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**U.S. MILITARY POSTURE AND NATIONAL
SECURITY CHALLENGES IN THE
GREATER MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA**

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ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, Thursday, March 23, 2023.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:00 a.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Mike Rogers (chairman of the committee) esiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE ROGERS, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM ALABAMA, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will come to order.

Before we begin, I have one housekeeping matter. In consultation with the ranking member, I plan to adjourn the public portion of this hearing at 1:00 p.m. and immediately move upstairs for the classified portion.

Today we continue our posture hearings with AFRICOM [U.S. Africa Command] and CENTCOM [U.S. Central Command]. I want to thank our witnesses for being here and their service to our Nation and the time it took to prepare for this hearing. These are very helpful to us as policymakers.

Earlier this month we heard from the commanders of NORTHCOM [U.S. Northern Command] and SOUTHCOM [U.S. Southern Command] about the growing presence of the Chinese Communist Party in North and South America. The situation in AFRICOM and CENTCOM is even more concerning. Most countries in Africa and the Middle East are now members of the CCP's [Chinese Communist Party's] Belt and Road Initiative.

The CCP built their first overseas military base in Djibouti at a strategic point on the Horn of Africa. This base can accommodate the CCP's aircraft carriers and sits only 6 miles from our own outpost. Now they are actively looking to the Atlantic coast of Africa for a new military basing opportunity.

Across the Middle East, the CCP is building ports, providing Huawei telecommunications, conducting joint military exercises, and delivering military equipment. But what worries me most is Xi's growing friendship with the Ayatollah. In the last few years, the CCP signed valuable trade deals with Iran, bought Iranian oil in defiance of international sanctions, and joined Russia in conducting joint drills with the Iranian navy. Last week they played peacemaker between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

These actions provide a lifeline to Iran at a very dangerous time. The Ayatollah continues to fund and equip terrorists targeting

American troops, he is providing Putin with advanced weapons to prosecute the brutal invasion of Ukraine, and his regime is aggressively pursuing nuclear weapons. We absolutely cannot allow that to happen.

Finally, both General Langley and General Kurilla continue to face tremendous challenges snuffing out hardened terrorists in their AORs [areas of responsibility]. In Africa, lack of adequate resourcing has led to worsening security situations, especially in the west where the terrorist havens are expanding.

In CENTCOM, President Biden's decision to unilaterally and unconditionally withdraw from—U.S. forces from Afghanistan has undermined our national security. It has left a security vacuum with—the Taliban, al-Qaida, and ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria] are all filling that vacuum.

The assessment is that some of these terrorists could attack the U.S. within as little as 6 months. I remain very concerned that we are no longer positioned to detect an imminent attack and stop it. That is because the President's so-called "over-the-horizon" counterterrorism strategy is a farce. Without persistent ISR [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance], reliable partners on the ground, and nearby facilities to launch assets, our ability to strike these terrorists is severely limited.

I look forward to this afternoon's classified discussion on the capabilities we have lost and how we can help restore them. We cannot allow for blind spots, especially in these two AORs.

With that, I yield to my friend and colleague, the ranking member, for any comments he may have.

STATEMENT OF HON. ADAM SMITH, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM WASHINGTON, RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it. I appreciate Dr. Wallander, General Kurilla, and General Langley joining us today, and I appreciate your leadership on these issues.

And I think the chairman started in the place where I think most members are going to be most interested, and that is the role of China and Russia in both of your AORs. As we know, it is growing, and I think the chairman did a pretty good job of describing it and the challenge that we face to balance against this.

And I think it is important to understand, you know, why that matters, and actually it is one aspect of General Langley's AOR that sort of drives home that point, and that is West Africa where the Wagner Group has been so active in taking over a security role. And we have seen the coups and the violence and the chaos that has followed.

Certainly, we continue to have the challenge of the violent extremist organizations operating there, but Russia and China's presence is making that worse. So we need to make sure that we figure out how to effectively counter that, and that is what I am most interested in hearing.

As we are working with all of the countries spread out throughout AFRICOM and CENTCOM, they are working with China and Russia for reasons. There are things that they see to their individual country's advantage. It is not enough for the U.S. to show

up and say, “We are better than them. You have to be with us.” We have to understand in great detail why these countries are working with China. Why are they working with Russia? What is being offered by China and Russia that we aren’t offering?

How can we effectively counter that, work with partners globally as well, to make sure that China and Russia don’t begin to have dominant control in those parts of the world? Without question, that is the number one biggest challenge in these is to understand how we balance that out.

And then very specifically, within Africa, we do continue to be concerned about the terrorist groups that are present there. I mentioned West Africa briefly, but we would love to have an update also on what is going on with Somalia. Al-Shabaab continues to be the most well-organized and effective arm of al-Qaida. How is that fight going?

And speaking of unilateral decisions, President Trump’s unilateral decision in the dying days of his administration to simply pull out of Somalia without any sort of plan to follow up also had consequences, and would be curious to see what we are doing in that part of the world to deal with that.

And then, in the Middle East, Iran was mentioned, but the other thing that I think we need to really think about is in Iraq. We have had a presence there now since 2003. That presence has varied in terms of its purpose. Certainly, in the 2015–2016 timeframe, it was very focused. ISIS had risen and was a profound threat, and we showed up to help our partners in that region to quell that threat.

What is our presence in Iraq right now doing? How is our partnership with Iraq? As the chairman noted, we are clearly targets for what Iran and their proxies are doing. What is our mission there? Who are our partners? And going forward, what should be our mission in that part of the world?

These are two very interesting commands. We look forward to your testimony to help enlighten us as to the challenges there, and most importantly how we can be helpful in making sure that we meet the national security needs of our country in those regions, and help all of you do your jobs in that region.

With that, I yield back and look forward to your testimony.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, sir.

We will now introduce the witnesses. We have the Honorable Celeste Wallander, is the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs; Dr.—I mean, General Erik Kurilla is the Commander, United States Central Command; and General Michael Langley is the Commander, United States Africa Command.

I want to welcome our witnesses. And, Dr. Wallander, we will start with you for 5 minutes to give us your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF CELESTE WALLANDER, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Dr. WALLANDER. Thank you. Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify.

As the Department of Defense articulated in the 2022 National Defense Strategy, a strong, principled, adaptive U.S. military is a

central pillar of U.S. leadership. This strategy sets out how the U.S. military will address growing threats to vital national security interests and a stable and open international system. It is focused on combining our strengths to maximum effect through integrated deterrence by campaigning to disrupt destabilizing activities and push back against competitors' course of actions, and by undertaking reforms and making investments to build enduring advantages.

The Department remains committed to using our instruments to further U.S. interests in the Middle East and Africa. We will continue to stand with our partners and allies to win what we view as the competition of coalitions that is becoming increasingly critical to our common security.

The Department's priorities in the Middle East are to promote stability and security; maintain credible military options to deny Iran a nuclear weapon, counter Iran's destabilizing activities; disrupt violent extremist organizations, or VEOs; safeguard freedom of navigation throughout global waterways; and work with Israel to ensure its security.

The Department maintains readiness to unilaterally respond to any crisis or contingency, but our preference is to work alongside interoperable and capable partners within coalitions. This emphasis on consultation and cooperation is the U.S. competitive advantage in the Middle East. Though others seek to strategically compete, there is no combat-credible, willing alternative prepared to share cutting-edge capabilities and invest vital national resources in support of regional security and defense of others within the rules-based international order.

Iran is a persistent threat across a range of domains, most notably its nuclear program, support for Iran-aligned militia groups in Iraq, and the proliferation of advanced conventional weapons and attack drones. In Iraq and Syria, the Department remains committed to the enduring defeat of ISIS, both through military activities and by working with interagency partners to support comprehensive, whole-of-government approaches to deliver security and stability.

In Yemen, U.S. policy objectives remain focused on creating the conditions to implement a durable resolution under U.N. [United Nations] auspices that will end the now 8-year conflict.

Within the Middle East, U.S.-Israeli military exercises demonstrate our ongoing work to improve our interoperability and increase military cooperation. And as Israel's alignment to U.S. CENTCOM's AOR matures, there will also be increased focus on working multilaterally with other partners throughout the region, including strategic partners in the Gulf.

Africa's geopolitical importance to U.S. national security must not be overlooked. Many of the world's most pressing challenges and global solutions will emanate from this continent as it continues to grow in political and economic power. Africa's extraordinary potential is threatened by episodes of political instability, democratic backsliding, transnational threats, the entrenched and growing presence of VEOs, and the impact of climate in a complex operating environment.

The Department takes an African-led, U.S.-enabled approach, in close coordination with allies and partners to address security challenges. The Department prioritizes disrupting VEOs that threaten the homeland and vital U.S. national security interests and supports a holistic approach to the security challenges in Africa through robust cooperation.

This approach ensures that U.S. security and governance initiatives mutually reinforce each other to address the transnational nature of threats.

In East Africa, we remain steadfast in our support of regional initiatives to counter the threat from Al-Shabaab in Somalia. In West Africa, we remain focused on countering ISIS and JNIM [Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin] in the Sahel by investing in and supporting our security partners.

The security situation continues to deteriorate in the Sahel and coastal West Africa. Growing threats presented by VEOs, governance challenges, and a lack of development opportunities have exacerbated conflicts in the region. Recent political transitions challenge U.S. military assistance as well as access and influence to help counter advances by malign actors; namely, Russia and the PRC [People's Republic of China].

The PRC is the only country with the intent, and increasingly the capability, to fundamentally reshape the rules-based international order, and Africa is key to U.S. strategy to prevent the PRC from achieving its objectives.

With the support of Congress, the Department of Defense remains positioned to support our allies and partners, compete with Russia and the PRC, and deter and defeat our adversaries across the Middle East and Africa.

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

[The prepared statement of Dr. Wallander can be found in the Appendix on page 65.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Dr. Wallander.

General Kurilla, you are recognized.

**STATEMENT OF GEN MICHAEL "ERIK" KURILLA, USA,
COMMANDER, U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND**

General KURILLA. Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, ladies and gentlemen of the committee, I am joined by Command Master Chief Fleet Derrick Walters, the command senior enlisted leader of U.S. Central Command.

On behalf of the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines, coastguardsmen, and guardians, who serve this command, the central region, and the Nation every day, thank you for allowing me to testify regarding the posture of U.S. Central Command.

This year is the 40th in our CENTCOM history. In January of 1983, the United States Congress authorized the establishment of CENTCOM to serve as the security guarantor in the Middle East, the Levant, and the Central Asian States. Today we rely heavily on partnerships the command has developed, and CENTCOM serves as the security integrator of the world's central region.

The story of this command between 1983 and today is one that parallels the threats and opportunities of the region it supports for

the past four decades. Central Command was formed to counter the influence of the revolutionary regime that had seized power in Tehran, and to compete strategically with the Soviet Union.

The organization's original charter was to direct and enable military operations and activities with partners to increase regional stability in support of American interests. That mission remains essentially unchanged to this day. Iran remains the focus. We now battle violent extremist groups who threaten the United States or interests in the region. The Soviet Union has been replaced with China and Russia as strategic competitors.

The region remains vitally important to the Nation and the world. Ours is an area of responsibility that encompasses 21 nations, 600 million people, and serves as the strategic nexus of the world's most important corridors of trade.

Today CENTCOM's priorities are to deter Iran, counter violent extremist organizations, and compete strategically with China and Russia. That is what we do. Four decades after CENTCOM's formation, Iran remains the primary destabilizing element in the region. We have seen rapid advances in Iranian military capability over time. The Iran of 2023 is not the Iran of 1983. In fact, Iran today is exponentially more militarily capable than it was even 5 years ago.

Today Iran possesses the largest and most diverse missile arsenal in the Middle East with thousands of ballistic and cruise missiles. Iran also maintains the largest and most capable UAV [unmanned aerial vehicle] force. Iran's vast and deeply resourced proxy forces spread instability throughout the region and threaten our regional partners. Iran continues to enrich uranium far above what is needed for commercial use. Iran can enrich uranium far faster than it could even 2 years ago. An Iran with a nuclear weapon would change the Middle East overnight and forever. As Iran continues to destabilize the region, we continue to fight violent extremist organizations.

Four years ago today, March 23, 2019, was a historic day in CENTCOM's 40-year life span. In Baghuz, Syria, the global coalition eliminated the last so-called ISIS territorial caliph. This historical achievement did not come without loss. During the fight against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, tens of thousands of our partner forces were wounded or killed.

Our partners were fully in the lead. Twenty American service members were killed and dozens were wounded. They will always be remembered throughout U.S. Central Command by their countrymen for their sacrifice in defense of stability in the region.

Today we continue the fight against ISIS in Syria, alongside our Syrian Democratic Force partners, to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS. And we remain in Iraq to advise, assist, and enable the Iraqi Security Forces in the fight against ISIS. In Afghanistan, ISIS-Khorasan seeks to expand its ranks and develop the capability to inspire, enable, or direct attacks in the region and beyond with the group's ultimate goal to attack the U.S. homeland.

Amidst these challenges, strategic competition is deeply manifest in the region. The People's Republic of China aggressively expands its informational, military, and economic instruments of national

power across the region. And now Beijing seeks to establish its diplomatic influence.

China, dependent on the region for over half of its imported crude oil, and more than a third of all of its natural gas, is also moving beyond energy-based investments to encompass physical and telecommunications infrastructure that advances its Belt and Road Initiatives. Nineteen of 21 CENTCOM countries have signed a Belt and Road agreement with China. We are in a race to integrate with our partners before China can penetrate the region.

Russia, on the other hand, seeks to expand its influence in Syria, seeking a permanent basing there and undermining our efforts towards stability and security. Putin seeks a foothold of influence in the Central Asian States leveraging historical relations and a perceived decline in U.S. engagement to challenge our influence in this area of the world.

With these challenges, the CENTCOM region holds the greatest risk of derailing the National Defense Strategy with a flashpoint international incident that may demand a response using unplanned resources or attention. That is why we require a sufficient and sustainable force posture to accomplish these missions without relying on additional forces.

And to accomplish these strategic priorities, CENTCOM focuses on a strategic approach centered on people, partners, and innovation. People are our greatest asset and our most critical resource. Our partners are the Nation's comparative advantage against competitors like China and Russia. And across CENTCOM we cultivate deep, abiding partnerships that can serve as a hedge against threats in the region, while deterring Iran from its most destructive behavior, and China views our partners as merely customers and clients.

Innovation of thought, innovation of process, innovation of concept and technology, extends the value of our partnerships, and innovation allows us to move faster, operate more efficiently, and increase progress across all operational efforts.

So, deter Iran, counter violent extremist organizations, and compete strategically, are what we do. People, partners, and innovation, that is how we do them.

In closing, let me thank you again for the support of our service members, civilians, and their families for 40 years, much of that time in sustained combat in CENTCOM area of responsibility. The United States and the region relied on the American service member for the security and stability of the region and to advance American interests. Those men and women have fulfilled the original promise of this command and in some of the toughest circumstances, and we owe them a debt of gratitude. It is the greatest honor of my lifetime to be their commander.

[The prepared statement of General Kurilla can be found in the Appendix on page 83.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, sir.

General Langley, you are recognized.

**STATEMENT OF GEN MICHAEL E. LANGLEY, USMC,
COMMANDER, U.S. AFRICA COMMAND**

General LANGLEY. Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, distinguished committee members, it is an honor to appear before you today to testify on the state of affairs of United States Africa Command.

I am proud to testify alongside my dedicated colleagues, General Kurilla and Assistant Secretary Wallander.

Now I assumed command last August, and since then I have embarked upon a campaign of learning, and over the last 7 months, all to inform this discussion today. Now I undertook this campaign of learning to fulfill my commitment to this Congress and complete a holistic assessment upon confirmation. Now I made that assessment, and I will continue it throughout my tenure in command.

Up front, I want to make one thing crystal clear. The team of service members and civilians at AFRICOM is a talented and dedicated body. I am honored to serve among them. I am joined today by my State Department foreign policy adviser, Mr. Phil Nelson, who represents the exceptionally skilled diplomatic team embedded at our headquarters.

Our entire team is laser-focused on implementing our whole-of-government approach with our partners from the Department of State, USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development], the intelligence community, and other U.S. Government organizations. We campaign with our allies and partners to advance mutual interests and promote stability and prosperity on the African continent. You should be proud of their efforts. I know I certainly am.

Africa is a vast and dynamic continent of sovereign nations. Collectively and individually, these nations are increasingly important players on the global stage. And, as such, AFRICOM's contribution to American security must be viewed through a global lens. Threats once contained on the continent are transforming into worldwide threats.

Terrorism, poverty, food insecurity, climate change, and mass migration shatter African lives. They sow the seeds of violent extremists and Russian exploitation. The Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine has aggravated the food insecurity crisis in Africa by blocking vital food shipments to the same nations that feel the deepest impacts of climate change.

Russia's Wagner mercenaries turn chaos into cash and destabilize entire regions across the African continent, and it cuts at American interests worldwide.

The expansion of Middle East-based violent extremist groups, such as ISIS and al-Qaida, including the biggest franchise of Al-Shabaab, threatens American lives.

Solutions to these colossal problems must be a shared burden. African nations need to be at the helm of the concerted international efforts to produce sustainable outcomes. Assisting African nations in achieving their goals, while advancing American interests, can only be accomplished through a synchronized whole-of-government strategy.

We call it the 3D [three dimensional] approach, which is the toolkit of diplomacy, development, and defense; but one tool does not succeed without the whole kit. So I will advocate for State Depart-

ment and USAID partners to receive the resources they need to succeed.

Now Africa faces many challenges. However, putting Africa's needs at the forefront of our campaign reinforced by multilateral and whole-of-government engagement will help AFRICOM and our partners work towards a sustainable peace, stability, and prosperity.

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished members of this committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to be here today. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Langley can be found in the Appendix on page 108.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, General. Thank all of you for your opening statements and for your service.

I now recognize myself for questions. General Kurilla, you assess that ISIS-K [Islamic State of Khorasan Province] can conduct an attack on the U.S. or Western interests abroad in 6 months or less. What could we do as Congress to help you best be prepared to thwart that or at least detect it?

General KURILLA. Thanks, Chairman. And when I say be able to—capable of conducting attack in under 6 months, there is three types that we look at. An inspired attack that is inspired by their vile ideology. They can do that today; they can do that tomorrow. There is an enabled attack where they are providing funding and some direction to be able to do that. And then there is a directed attack where it is command-and-controlled from the region to do that.

Really, what we see right now as their ability to do that in under 6 months is the enabled attack against U.S. or Western interests abroad; obviously much harder to do against the homeland.

So part of that is our ability to increase our intelligence and collection efforts inside of Afghanistan. We are working right now with the Department. We have received funding to increase our alternative airborne ISR, and we should have some systems coming online that is a 400 percent increase in the ability to collect over the top. We are trying to increase our other forms of intelligence—SIGINT [signals intelligence], HUMINT [human intelligence]—to enable us to penetrate those networks to target better.

The CHAIRMAN. Great. General Langley, the CCP has built a base in Djibouti. They have announced they are building a space port there, and they are looking to build a naval base on the Atlantic coast of Africa. Could you tell us the impact of those plans and what we can do to help you best thwart those?

General LANGLEY. Chairman, what I am concerned about is the strategic implications. I am concerned about that these aspirations, space-based or any other technologies that can be dual use into military uses, that the PRC or the CCP will establish a platform for power projection. That changes America's strategic calculus going forward. We need to be concerned, and what I have at my disposal is become and maintain the partner of choice as we engage with our Afghan nations.

