might have otherwise been used on other theaters. But at the same time, it has also boosted global recruitment for the movement. So it has offset each other in a way.

Now if we have Iraq shutting down perhaps as a very active theater for them, and something happening in Syria, you have people saying, when ISIS implodes in Iraq and Syria, it will explode internationally. Where will those people go? They will stay in the host nations, and they will activate there instead, maybe using less sophisticated means, whatever they have available.

Senator GARDNER. So, I mean, the report, it is pretty clear in their thinking that the efforts have not reduced the Islamic State’s terrorism capability and global reach. I mean, why would RAND develop that—how did you reach a different conclusion than they have?

Mr. LANG. I guess the only point, Senator, that I would emphasize here is, again, I think that their ability to recruit internationally and to inspire internationally is closely linked to their ability to control large swaths of territory and to project themselves as the caliphate inside of Iraq and Syria.

Of course, we should never let down our guard about their ability to inspire and conduct these kinds of operations out of theater, in-

cluding that they have shown a capacity to do that. I guess I would just wonder, over the long term, whether or not they are going to be able to maintain that capability if really we have sort of given the lie to the promise of the caliphate.

Senator GARDNER. Dr. Knights, in your testimony, you stated: “We wake up to the nature of an urgent threat that has been allowed to grow unchecked. We make mistakes, then we do the right thing, but then we lose interest. The cycle starts again.”

You talk about that in your statement. In your opinion, how can this administration avoid that same dangerous cycle that you described?

Dr. KNIGHTS. So the first thing that you need to do is do not declare victory ever under any circumstances in any conflict, and that is especially true here.

As I said, we do not want to create any kind of gap, any daylight at all between the mission we are currently undertaking and the next phase of the mission where we need to help Iraq stabilize liberated areas, build the security forces against both the ISIS threat and the Iranian-backed militia threat. If we create a sense that there is a gap between the two, that we are ending one thing and starting another, it makes it very difficult for the Iraqi Prime Minister to keep this relationship going.

So that is why I recommend the continuation of Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve the way it currently is, to create no gap whatsoever. We do not create a gap like in 2008–2009, where we said to the Iraqis take it to your Parliament and get us an ironclad, written—if we try to do that again, it is all over. So that is one of the things we need to avoid.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Kaine?

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am going to continue in a similar line. I am interested in the political circumstance in Iraq, assuming success in Mosul, that would allow the United States to play the kind of role that you are suggesting.

So Senator Johnson was asking you some questions along this line too, and we have had a lot of debates in this committee and in the Armed Services Committee about, at the end of 2011, did the U.S. bug out of Iraq or were we thrown out of Iraq? And there is a lot of back-and-forth about that. We do not really need to go into it.

But the circumstance that we have to ask ourselves is, I do not think there is an appetite of anybody on this committee that we get to a point where, on the battlefield it is going pretty well, and then we stay as occupiers, or we stay against the will of the Iraqi Government.

If we stay, we would define how we stay. I think it is only tenable that we stay with the Iraqi Government’s support rather than against their wishes.

So right at the end of Senator Johnson’s questions, as he was running out of time, you started to talk about, politically, what is necessary for a Prime Minister, Abadi or a future Prime Minister, or a Parliament, to accept the role of the U.S.? Because we have been hearing kind of rumors from inside Iraq that say, after a big

success in Mosul, then Iran will start really pushing Iraq, okay, you do not need the United States around anymore. They were useful to have here to beat ISIL back, but now that ISIL is on the run, you can throw the U.S. out again and let us, your next-door neighbor, be your friend.

What, politically, needs to happen to provide space for the U.S. to have a post-Mosul role that is the right role for us to play?

Dr. KNIGHTS. So it would be impossible for us to stay without the full support of the Iraqi Government, and we would never try to do that.

I keep talking about this. I believe security cooperation is the key to our staying. In other words, demonstrating outstanding, unique value as an ally and a partner. That is what we do through our intelligence cooperation, through things like our embed with the Baghdad Operations Command, helping Baghdad to get aerostats with balloons with sensors up over the city again, helping them to get their vehicle scanning technology back up and running, helping them to develop a Baghdad security plan so that Baghdad is not being hit with a major mass casualty attack every 2 weeks or 1 week, eventually.

This is of extraordinary value to the Iraqi Government, and they see the direct impact of our involvement. That is the kind of thing we need to do. And this only takes 20, 30, 40 Americans to have this kind of impact.

So that is what we need to do, I think, to help him keep us in the loop, in the operation.