In my travels across the—Chairman, in my travels across the continent, our partners don't want to be militarized in a strategic

sense. That is what I need to be able to articulate to them in my engagements.

The CHAIRMAN. Great. I am curious, there is a concern that we may not be able to get appropriations bills passed on time. If we were not to be able to get a defense authorization bill passed on time, what would the implications of a CR [continuing resolution] be to you in your AOR? And I will start with you, General Langley.

General LANGLEY. Chairman, first of all, it affects readiness. As we do a calculus of risk to force, risk to mission, the readiness of our forces as the violent extremist organizations, and the layered threat of the PRC, and also Wagner's actions, it increases risk. We need new starts to be able to address these challenges. A delayed budget will hamper our new starts to address those issues.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. General Kurilla.

General KURILLA. Chairman, thank you. We require a sufficient, timely, and predictable funding. Bottom line, it affects readiness. As Mike Langley said, one of the key issues, we can't have new starts, and we will see that affect readiness for forces coming forward in our allocated forces.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. General Langley, I am curious. You know, you made reference to Russian activity in the African continent. Have you seen any diminution of that activity, given their focus on Ukraine and their devotion of resources there? Or has it been uninterrupted?

General LANGLEY. Chairman, first and foremost, let me state that Wagner—Wagner, Yevgeny Prigozhin, they are about power and profit, and they do this and engage and they fill a void of where we are not—where we have backed off because of one reason or another. They are the vanguard for the Russian Federation, and they are a cash for profit agency. And there is a revenue stream of what they garner on—through their illicit activities on the African continent goes up to Putin.

The CHAIRMAN. Great. I am interested, General Kurilla, you know, one of my frustrations about the way we left Afghanistan was we did not maintain a base anywhere in Afghanistan from which we could conduct ISR. Can you tell me how adequate, or if it is adequate, what you are receiving now in the way of ISR?

I know we are going to talk more about this in the classified section, but can you in a public way talk about how adequate it is, or inadequate?

General KURILLA. So I have validated requirements right now for ISR. We are not filled completely to our validated requirement. One of the challenges I have is the time I spend in transit—about 80 percent of the time is spent in transit—to get to Afghanistan, but we are working with some alternative airborne ISR, like I said, high-duration stuff that can stay up for days, and we are working towards programs and platforms that can stay up for weeks.

The CHAIRMAN. Great. I recognize the ranking member.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. So focusing on China—well, and to some degree Russia's role—but the treaty that—not treaty, the reopening of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia that China just recently negotiated, part of that is that Iran says publicly that they are going to stop sending arms to Yemen, to the Houthis in Yemen, which would be, you know, a significantly positive step.

So I guess the first question is, do you believe that? Do you see that coming out? Do you see some positive aspects of Iran and Saudi Arabia reestablishing diplomatic ties?

General KURILLA. Thank you, Chairman—or Ranking Member Smith. So I think there is goodness anytime tensions can be lowered. An agreement is not implementation. While they were negotiating this over the last 90 days, we stopped five major shipments of Iranian arms that were going to the Houthis, and some of those were advanced components like inertial navigation systems for short-range ballistic missiles.

And I think that what we should be concerned about in this is that China is the one that mediated this. It was being done by two countries in the Middle East over the last 2 years, but what it shows is that China, not only do they have their economic information and military instruments of national power being—coming into the region, we are now seeing really for the first time their diplomatic instrument of national power.

Mr. SMITH. Yeah. And, Dr. Wallander, just to sort of follow up on that from a policy standpoint, because this room is kind of conditioned to not be fond of China, and that is where the conversation goes, and that is fine. But looking at the broader world, we are talking about Chinese involvement. We will leave the Russians out of it for the moment.

You know, they are doing a huge development initiative throughout Africa, and now they are negotiating, you know—well, peace treaty is the wrong word, but they are negotiating between Iran and Saudi Arabia. If you are in Africa, if you are in the Middle East, you know, what is our argument for why China is a problem? And, frankly, how do we balance?

And I understand the nefarious aspects of what China is up to, but how do we effectively make that case to these countries that we are trying to make our partners as opposed to—I mean, everyone in this room is going to be there, but we are not the ones we are trying to persuade. We are trying to persuade the countries out there that they need to be careful about their relationships with China and Russia. How do we do that in light of those facts?

Dr. WALLANDER. Well, thank you, Congressman. I share your assessment and what General Kurilla laid out as his concerns. I think that what—our duty and our argument to countries in the Middle East and Africa is that we want to work with them on common interests to improve their capabilities for national security and stability, whereas the track record of China and Russia in the form of Wagner actually comes in for their narrow national interest, often, as we have seen, the track record of China going in with what sounds like very tempting deals, which end up on the back end costing countries quite a lot and providing a lot less capability.

So the track record is something we can point to, and we are beginning to see that effect. In Africa, Wagner is beginning to not have the stellar reputation that the Russian government would like to claim that it has.

Mr. SMITH. And what I would strongly suggest is that we need to make that case, and we need to make it better. I think there is a tendency, at least in the pronouncements that I hear, just like,

we are the U.S., we are good. They are China, they are bad. Therefore, you have to agree with us.

I can assure you and everyone at this table that the rest of the world doesn't look at it that way. They look at a mixed record coming from us. They look at their needs. I think we are right. I think our role in the world is incredibly important. I think the alliance that we put together and the idea of a rules-based international order is vastly better than China's debt traps and China's desire to come in and extract resources. China's autocratic approach crucially—you know, if you say anything, I mean literally anything, that China doesn't like, they will cut you off at the knees. Okay? That is the argument we need to be making.

I mean, South Africa is out there doing joint exercises with Russia and China, and we are going "Don't do that." We need a better argument. It is really crucial that we do that.

Just in the last couple of minutes, on my question I raised in the first part, what are we doing in Iraq right now? What is our plan? Why are we there? What is the mission?

General KURILLA. So Iraq is a strategic partner, Congressman, and what we are doing there is for the enduring defeat of ISIS. We are partnered with the Iraqis, and, obviously, the Syrian Democratic Forces. We did 313 partnered operations last year. We have done 129 this year to date. And those are Iraqis in the lead or Syrian Democratic Forces in the lead.

The Iraqis just did a major large-scale operation where we are providing some of the intelligence and the fires aspect of that to go after the enduring defeat of ISIS. There is about 20,000 ISIS detainees inside of Iraq. And when we can get to them, where they can do this on their own, that is when we will know when we see the enduring defeat of ISIS.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much. Thank you, all.

I yield back.

Mr. LAMBORN [presiding]. Good morning, everybody. I will now recognize myself for 5 minutes.

General Kurilla, I am extremely concerned about the rapid progress Iran has made on its nuclear program. Earlier this month the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] said that Iran has produced uranium particles that were enriched up to 83.7 percent. Last week you testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee that Tehran can now produce sufficient fissile material for a nuclear weapon in less than 14 days.

Iran is on the brink of being a nuclear weapon state, which would change the security layout of the Middle East in unpredictable ways.

So, General, what activities or plans are you engaged in to reinforce U.S. deterrence and convey to Iran that acquiring nuclear weapons will not be in its best interest?

General KURILLA. Thank you, Congressman. I mean, the U.S. policy is Iran will not have a nuclear weapon. I think anything about plans that we have against any nuclear program would be best in a classified setting.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you. And we will bring it—bring that topic up in the classified setting.

And, Dr. Wallander, do you have anything to add to that here in this public setting?

Dr. WALLANDER. Just to endorse or support your assessment of the challenge and to reiterate that the role of the Department of Defense is to provide the Secretary of Defense and the President with military options for the prevention of Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons.

Mr. LAMBORN. Okay. Well, thank you, both. Further on Iran, they are posturing to be more than just a regional challenge. Over the course of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Iran has increasingly provided military support to Russia, specifically drones. Russia is planning to provide Iran with advanced capabilities, including military fighter jets, helicopters, and air defense systems.

So, and they are also planning to jointly build a drone factory inside Russia that would produce thousands of drones per year. This has more than just regional impact for Iran. So how is CENTCOM posturing to respond to this increasing collaboration between Iran and Russia? And what do you assess the implications to be for the region?

General KURILLA. Congressman, it is very concerning with this relationship that Iran and Russia have. We are seeing them move the UAVs to Russia, be able to use them in Ukraine, and these are the very same UAVs that they use to attack our forces in Iraq and Syria, and they are improving upon them. And we are seeing—we saw Iranian state media publicly announce that they will be getting S-35, which is a fourth gen-plus fighter aircraft. They will be providing those. We think that will happen at some point this year.

And it is this closer collaboration between two adversaries that is concerning. What we are doing is building the regional partnerships in the region to be able to counter that.

Mr. LAMBORN. And what about the—I think it is called the S-400 air defense system that Russia is saying it will provide to Iran?

General KURILLA. We have not seen the S-400 be provided to Iran, but Iran also produces very capable indigenous air defense systems as well.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you. And, Dr. Wallander, do you have anything to add to what General Kurilla just said?

Dr. WALLANDER. I just want to especially note the importance of the work of CENTCOM in creating regional constructs for integrating and improving the capabilities of partners in the region to push back and defend against the growing threat of Iran.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you. And lastly, General Kurilla, there are numerous efforts underway in Congress this year to enhance U.S. and Israeli collaboration on future warfare technologies. I have a lengthy amendment in the NDAA [National Defense Authorization Act] on this, for instance. This would include working together on directed energy, quantum computing, artificial intelligence, missile defense, space, and other cutting-edge programs.

Do you support efforts to provide Israel with additional capabilities to ensure that it can effectively respond to enhanced Iranian threats that we have been already talking about?

General KURILLA. Thank you, Congressman. We are committed to the defense of Israel. We work very, very closely with them in a lot of their new technologies. I have been to the country multiple

times and looked at everything from their ballistic missile defense, their counter UAS [unmanned aircraft systems], and a lot of their advanced technologies like their Iron Beam that they are coming out with. And we also are coming out with our own directed energy systems as well.

Mr. LAMBORN. Excellent. And, Dr. Wallander, anything to add to that?

Dr. WALLANDER. You know, the United States is—has an iron-clad commitment to the defense of Israel, manifested most recently in the extraordinarily successful exercise Juniper Oak, which exercised and demonstrated the level of interoperability and capability and the ability of the United States, CENTCOM in particular, to surge that capability and work closely with Israel to exercise and also demonstrate that capability.

Mr. LAMBORN. Very good. Thank you all for being here.

I now recognize Representative Courtney for 5 minutes.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. Lamborn. Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

General Langley, it was striking to me in your testimony, sort of, where you contrasted sort of Russia's entry into particularly countries like the Central African Republic using basically the Wagner Group as the sort of enticement to get into that country and other countries like it, whereas China is using more of an economic investment sort of approach in terms of trying to, again, ingratiate itself to these countries as well.

So going back to the Wagner Group sort of enterprise, can you just sort of describe, what is—what does Wager Group and Russia get out of that? Are they getting sort of—and there has been reporting that they basically get paid or reimbursed or compensated by gold, diamonds, other materials and minerals that obviously are valuable.

General LANGLEY. Congressman, absolutely Wagner has ill intentions. Their destabilizing activity. They have a history of it on the continent. And then, as we can see in the Central African Republic, and there are no good stories in their entrenchment in Libya as well, and now Mali.

I am concerned about that. That is a layered threat that we are really concerned that they are the vanguard of the Russian Federation, because they have a thinly veiled false value proposition that says we are going to provide security for you, especially nations that have been affected by a coup. That is what happened in Mali. And then they come with their invoice. And, whereas, the only security they actually provide is the bubble around the elite or those that were—that initiated the coup in the first place.

And there is also a roadmap to rare earth minerals or diamonds or gold. There is all of—Yevgeny Prigozhin is all about power for profit. What we are doing, Congressman, is initiating a campaign plan with our OAI [operations, activities, and investments] across the whole-of-government approach to suppress this. And I can get more specific on what we are doing in the closed session.

Mr. COURTNEY. And, again, China's approach is, again, using its sort of economic muscle to, again—and I think it was described, I mean, it is a bait-and-switch, you know, type of plan. But so 4 days ago, 5 days ago, there was an incident in the Central African Re-

public where 9 Chinese nationals were gunned down in broad daylight at a gold mine. Again, the initial claim by the government was that it was rebel forces that were responsible for that mass shooting.

Last night there was actually reporting that eyewitnesses described that the perpetrators were actually Wagner Group, which is kind of an interesting colliding autocracies playing itself out in that continent.

Xi Jinping actually stopped and interrupted the summit he had a few days ago with Putin to condemn the shooting, and, you know, promised that there would be a full investigation to get to the bottom of it. But, again, it was kind of a—you know, it is hard to get your head around the way that, you know, again, these two exploitative autocracies are now basically almost like scorpions in a bottle where their approach to this part of the world is now even possibly creating, you know, conflict amongst themselves.

So, you know, Dr. Wallander, I don't know if you want to comment on that—that, you know, that actually, going back to Mr. Smith's comments, is maybe an opportunity for us to really show that, you know, neither one of these players are really going to create stability or prosperity in this part of the world, and there is a better way to proceed.

Dr. WALLANDER. Thank you, Congressman. Yes. We are very clear with partners in—particularly in West Africa in the evidence that Wagner brings not security and stability for their countries, but in fact is an entry point for economic exploitation, for instability, actually extraordinary and horrifying assaults on civilians in these countries, because what Wagner offers is regime security, not national security, to these countries.

I would say on this China-Russia issue, that is an interesting incident, and we will have to track it more closely. I am more struck by the consonance and the alignment of strategic interests at the level of Xi and Putin, and that is the real challenge we have going forward, that they share an interest in undermining global security and the rules-based international order and use one another to advance their national goals, but often those goals aren't very complementary.

Mr. COURTNEY. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN [presiding]. I thank the gentleman. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Wittman, for 5 minutes.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Dr. Wallander and General Kurilla, General Langley, thank you all so much for joining us.

General Kurilla, General Langley, I want to begin with you. If we look at where we are today as necessarily focused on this era of great power competition with China and Russia, I believe that potentially opens up a door for an opportunity for a black swan event.

And my question is, based on your testimony, General Kurilla, beginning with you, where you said a flashpoint with Iran, a crisis in the region, a successful large-scale attack on a partner country, or an attack on the homeland by a VEO, would necessarily redirect

resources away from Central Command or, excuse me, away from other areas to Central Command. I think that is meaningful.

General Langley, you said an underinvestment in African security raises the risk of an unexpected crisis that would abruptly strip U.S. resources away from our top national security challenges in that arena of great power competition.

Gentlemen, in your professional military judgment, do you assess that the shift in great power competition and resources and focus by the United States increases the risk of a black swan event? And do you believe, though, that our military building capability to address great power competition in any way would deter a black swan event?

And, thirdly, do you believe that efforts by either Russia or China are adding to the potential of any actors out there that may be interested in perpetrating a black swan event?

General KURILLA. Congressman, thanks for that question. Interesting question. So when I took command in the first month, at the end of the first month, we had a commanders' conference, and one of it—we had to come up with, each group had to come up with two black swan events that they could see happening. We had 12 of them. At the end of this, we briefed them all. We found that 11 of the 12 are actually highly likely or at least probable that could occur, and by definition they are no longer a black swan event.

But I think to your question about preparing for strategic—or doing strategic competition, does that take away from not being able to see a black swan event? I don't think so, because I think when you are preparing and you are doing strategic competition you are increasing the capability of your military force, and that includes the intelligence-gathering apparatus and I think, if anything, it helps us be able to see some of those things that we might not otherwise be able to see.

Mr. WITTMAN. Very good. General Langley.

General LANGLEY. Congressman, the NDS, our National Defense Strategy, tells me to—specified and implied—to monitor and respond. I need to be able to identify indications and warnings.

One capability in a posture-limited and economy of force command is a decrement of our ISR capabilities. That is the foundational piece that I need, and it is also on my unfunded priority list of being able to bolster that capability, so I can see those black swans, so I can provide indications and warnings, and so we can reposition assets, or I can go to my colleague, General Kurilla, to have—to assist, and we can aggregate some of our forces to do that.

But at this point now that is what pressurizes our efforts of exploitation. It is a layered threat here. So, yes, in answer to your last question, any exploitation by the violent extremist organization I say yes, that is why I need increased ISR to address all of those issues.

Mr. WITTMAN. Very good. Thank you.

Gentlemen, let me ask, too, you laid out that you have assessed this particular situation, those risks. In your assessment, where do you believe the greatest risk exists? And, General Langley, you talk about maybe needing more ISR to be able to even further define that risk. But from both your professional judgments about what you see today, what is the greatest risk?

And what do you have currently that you are using to mitigate that risk? And what might you need in order to do everything possible to make sure that we deter those actors that may be wanting to perpetrate a black swan event?

General KURILLA. Congressman, for us, our greatest risk is with Iran right now. That is why it is our number one priority to deter them. And then I would tell you it is the violent extremist organizations that we are seeing the ISIS-Khorasan group in Afghanistan.

And what we are doing is we are applying our resources to both of those efforts. We look at those also through our partners to be the regional constructs to deter Iran, and, again, it is increasing our capability and intelligence inside of Afghanistan.

Mr. WITTMAN. Very good. General Langley.

General LANGLEY. Congressman, again, on the African continent it is a layered risk, it is a layered threat. So my first and immediate, as I engage with our partners, because it is going to be partner led, U.S. enabled, it is violent extremist organizations, and how do we address that.

So that segues into how we address that through our programs and our portfolios, the security force assistance. As we look at 333, title 10, to train and equip or build institutional capacity in a 332, that is what we need to address this.

But we do have a pacing threat, and we do have that immediate threat as well. And that is where it is going to be a whole-of-government approach, collectively all of the OAs coming together and putting together a value proposition to our African partners to deter them becoming the partner of choice.

Mr. WITTMAN. Very good. Thank you to our witnesses.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The Chair now recognizes Mr. Garamendi from California.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary Wallander, General Kurilla, and General Langley, thank you very much for the testimony today and your insight into the issues.

I would like to focus on Africa here, and specifically, General Langley and Dr. Wallander, you mentioned the whole of government. It is rather obvious that it is not within our current military capability to deal with all of Africa. So, Dr. Wallander, if you could talk to us about what you see the State Department, USAID, and U.S. private investment could and should be doing in Africa to address the problems that have been discussed here.

Dr. WALLANDER. Thank you, Congressman. It is an excellent question, and I would point to, as a signature sign—a signature element of that whole-of-government approach, including the private sector, the African Leaders Summit that was so successful in December of last year. There were elements of that summit that were focused on defense and security, on diplomacy, on development, and there was a significant private sector involvement in the discussions about how to advance security, stability, and prosperity in Africa.

The Department of Defense works closely with USAID to support their programs when they—when they need assistance and when they need AFRICOM support, and we work very closely with De-

partment of State in advancing governance, rule of law, institution building.

When we talk about security assistance, a lot of our security assistance is focused not merely on train and equip, but also on building civil-military relations, resilience, and capacity of our partner governments, so that they have that strong governance structure to be able to advance policies for their countries across the board.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Well, thank you. General Langley, same subject area.

General LANGLEY. Thanks for the question, Congressman, because the whole of government conceptually will work, can work, but we need to address some issues. As I look at USAID, and I talk to some of the administrators over there, and even administrative power, says that their non-humanitarian efforts to put the full throes or horsepower into the whole-of-government approach, most of that funding is earmarked.

So they can't do in-stride adjudication. They can't do in-stride reallocation, I should say, to the problems brought to bear in some African countries, whether it be famine relief or any other thing of development across their governance.

These African partners say that, holistically, the enduring solution to violent extremist organizations is good governance. To bolster the capacity in their governance, USAID and State Department need flexible funding to address these current near-term issues.

And just one point. As far as the military perspective, we add to that within our 333 programs, and we just want that to be more responsive as well.

Mr. GARAMENDI. 333. Explain, please.

General LANGLEY. I am sorry. That is our—the 333, title 10 authorities is authority that I have as they—as the African countries are embarking upon the violent extremist organization fight, they need training and they need assistance within that. The 332 builds ministerial capacity, so they can have—so they can embark upon the whole-of-government approach to address these issues.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I would note that the Peace Corps is returning to Africa. At least I am pleased about that.

I want to deal with the violent extremist organizations, the relationship between the U.S. military and French in Mali and other Sahel areas. If General Langley and Dr. Wallander, if you could speak to that issue, and where the French are and where they are not, and where we are and where we are not.

General LANGLEY. Yes. Congressman, I talk to the French weekly. And as their president came out with a new strategy, more of advise and assist and institution across, they are just moving some piece on the chessboard. We still have the same strategy that is in line with each other to be able to help and enable partner-led, but U.S.-enabled, to be able to ensure that they achieve their objectives.

So I work with the French all the time, and our operational plans and campaigning are in line.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I will yield back. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Georgia, Mr. Scott, for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Chairman. The Air Force is moving assets from EUCOM [U.S. European Command] to INDOPACOM [U.S. Indo-Pacific Command], and it just seems kind of strange that we would be moving those assets right now with everything going on in Ukraine.

Do you—do both of you have a need for additional air assets, or do you have the air assets that you currently need in CENTCOM and in AFRICOM?

General KURILLA. I have a requirement for additional air assets, Congressman.

Mr. SCOTT. Do you need A-10s in CENTCOM?

General KURILLA. We have been given A-10s or have been approved to come to CENTCOM.

Mr. SCOTT. Okay. Are you being given what you have requested, or are you being shorted on your request?

General KURILLA. So we have—you know, four of the five NDS priorities are in the CENTCOM area. Every day I am looking at the missions I have, the resources I have been allocated, and I am dynamically balancing risk against those. In the closed session, I can talk about specifically what some of those shortcomings are.

Mr. SCOTT. Okay. General Langley, thank you for your help when Congressman Panetta and I got to go to a couple of countries in Africa. We couldn't have done it without your assistance.

The thing that sticks in my mind on that trip is Wagner and how effective they have been with social media. It is open source that the French ISR picked up mass graves where Wagner had killed a lot of people. By the time it made it to the public what had happened, Wagner had already hijacked the pictures and convinced the public that it was the French that had carried out the atrocities.

I am concerned about the speed at which we are handling unconventional warfare and how we are able to increase our pace to deal with what I consider to be a terrorist organization like Wagner. What discussions are happening about how we increase the pace of our unconventional warfare to compete with Wagner and others who don't have to operate by the rules?

General LANGLEY. Congressman, thanks for that question because that is one of my concerns. We need to be able to operate at the speed of relevance, and as we consider in the military, as we all know, the OODA loop, to be able to observe, orient, decide, and act, and once Wagner does something like that, through our military information support operations, we need to be able to go at that cadence, faster cadence that interdicts their illicit activities, especially their malign information activities. So we are working whole of government as well. State Department does have some programs in place as well to deter the ill effects of the information spate that Wagner is espousing.

Mr. SCOTT. I mean, speed is the key to it. Once people have already made up their mind, then it is hard to—hard to unmake it, especially in those countries. And I am very concerned, and we met with the current leadership of Chad and some other countries about what is happening with the French. And there seems to be—an “attitude” might not be the right word, but kind of the belief that if they kick the French out of the country that the U.S. is going to build an enduring mission.

But it was the French Mirages that saved us in Tongo Tongo. My assessment is we would have lost everybody in Tongo Tongo had the French not had Mirages. Is that yours as well?

General LANGLEY. Congressman, I have read the Tongo Tongo report, and as every time we come around to matching capabilities and readiness assessment, we ask for more vertical lift, and we thank this Congress for the warfighting recovery network. We bolster that.

But I am still going to be asking for more as we—as we look at our reposture and as we are starting to expand our activities to address the violent extremist organizations going into the Gulf of Guinea states as well. So that is going to be comparable to what I ask for in this coming budget. Over.

Mr. SCOTT. I appreciate both of you. I will have more questions when we get to the other meeting. Look forward to coming back to Africa this year, General Langley, and seeing you over there again. Thank you.

Thank you, Dr. Wallander. Sorry I didn't have any questions.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair now recognizes Ms. Houlahan for 5 minutes.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you all for being here today.

General Kurilla, I thank you as well for your testimony, and I was really excited to hear about CENTCOM's Innovation Oasis competition. And I think that you probably do think as well that some of the best ideas for innovation and best practices come from people who are on the front lines rather than not necessarily the leadership.

So I was hoping you might be able to share a little bit more about the genesis of that idea. Are there any projects in particular that have come from that idea? And is there anything further that we can do here in Congress to be supportive of that initiative?

General KURILLA. Thanks, Congresswoman. So Innovation Oasis is our Shark Tank-like idea where what we do is we find some of the best ideas are trapped inside of a hangar, on a ship, in a cubicle, or down in a squad, and we use it as a way to elevate those ideas and then use the resources at CENTCOM to then promote those ideas. And we have received a lot of really good ideas.

One of them was a counter-UAS trainer. We had a bunch of proprietary systems out of there, and we created one, and one of our sergeants, an E-5 from the Massachusetts National Guard, programmed it himself on the weekends and came up with a counter-UAS trainer that we are able to use, and we are in the process of trying to advance that idea, putting the resources and energy of CENTCOM behind it.

We have another one coming up in the end of May from each of the different components within CENTCOM. They will pick their best person and send them up. It is a chance, really, to elevate great ideas that are otherwise trapped inside a squad or a ship, et cetera. You know, it was Staff Sergeant Cahill from the New Jersey National Guard who figured out a way to break through the hedgerows at France. A staff sergeant figured that out.

Ms. HOULAHAN. And is there any kind of way that you guys are tracking those successes, so that we can kind of continue to elevate

them and encourage that sort of innovative thinking in what is otherwise sort of a stodgy kind of an organization? I say that as a former Air Force person myself.

General KURILLA. Ma'am, we do have an open portal website where people submit their ideas and people can see those.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Excellent. Thank you.

And, General Langley, as well, thank you for being here today. U.S. Africa Command is a relatively new combatant command, and it was designed from the start to lead with diplomacy, with development and defense in a supporting role, and that is fascinating.

Until this last Congress I was able to serve both on the Armed Services and the Foreign Affairs Committee, which I really enjoyed that kind of combination of defense as well as diplomacy. So as part of the combatant commander in part—part combatant commander and part diplomat, how can you balance those roles? How are you able to balance those roles? As you are working with the Department of State or USAID to offer a whole-of-government support for our African partners, how are you finding that?

General LANGLEY. Congresswoman, thanks for asking that question, because, yes, all my engagements on the continent, and these countries, they know that their solution to their immediate threats, this is violent extremist organizations. And they know that they need to create a holistic approach in their whole-of-government approach.

So I always engage with assistant secretaries over at State, or administrators over at USAID, to ensure that we can build that capacity. And they asked me to advocate for their need for more flexible funding or increased funding and the number of programs.

But also, on the back of that, Prosper Africa, these are the initiatives that this conference—this Congress has legislated. We need to get after that, especially the GFA [Global Fragility Act], you know, formerly—well, actually, now known as Prevent Conflict Promote Stability.

So, holistically, that is what I—that is what I have in discussions with the leadership of the countries that I engage with, being able to add more to that, more capacity to those programs. Full funding will be helpful in—

Ms. HOULAHAN. If you would let us know if there are any further authorities or help and support that we can provide to allow that to be easier for you, that would be terrific.

And with the last minute of my time, I wanted to talk a little bit about the threat posed by infectious diseases. I had a chance to go on a bicameral delegation with Senator Coons and Senator Portman this past summer, and particularly struck by the Kibera slums that I was able to visit and how dangerous an outbreak in those slums could be, or, frankly, a rural outbreak as well; that is, a zoonotic one.

Can you all speak a little bit more in half a minute about what CENTCOM is doing on this issue and what we think we should be doing or how Congress can be more helpful on that?

General KURILLA. Congresswoman, I think it is by working with our partners on this to make sure that we identify the threat, and we are working with them as they help identify the needs.

General LANGLEY. I concur with what Erik is saying. We bring this up with our partners and have that discussion, and it is going to be partner led on these initiatives, and—but we will enable.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Thank you. I have run out of time, and I yield back, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentlelady.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee, Dr. DesJarlais.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Thank you, Chairman. And thank you, panel, for being here today.

I am going to start with General Kurilla and Dr. Wallander. As mentioned earlier in today's hearings, over the last few years Iran and its proxies across the region have escalated their use of projectiles, particularly drones, to attack U.S. forces and U.S. allies.

Can you give us an idea of how we are defending ourselves against these threats? And what does the data show about the performance of counter-UAS systems deployed in the region?

General KURILLA. Thanks, Congressman. So what we do see is advanced capabilities that Iran is using. I do think the services providing the counter-UAS capabilities that we do have in reason—in the region, it is a layered defense. No one system is effective against all. And so what we do is we look at the performance of the systems and look at ways to help improve them.

We just finished a counter-UAS experimentation and live fire down in Saudi Arabia in our Red Sands Integrated Experimentation Center that we have down there. We finished that last week against complex threats to identify weakness and other areas that we can improve the tactics, techniques, and procedures of those counter-UAS systems.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Can you share any numbers on performance percentage-wise of how we are doing against those assets?

General KURILLA. I would have to take that for the record, give you the exact performance parameters.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 151.]

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Okay. Dr. Wallander, did you have anything to add?

Dr. WALLANDER. I would just emphasize, in addition to the partnerships with countries in the region, that the focus of CENTCOM, and also policy and support, has been to emphasize the opportunities for integrated approaches where regional partners, especially in the Gulf, can work together to more comprehensively address the threats that you have identified.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Okay. And we also talked earlier about the Iran nuclear deal, and, Dr. Wallander, does it remain the policy of the United States to ensure that Iran will never acquire or develop a nuclear weapon?

Dr. WALLANDER. Yes, Congressman. President Biden has made that clear.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Okay. Given the strides that the Iranian nuclear program has made, I am not sure we should be confident we won't be witnessing a rise of nuclear Iran in the near future. So how do you assess CENTCOM's ability to respond to an Iranian nuclear breakout?

General KURILLA. Again, Congressman, I will be happy to talk about the Iranian nuclear program in a closed session.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Okay. Fair enough. There is probably no bigger threat to one of our greatest allies—Israel—than the Iranian nuclear program. Do you believe that if it became necessary the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] has the capabilities today to defend themselves against the rising threat of nuclear Iran?

General KURILLA. I think Israel has the capability to defend itself against ballistic missiles. I think any discussion other than that on a nuclear program is best in a closed session, Congressman.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Okay. Do we have contingency plans being prepared to defend U.S. personnel and assets in CENTCOM's AOR against Iranian retaliation in the event of an Israel strike on Iran's nuclear program?

General KURILLA. Congressman, we are always prepared to defend our forces that are in the region.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Okay. Just one final question, shifting to what impact the Ukraine war has had on Russia's posture in the Middle East. For instance, have we seen a reduced footprint in Syria?

General KURILLA. A very small reduction in the footprint. We have seen some reduction in terms of munitions, but for the most part they have maintained their force posture because it is very important to them. It shows the importance that they place on Syria. And you saw that Assad just went to Moscow, and he welcomed a permanent Russian basing in the region.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. We continue to observe Iran and its proxy shipping weapons to Russia for use against Ukraine. General, if you see such a shipment, say Iranian drones headed to Russia through your AOR, do you have the authority to interdict these shipments?

General KURILLA. We have the authority to stop things that we can see inside of certain countries, but I think that is best in a closed session, Congressman.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Okay. And I will save a few more questions for the closed setting. Thank you all for being here.

I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. Moulton, for 5 minutes.

Mr. MOULTON. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much, and thank you all for being here. I think it is incredibly important that we don't take our eye off the ball in the Middle East, even as we rightly focus on the rising threat of China and the necessary deterrence initiatives in the Pacific.

Dr. Wallander, back to this deal that the PRC was able to broker between Iran and Saudi Arabia, what do you think that this could mean for the region in the medium term? And what lessons should we learn from it with respect to how we compete with China outside the Indo-Pacific region?

Dr. WALLANDER. So, thank you, Congressman. I want to emphasize two points about the—what looks like a deal. As General Kurilla pointed out, it is an agreement. We will see about implementation. One is that these were quiet talks that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran were having for some time about reestablishing embassies, exchanging diplomats.

So China came in on the back end, played a role, but this is something that was in the works for a while.

Second of all, if this contributes to greater security and stabilization in the region, if this does—and, again, we are waiting to see—lead to an end to Iranian provision of capabilities and fueling of the conflict in Yemen and the threat that that has posed to other Gulf countries, that would be a welcome development.

So we are, you know, watch-and-wait posture. But I also want to emphasize we are concerned about China's increased activity on the diplomatic front to present itself as a problem solver, and we will make clear to our partners, such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with which we have broad, deep, longstanding security, economic, and political ties, that we are a strategic partner of choice.

And just because China came in at the end here and maybe helped seal the deal does not mean that the reliability and the longstanding partnership between the United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is something to discount.

Mr. MOULTON. So you are saying that China swooped in here at the last minute and took credit for the whole deal, which I think is something that we are all quite familiar with in the realm of politics and world affairs. If we get wind of the Chinese about to do something similar with perhaps another country in the Middle East and Iran, would it be wise for us to be the ones who swoop in and seal the deal, as you said?

Dr. WALLANDER. We remain closely engaged with all of our partners in the region and are attuned to their security concerns, support their diplomatic efforts that are consistent with international law, and advance stabilization and security. So we need to be forward-leaning, as you are suggesting, in working with our partners in the region, so that they know the United States have their best interests at heart and they can count on us.

Mr. MOULTON. So if that is what we should do in the future, why didn't we do it in this case?

Dr. WALLANDER. We have a close relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and I can't speak to the details of diplomatic discussions between countries that we were not privy to.

Mr. MOULTON. Okay. Well, I hope we go into this more in the classified session, because if we knew this was happening, I don't know why we wouldn't be the ones to get diplomatic credit here, especially when the alternative choice is the PRC.

General Kurilla, we are tracking that, in Syria, Russian military forces have been behaving unprofessionally towards U.S. forces and have repeatedly harassed our troops with low-flying aircraft. Could you please describe Russia's behavior in Syria towards our troops and how that has changed over the course of the conflict in Ukraine?

General KURILLA. Thanks, Congressman. So what we see is their behavior is unprofessional and unsafe. Since 1 March, it is the highest number of tactical air flights over U.S. forces in areas since the beginning of the—since Russia was in the AOR. Really starting on 1 March, it has—when I talk tactical flights, that is fighter aircraft or air-to-ground aircraft flying over our area.

We always have—our own fighters will intercept them, so we always have the ability to protect ourselves, but, really, we are there

for D-ISIS [defeat ISIS]. They are under the guise of being there under D-ISIS. We do not see them doing a defeat ISIS role. When they are doing that, it is unnecessary, unsafe, and unprofessional.

Mr. MOULTON. Dr. Wallander, do you think there is an escalation risk here?

Dr. WALLANDER. There is always a risk when Russian forces are behaving unprofessionally. And making sure to maintain American presence and appropriate responses is something we count upon from our military commanders, but escalation management is something that we know that they take—they are mindful of as well.

Mr. MOULTON. Well, my time is up, but I would just say that if there is always a risk when Russian soldiers are behaving unprofessionally, it also seems that Russian soldiers always behave unprofessionally. So we really have to manage this risk.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Mississippi, General Kelly, for 5 minutes.

Mr. KELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And my first question is for you, General Langley. Have you seen a shift in the Wagner forces available in Africa with the shift to Ukraine, or has it pretty much stayed consistent since they got more deeply involved in Ukraine?

General LANGLEY. Congressman, that is a great question. I have not seen a shift, but here is what my analysis would tell me, though. That they wouldn't have—what you have on the African continent is a false value proposition of security. So I don't think they are going to have their experts on the continent of Africa for that purpose. They are going to have the businessmen that are trying to make their way to the mines for profit.

Mr. KELLY. And I am going to follow up on Seth Moulton, because I agree with him. We need to be forward-leaning in diplomacy. And right now the partner of choice around the world, whether that is South America or CENTCOM or AFRICOM, is the United States military. However, our State Department sometimes makes that very, very difficult.

So we have Jackson-Vanik and a lot of things that we punish people wholly when we see their policies don't align with U.S. policies, and that is not a bad thing. There is a purpose for that.

But do you guys see any way that we can do that on a sliding scale and a reward-punishment basis as opposed to a wholesale you acted bad, so, therefore, we are not going to do any IMET [International Military Education and Training] with your country anymore. We are not going to provide U.S. aid to your country anymore. We are not going to do anything, we completely cut them out and create a vacuum in those countries where they have to choose China or Russia because we are not available because of our State Department.

And I will use a prime example. I visited five countries in Africa last July, May or July, somewhere around that timeframe. And I went to Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, and Djibouti. And in all of those we had State Department restrictions that were preventing us from being effective as a military as we can.

What is the solution to this, so that we can build those future leaders in those countries, instead of just saying no? We can do an incentive-based program as opposed to just saying no? Any ideas?

General LANGLEY. Congressman, the 7008 sanctions on that country, but restrictions for me—I have to look at the whole-of-government approach. For example, Burkina Faso, 7008 was imposed, but I had to—thank you for—I just really want to thank you for the language within 8823 that says “notwithstanding authorities.” There are still some notwithstanding authorities, and that is why at Flintlock that we had last week, major exercise in West Africa, the Burkinamis were there. They were there.

So until they—this is a message to them that they need to set the stage to return back to democratic norms. But across the whole of government, I met with State Department last week, so they also have some activities and investments that they can do to be able to employ in Ouagadougou, because Ambassador Clark, she is looking for what CT [counterterrorism] mechanism we can do to still engage with Burkina Faso, so they can embark upon the fight against violent extremist organizations.

Mr. KELLY. Thank you. Let me kind of get—I have got one more question. But I think you are 100 percent right, and I just think we really have to work this problem set, because there is a lot of opportunities that we are missing, and we are giving opportunities to our competitors by not using a reward system to modify behavior to our culture.

The final thing, and General Kurilla, you have done an outstanding job, and your predecessors—the State Partnership Programs—and we need to get stronger in Africa, General Langley, but you have done an outstanding job of using that resource, which is a low-resource dollar-wise programs, which can be very, very effective. But it also takes at your levels engaging with those State partnership adjutant generals to make sure that their priorities align with your priorities in those countries that they represent.

And so I think there is a lot of opportunity, and just if you can comment on those.

General KURILLA. Congressman, thanks. If I could just back up one. On the IMET program, I think that the highest return on investment for every dollar we spend, because I will tell you in the CENTCOM region many of our chiefs of defense went to school at our military—School of Professional Military Education back in the States.

I thank you for what Mississippi does with Uzbekistan. I think we do have great alignment, and the return on investment we get from our State Partnership Program is significant, and it is one of the highest requested things from a lot of our countries in the region.