Also, the economic reform support, you know he was on the finance committee of the Iraqi Parliament, the economic committee, for many years. The economy is his thing. Anything we can do to help the Iraqi Prime Minister turn the economy around, and the electricity sector as well, which we are, is very valuable to him and to the country.

Senator KAINE. Mr. Lang?

Mr. LANG. Senator, I think the first thing that we can do is stop rhetoric like talking about taking the oil and executive orders that sort of pick out the Iraqis in a way that would suggest that we do not value their contribution to the fight.

Second, Prime Minister Abadi, again, is in a very difficult position. He is straddling an intra-Shia political crisis inside Baghdad. And to the extent to which we can provide him with some deliverables and some quiet support, we do him favors. And we extend the ability for us to have a negotiating partner.

Again, I think the extent to which we are seen and understood to be by, with, through, and behind the Iraqis in undertaking these types of operations, and not sort of adopting a wider sort of counterterrorism mandate where we have our own operators doing their own thing, that is going to be quite important for Prime Minister Abadi to be able to sell this going forward.

Senator KAINE. I kind of, in my own mind, use the phrase "partner." You used "partnership." Partner, not protector, and trying to kind of look at it that way.

I know that Senator Corker asked you some questions before I came in about Kurdistan. While I agree with Senator Menendez that we do eventually need to have our State Department folks

here, sometimes they are going to follow the party line. And one of the good things about the independent guys is they do not have to follow the party line, and sometimes there is some virtue in actually hearing from both. Down the road—

Senator MENENDEZ. Sometimes it is good to know what the party line is.

Senator KAINE. I completely agree.

But down the road, as I have been in the region and in Kurdistan, the dream or professed dream of Kurdish independence seems very strong, unlikely to die in the northern part of the country. Down the road, how does that affect the prospects for the future of Iraq, whether it is in 5 years or 10 years or 15, the Kurds pursue a path toward independence?

Dr. KNIGHTS. It is in the U.S. interests, I think, to back whatever the Iraqi Government and the Kurds agree between themselves. We cannot want a united Iraq more than Iraq wants it itself. Our role should be to help the two sides come to an arrangement.

We are an honest broker. We are trusted by both sides, or at least equally distrusted. And so we need to help them talk to each other about the disputed areas, about the oil, about confederalism, oil independence, or whatever model they choose, because when it comes down to it, it is in the strong U.S. interests to have two strong U.S. allies next to each other who are also allied with each other.

And as you can imagine, when one country becomes two, there is very strong economic synergies between the two, naturally. That is the case between Iraq and Kurdistan, and it is happening under the surface right now.

Senator KAINE. Great. Thank you very much.

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, sir.

Senator Coons?

Senator COONS. I would like to thank you, Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, for convening this hearing.

And my thanks to both witnesses today as we try to confront the path forward in Iraq against ISIS.

As has been mentioned by several other Senators, President Trump has inherited a successful strategy that is moving forward. We have both Americans deployed in the field and a wide range of coalition partners, and they are currently making real progress in the battle to retake Mosul. But we have unresolved and important issues going forward.

It is in our national interests to secure a positive, productive, long-term partnership with Iraq, and a strong bilateral relationship will allow Iraq to serve as an effective counterterrorism partner and, hopefully, a bulwark against Iranian influence in Iraq and the whole Middle East. Achieving that goal is going to require a responsive, whole-of-government response.

I share the concern expressed by several others here that the suggested request from President Trump to cut tens of billions of dollars out of our diplomacy and development budget in order to fund an expansion in defense spending is unwise and ill-considered and may, in fact, lead to the wrong outcome.

So let me turn, if I could, to a few questions about stabilizing Mosul after this military campaign, given the other questions that apparently have already been asked by members of the panel.

Is it possible to stabilize Mosul if Shia militia are not just allowed to enter Mosul but to remain in Mosul? And do we have any options?

Mr. Knights first, if I might, do we have any options to prevent the Shia militia from entering Mosul in the first place? I think in your written testimony, you referenced the very dark, but real possibility that they will turn into something more akin to Hezbollah, a long-term, malignant presence forward-projecting Iranian influence into Mosul and Iraq in the long term. What options do we have to prevent them from entering and then destabilizing Mosul, should they do so?

Dr. KNIGHTS. So our problem is not in Mosul city itself or the immediate outskirts where the very, very small numbers of Shia population mean that it is going to be pretty much impossible for the Shia militias to maintain any kind of presence there, and they have not played a significant role so far in the urban combat operations.

What they have done is create a major expeditionary base to the west of Mosul, Tal Afar airport, which we probably should have held onto back in 2014. And they now have an outpost right next to the Syrian border, which they are probably going to try to hang onto.