Mr. KELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The Chair now recognizes the gentlelady from New Jersey, Ms. Sherrill, for 5 minutes.

Ms. SHERRILL. Thank you. And thank you all for being here today and for all of your service to our country, not just now but over many years.

As you may know, Picatinny Arsenal in my district does a lot of work on our supply chain, especially with some of the minerals that we need in our supply chain. And so, General Langley, as you know, the African continent is full of rare earth mineral deposits, and I am wondering what you are doing in that area to increase the stability of our supply chains, especially with the incursions of China into the African continent and the relationships they have there.

Is there an ability for us to stabilize our partnerships there to better protect our supply chains, or do we really need to be thinking about moving our supply chains out of rare earth minerals coming from Africa?

General LANGLEY. Congresswoman, that is a great question, because here is—here is another opportunity for me to illuminate the illicit activities and the shady deals that the PRC has started to embark upon with some of our partners, just illuminate and amplify their activities.

And we do that through the whole-of-government approach and through these country teams to give the cautionary tales, because as we look at these rare earth minerals, we do know that that is—some of those rare earth materials are—from a military sense will go into our future weapons, our high-tech weapons. But in the holistic sense, as far as the society, it is—a lot of these are clean energy type—necessary items that need to be able to be harvested for that particular capability.

So just engaging with our partners, giving the cautionary tale in the information space of the negative effects in the long run.

Ms. SHERRILL. Thank you. And then also, with—back to Picatinny Arsenal, we have the Joint Center of Excellence for Guns and Ammunition. And, we're working on a new gun-based counter to small, unmanned aircraft systems. I know there are different ways we are approaching unmanned systems.

But, General Kurilla, how would a gun-based system, which would potentially be cheaper and easier for partners especially to train on, be beneficial to supporting your organization's efforts to combat threats to our allies in the region?

General KURILLA. Congresswoman, so counter-UAS systems, it's a layered defense. Generally, the gun-type systems, and we have them employed right now with our counter-rocket and mortar systems, a lot of our partners use a gun-type system. Ukraine uses gun-type systems.

It's generally the last line of defense, just based on the range of the munitions of the guns that they use, where we're using the rockets, or sorry, a missile that would go out and then do the interception or electronic warfare.

But, there is a need for a gun-type system as part of a layered defense.

Ms. SHERRILL. Thank you. And, General Kurilla as well, during the last year's CENTCOM posture hearing, I discussed with your predecessor my concerns about the 2019 bombing in Baghuz, Syria, which led to the deaths of over 60 civilians.

The FY23 [fiscal year 2023] NDAA authorized \$25 million towards operationalizing Secretary Austin's Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan. Can you elaborate on what your

team is doing to fully support the harm mitigation plan, and what actions you've taken to eliminate civilian casualties in the AOR?

General KURILLA. So ma'am, we were involved in the civilian harm mitigation process in that, and the implementation. And so, what it's done, we're in the process of implementing now. There will be a Center of Excellence at OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense].

And, then we have been authorized individuals both at the CENTCOM headquarters and each of our components, to hire experts on that.

Ms. SHERRILL. And, do you need additional resources for that mission?

General KURILLA. I think those resources that were provided with that is what's going to help us in our ability, the authorization to hire those individuals.

Ms. SHERRILL. Thank you. And I yield back.

Mr. SCOTT [presiding]. The Chair recognizes General Bacon for 5 minutes.

Mr. BACON. Thank you, Mr. Scott. Thank you, Dr. Wallander, General Kurilla, General Langley for being here. Most of my questions are with the CENTCOM AOR.

General Kurilla, is it true that we have with this recent report that we have \$7.1 billion in weapons that were left behind in Afghanistan when we withdrew?

General KURILLA. Congressman, I have seen the list of items. It is exhaustive. I can't give you the exact amount. But I do know that \$7 billion is a number that I've seen out there.

Mr. BACON. Are there particular weapons that you're most concerned with falling in the hands of the Taliban or ISIS or al-Qaida?

General KURILLA. I think there is a wide variety of munitions that would be concern that would be used outside of the country by individuals if they got their hands on them.

Mr. BACON. Now \$7 billion of weapons is a grave concern to many of us here. A second line of questioning, how often are you under attack from Iran with the unmanned aerial vehicles?

Is it weekly? Monthly? Can you give us a feel for how often you're being attacked?

General KURILLA. It is periodic. We see periods where they will do more. There has been a number since 1 January 2021, the number is about 78 times that we have been attacked.

Mr. BACON. Seventy-eight times you've been attacked out of—and, are these UAVs flying out of Iran and striking us?

Or, are they being used by militias controlled by Iran?

General KURILLA. Congressman, so what Iran does to hide its hand, is they use Iranian proxies. That's either UAVs or rockets to be able to attack our forces in either Iraq or Syria.

Mr. BACON. Are these considered acts of war by Iran?

General KURILLA. They are being done by the Iranian proxies is what I would tell you, Congressman.

Mr. BACON. Do we have the right level of investment and fielding for counter-UAV? I know you talked a little bit about it.

But, just are we, should we be doing more? Or are we about right?

General KURILLA. We are doing more right now in terms of getting additional capability to the field. We'll be bringing some directed energy systems online. That is—you know, everything is a layered defense.

I think when we bring some new capabilities online, you want to be able to then test these systems and make sure they have the right probability of kill based on different systems and the techniques that the enemy is using to be able to attack you.

So, I think this will be an area we'll continue to invest in. I know that there's other organizations like SOCOM [U.S. Special Operations Command] that are doing some to bring additional capability to it.

But, all of it is a part of a layered defense.

Mr. BACON. Well, thank you, General Kurilla. I appreciate your inputs there. The number 78, to me, that's a big number and we should be focusing more on that, that Iran's doing this.

Dr. Wallander, is the Iranian/Saudi Arabian re-approchement a positive or a negative thing when it comes to the United States national security interests?

Dr. WALLANDER. Congressman, if it contributes to security and stability in the region, if it contributes to an end to Iran's provision of military capabilities to the Houthi regime in Yemen, if it contributes to an end to the offensive attack from Yemen to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, it would be a positive development.

But, if is the important word. And, we will have to monitor that closely.

Mr. BACON. I believe that's a very valid point with the effects on Yemen. But, does this take some pressure off Iran on its nuclear program?

Dr. WALLANDER. Congressman, we do not see any signs that any of the countries in the region, our partners in the region, are complacent about the dangers that an Iranian nuclear weapons capability would pose to their very direct security. So, I do not believe so.

Mr. BACON. Is there a potential for the Abraham Accords expanding to other countries? Are we seeing a potential there?

Dr. WALLANDER. Congressman, I won't speak for the state of Israel and its regional relationships. But I will say that we know that there are opportunities, and there are discussions with other countries in the region. And the United States supports those discussions and would welcome that development.

Mr. BACON. It's one of the best developments we've had, I think, in recent years there. And, my final question, and I'll go back to General Kurilla.

What is the impact if we turn off the 2002 AUMF [Authorization for Use of Military Force]? What's the impact to you?

General KURILLA. Congressman, right now we do not use the 2002 for any of our operational activities.

Mr. BACON. Does it have any impact in responding to the Shia militias that have Iran fingerprints on them?

General KURILLA. So, right now, if there's an Iranian fingerprint on that, we can use the article 2 from the President.

Mr. BACON. Okay. Thank you very much. I appreciate the concise answers. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. SCOTT. The Chair now recognizes Congressman Carabajal for 5 minutes.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, thank you Secretary Wallander, General Kurilla, and General Langley for being here today. I'm nursing a cold, as you can tell.

General Kurilla, last year Secretary Austin was focused on improving civilian harm mitigation and response, and last August signed the Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan.

How is the implementation of this plan going? And, how is it impacting operations in the AOR? Are we seeing positive effects?

General KURILLA. Congressman, we were involved in the development of the overall plan. And, the implementation aspect, what it will do is create a Center of Excellence up at the OSD level.

And, it has authorized each of the combatant commands to have higher experts at the combatant command level and each of the components. And, we're in the process right now of going through the hiring process to be able to get those experts online and in the headquarters.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you. General Langley, I just returned from a delegation to Morocco, which was very informative.

African nations are increasingly influential in the United Nations and other international forums. There continues to be a misunderstanding about the AOR.

You've been commander of AFRICOM now for about 6 months. What are some of the misconceptions you hear about from both American officials and the American public about the AOR? And, how can we approach the AOR in a more productive and effective manner?

General LANGLEY. Congressman, thanks for that question, because I wanted to just echo what in my visit to Morocco that they want us to be a partner of choice. But also, to talk about how, what capabilities they have to export security.

African nations want to solve African problems themselves. They want to own it. They just need us to enable us—enable them in various title 10 authorities that I have in 333, which is train and equip.

What Morocco is right now, they are a microcosm of what we have in the IMET program. They bring other African, Sub-Saharan African nations to—onto their ground to be able to train with them.

And, we have African Lion getting ready to kick off. Exercises like that is sharing of ideas and sharing of norms, supporting democratic ideals, and also a full-fledged fight against violent extremist organization capability and capacity building.

Mr. CARBAJAL. African Lion exercises started in May or June?

General LANGLEY. Yes, we just got, we just finished out the second phase. It's going to extend through June.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Great. General Langley, violent extremism has been a very difficult problem to address, particularly in the AFRICOM AOR. There continues to be an alarming rate in violent events by militant Islamic groups, including Al Shabaab and al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb.

What is the biggest impediment to being able to better address these threats? Do you think the U.S. needs to amend our strategy in the AOR to do so?

General LANGLEY. Congressman, I'll state that the countries that I've been to, as we see this threat starting to metastasize West Africa, which I characterize that's the tipping point. These countries recognize that.

And, they think that the regional players are going to address this issue. Regional players such as Niger, Ghana in the Accra Initiative.

The ECOWAS [Economic Community of West African States] economic construct are trying to enable some of these countries to be able to form a regional coalition to address this issue. They just need help in the various authorities that I have.

And—but what we need is more responsive authority so they don't go over to Wagner. And so, in the 333 area of train and equip, you know, 332 and building ministerial capacity, that's what needs to be more responsive as we collectively work with State Department and this Congress to be more responsive so they won't select Wagner, which is a threat and destabilizing action.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. SCOTT. The Chair recognizes Congressman Gallagher for 5 minutes.

Mr. GALLAGHER. Thank you. General Kurilla, I appreciate your commitment to fostering technological innovation through Task Force 59, 99, and 39. I think these task forces are very—an important test of innovative technologies.

But, how would you assess the Department of Defense's effectiveness in actually operationalizing new technological outputs, particularly adopting commercial technology and integrating it into what you need as a warfighter?

General KURILLA. So thanks, Congressman. If I could talk about using just 59 as an example. We're using commercial off-the-shelf to be able to increase maritime domain awareness.

We are using a lot of commercial technology that was used for the tuna industry. And, in that industry they don't go out to find fish, they go out to catch fish.

So, we're using a lot of these systems right now, whether that's a Saildrone or an unmanned surface vessel or an undersea vessel, that can have a lot of wide variety of commercial use as well. We're operationalizing that and putting it toward this maritime domain awareness, which allows us to more effectively use our manned assets.

So, a destroyer right now patrolling in the Red Sea, is the equivalent of one police car patrolling the State of California. We take these unmanned systems and we put them out there, and they act as indications and warnings and early sensors to then more effectively use.

An unmanned system can go up and find anomalies and look at behavior, is that normal, is that not normal? We run that through a structured database, run algorithms against it, and then it can say hey, you need to take a look at this, this is an abnormal behavior. And then, more effectively use that manned asset.

We've done this, we've also gone to the INDOPACOM, and we've gone to EUCOM, and shown them this capability. We've exercised with those countries. We just finished an exercise last week, 7,000

participants, 42 countries, 35 ships, and 30 unmanned systems. That was 42 countries participating in that.

And, if you saw Admiral Gilday, the CNO [Chief of Naval Operations] of the Navy, he was just on 60 Minutes. He sees that 40 percent of the Navy in the future is some type of unmanned system. We think we are helping inform that in a way that we can test out in our region as well.

Mr. GALLAGHER. So, you're taking commercial technology, unmanned technology in this case, you are then using it and adapting it to meet a warfighting need to enhance your maritime domain awareness.

What then, okay, having proved the concept in this task force, what then are the barriers to scaling that or applying that in other areas from your perspective?

General KURILLA. Funding would be one.

Mr. GALLAGHER. Um-hum.

General KURILLA. And, I think taking systems that we're using right now and then converting them to programs of record. But, I'd really defer to the services on that to what would be the barriers to do that.

Mr. GALLAGHER. Talk a little bit about, have allies in the region, allies and partners in the region, been receptive to this?

Have you been able to integrate them in any cases? Talk about the ally and partner piece if you would.

General KURILLA. Congressman, that is probably the strength of it. So, our goal by the end of this year is to have 100 unmanned surface and subsurface vessels. Right now, we're on path. We're getting close to 50.

But, we can see right now our way forward to 85, 75 percent of them through our partners. And, we just did an exercise with Bahrain and we did an exercise in the Gulf of—up in Aqaba, where we took partners and everybody was able to see the same feed.

It didn't go back through NAVCENT, Naval Command Central. It didn't go back through them; it went directly to our partner nations. That's what they find so useful about it.

And, candidly, it's because it's not foreign military sales and some of the bureaucracy that's associated with that to be able to get it, and the timelines to get it, because they can go directly to the vendor and purchase.

Mr. GALLAGHER. Thank you for that. Quickly, General Langley, I know I only have a little bit over a minute.

Can you talk a little bit about the threat as you see it, posed by the Chinese Communist Party's infrastructure investments in the AFRICOM AOR?

General LANGLEY. Yes, Congressman. Some of their infrastructure investment, such as Smart Cities, have possibly dual use or infringe upon the privacy of the African citizens at large.

So, there's some ill intentions by their actions. And we can, you know, show that and talk to it with our partners and tell the cautionary tales that some of their infrastructure on the face of it may serve them, serve their purposes.

But, in the end, through the financing realm, it can have some ill effects on their society.

Mr. GALLAGHER. I appreciate that. I probably don't have enough time for another question. Maybe just quickly back to General Kurilla.

Within your AOR, going back to allies and partners, what do you think is the country that doesn't get enough focus or attention that we need to be paying a little bit closer attention to?

General KURILLA. Congressman, that's a hard question. I mean, I spend about 50 percent of my time in the region. I've been to every country except Iran, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan right now.

Mr. GALLAGHER. Interesting. Okay. I guess we'll answer another time. It wouldn't be offensive to the other, the countries that you leave out. But, appreciate it.

Mr. SCOTT. The Chair now recognizes Congresswoman Escobar for 5 minutes.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And many thanks to our witnesses for your time today before our committee, but also, of course, most especially for your service to our country. I represent El Paso, Texas, home to Fort Bliss, a key military installation in our country.

General Kurilla, as you've taken command of a COCOM [combatant command] that has seen a very significant redirection of resources over the last decade as the United States repositioned focus from the global war on terrorism to great power competition, you have mentioned in your testimony the threats in your AOR continue to evolve in complexity and risk, particularly in air domain.

Can you elaborate on the cooperative efforts between industry and academia that are propelling the work of Task Force 99?

I have long held a particular interest in making sure that we link as closely as possible to the brilliance within academia to our advantage.

General KURILLA. Thank you, Congresswoman. So, Task Force 99, that is our Air Domain Innovation Task Force. One of the things we're working with them is to shorten the kill chains.

We're doing a lot of stuff with artificial intelligence and machine learning to be able to do dynamic targeting. But we are seeing, and our goal is by this January from a year ago, to be able to increase 700 percent our ability to target dynamic targets in a 24-hour period.

Part of that comes from our work on being able to educate our force on how to use machine learning and artificial intelligence. When we look across the entire force, we look, one of them is our digital literacy. So, how do we improve the digital literacy of the force?

A lot of our younger generation that comes in, they have this. But, then again, as our leaders are a little older, they may not have it. So, how do we educate them?

And through academia is one of the methods that we do it.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Are there some key opportunities in that area, in terms of the education that you see where Congress can be helpful?

General KURILLA. I think that as we identify these, we'll certainly come to Congress if we need the assistance. But, I think we have all the authorities that we need to be able to do that now, ma'am.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Great. Thank you. Dr. Wallander, General Kurilla, while Russia and the Chinese Communist Party look to meddle in CENTCOM and foster financial dependencies by other countries, the United States has, and will continue, to provide security assistance and weapons to strategic allies in the region, just as we are currently doing in Ukraine.

However, shortfalls of our domestic industrial base have come to the forefront of conversations as we look to backfill our own stockpiles for our security and that of our allies. To this point, can you outline some of the broad FMS [foreign military sales] challenges that affect your ability to maintain commitments to our ally nations, and what risk do we incur when our domestic industrial base cannot meet those FMS requirements?

And, we'll start with Dr. Wallander, please.

Dr. WALLANDER. Thank you, Congresswoman. As I believe you are aware, but allow me to emphasize, the Department recognizes the challenges in the defense industrial base in providing timely capabilities, for example, to Ukraine, backfilling ourselves and allies, and fulfilling a lot of those contracts.

Deputy Secretary Hicks is leading a whole-of-department focus on identifying obstacles and opportunities in relations with the defense industrial base. One of the achievements was Congress authorizing and allowing us to do multiyear procurement contracts, because that's one of the things we have heard from industry.

But, this is a major focus of the Department. And, we've already seen progress in some areas in procuring ammunition, producing and procuring ammunition more quickly.

But, much remains to be done, including in fulfilling many of those partner contracts.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Thank you. General Kurilla.

General KURILLA. Congresswoman, specifically what specific munitions. We see it really on our high-end munitions, our Patriots, THAAD [Terminal High Altitude Area Defense], and even the F-16, because we—but, the good news there is, we just had our very first F-16 Block 70 come off the South Carolina line.

And, that's going to be going to Bahrain. And, we have orders for those for Bahrain and Jordan as well.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Great. Thank you so much. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN [presiding]. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Gaetz, for 5 minutes.

Mr. GAETZ. General Langley, I have constituents that have been scattered across Africa on train-and-equip missions. So, just ballpark in the last decade, how many Africans has the United States military trained and equipped?

General LANGLEY. Congressman, I don't have that figure. I can get that figure for you.

Mr. GAETZ. Just ballpark. Just, you know, how many?

General LANGLEY. Congressman, it would be a wild guess right now.

Mr. GAETZ. It seems like something we should know, right?

General LANGLEY. Over the years we have trained a substantial number, especially in the Gulf of Guinea states. But, including—

Mr. GAETZ. Is it more than 10,000?

General LANGLEY. It is more than 10,000.

Mr. GAETZ. More than 50,000?

General LANGLEY. I'd say we're reaching around 50,000 at least.

Mr. GAETZ. Okay. And, what percentage of the people we've trained end up participating in insurrections or coups against their own government?

General LANGLEY. A very small number, Congressman. A very small number.

Mr. GAETZ. So, what percentage do you think?

General LANGLEY. I'd say probably less than 1 percent.

Mr. GAETZ. But, it does happen, right?

General LANGLEY. The IMET program is in force, and we've pushed a number, a significant number through our schools across the military, so.

Mr. GAETZ. Yeah. And, what data sets do you track to arrive at the conclusion that less than 1 percent of the roughly 50,000 that we've trained have participated in coups?

Because it would be like about 500, about 1 percent of 50,000.

General LANGLEY. Congressman, we may have that information. I don't at this time. But, I know there's—

Mr. GAETZ. Well, I know there are some, right? Like in—go ahead and throw up that image. This is Colonel Mamady Doumbouya.

And, this is a photo of him. Did we train and equip him in Guinea?

General LANGLEY. By name, I cannot identify that.

Mr. GAETZ. Well, that guy in the middle with the big red hat, Colonel Mamady Doumbouya, that's him with a bunch of U.S. service members outside of our embassy.

And, just months after this photo was taken in 2021, he led a coup in Guinea and threw out the leader. Does that concern you?

General LANGLEY. Congressman, core values is what we start off with in IMET programs. And, we stick with that.

Mr. GAETZ. Do we share core values with Colonel Doumbouya?

General LANGLEY. Core values. I will repeat that, core values, respect for it matters.

Mr. GAETZ. I know. But, do we—do we share those values with Colonel Doumbouya?

General LANGLEY. Absolutely. In our—

Mr. GAETZ. We do?

General LANGLEY. In our curriculum.

Mr. GAETZ. He led a coup.

General LANGLEY. We do.

Mr. GAETZ. Okay. Like, that's a very telling answer. In, Burkina Faso, did we share core values with the leader that we trained there who led a coup?

General LANGLEY. It's in our curriculum. We stress core values.

Mr. GAETZ. Leading a coup is part of our curriculum?

General LANGLEY. We request civilian-led governance. So,—

Mr. GAETZ. Wait a minute. Hold on, hold on. Is leading coups in our curriculum?

General LANGLEY. Absolutely not.

Mr. GAETZ. So,—

General LANGLEY. Civilian led—

Mr. GAETZ. My question is——

General LANGLEY. Civilian led——

Mr. GAETZ. My question is, do we share core values with the coup leader in Burkina Faso, who we trained?

General LANGLEY. Holistically we teach whole, you know, core values, with a respect for civilian governance, apolitical. And, that's what sticks across a very high percentage, in the 90——

Mr. GAETZ. But, not everybody, right?

General LANGLEY. Over 99 percentile.

Mr. GAETZ. But not everybody. And, when it—I wonder how many people it takes to plan a coup? I mean, initially you didn't know how many we trained and equipped.

Then, you said it was 1 percent. You had no basis for that 1 percent number, because there's no data set you track.

Mr. Chairman, I seek unanimous consent to enter into the record "Another U.S.-trained soldier stages a coup in West Africa" by the Intercept.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 131.]

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. GAETZ. And, I further seek unanimous consent to enter into the record, "U.S. Forces trained the Guinean colonel behind the recent coup in West African country." And, this is in regard to Guinea.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 140.]

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. GAETZ. So, I guess the question is, why should U.S. taxpayers be paying to train people who then lead coups in Africa?

General LANGLEY. Congressman, our curriculum harvests core values and also to be able to embolden these countries for a representative democracy.

Mr. GAETZ. But General, that democracy isn't what emerges. The problem is, I know you may have great confidence in what you're teaching, but when two governments have been overthrown. I guess, how many governments have to be overthrown by people we train before you sort of get the message that our core values might not be sticking with everyone?

Is it five countries? Ten?

General LANGLEY. We'll continue with our persistence in assuring——

Mr. GAETZ. But, do you think it's a good——

General LANGLEY. That they harbor, that they harbor democratic norms and democratic values——

Mr. GAETZ. Just a moment ago you said——

General LANGLEY. That are apolitical.

Mr. GAETZ. You said we shared core values with Colonel Doumbouya. You said that just moments ago in response to my question. And, his core value seems to be leading a coup.

So, I don't think it stuck. I think we should at least know how many countries we train the coup plotters in. How many is too many?

Because clearly, two is not too many. And, I think we could use our resources far more effectively than doing this.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from New York, Mr. Ryan, for 5 minutes.

Mr. RYAN. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you all for being here. In particular, I just want to thank General Langley and General Kurilla as we mark the 20th anniversary essentially of our tremendous sacrifice and service of all of our service members in Iraq.

I know you both spent a significant amount of time there. And, I just want to thank you as someone who also spent some time there. And, thank everyone that has risked and sacrificed in those conflicts. And, just appreciate you all.

I wanted to follow up, General Kurilla, I really appreciated your focus. And, my colleague, Mr. Gallagher, was talking about the innovation opportunities, just to build on that and follow on that, and also bring General Langley a little bit into the conversation.

I think this is one of the most important and exciting things that you all are doing. I wanted to ask, between Task Force 59, 99, and 39, but also what you're both seeing and observing out of Ukraine?

You know, our allied forces fighting, innovating, iterating rapidly, what are we learning there? What are you all observing there that we can carry to the threats in your AORs as well as threats in other AORs?

General KURILLA. Congressman, thank you for that. I think you nailed it. We are watching what they're doing there.

And again, I think the innovation is because they're in conflict, because they're in this operation right now, that's where we see the most learning and the best ideas coming forward.

You're familiar with how they are using cell phones to be able to identify drones. And, they use, they basically operationalize the populace.

Our Task Force 39, working with a vendor, we have created a very similar system, but that also uses artificial intelligence that they apply against it. That we think we can operationalize a lot of the population in the Middle East to help identify and track drones outside of just using a radar.

We do find that the best ideas on how to operationalize things come from those at the pointy end of the spear.

Mr. RYAN. And, just to follow up on that, how can we, of course, there's no substitute for being in direct combat, but how can we replicate, how can we create, how can we scale what you're doing in your task forces?

General Langley, are you taking similar approaches? And, what authorities and tools can we give you all to, as close as we can, create those cycles of innovation?

General KURILLA. So, Congressman, what I would tell you, that we are sharing with our other combatant command partners, and back with the services obviously. We get a lot of the funding from the service to do this.

One of the ways we do this, is by training and exercises. I think that's where you really can flesh out the best ways.

And, you put them through very difficult training where you stress the systems. We've had numerous exercises, like I said, we just finished one, 7,000 people, 42 countries, 35 ships, 30 platforms, AI platforms and artificial intelligence platforms.

By doing that, we learn from that. And then we say, how can we get better or what do we take from this to then apply it at scale?

General LANGLEY. Congressman, I have the same enthusiasm about what effects we're going to get from our joint exercise program. We just finished last month Obangame Express for Maritime Awareness. We also finished Flintlock, and also embarking on African Lion.

This was where, a form where we collectively share ideas with our partners. And then they gain capacity and capability from, and also interoperability. So, to address some of the needs and whether it be in the maritime domain space or in counter-VEO type operations.

Mr. RYAN. Thank you. And, I think just as a follow-on to encourage us to think about, no need to answer, but how we can scale and keep, you know, these sorts of initiatives not personality-based and by exception but make them both institutionalized but still adaptive.

So, I really appreciate that. A brief amount of time left, but I wanted to ask you both to expand a little bit more on your answer, General Kurilla, on the 1991 and 2002 AUMFs related to Iraq.

We're obviously having this debate now in Congress, which I think is very necessary and healthy, and would ask again, just to expand on your brief answer, General Kurilla, you don't foresee significant or any operational risks were those to be repealed?

General KURILLA. Congressman, I do not use the 2002 as the basis for our operations. We use the 2001 AUMF.

Mr. RYAN. Thank you. General Langley.

General LANGLEY. The same. We use the 2001 AUMF. And, if that was considered, we'll need to take another look at what would be in its place if that's addressed.

Mr. RYAN. Thank you. I yield back, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Indiana, Mr. Banks, for 5 minutes.

Mr. BANKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Kurilla, last week or 2 weeks ago, the House voted against a measure that would have tied the hands of the administration on our troop levels in Syria.

I've been out of the room for a little bit, I don't know if you've already discussed this. But, can you talk about what we're doing in Syria? Why it's important? How many troops are there? Give us the full defense of our activities there.

General KURILLA. Thanks Congressman. So, we are in Syria for the enduring defeat of ISIS. That is our daily mission. We are doing that through a partnered force called the Syrian Democratic Forces.

And, if I can talk about ISIS in Syria, we put them into three categories. The first one is ISIS at large. Those are the individuals that we are going after every day through our partnered forces.

Last year we did 313 partnered ops [operations] in Iraq and Syria. This year we've done 129. They're in the lead. That same Syrian Democratic Force that was in Syria going after ISIS, they took over 10,000 killed, over 20,000 wounded going after ISIS, basically from 2014 until today.

That is the ISIS at large that we see. Most of the ISIS very senior leadership—the leader, the Caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, Abdul Qureshi, those are the ones—they were basically command-and-controlling the ISIS global enterprise from northwest Syria and areas inside of Syria. We think we have contained ISIS in Syria, but the ideology is uncontained and unconstrained.

The next category is ISIS in detention. And, I call it an ISIS army in detention. There's over 10,000 ISIS detainees across 26 prisons that those are at-risk.

When we do our targeting inside of Syria, we go after those that are doing external operations or those that are trying to break that army out of prison. If they were to get out, there's approximately 2,000 ISIS is our estimate in Syria, you would five times more the size of what they currently have.

And lastly, it's the last, it's the potential for the next generation of ISIS in Al-Hol and Al-Roj camps. I was in these camps 2 weeks ago. I've been to Syria six times, and I've seen, I've been in—I was in that detention facility in Hasakah.

That's why we are there, is to go after the enduring defeat of ISIS.

Mr. BANKS. So, can you, would you quantify the troops who are in Syria as special operations troops? What types of personnel do we have there?

General KURILLA. Every kind, Congressman. We have special operations forces, we have National Guard, and we have Active Duty.

Mr. BANKS. Yeah, and can you quantify the troop level again, of approximately—

General KURILLA. It's 900, but it goes plus or minus on that, based on if we have to bring up a temporary enabling force because of that. And, also when you do as we call a relief in place/transfer of authority, those numbers go up.

So, when we bring in, based on a capability that we want to bring, that's called temporary enabling. Much like we brought Bradley fighting vehicles in, for a temporary period of time, you'll see those numbers will go up.

And, I think it, for the return on investment you get for that very small force, what you are seeing is really the containment of ISIS in Syria right now.

Mr. BANKS. Okay. I appreciate the overview of why we're there. Tell us what would happen if we weren't there. And maybe perhaps Afghanistan as a parallel example, if you removed troops, then what happens if we leave Syria?

General KURILLA. It is my commander's estimate, and my intel analysts, that if we were to leave Syria, and if the SDF [Syrian Democratic Forces] could not fight the ISIS by themselves, you could see a breakout of the prisons. You could see the radicalization inside Al-Hol. And, it is our estimate that ISIS would return in 1 to 2 years.

Again, there's no military solution for Syria. It's going to take a whole-of-government approach. When you look at the detainees, when you look at the IDPs [internally displaced people] that are in Al-Hol, we need to repatriate them, rehabilitate, and reintegrate them back into their countries of origin.

Mr. BANKS. How important is it to protect the Omar oilfields? What would happen if we weren't there to the—would ISIS take over the oilfields?

General KURILLA. I think if we weren't there, I mean, we're not there to protect the oilfields. We're there for the enduring defeat of ISIS.

I think you would see either the Wagner forces that are along the Dahisar River, or you'd see Russian forces or Syrian forces go in there.

If you remember back in 2018, Wagner, a very large force of Wagner tried to go and actually attack U.S. forces and our Syrian partners or the Syrian Democratic Forces, and they understood what American firepower can do, and we killed over 300 of them.

Mr. BANKS. What about the ISIS threat to Israel? If we pulled out, what would that, what could potentially occur vis-a-vis Israel from a threat from Syria?

General KURILLA. What we see with ISIS in Syria, that is an area where they do try and do their external ops. That's why we target the external operations.

ISIS-Sinai is probably a bigger threat, where they try and go across. And then, there's the ISIS really in the Levant. But, from a Syria standpoint, that's where they do their command and control from at the highest levels.

Mr. BANKS. Mr. Chairman, I'm glad I voted the way that I did a couple of weeks ago. With that, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. The Chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Virginia, Ms. McClellan, for 5 minutes.

Ms. MCCLELLAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate this opportunity to discuss the priorities of AFRICOM and CENTCOM, especially into regions of the world where incredible instability and the widespread use of irregular warfare have largely defined the nature of the conflict.

We are now approximately a year and a half removed from the withdrawal of American forces in Afghanistan. How is CENTCOM working to reposition resources following the withdrawal to continue addressing emerging threats in the region?

General KURILLA. Thank you, Congresswoman. So, what we are doing, is we are trying to increase our intelligence collection capability inside of Afghanistan. It's not just about an ISR platform flying over the top, but, it's also increasing our SIGINT, our cyber, and most probably importantly, is our human intelligence collection inside of there.

One of the things, a positive new story, is that we have been funded from alternative airborne ISR. This is something other than an MQ9. But we are trying to find things that can go up and have endurance that go for days and weeks, and still be able to have the appropriate sensor payload on them, whether that's IMINT or image intelligence, or full motion video, or signals intelligence.

And, we should be bringing some of those capabilities online as early as this May.

Ms. MCCLELLAN. Thank you. And, General Langley, could you elaborate on what AFRICOM is doing to combat irregular warfare, particularly misinformation, to bolster stability within Africa partners and allies?

General LANGLEY. Yes, thanks for that question. Yes, a lot of misinformation and disinformation in the name of competition with our immediate and acute threat and also the pacing threat.

And so, we address this with a whole-of-government approach. I do have some authorities to address this from our military information support operations.

But then, it goes deeper than that across the whole of government. State Department has some authorities themselves as well as there are near-term authorities that are developing across the interagency as well so that we can apply collectively for cumulative effects.

Ms. MCCLELLAN. Thank you. Mr. Chair, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentlelady. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Waltz, for 5 minutes.

Mr. WALTZ. Thank you. General Kurilla, I just want to build on Mr. Banks' questions. I mean, you laid out a compelling case for why it's critical that we have partnership, we have presence, we have bases in and around Syria to maintain pressure on ISIS. Is that a correct characterization?

General KURILLA. That is a correct characterization, Congressman.

Mr. WALTZ. Ms. Wallander, from a policy standpoint, why is it critical to have a presence and partnership in Syria to go after ISIS, but it's acceptable to not have it in Afghanistan?

Dr. WALLANDER. Congressman, there was a decision made that the—

Mr. WALTZ. I'm familiar with the decision. I'm talking about now, going forward, the President of the United States said it was an extraordinary success, over-the-horizon capabilities, no problem. We do it in Syria. We do it in Somalia.

Why do we, why is it not important to have a presence in Afghanistan from a counterterrorism standpoint?

Dr. WALLANDER. Congressman, as General Kurilla made clear, that the ability of CENTCOM to monitor and act against the coalescence and the effectiveness of an ISIS threat from Afghanistan, is something he believes he is able to build additional resources on, and is—remains a CENTCOM mission. And, policy fully supports CENTCOM in that mission.

Mr. WALTZ. Ms. Wallander, I think history is going to prove you very wrong, the President wrong. And, just as it proved many members of this committee and the national security committee, or the national security community in Washington wrong when we yanked out of Iraq in 2011, really had no follow-on plan.

We had the rise of ISIS by 2014. And, we now have more forces back in Iraq than we had in 2011 at a tremendous cost of lives and treasure.

So, General Kurilla, do you think there's a likelihood if we have another attack, which you have stated is possible within the next 6 months, that we'll have to go back in some way, shape, or form, to Afghanistan?

General KURILLA. Congressman, you know, when I stated that we have, that they could attack in under 6 months with little to no warning, I'm referring to an enabled attack where it is funded directly against interests abroad, U.S. interests abroad.

Mr. WALTZ. Yeah.

General KURILLA. Going back into Afghanistan would obviously be a policy question, how we would address that. I would try and address that as best I could from the rise——

Mr. WALTZ. Is ISIS gaining in capability in Afghanistan? Gaining in capability—they certainly have the intent to hit our interests around the world.

Are they gaining in capability?

General KURILLA. ISIS is stronger today in Afghanistan.

Mr. WALTZ. Then they were last year?

General KURILLA. Yes.

Mr. WALTZ. Are we seeing a cooperation with ISIS in Afghanistan and other elements, for example, in Syria and Europe?

General KURILLA. So, much like there are regional combatant commands, ISIS is a global organization. They have an organization called the Al-Sadiq office that is responsible for all of ISIS from Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, all the way down to Indonesia.

The Al-Karrar office is in——

Mr. WALTZ. No. I'm familiar with the broad organization. Are we seeing active cooperation with ISIS in Afghanistan with those other entities?

General KURILLA. They do communicate back and forth with the head of ISIS, the global affiliate.

Mr. WALTZ. And, you're seeing—we've experienced an 80 percent loss in what remaining ISR you have, which is less than you had, or less than CENTCOM had 2 years ago, right? And an 80 percent degradation due to transit time, correct?

General KURILLA. I'm spending 80 percent of my time in transit. It is actually a greater than 80 percent loss at this point.

Mr. WALTZ. Do we have any bases in any country surrounding Afghanistan with which we can use to launch ISR or any type of strike or assets?

General KURILLA. Congressman, I think it would be great to talk about that in a closed session. And I can talk about the efforts that we're working.

Mr. WALTZ. Would it be helpful if you had a base in a neighboring country?

General KURILLA. Proximity reduces transit time. So, what I'm trying to do is increase the time I am over the target. That's just airborne ISR. But there's a lot more than just other intelligence parameters.

Mr. WALTZ. Given our presence in Syria, did you agree with General McKenzie, your predecessor, that having a small footprint at Bagram in Afghanistan would be helpful for counter—ongoing counterterrorism efforts?

General KURILLA. Congressman, I think that decision's already been made.

Mr. WALTZ. Right. But, do you agree that it would be helpful now, say that decision was reversed?

General KURILLA. So, any time you have proximity to the target, you are more effective.

Mr. WALTZ. Do you know, General, how far Bagram is from the Chinese border?

General KURILLA. I don't know the exact distance.

Mr. WALTZ. Several hundred miles. It's actually closer to the border of China where, by the way, they have a massive nuclear build-up, than Mexico City is to the Texas border.

General KURILLA. I spent about 5 years on Bagram.

Mr. WALTZ. Yeah. It's close. Right? A 12,000-foot runway capable of holding strategic bombers. Just bear with me, hypothetical, do you think China, if China had that close of an airbase to the Texas border they would have just given it up?

General KURILLA. I am not sure, Congressman.

Mr. WALTZ. I would bet not. I think we know the answer to that. Thank you, General. I yield.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. I now recognize the gentleman from North Carolina, Mr. Davis, for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVIS. All right. Thanks so much, Mr. Chair and to the ranking member. And, good afternoon to each and every one of you. Thanks so much for your leadership and your service to the Nation, in particular your command units at different times in your career at Fort Bragg and Lejeune, as a North Carolinian, so.

My first question I want to direct to General Kurilla. Israel, realigned from the European Command to Central Command in late 2021. How has the inclusion of Israel strengthened the partnership between militaries and with the forces throughout the Middle East?

General KURILLA. We view it as a net positive right now, Congressman. They bring tremendous capability. They have the ability to share some of their, the things that they are doing.

We view it as a net positive across the board. And, when you look at the Abraham Accords, those aren't just military, those are also economic as well.

Mr. DAVIS. Awesome. General Langley, I want to pivot, and speaking of the Abraham Accords, can you talk specifically about the impact of the Abraham Accords with African partner nations?

General LANGLEY. Congressman, Morocco, they were part of the Abraham Accords, and I would just go ahead and state that they are probably our top, or close to the top, non-NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] allies, them and Tunisia, that actually export security.