They are also getting their claws into all sorts of micro-minorities around the Mosul area, Shabaks and Yazidis and all sorts of others.

Really, the Shia militia PMU threat is most active around Baghdad, Basra, the southern areas, the mainly Shia areas, and some of the mixed Sunni-Shia areas around Baghdad.

The option really I think is to build up the Iraqi counterterrorism service and Iraqi army as a counterbalance to these militias, to help Iraq to develop a reserve system, which it could use to suck a lot of these elements into the formal security forces, and then slowly pick them apart and actually institutionalize them.

We need Prime Minister Abadi or an Abadi-like figure to continue leading Iraq, bringing that kind of moderate politics at the center.

And we need to build the security forces volume, I mean literal numbers of units, number of active brigades, because right now, they do not have enough to do Baghdad, to do Mosul, to do the borders, to control Basra where all the oil is. They need to build more forces.

They do not have to be remarkably capable. They just need to be warm bodies in uniforms that can resist Shia militia infiltration or pressure.

Senator COONS. Mr. Lang? And if you might also add sort of how do you view the critical safeguards—size, training, other institutionalized safeguards—that will prevent the security forces more broadly, as well as the Shia militia, from becoming a sectarian actor?

Mr. LANG. A great deal of this has to do with the political leadership at the top of these institutions. So we have seen Prime Min-

ister Abadi actually manage to get some of his appointments through in January, which was a hopeful sign.

But one of the core focus that is going to need to be going forward, in terms of the leverage that we maintain with Prime Minister Abadi and with his government, is to ensure that the leadership of these institutions do not revert to the kind of sectarian policies that we saw under Prime Minister Maliki.

Again, I think a strategy in which you are trying to build the capability of the counterterrorism service and other elements of the Iraqi army will be critical as a counterweight. The Iranians, for a series of different Popular Mobilization Fronts, they are not going to stop what they are doing, but we can balance that.

So it is both a political piece at the top and then balance in terms of capability inside of the formal security structures.

Senator COONS. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Markey?

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Last June, Brent McGurk, the Special Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIS, testified before this committee. At that time, the military operation to clear ISIS from Fallujah was coming to a close.

I told him that I was concerned that tactical military successes will not bring about the strategic defeat of ISIS unless accompanied by simultaneous political initiatives to bring divergent groups together and local governments willing and able to represent and protect all of the people who live in areas cleared by ISIS.

While Mr. McGurk agreed that such efforts are essential, it is not clear that they have been made a real priority.

On February 22nd, the Washington Post reported that, "So far, the U.S.-backed campaign has focused on defeating ISIS militarily rather than addressing the reason so many of Iraq's minority Sunnis initially turned to the group."

Given President Trump's rhetoric and budget plans that would cut diplomacy and development assistance, I am even more concerned that political efforts will fall by the wayside.

On January 31st, the Al-Monitor reported that Shia-dominated popular mobilization units "have established at least 10 offices in the past few months in areas that were thought to be cleared of ISIS by tactical military operations, including Fallujah and Ramadi."

And the New York Times and Washington Post have reported in the past 2 weeks that ISIS continues to threaten people in areas where post-clearing governance and security efforts appear insufficient, including Fallujah, Ramadi, and Tikrit.

Now in your prepared testimony, each of you called for the U.S. to take specific measures to create viable political arrangements in Mosul after it has been cleared.

And I believe you, Mr. Lang, believe there would be great value in a formal transition period, during which a high-level governing body, advised by a full-time U.S. senior diplomat empowered to broker disputes, would support and oversee local administration.

So could you each briefly address what are the lessons from Fallujah, what are the lessons from Ramadi, what grade would you give what has already been taking place there in terms of ensuring that there is an inclusive, welcoming political environment for the Sunnis? Otherwise, we are just going to have a repetition syndrome where we reenact the past year after year, over and over again, in a never-ending cycle where there actually has never been a political solution to this problem that does not give a breeding ground for ISIS to return and repeat history.

Mr. Lang?

Mr. LANG. Senator, thank you for the question. There are a couple points that are interesting here. In my prepared remarks and sort of oral testimony, one of the things that I highlighted was the fact that you still have 3 million people displaced by the conflict. Many of these people, in fact, the vast majority of those who have been displaced, are displaced from areas that have been “liberated” quite some time ago. And this is highlighting the fact that many of the Sunni Arabs do not feel comfortable going back to these communities yet, where they are not able, because they have not been cleared of mines, or politically they feel insecure where there is the presence of PMF.

So I think there is a great deal more work that needs to be done in a number of these areas.

Senator MARKEY. Why has it not been done?

Mr. LANG. To a certain extent, the actors and the resources that have been mobilized against the problem are insufficient. So the United Nations, again, is in charge of stabilization in the wake of the military operation. I actually worked with the U.N. at one point in Iraq, and so I think they have been doing great work inside of their capability. But the—

Senator MARKEY. But not great work in general? “Inside of their capability” means that they are meeting expectations for what their capability is, which is not going to match the task. Is that correct?

Mr. LANG. Senator, I think that we can probably bring more to bear on the problem.

Senator MARKEY. What does “more to bear” mean? What do we need to do here? Because otherwise the political instability is a recurring cancer that just keeps coming back because you do not have the intervention. You do not have the treatment.

So what is needed here, because it is just a preview of coming attractions otherwise in Mosul and other places in Iraq?

Mr. LANG. I could not agree more. I would think some of the practical steps that we could take, for example, USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives could deploy onto the ground undertaking stabilization programs in many of these communities. They can get outside of the wire faster than the U.N. can, and they know the country well. They were operational there behind the U.S. military in many of these places during the last decade.

There is a lot of money that has been raised for stabilization, about \$2 billion, in a conference last summer. But that has not sort of trickled down into actual implementation.

Senator MARKEY. Why not?

Mr. LANG. It is a good question.

Senator MARKEY. Who do you blame?

Mr. LANG. My sense is that the donors, that we do not really have the mechanisms for implementation on the ground.

Senator MARKEY. But who do you blame for not having—the donors put up the dough, and who is not implementing? Who is blocking the implementation?

Mr. LANG. I am not sure it is a question of blocking implementation. But my sense is that we do not have the capacity yet. I am not sure the U.N. has the capacity to distribute all that assistance. And I think some of the donors have not made that money available, so I think it is a twin problem.

Senator MARKEY. Okay. Well, again, desperate people do desperate things. If you have the aid there and you are helping them, then they are more likely to move in our direction. And if it is not there, then it just creates an environment where ISIS can return and say, see, we told you. You know, trust in the Shia, trust in this government, is just not a good idea.

So I think that is a good lesson for us. And I know my time is up, Mr. Chairman.

But I am taking your warnings very seriously, and we have to find a way of ensuring that the donors' money is collected and then it is distributed in a way that does deal with that underlying sense of isolation and fear, which they justifiably have, given what has happened in that country.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, sir.

Senator Cardin?

Senator CARDIN. I just really wanted to thank our two witnesses. I find that there is more unity in their comments than division. And it really points out so many threads have to come together for Iraq to be a successful state and be able to maintain stability in representing all of the communities.

You mentioned one of the critical points: the Kurds. We met with the Kurds. They are not going to give up their desire for independence. That is clear. They want an independent state.

And, Dr. Knights, I agree completely with you. That is not our decision. The Iraqis and the Kurds have to reach a conclusion.

But then when they get some autonomy or independence, how does that deal with the security of Iraq itself? And how does the Popular Mobilization Forces integrate into the Iraqi security forces in a way that the Sunni communities feel that they are protected and does not open up again the opportunities for extremist groups to see a security vacuum and, therefore, an ISIS or something similar to ISIS forms again? So it is so many complications.

So, Mr. Chairman, I just point out that I look forward to getting a briefing in regards to Secretary Mattis' plan. And it is going to have to have a major role for the jurisdiction that comes under this committee. That is, how do you rebuild Iraq into a country that not only can provide the short-term stability to the communities but the long-term confidence of the communities that will allow the country to stay stable for the foreseeable future?

And after we have had that material made available and briefings to this committee, I would be very interested in getting Mr. Lang and Dr. Knights' view in regard to how the Trump adminis-

tration sizes up the continuing role for the United States and our coalition partners to a successful completion of Iraq.

That would be, I think, helpful for us to have your expertise moving forward after we have been briefed on the Trump administration's strategy.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Again, I appreciate your comments.

I do think, amongst the principles that are working through this, there is a strong acknowledgment of the State Department's role here. I know that the Secretary of State is very aware of that and has been far more involved in much of what has been happening than I think has been reported. I hope that what we will do very soon is have a full committee sit down with him.

I just have to say, I think things from the standpoint of him strategically thinking about not only this issue but numbers of issues around the world are way further along than anybody might realize.

So thank you both for being here today, providing valuable insights. As the ranking member mentioned, I hope we have you back again. We will try to make sure there are no security hitches the next time.

And with that, if you would, there will be some additional questions. We are going to accept questions to the close of business Thursday. To the extent you can answer those fairly quickly, we would appreciate it.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you again for your testimony and for being here in service to our country.

And with that, the committee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:40 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