So, we see that with African Lion coming up, you know, that their handshake with the Israelis is going forward. And, collectively for regional security across—well, the merge of EUCOM and AFRICOM's AORs, is going to just add capacity for that region in an agreement, a sharing of ideas and sharing of tactics that these exercises bring.

So, I see it as a positive thing.

Mr. DAVIS. All right. And, General Langley, General Richardson previously testified about the growing PRC space infrastructure, in particular, the footprint in the SOUTHCOM AOR. There's a concern with those developments and related advancements in Chinese space capabilities.

Can you please discuss the PRC's growing space footprint with African nations and the security implications for the U.S. and our allies?

General LANGLEY. So Congressman, thanks for that question, because there are aspirations across a number of countries across the continent in which they have already established agreements for building space capacity in various countries.

Just of late, there's Djibouti. But, they're coming with a thinly veiled proposition that is for goodwill. But I am concerned that it will maybe have some other sharing or dual use in a military sense, especially in tracking satellites.

They're already down, Swakopmund is down in Namibia, in which they do that by one of their state-owned institutions. But, they have to share technology by law to the CCP. And, therein lies probably an indicator, a leading indicator that it will probably have some future military use.

Mr. DAVIS. Okay. And, do you believe that any of the PRC space infrastructure projects are going to benefit those countries? Or, is this just more of a one-way relationship?

General LANGLEY. Congressman, that time's going to tell. That time's going to tell.

Mr. DAVIS. And, General Kurilla, earlier this month Saudi Arabia and Iran announced an agreement brokered by China to normalize relations. Can you speak to the concerns you have about China mediating this agreement?

General KURILLA. Yes, Congressman. So, I think the concern we should have is that we've seen China use its national instruments of power, their economic through their Belt and Road Initiative through the region, their informational, their military, through their quick fast FMS, and now, for the first time we're seeing their diplomatic.

China has chosen to compete on a global scale. And, this is an area where they're choosing to compete.

Mr. DAVIS. What does this mean as it pertains to our military relations with Saudi Arabia?

General KURILLA. We have very strong military relations with Saudi Arabia. What we're talking about in this agreement is really about opening up diplomatic ties.

They had it for 37 years until 2016, until Iran stormed their embassy and burned part of their embassy and they cut off their diplomatic ties. So, that was, they had it for 37 years prior to that. And, there was still high tension between both of them.

And so, I think what this means really in the region is that this was going on for 2 years prior, but that China came in to swoop and try and take the credit for this mediation.

Mr. DAVIS. Thanks again for being here today. And, I yield back, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana, Mr. Johnson, for 5 minutes.

Mr. JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you all for being here. General Langley, there's been a lot of discussion today, and every day here, about the influence of China and the CCP. And, we're concerned about that in Africa as well as all over the globe.

A couple of weeks ago when we had the NORTHCOM/SOUTHCOM posture hearing, I spoke with General Richardson

about the tools that we have at our disposal to combat that growing influence.

And, she mentioned that our partnerships with those countries are one of the biggest benefits in that endeavor. Would you say that's true of AFRICOM as well?

General LANGLEY. Yes, Congressman.

Mr. JOHNSON. General Richardson also mentioned that there's probably more that we could be doing as a country to make our presence more visible. And, she indicated that, you know, defense partnerships and commercial endeavors and other things can help in that regard.

Are there things that you're doing to increase that visibility and try to make the pitch that the United States is really the country to partner with and not China?

General LANGLEY. Congressman, thanks for that question. Because holistically, if China had to look at our 3D approach, in a negative sense they would probably tell our partners that it's an empty suit.

So, what I'm saying here Congressman, is we need to be able to respond at the speed of relevance in the quantity that the PRC's providing, across all fronts in my title 10 authorities.

China will sell their wares, their military wares to a partner that is at the cusp of being subjugated by an extremist organization. They can provide the weaponry real quick.

My title 10 authorities and 333, train and equip, or even our FMS-type program, it moves too slow. So, we want to—the panacea to this is to become the partner of choice.

But we just need the authorities to move faster. And that goes across the whole of governments with USAID and the flexible funding and also State Department as well.

And, lastly, I would say that China moves at the speed of relevance. And that's—and we're not forcing our partners to choose.

But, we need—they do know that we do have a value proposition of quality equipment and they will hang in the balance waiting for us to respond.

Mr. JOHNSON. It's disconcerting to us as Members of Congress to hear we might be regarded as an empty suit anywhere at any time, because we don't maintain the peace through strength if that's how we're regarded.

In a perfect world, how would that title 10 authority be expanded? What would that look like?

General LANGLEY. So Congressman, first of all I would say just holistically, of all the whole portfolio, of State Partnership Programs and then the security force assistance brigade, they need persistent presence.

So, as we, as our country teams make this request, we need to be able to affect this in less than 24 months. We need to shorten that, boots on the—from a request to boots on the ground real fast.

Because these partners are saying, we don't need your boots on the ground, you know, we just need the training. And our partnership is affecting that through exercises.

And then collectively, actually, just going outside the USGOV, thanks for the legislation of Prosper Africa, Digital Africa, and

other types of legislation that causes, that affects our private sector to invest in Africa. Holistically, that will make a full suit.

Mr. JOHNSON. Very good, thank you. Shifting gears quickly, General Kurilla, as we've entered this new era, I'm curious about how all of you process and prioritize competing mission sets, specifically with weighing strategic competition versus counterterrorism threats that have dominated us for the last 20 years or so.

Do you have any recommendations for us about the way that we should view this? The lens through which we should see these issues?

General KURILLA. Thank you, Congressman. So, as I look at it, I prioritize deterring Iran, counter VEO, and strategic competition against China and Russia.

I believe that CENTCOM is literally and figuratively central to competition with China and Russia. We have a six and a half times longer border with Russia than NATO. That's along the Kazakhstan border. We have a longer border with China then we have in the U.S./Mexican border.

I think our strategic competition is our presence as well, and it's our partnership. What we bring is long, enduring partnerships. We've been there in the past; we were there for 75 years; we are there today; and we'll be there in the future.

China, everything China does is for its own self-interest. And, they view the partners in the region through a lens of customer or client.

It's no real surprise that they try tried to negotiate the Iran/KSA [Kingdom of Saudi Arabia] deal, because they get 50 percent of their energy comes through the Straits of Hormuz. It gets—one-third of their gas comes from the region.

And so, when we look at that, they are trying to ensure that their interests are secure. But, it's only for their own self-interest.

Mr. JOHNSON. Thank you so much. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Veasey.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. And I want to welcome everyone for coming to testify today. I would also like to give a special welcome to General Langley. We're both graduates of the Fort Worth Independent School District.

This may be the first time that two Fort Worth Independent School District people have asked questions back and forth to each other. And so, welcome you.

We know that the PRC has planted seeds all over the African continent. And in your statement, General Langley, you said that USA AFRICOM does not seek to block benefits that the PRC can bring to the continent's nations.

Based on your overall threat assessment, and level of knowledge, is there a solution that can further contain Chinese influence in the AOR?

General LANGLEY. Congressman, thanks for that question. Because on the forefront as engagement with our competitors, as we engage with our African partners that we want to become and stay the partner of choice for strategic access and strategic influence in some cases.

China does have a proposition, I would say, the Belt and Road Initiative. But, they characterize it, the whole name is One Belt and One Road. That's a one-way road back to Beijing. Those are the cautionary tales that across the interagency and across the whole of government that we do tell them.

We're not forcing our partners to choose, but we need to be able to represent our value proposition across the whole of government that builds capacity across their institutions as well as their governance as well. In the end, our partners realize that we are the partner of choice.

Mr. VEASEY. Yeah. Yeah, another question that I wanted to ask you is how does AFRICOM work with African countries to promote regional economic development and stability?

And, what role does this play in advancing U.S. interests? I know that when, you know, myself and Mr. Panetta and Austin Scott went to Djibouti back in 2017, we saw the base that the Chinese were building there.

You know, later learned through reports in the media that there was a secret base that they were building underneath the base that the Djibouti government probably didn't know anything about.

So, we know that some of these economic development projects come with certain strings attached. Do you, can you talk a little bit about how we're doing that?

And if you think that we're doing enough to advance the economic stability in Africa? Because we know especially with these mineral-rich areas that they have there, that actors like the Russians and the Chinese are certainly going to want to make long-term strategic partnerships with these African countries.

General LANGLEY. Congressman, there's a couple of things to address your question. What we are doing holistically across a whole-of-government approach, and various legislations in the last couple of years, Prosper Africa that will affect more investment through the private industry.

And, a number of agencies in the Department are signatories of that. We just need to get it off the ground.

And then for the fragile states, our Global Fragility Act, which is now characterized as the prevent conflict, promote civility, are other mechanisms that we share with our partners and the country teams to get this off the ground.

From the PRC's persistence on going after rare earth minerals or mining, there is a mechanism where we illuminate and amplify some of the ill effects of those partnerships or those deals that were struck by the PRC. And, we pay attention to that. And we do that in the information space in direct conversations with our partners.

Mr. VEASEY. Yeah. Well, thank you. General Kurilla, I wanted to know about just the level of cooperation and coordination between AFRICOM, EUCOM, and other government agencies, particularly as we're trying to talk about the Wagner Group's activities in Africa.

And, I was hoping that both of you could briefly touch on that.

General KURILLA. So, what I would say, in terms of information sharing and even resource sharing, Mike and I share resources all the time, and include Chris Cavoli, who is the commander of EUCOM.

So, we all make sure we see the same site picture on the intel, specifically for Wagner. I have Wagner in Syria. He has Wagner all over Africa. And, Chris Cavoli is dealing with Wagner up in the Ukraine.

So, I think it's important that we're all talking and sharing about the intelligence as well as the resources.

General LANGLEY. So, absolutely, I concur what, you know, Erik was saying. You know, the global integrator construct, and especially the NDS, talked about integrated deterrence.

Just processes like that, sharing of information, collaborating between our staffs, sews up those seams. So, collectively it is very effective in the overall global integrated construct.

Mr. VEASEY. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Ro Khanna.

Mr. KHANNA. Thank you, Mr. Chair. General Kurilla, I appreciated our conversation yesterday. I was hoping you could share with the committee some of the insights you shared with me about why the Strait of Hormuz is critical to our relationship with China.

And why, if America wants to make sure that we're leading in the 21st century, your work and your troops' work is critical even vis-a-vis China?

General KURILLA. So, thank you, Congressman. So, what we talked about yesterday, was the fact that China gets over 50 percent of its oil and over one-third of its natural gas from the CENTCOM region.

Ninety-eight percent plus goes through by ship. It will come through the Straits of Hormuz. That makes them vulnerable.

Seventy-two percent of all Chinese oil is imported. They have, domestically produce about 28 percent. So, that could make them vulnerable.

God forbid there's ever a conflict with China, but we could end up holding a lot of their economy at risk in the CENTCOM region.

Mr. KHANNA. So, our having a presence there, and dominance there, to keep it a free-flowing sea, is a strategic value even as we look at the competition and strategic threat that China poses.

General KURILLA. Correct, Congressman. And it's not just the Straits of Hormuz. It's also global commerce. Thirty percent of all container traffic in the world goes through the Suez Canal.

I think in 2021, about 22,000 ships went through there. So really, we saw what happened when the *Ever Given* was stuck in the Suez Canal. That stopped \$10 billion of trade a day until that was unstuck.

Mr. KHANNA. And, our values, we keep the freedom of the seas for every nation. It's not just that we're doing it for our nation. So, we're upholding our values in these areas. Is that correct?

General KURILLA. And so what we also have is the Combined Maritime Force. It's 38 countries that participate in CENTCOM. It's the largest maritime partnership in the world.

They do everything from maritime security to anti-piracy and to counter-smuggling. And, that's how we keep the, you know, the international rules-based order in the maritime domain.

Mr. KHANNA. Now, I know you've spent a lot of your testimony also on Iran. And I have a lot of constituents of Iranian background

who say that this time the protests are different. This time the regime really is not going to last.

I don't know if you're in a position to have a comment from what you're hearing in the area about what the sentiment is towards the regime and the protests.

General KURILLA. So Congressman, what we can see is that the regime can deal with the domestic situation, but also do their malign behavior externally. So, their foreign policy, if you will, while they still deal with their domestic policy.

It is my assessment right now though that even though the protests have put stress on the regime, it is not, it has not put the regime at risk.

Mr. KHANNA. Thank you. General Langley, I appreciated your focus on development in Africa beyond just the defense. I'll tell you briefly, and then I'd like you to respond, my own perspective.

My grandfather was in jail with Gandhi as part of the independence movement. Which, of course, also inspired Mandela. And my first view is that Africa should have what Africa wants, not be a plaything for just great power competition.

I'm concerned that China has used Africa not to see African self-determination, but to basically use it for their own self-interest in a form of neocolonialism.

I wonder how you think America can have a policy towards development and economic growth that respects what African nations and Africa wants, and respects their sovereignty?

General LANGLEY. Congressman, thanks for that question. And, you know, I profess the whole-of-government approach. But also, it's more than that, that would actually put more horsepower of us being the partner of choice.

So, outside of the 3D construct, and I thank this Congress again for legislation of the past, to get things off the ground for private investment and also various departments investing in Prosper Africa, Digital Africa. But I think we need more.

I think, I really do think we need more, because not just me saying that, this is some of the things that are communicated to me as I make my travels across the continent engaging with these countries.

The Global Fragility Act, formerly known as, but the strategy what this professes, is prevent conflict and promote stability. They think the enduring process to actually address their immediate threat, is good governance.

Collectively, State Department, USAID, and DOD [Department of Defense] are working together to be able to build capacity and bolster their governance under democratic norms. But, we need more investment across the others, across the aforementioned legislations that have been passed.

We just need to put more investment into it.

Mr. KHANNA. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Panetta, for 5 minutes.

Mr. PANETTA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, gentlemen, ma'am. As I get to my notes, recently we heard about a hostage, a couple of hostages that were released. One of them, it's been his second time being a hostage, I guess, Mr. Woodke, that is.

But, I guess my question is surrounding the circumstances around his release, in that JNIM supposedly released him without any ransom. And it's kind of unclear whether Niger had anything to give up in these, I guess negotiations as you may call them.

If he was released without ransom, what's your assessment of JNIM's motivation for the kidnapping?

General LANGLEY. Congressman, I'll be able to speak to that fully in closed session. But I will tell you this, it's—this is an indication of, and we just want to commend and thank Niger and President Bazoum in his efforts to be able to release Mr. Woodke.

And that's—but in closed session I'll be able to shed a little bit more light on what we think will unfold as he is interviewed.

Mr. PANETTA. Affirm on that. And, I think we actually have a lot to thank Niger for, considering as I call them, sort of the Alamo in the Sahel right now.

In that you're seeing a lot of, be it our forces, be it our allies' forces, kind of gathering there and staying there and being able to operate in there and out of there in order to deal with many of the VEOs.

On that note, talking about Burkina Faso, obviously, that's experienced two military coups since January of 2022. You've got these regional insurgencies that are linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State. And then, you're starting to see a little overt outreach potentially, to the Wagner Group, which is active in neighboring Mali.

Now, JNIM and ISGS obviously, the Islamic State Greater Sahel, they control much of Burkina Faso's national territory. In particular the northern and eastern regions have faced a surge in threats from Islamist VEOs since 2016. Now, unfortunately, you're seeing the French forces being expelled or actually removing themselves from that area.

I've been working with my good friend Austin Scott, we've traveled to the region. We want to make sure that our service members, they understand the danger that they're in. But, we want to ensure that they're paid accordingly with imminent danger pay [IDP], something that your predecessor tried to push through last May.

A couple of questions. Can you tell us whether service members in Burkina Faso should be afforded IDP?

General LANGLEY. Congressman, yes.

Mr. PANETTA. Thank you for that straightforward answer. Second, obviously I remember asking somebody, I think it was in this position about 2 years ago, dealing with QRFs and the potential for quick reaction forces, and the need for quick reaction forces, not just in West Africa, but throughout Africa, and realizing how important they are.

And the question I posed to him is, what are we doing about QRFs? And, they said, we are relying on our allies. With the French removing themselves from most of Africa, do you feel we still can rely on our allies for a quick reaction force? And, if not, what's—who can we rely on?

General LANGLEY. First of all, Congressman, thanks for asking that question. Because what I have to do on a regular basis, is assess the risk. Assess the risk of being able to respond to crisis.

A foundational piece of that, a foundational capability is intelligence, is surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities so that we can reposition our assets to be able to respond to the probability of consequence. Connected to that is also being able to identify indications and warnings that helps us do that.

You know, I thank this Congress, in the last couple of years, the last couple of budgets, the Warfighting—the Warfighter Recovery Network has gained and bolstered capacity. But I need more.

And, you're right, Congressman, yes, we still support the French. And, the French support us as well. But we're also building capacity into our African partners to be able to go into that calculus.

And being able to respond to crisis accordingly and cover some of the 16 high-threat embassies that we have across the ground, and the men and women of AFRICOM that are doing their due diligence in the execution of their mission.

Mr. PANETTA. Gentlemen, Doctor, thank you. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman, Mr. Keating, for 5 minutes.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank all of you for your service to the country. So many of us are coming in and out because we have coinciding hearings, many of them related.

So, I just have a couple of questions given everything you've been asked to this point this morning. One of them, I'm curious, you know, Russia is involved in Africa with at least 20 countries for precious resources.

That includes gold and many of the Russian oligarchs involved in gold mining and activities. And the reports that many of them are circumventing sanctions and money is ending up back in Russia that's helping to fuel their war effort against Ukraine.

What do you know about the ability of Russia and the last analysis, getting some of those revenues to help fuel their efforts in defiance of the sanctions? General.

General LANGLEY. Congressman, I've been briefed. That's exactly what's going on. Yevgeny Prigozhin and head of his private military company that's, they are the vanguard back to the Russian Federation.

And, they do it through profit. Cash and profit. So, they have a false value proposition, especially the fragile governments across West Africa, where I characterize at the tipping point, which are looking for assistance to be able to provide security in the face of violent extremist organizations.

And, sometimes they select Wagner to do it. But Wagner has a hidden agenda, road-mapping into their closest mine, whether it be gold or diamonds.

That's what I'm concerned about. There is a revenue stream back to the Russian Federation.

Mr. KEATING. Anyone like—

Dr. WALLANDER. Congressman, I would just add two points. One is that with the designation of Wagner as a transnational criminal organization, we have new instruments to constrain its ability to move money freely. And, the Biden administration is focusing on those instruments.

And secondly, in the realm of sanctions evasion and illicit moving of money and resources, similarly, we are focused on sanctions en-

forcement, working with countries to shut down banks that Russia is using to move money. And, we can talk more about it in a classified setting if you'd like.

Mr. KEATING. Great. Well, thank you for those efforts. You know, our effort is to try and choke off as much resourcing as we can to Russia during this period.

Just even though General Kurilla, you know, you obviously said in terms of Bagram that that decision is made already. But, it keeps being asked all the time.

So, could you tell me from the present standpoint, what would be a quote/unquote, small footprint in Bagram? I mean, you need support forces. You just can't have a small footprint there.

Can you just give us an approximate idea? I mean, how many people would it take? Not just to have a quote/unquote, small footprint, but to be able to support it safely?

General KURILLA. I mean, I couldn't give you an exact number right now, because it would all depend on the threat. If we were back in Bagram right now, you would be—that would, you have the Taliban trying to attack us as well, as well as ISIS—K.

Mr. KEATING. That's what I mean, right now. So, it would be, it wouldn't just be a small footprint. You'd need support services in maybe the tens of thousands? Or, just in total, to make sure that you have the support?

General KURILLA. It would be based on the threat and the size of the force there. And, what is the mission that they're there for?

Mr. KEATING. Yeah. Just a presence there in terms of, you know, intelligence. A presence to have—

General KURILLA. Well, you'd have to secure the entire base. And, that would require, you know, a security force. And then, if you're bringing in the intelligence apparatus and all the support structure.

Mr. KEATING. Right. So, my inclination is, presently, what you do, there's no such thing as a small footprint in that regard.

I'd just like to ask this. This is troubling. The situation in the Middle East is getting worse. We're approaching the coinciding holidays. Our efforts as a country, as well as Jordan, Egypt, and other countries, is just trying to get through the holidays. Just trying to keep calm through the holidays.

But, the situation, and it was shared with this committee by people in the region prior to this, is how really fragile Palestine is right now. And how these threats of disruption even during the holidays could trigger a collapse even.

What would happen, what would be the impact of that in the region? Hamas and other groups? And, can you just give us some of your feelings on what that would mean, because it's, we're being told it's very real at this point.

And, that's why we're working so hard to keep it calm.

General KURILLA. So Congressman, I think the concern right now is that there are—all the kindling and the tinder is there for a flashpoint. And, it can take just one incident that can cause that fire to start inside the West Bank.

And I think it would be bad for the entire region.

Mr. KEATING. All right. Thank you. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Nevada, Mr. Horsford, for 5 minutes.

Mr. HORSFORD. Thank you, Chairman Rogers and to the ranking member for this important hearing. As this committee knows, Russia and China continue to challenge American influence in Africa and the Middle East.

In 2021, trade between Africa and China surged to \$254 billion, up about 35 percent as Chinese exports increased to the continent. China has steadily increased its influence in Africa by promoting a political and economic model for countries on the continent, all while the United States has fallen behind on investment.

Algeria, a global energy exporter, with Africa's largest defense budget, continues to be one of Russia's top arms export clients behind only India and China.

So, I was glad to see that the conclusion of the 2021 Global Posture Review directed under Secretary Austin, included ensuring that the Department of Defense appropriately monitors threats from regional extremist groups, supports our diplomatic activities, and enables our allies and partners in Africa.

General Langley, it's good to see you again. This committee has heard from combatant commanders time and again that global competitors, specifically China, outcompete us by responding to partner nations faster than we can.

Is that an accurate assessment of the problem from your perspective? And, if so, what additional authorities do you need to meet security challenges in a responsive way?

General LANGLEY. Congressman, thanks for that question. And, I'll answer it in just saying that we need to be the partner of choice, through various actions, and through the whole of governments, and from the military standpoint.

And, when I engage with our partners on the continent, they said our near and present danger right now are violent extremist organizations. I have the portfolio available to be able to build partnership and capacity with them so they can professionalize their forces, train their forces in the face of the threat, their immediate threat.

I don't think China does that. China will sell them weapon systems that will be in a weapon system graveyard within a couple years.

So, that's that value proposition that I have the leverage, that I need to continue to leverage. But that system needs to work, be more responsive.

Our title 10, 333 authorities, that process is kind of slow. Our foreign military sales, that process is very slow. Where China can operate at the speed of relevance. So, we need to get that back.

Now, across the whole of governments, just in the developmental realm, as they start looking at their societies, and building their societies and for the citizens in the name of democracy, they want to be able to do that. So, the development programs in USAID, you need to have flexible funding as such in our State Department as they build capacity across the government.

Mr. HORSFORD. Thank you. And General Kurilla, can you describe the threat China and Russia pose in your respective area of responsibility?

General KURILLA. Thanks Congressman. Again, what we've seen, is them go in with their economic, and that's where we have 19 of 21 countries have signed a Belt and Road agreement with China.

And what a lot of them don't understand is the predatory nature of the financing or how they are doing that when they come into the region. We've seen it with their informational.

Their military, as I look at the military domain, which is my business, they come in very quickly. They bring out the whole catalog of equipment. They allow them to ship very quickly. They give them financing. And they have no end-user agreement.

As Mike said, we do see a lot of their equipment ends up breaking. But, they are meet—our partners have real security needs based on the region. And what China is doing, is very quickly filling that for them.

So, I think there are things that we can do to improve our foreign military sales. Because when you buy into the American system, you buy into the quality, you buy into the training, you buy into the upgrades, you buy into the sustainment. But you're also buying into the bureaucracy as well.

In terms of Russia, we are seeing them in Syria. They want to undermine our efforts in the Middle East. And, they want a permanent basing to that warm-water port where they signed the Port of Tartus for a 49-year lease. And now, Assad is asking them to stay longer, is what it looks like.

Mr. HORSFORD. Well, I am pleased to see the Biden administration's step up engagement with Africa as a counterweight to China's influence on the continent.

And I am glad to see both the First Lady, Jill Biden, which focused on the United States commitment to the region. And I know I look forward to the Vice President's visit to the continent later this month, which will only strengthen that commitment.

Now, I think it's the committee's job to follow suit. We must continue our investment in Africa's future and stability.

And, I want to thank the panel for taking our questions today. And I look forward to working with you on this important issue. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired. The Chair now recognizes the gentlelady from California, Ms. Jacobs, for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACOBS. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to our briefers, it's great to see you here. I also want to thank you, General Langley, for your service, and all the important work on the African continent, and also for your thoughtfulness today.

I want to especially thank you for your comments earlier about the need for a whole-of-government approach to addressing good governance on the continent and how that is a key pillar of our national security.

And I couldn't agree more. And I'm very excited to see the Global Fragility Act plans which we should be imminently receiving here, and how you're going to put that into practice.

So, earlier this month, General Fenton and Assistant Secretary Maier testified before the committee. And, I asked about what lessons SOCOM had learned from our decades of counterterrorism op-

erations in Sub-Saharan Africa. And, General Fenton largely deferred to AFRICOM.

So, I'm going to ask you the same question, General Langley. As you know, despite two decades of our investment in counterterrorism in Africa, and over \$3 billion in equipment, training, and logistics, we've actually seen violent extremism increase threefold since 2013.

And just in the last year we saw it increase by 22 percent and fatalities up by 50 percent. And just in the Sahel, we saw 130 percent increase since 2020 in violence.

So, I wanted to ask you, what lessons has AFRICOM learned from this, you know, apparent lack of success of our investments in the continent? And, how can we take that moving forward as we focus on the region?

General LANGLEY. Congresswoman, thanks for that. And thanks for your visits on the continent, especially with the CODEL [congressional delegation] that you went on. And that was a result of this blue map that's shown here, of our investments on the continent.

But getting back to your question, as our engagements with our African partners, as I go from country to country, knowing that it is going to be a partner-led U.S.-enabled proposition or remedy to their fragile governance.

And when they look at their immediate threat, and as you just said, that a number, it's really starting to metastasize across from the Lake Chad region violent extremist organizations are starting to encroach upon the Gulf of Guinea states.

So, given that, what my discussions with them is, I ask the question. That's part of my campaign of learning. What is the solution? What is the panacea?

And they said, responsible governance. Responsible governance is the enduring solution to violent extremist organizations. And they realize that.

So, just as much as they are buying weapon systems, they want to be able to add—bolster capacity into their total governments, providing for the people.

And, you know, as we look at Sheikh Mohamud, President Sheikh Mohamud in Somalia, what story is not really told is how he's turning a lot of the Al-Shabaab to laying down their weapons and repatriating them into the Somalia government. Those are the good news stories that aren't told enough.

So, Congresswoman, that is, our African partners get what the solution is. We just need to help them across our whole-of-government approach to get there.

Ms. JACOBS. Well, I appreciate that. I think getting governance right on the continent is going to be key. And, I look forward to working together both on this whole-of-government approach and implementing the Global Fragility Act. And, making sure we're being very thoughtful about how all of DOD's activities on the continent feed into that good governance.

I wanted to ask you about Somalia as well. We are increasing what we are doing there, increasing the tempo. We've recently put troops back in.

I just wanted to ask, what is our theory of the case? Or, how does it end? When can we leave? What are we trying to get to so that we are able to actually not have troops stationed there anymore?

General LANGLEY. Congresswoman, I'll answer that from an operational perspective. What we're doing to enable President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and the Somalia National Army, being able to take the fight to Al-Shabaab.

And, turn to, and follow that up with, being able to bring in the rest of their governance to go out to the outer regions and to the clans that have been turned. And also preventing famine.

Preventing effects from climate change. That is just a clear indicator that the campaign by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud is working holistically.

And so, given that, he is going to turn south and go into some of the regions where there's a stronghold by Al-Shabaab. And, I think he's going to be able to do that.

But, we will be with them until our policy changes.

The CHAIRMAN. Great. The gentlelady's time has expired. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Kim, for 5 minutes.

Mr. KIM. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Actually, I want to just kind of build off of that. So, you know, Dr. Wallander, I'd love to kind of hear your thoughts about the challenges that we're facing in Somalia.

We are taking some new steps as the general just articulated on that front. But, you also kind of raised that this is in a broader context as we're seeing the African Union Transition Mission to Somalia's plan to draw it out over the next 2 years.

And, you were really kind of talking about it as this critical 2-year period. So, could you elaborate on just, you know, how you're seeing this?

And, kind of to the point of my colleagues, what is the end state that we're trying to get to here that will allow us to start to pull back some of our resources?

Dr. WALLANDER. Thank you, Congressman. It's nice to see you. I would build on, or endorse, what General Langley just laid out. Which is the key to our support to Somalia in countering the—Al-Shabaab, is working with our partners and investing in our partner country.

There is current operations, but, there's actually been a period of time of training and equipping, and working with the Somali armed forces, not only through AFRICOM, but also through State Department authorities, and developing the Danab Brigade.

So, it's a great example of all-of-government, whole-of-government work to build a security force, and to enable a security force that is trained in American standards, that has trust and good relationships with AFRICOM and leaders in AFRICOM.

And, we're seeing the material benefits of that, because we're seeing an increasingly effective force that also is working constructively with other regional partners in Africa in African-led operations that are enabled by U.S. presence and AFRICOM's assets.

But it really is a great example of an implementation of the approach that was laid out in the National Defense Strategy.

Mr. KIM. I appreciate that context. Thank you. General Kurilla, I wanted to just turn to you. Some of my colleagues have asked you about ISIS-Khorasan. I've heard some of your comments on that front.

I get it, we can talk about this in a SCIF [sensitive compartmented information facility] at a higher classification as well. But just to kind of situate for the American people what we're talking about here, what is the current that we can talk about in this forum right now, about how many fighters they have? What their general health is right now?

General KURILLA. Congressman, thank you. So, the current strength of ISIS at the unclassified level is about 2,000 to 2,500 in Afghanistan. And, that's ISIS-Khorasan, when we say that; that is specifically for Afghanistan.

But we do see the threat really coming from the Al-Sadiq office. That's the region that sits above it. But, they're based out of Afghanistan as well.

And, it's not so much the fighters as it is their ability to plan and enable operations from there.

Mr. KIM. Um-hum.

General KURILLA. We do know the Taliban and the ISIS-Khorasan are fighting. But the Taliban is more of a blunt force to go after them, and doesn't have the intelligence and the precision to get after the real threats that we are seeing.

Mr. KIM. So, there is, and that was something that I wanted to kind of pull on, because you did talk about it in your testimony as well, that ISIS-Khorasan and the Taliban, there continues to be challenges there.

But what you're saying is that the Taliban is not able to kind of produce a, kind of precise enough pressure upon ISIS-Khorasan such that some of the foreign threats are the ones that can be mitigated. Is that correct?

General KURILLA. Yeah. Just to be clear, ISIS-Khorasan and the Taliban hate each other. And they are fighting and killing each other.

Mr. KIM. Yeah.

General KURILLA. But, the Taliban doesn't have the precision to go after the individuals. They will do large sweeping clearance operations. It can be disruptive to a point.

But, they don't have, they're not doing the precision targeting of individuals.

Mr. KIM. What is the current, again, in this setting, kind of connection or relationship between ISIS-Khorasan and sort of the core ISIS that we've engaged with in Iraq and Syria?

General KURILLA. So, the ISIS, the core ISIS that's in Syria, they are in charge of the global enterprise. And the General Director of Provinces, he was killed about 2 weeks ago. He is the one that would provide guidance for external operations.

ISIS-Khorasan falls underneath the Al-Sadiq office, which basically runs from the Stans all the way down to Indonesia. Mike has the Al-Karrar office. There's the Bilad Al-Rafidain office, which is in Iraq and Iran.

So, they basically have this global enterprise. And, what we see right now the most prolific, is coming out of the Al-Sadiq office.

And, in closed session I'll give a very specific example of how we've disrupted a couple of threat streams. And, not all threat streams are kinetic in terms of our disruption.

Mr. KIM. Yeah. Thank you. And, my time is going to run out here. But, I'd love to do a followup with you, General, and Dr. Wallander as well, just about what we can be doing to sort of increase cybersecurity efforts with our partners. And, that's certainly something General Langley as well, we can engage in.

But, it feels like a place where we can really engage. I'm hearing a lot from these partner nations throughout the Middle East and North Africa and elsewhere. So, let's make sure we're engaging on that.

General KURILLA. We're doing a lot with that, Congressman. Look forward to talking about that at some point.

Mr. KIM. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Great. I thank the gentleman. I thank all of our witnesses. We will now adjourn this—oh, you need to, you want to talk, ask them questions?

Go ahead. The gentleman from Georgia is recognized.

Dr. MCCORMICK. I know you've been waiting for this one moment, General Langley. I heard the testimony that you gave to Representative Gaetz.

And I want to kind of give you a second go at this, just because I know you made four stars for a reason in the Marine Corps. That's not an easy thing to do. And AFRICOM is a very challenging environment.

I know our intent is never to create bad guys who are in leadership positions. And yet, it has happened several times in our history. It's happened famously in Somalia. And you and I have suffered the consequences from that in our careers and the enemies that we've combatted with.

My plea to you, and then I'll give you your ability to respond, is that we do—we revise our position on how we train and what kind of accountability we have. Because it is obvious to me that we have created some situations, especially in AFRICOM where we've gone against people we literally trained.

And so, I do want you to kind of maybe just give us an insight on how you think you can approach this with the collaboration of Congress, and the President, and everybody else who's in our chain of command, to mitigate that for the future?

General LANGLEY. Congressman, thanks for the opportunity. So, just going forward as we look at our IMET program holistically, we probably need to add more capacity to it, because that's the last thing we want to do, or want to see, is some episodic event such as a coup by someone that we formerly had trained in the past.

So, just broadening on that. And, focusing and broadening the curriculum that focuses on civilian-led militaries.

Now, within that, we had that discussion over at National University amongst our partners at the African Leaders Summit. And where it was led by the Secretary of the Army and also representation from Senegal, General Sisi, and myself, and where we pounded the table on this is a must.

There was over 43 countries in attendance to that. So, more of that. So, as we focus on civilian-led governance, excuse me, civilian-

led militaries, that actually endorse, fully endorse democratic norms and democratic values, and holistically core values, just to prevent this from happening.

Dr. MCCORMICK. Okay. Do you feel like you have the intelligence that you, and I'm not talking about personal intelligence, I'm talking about military intelligence, that required to decipher who is the good guys and the bad guys?

And, do you have the personnel that is required in this very robust dynamic AFRICOM scenario?

General LANGLEY. Yes, the lay-vetting process is in effect. And, we take that very seriously. And, we're very, very deliberate in our processes of vetting our African partners as they come into the IMET programs.

Dr. MCCORMICK. Okay. General Kurilla, just a real quick question. In looking, we talked about keeping Iran from having nuclear capabilities, as far as obviously they have nuclear capabilities for energy, but as far as weaponry.

We know what Israel's opinion is on this. And you stated yourself that we want to make sure that we avoid that at all costs.

What does that mean? And I'm not talking about from a classified standpoint. But what are we willing to engage? How militarily, and we know politically we're engaged, and we can only do so much when we talk about negotiations.

But, how do we, from a military aspect, and maybe I'm going too far when I say unclassified, is there a way to posture that would create a scenario where they would back down?

General KURILLA. Congressman, I really do recommend that that's in a classified setting if we talk about any of the Iranian nuclear program.

Dr. MCCORMICK. Fair enough. Doctor, do you have anything to add?

Dr. WALLANDER. Not on that. But, if I may on the issue of military training?

Dr. MCCORMICK. Please.

Dr. WALLANDER. I think it would be a real, not just a tragedy, but it would be a great loss to American national security if the very regrettable fact of instances of military abroad who have been trained by the United States in IMET and other programs, undermine what is an extraordinarily important program.

There is no better way to build capacity and relationships among our foreign partner countries than the extraordinary examples of American military, professional American military, who fulfill their duties as American citizens.

And you heard from the generals that they believe that this is a vital program. The civilian leadership in DOD fully supports the importance of these military education programs. And takes very, very seriously the need to make sure that we are training the right people as well.

Dr. MCCORMICK. Thank you. And I just want to add for the record that I believe that we also have to be very careful about an isolationist mentality because of a couple of bad apples that obviously had bad results.

Thank you. With that I yield.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. And I thank the witnesses. We will now adjourn this portion of the hearing and reconvene in 5 minutes for the classified portion in room 2212.

[Whereupon, at 12:57 p.m., the committee proceeded in closed session.]

A P P E N D I X

MARCH 23, 2023

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

MARCH 23, 2023

STATEMENT BY
DR. CELESTE WALLANDER
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

BEFORE THE 118TH CONGRESS
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MARCH 23, 2023

Opening

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify on our defense posture and policy in the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) and U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) areas of responsibility (AORs), alongside Commanders General Kurilla and General Langley.

As the Department of Defense (DoD) articulated in the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS), a strong, principled, adaptive U.S. military is a central pillar of U.S. leadership in the world. The NDS sets out how the U.S. military will meet growing threats to vital national security interests while supporting a stable and open international system. It directs the Department to act urgently to sustain and strengthen deterrence and identifies the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the pacing challenge for the Department, and Russia as an acute threat. The NDS further explains how we will work with our NATO Allies and partners to reinforce robust deterrence in the face of Russian aggression while mitigating and protecting against threats from North Korea, Iran, violent extremist organizations, and transboundary challenges such as climate change.

The NDS identifies four defense priorities to strengthen deterrence: defending the homeland paced to the growing multi-domain threat posed by the PRC, deterring strategic attacks against the United States and its allies and partners, deterring aggression while being prepared to prevail in conflict when necessary – prioritizing the PRC challenge in the Indo-Pacific region, then the Russia challenge in Europe, and building a resilient Joint Force and defense ecosystem.

The NDS is focused on leveraging our strengths to maximum effect. The Department will accomplish this through integrated deterrence by campaigning to disrupt destabilizing activities and push back against competitors' coercive actions and by undertaking reforms and making investments within the DoD and the U.S. defense enterprise to build enduring advantages.

These lines of effort make us a better partner by enhancing U.S. contributions to our own security and to the security of coalitions that we support around the world. This emphasis on coalition-building to achieve collective defense and expand interoperability is key to our approach in the USCENTCOM AOR. In the USAFRICOM AOR, our approach emphasizes disrupting violent extremist organization (VEO) threats against the U.S. homeland and vital U.S. national interests and working alongside African partners to build their capabilities to degrade terrorist organizations and contribute broadly to regional security and stability.

As Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, my portfolio spans a vast network of U.S. allies and partners in Europe, Eurasia, the Middle East, and Africa. It is my responsibility to ensure that the DoD has a sustainable approach, consistent with the NDS, to achieving our objectives and addressing the most pressing threats in the regions.

The military instrument of power supports diplomacy, the Biden Administration's preferred tool for global engagement. By enhancing partners' capabilities and capacities to provide for their own defense and to address regional problems together, the DoD advances U.S. interests more efficiently and effectively. America's comparative advantage includes building partnerships that strengthen deterrence while using diplomacy wherever possible to deescalate tensions.

The DoD remains committed to using all of our assets – in support of broader instruments of our national power – to further U.S. interests in the USCENTCOM and USAFRICOM AORs and around the world. As we do, we will continue to stand with our allies and partners to win what we view as the competition of coalitions that is becoming increasingly critical to our national security.

Middle East

Security and stability in the Middle East are necessary for protecting vital U.S. national security interests. A prosperous, peaceful, integrated region is central to the long-term security and prosperity of the United States and remains essential for mitigating threats to American citizens emanating from this region. Resilient, interoperable, and capable Middle East partners are essential for maintaining security inside the region and addressing global challenges beyond the region. Our decades-long security partnerships with the armed forces and defense ministries of our Middle East partners provide the foundation upon which civilian-led work to secure stability can build. DoD makes enhancing these partnerships, both bilaterally and multilaterally, a priority.

The Department's priority objectives in the Middle East are to (1) maintain credible military options to deny Iran a nuclear weapon while working to counter Iran's other destabilizing activities; (2) disrupt top-tier VEO threats that endanger the homeland and vital U.S. national interests; (3) safeguard freedom of navigation in some of the world's most vital waterways; and (4) work with Israel to ensure its security. DoD seeks to expand regional coalitions of capable, willing partners ready to share in the daily tasks designed to achieve these objectives.

The 2022 National Security Strategy (NSS) articulates five principles that guide defense engagement in the Middle East: partnership, deterrence, diplomacy, integration, and values. DoD applies these principles as it works to strengthen integrated deterrence, reduce conflict, and promote stability. First and foremost, we support diplomacy as the preferred means to achieve our objectives. Second, the Department's vision for sustainable security relies on expanding regional security constructs, integrating our partners with us and with each other, and extending deterrence through multi-domain, collective defense. Weaving air, maritime, land, cyber, and space capabilities together both enhances collective defensive capabilities and raises the potential cost to adversaries for aggression. Finally, respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights expands opportunities in our security partnerships. U.S. defense officials reinforce U.S. values in key leader engagements, through security assistance programming, across professional military education courses and training, and by demonstrating these values in exercises.

DoD's activities support the commitments made by President Biden during his visit to the region last year. President Biden committed (1) to support and strengthen partnerships with countries that subscribe to the rule-based international order, (2) to prevent foreign or regional powers from jeopardizing freedom of navigation through the Middle East's waterways, and to disrupt any country's ability to dominate another through military buildups, incursions or threats, (3) to

work to reduce tensions, de-escalate, and end conflicts wherever possible through diplomacy, (4) to build political, economic, and security connections between U.S. partners wherever possible, and (5) to promote human rights and the values enshrined in the United Nations (UN) charter.

The NDS directs DoD to address major security challenges in the region in effective and sustainable ways as the Department continues to right-size its forward military presence in the Middle East, using the Joint Force more effectively over time. U.S. posture in the Middle East remains significant. Over 30,000 forces are deployed in this critical region, together with combat-ready capabilities. Our ability to support the region should not be evaluated only by what is deployed within the Middle East. DoD is ready to rapidly flow significant forces into the region and to integrate those forces with partners based on decades of military cooperation to enhance interoperability and address any contingency. Maintaining this ability will require political will and resource investments by both the United States and the leaders of the Middle East.

DoD maintains readiness to unilaterally respond to any crisis or contingency, but our preference is to work alongside interoperable and capable partners within coalitions. This emphasis on consultation and cooperation is the U.S. competitive advantage in the Middle East. Though others seek to strategically compete, there is no combat-credible, willing alternative prepared to share its cutting-edge capabilities and invest vital national resources in support of regional security and defense of others within the rules-based international order. The United States remains the partner of choice across the Middle East.

Iran

Iran is a persistent threat across a range of domains, most notably through its nuclear program, support for Iran-aligned militia groups (IAMGs) in Iraq, and the proliferation of advanced conventional weapons and attack drones. Iran continues to pose a threat to maritime security, commercial shipping, and freedom of navigation in the Middle East.

The Department maintains unilateral options to address Iranian threats while pursuing a range of partnered activities to bolster the defensive capabilities of our partners. While we execute these activities and maintain readiness to respond to Iran-related contingencies, U.S. force protection is the highest priority. We also demonstrate through exercises, Dynamic Force Employment activities, and bomber task force flyovers that the United States can rapidly flow forces into theater to respond to any contingency.

Iran plays a destabilizing role not only in the region but across the globe, through its support and proliferation of advanced weapons to proxies and rogue states. In response to the persistent threat posed by Iranian drones, the Secretary directed a comprehensive review of our counter-unmanned aerial systems (c-UAS) investments and capabilities that have bolstered our efforts to defeat these weapons prior to launch. Together with our partners, we are enhancing our intelligence collection capabilities, expanding opportunities to interdict and degrade illicit weapons transfers, and improving defense capabilities. We have made clear that we will respond to Iranian and IAMG attacks against U.S. personnel with military force, and we remain prepared

to take necessary and appropriate action if attacked. This was most recently demonstrated in August 2022, when the U.S. military took necessary and proportional defensive strikes against IAMGs in Syria responsible for attacks against our forces.

At sea, Iran continues to pose a threat to vital shipping lanes. We have seen a demonstrated pattern of Iranian attacks on oil tankers, which poses a challenge to freedom of navigation, has implications for insurance rates, and threatens global rules and norms. The United States, our partners, and our allies will continue to address Iran's maritime assaults and protect freedom of navigation, including through our participation in the International Maritime Security Construct (IMSC).

Deepening Russian-Iranian military cooperation poses a serious threat to stability in Europe and the Middle East. Since Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine, Iran has transferred lethal aid for Russian use in Ukraine, offered support for Russian sanctions evasion, and received Russian support for Iran's space program. In addition to the DoD's "prior-to-launch" activities, the Defense Intelligence Agency declassified information in February 2023 to demonstrate that Iran is actively supporting Russia's war in Ukraine by supplying the same systems – including uncrewed aerial systems – used to attack U.S. forces, as well as our partners, across the Middle East.

Iraq and Syria

In Iraq and Syria, DoD remains committed to the enduring defeat of ISIS. We pursue this objective through the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS (D-ISIS), which brings together 80 nations and five international organizations to provide an array of military capabilities, funding, and political support to the campaign against ISIS. Since 2014, the United States and its Allies and partners in the Global Coalition have made tremendous progress in the fight against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, liberating more than 100,000 square kilometers of territory and more than 11 million people from ISIS tyranny. Though ISIS no longer holds territory, the group maintains the capability to conduct intermittent attacks and seeks to infiltrate population centers by exploiting sectarian and other demographic tensions. ISIS maintains the intent to direct, support, and inspire attacks across the globe and continues efforts to rebuild its organization and re-establish a viable insurgency to regain territorial and social control. As a result, maintaining operational pressure on the group – by, with, and through vetted partner forces – is essential.

DoD is authorized to provide assistance to vetted partners in Iraq and Syria under Section 1236 and 1209, respectively, of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015, as amended, and through the Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF) appropriation. CTEF remains an essential tool for enabling the Iraqi Security Forces (including the Kurdish Peshmerga forces), the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), and other vetted partners to achieve the enduring defeat of ISIS. Current CTEF support to vetted partner forces includes basic life support services, stipends, detention facility renovation and construction support, equipment, and sustainment.

In Iraq, Combined Joint Task Force – Operation INHERENT RESOLVE (CJTF-OIR) completed its primary mission transition to an advise, assist, enable role in support of Iraq's fight against

ISIS in December 2021. This transition fulfilled commitments made by U.S. and Iraqi leadership during the July 2021 U.S.-Iraq Strategic Dialogue and was made possible due to the significant progress the Iraqi Security Forces, including the Kurdish Peshmerga, have achieved in their counterterrorism capabilities. Today, the Iraqi Security Forces are in the lead for ensuring ISIS's enduring defeat in Iraq. U.S. forces continue to support the Iraqis in this fight at the Government of Iraq's invitation, and DoD remains committed to supporting the Iraqi-led fight against ISIS.

U.S. and Iraqi leaders agree that Coalition support remains essential for achieving the enduring defeat of ISIS. DoD is focused on increasing the capabilities of the Iraqi Security Forces and setting the conditions for a long-term defense partnership. DoD will continue to provide logistical support, within means, to NATO Mission-Iraq, which conducts ministerial-level advising -- a complementary mission to CJTF-OIR's operational advising. This continuity in the D-ISIS mission is an essential pillar of the broader U.S. government approach to build a strong, stable, and sovereign Iraq.

In Syria, DoD is committed to achieving the enduring defeat of ISIS, working by, with, and through vetted, capable partner forces -- including the SDF. DoD conducts both unilateral and partnered counterterrorism operations that have yielded significant success in degrading ISIS networks in Syria. In 2022 alone, Coalition forces conducted 122 operations resulting in 466 ISIS operatives killed and 215 detained. The SDF continue to demonstrate increased capabilities to plan and conduct counterterrorism operations, though Coalition presence and support remains critical to their success.

DoD is prioritizing the secure and humane detention of the 10,000 ISIS fighters by providing support to the SDF to maintain custody of this population. ISIS remains intent on reconstituting its forces by liberating detained fighters. Repurposed facilities currently housing many detainees are not sufficient for long-term detention. To address these concerns, DoD is leveraging CTEF to work with the SDF to construct purpose-built detention facilities and professionalize and expand the guard force securing detained ISIS fighters.

The DoD coordinates with the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to address the simultaneous security and humanitarian crises at the al-Hol and al-Roj displaced persons camps in northeast Syria. DoD provides support to the SDF to disrupt ISIS activity and networks that threaten al-Hol's residents and the broader populations of northeast Syria. This support includes efforts to reinforce the camp's physical security, increase the number of security forces operating in the camp, and ensure those forces are appropriately trained to provide security in the unique environment of a displaced persons camp.

Repatriation remains the only durable solution for the humanitarian and security crises presented by the detention facilities and displaced persons camps in northeast Syria. It is imperative for countries of origin to repatriate, rehabilitate, and prosecute, where appropriate, their nationals who are detained in northeast Syria. DoD is committed to working with countries of origin to facilitate repatriations, including the Government of Iraq whose nationals make up most of both detained fighters and displaced persons. DoD will continue to prioritize supporting State Department activities to facilitate repatriation.

Military activities to support the enduring defeat of ISIS are just one piece of a broader whole-of-government strategy to address the underlying social, economic, and political conditions that gave rise to ISIS and that ISIS continues to exploit. DoD continues to work with interagency partners to best support our local partners in Iraq and Syria and encourage international action to address the challenges that remain to ensure ISIS's enduring defeat.

Partnerships: Israel, Egypt, the Levant, and the Gulf

Israel

The United States' security commitment to Israel is ironclad. In July 2022, the United States and Israel signed the Jerusalem Declaration, which reinforces our commitment to Israel's long-term security and Qualitative Military Edge. DoD plays an essential role in supporting this objective through a robust and far-reaching bilateral relationship with the Israeli Ministry of Defense and Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The bilateral cooperation extends across all elements of our defense enterprises, ranging from senior-level policy dialogues to bilateral operational collaboration and training, combined military exercises, missile defense cooperation, cooperative scientific research and development, technological innovation, and even collaboration on care for wounded veterans and addressing traumatic brain injury.

Within the Middle East, U.S.-Israel military exercises demonstrate our ongoing work to improve our interoperability and increase military cooperation. The JUNIPER OAK 23 combined military exercise in January deployed roughly 6,400 U.S. troops alongside more than 1,500 Israeli troops, highlighting the ability of our two militaries to be interoperable and conduct combined operations. We look forward to further engagements with our Israeli partners as we build on this success. As Israel's alignment to USCENTCOM's area of responsibility (AOR) matures, there will also be increased focus on working multilaterally with other partners throughout the region.

Egypt and the Levant

Egypt remains a key partner to the United States that is essential for maintaining regional stability. Egypt's positive responses to U.S. overflight requests to transit the Suez Canal remain critical to U.S. military global readiness. DoD supports Egypt's military modernization, and in particular Egypt's efforts to bolster its counterterrorism capabilities, mitigate risk to civilian harm in its operations, and border and maritime security efforts. The Egyptian Armed Forces are key to advancing integrated deterrence and stability in the region, as evidenced by their command of Combined Task Force 153 as part of the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) activities to secure vital sea lanes in the Red Sea and the upcoming combined, joint exercise BRIGHT STAR 23. DoD also continues to maintain U.S. contributions to the Multinational Force and Observers which monitors the implementation of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty in the Sinai Peninsula.

Jordan remains a steadfast partner and a leader for stability throughout the region. DoD continues to work with Jordan to bolster its ability to secure its borders against the continued

threat posed by ISIS and address new and emerging threats such as drug smuggling, unmanned aerial systems, air and missile threats, and other challenges posed primarily by Iran. In September, Jordan and the United States signed the most significant Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between our two countries to date. The MOU deepens our military and economic cooperation and strengthens Jordan's role as a leader in regional security. The agreement covers the longest timeframe and provides more assistance than any prior agreement, including an unprecedented level of Foreign Military Financing, which will support the modernization of Jordan's military. DoD is committed to strengthening the capabilities, professionalism, and interoperability of the Jordanian Armed Forces through robust security assistance, bilateral and multilateral exercises, joint training, and defense institution building efforts.

In Lebanon, the DoD works closely with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) to help them counter VEOs, secure their border with Syria, maintain internal stability, and preserve internal stability. As Lebanon faces destabilizing economic, political, and social crises, the LAF continue to perform admirably in securing Lebanon's borders, conducting effective counterterrorism and counternarcotics operations, and in maintaining internal stability. The LAF's reputation as a capable, nonsectarian, responsible institution undermines Lebanese Hizballah's false narrative that its weapons are necessary to defend Lebanon. This year, the U.S. Government partnered with the UN Development Programme to provide \$72 million to all eligible LAF and Internal Security Forces in the form of a \$100 per month living stipend for six months. This Administration remains committed to strengthening Lebanon's security and stability through a combination of diplomatic engagement and sustained support for the LAF.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries

The GCC countries remain critical to U.S. priorities in the region. These are strategic partnerships. We rely on these partners for critical access, basing, and overflight. We coordinate diplomatic and security approaches to regional challenges and objectives. We share intelligence and early warning. And we are working to expand interoperability and defensive capabilities to collectively address threats. The armed forces of each GCC country are significant Foreign Military Sales (FMS) customers, expanding opportunities for interoperability and integration. Finally, resilient, strong partnerships across the GCC are vital if we are to achieve the NDS vision for integrated deterrence and strategically compete in the region and globally.

Decades of investment in security cooperation, exercises, and FMS to Gulf partners such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are enabling these governments to effectively defend their territory, their citizens, and the tens of thousands of U.S. citizens living in the Gulf. The United States remains committed to supporting the defense of our GCC partners' territories and will continue to provide intelligence, early warning, training, and security cooperation activities.

The convention of GCC Defense Working Groups in Riyadh in February was one of many initiatives to promote integration as a foundation for a more secure and prosperous region. Additional enterprises include expanding multilateral relations between Abraham Accords signatories, increasing information sharing and improving interoperability between Negev Forum

members through participation in the Regional Security Working Group, and regular security initiatives and joint exercises under the auspices of USCENTCOM.

The U.S. strategic partnership with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia spans nearly eight decades. Saudi Arabia remains a critical stakeholder for reaching a durable political solution in Yemen. Saudi Arabia also is a leader for integrating regional security architecture and advancing a stable, integrated, and prosperous Middle East region. DoD remains committed to supporting Saudi Arabia's security and territorial defense and facilitating the Kingdom's ability to obtain necessary capabilities to defend its people and territory against external threats. In 2022, Saudi Arabia also assumed command of Combined Task Force 150, which reinforces shared maritime security objectives in the Gulf of Oman and Northern Arabian Sea and has increased its cooperation with USCENTCOM's Task Force 59.

The UAE is a strategic partner that has fought alongside U.S. forces in Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. It remains solidly committed to the collective defense of the region and continues to take the lead in bolstering regional cooperative defense efforts for the Gulf. The UAE also recently hosted the Negev Forum, an opportunity to not only deepen Israel's integration with the region, but also shore up our bilateral cooperation with the UAE on a broad range of shared interests.

We also have a close and robust partnership with Qatar, which acts as a host and provides critical support to U.S. forces and facilities. Qatar is also taking steps to increase its interoperability with U.S. forces and continues to rely on the United States as one of its top suppliers of defense sector purchases.

A long-term partner and strong ally in the region, Kuwait, provides critical support for U.S. troops and equipment, acting as a force-flow and logistic hub. Kuwait continues to host the fourth largest presence of U.S. forces outside the United States.

Bahrain is a key driver of regional coalitions as host to the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet -- a critical resource in protecting the freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz -- the International Maritime Security Construct (IMSC) -- an eight-member consortium that helps to maintain the free flow of trade for legitimate mariners in the region -- and the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), which works to interdict Iran's illicit shipments of weapons to the Houthis and underscores the United States' enduring commitment to freedom of navigation and maritime security.

Oman serves as a critical waypoint for DoD operations in the USCENTCOM AOR and is a consistent voice for diplomacy and moderation in regional affairs. Oman provides critical access, basing, and overflight to U.S. forces. With its strategic location at a key naval chokepoint in the Strait of Hormuz, Oman is valuable to DoD operations and planning.

Yemen

In Yemen, U.S. policy objectives remain focused on creating the conditions to implement a durable resolution under UN auspices that will end the now eight-year conflict in order to alleviate humanitarian suffering and stymie threats from al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula

(AQAP) and ISIS-Yemen. DoD supports the Department of State's work to secure a peaceful settlement to the war. Although the April 2022 UN-mediated truce was extended twice after it was first announced, an agreement could not be reached to extend the truce before it expired in October 2022. Both sides have largely upheld their commitments under the UN-brokered truce agreement and continue to do so despite the truce's expiration.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has, at times, faced a high-volume of cross-border attacks from Yemen. DoD provides air defense support, intelligence-sharing, and other coordination to the Kingdom to defend its territory, people, and the 70,000 U.S. citizens who reside there. DoD is also bolstering activities to interdict Iranian weapons transfers to the Houthis and expose Iran's involvement in such transfers so that Iran can no longer hide behind the veneer of plausible deniability. In the past few months, there have been four significant interdictions of Iranian illicit cargo that were en route to Yemen. These interdictions have prevented the transfer of more than 5,000 weapons and 1.6 million rounds of ammunition to the Houthis.

Inside Yemen itself, DoD continues to maintain a small presence of U.S. special operations forces to combat AQAP and ISIS terrorist organizations that have capitalized on Yemen's instability. These terrorist organizations threaten U.S. national security interests, and the United States has worked with our partners in the Gulf, such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia, to degrade AQAP's ability to conduct external attacks and ISIS-Yemen's presence.

The People's Republic of China (PRC)

As President Biden made clear: "we are not going to leave a vacuum in the Middle East for Russia or China to fill." Across the U.S. Government, we have worked with our allies and partners to mitigate food insecurity, address climate change, enhance maritime security, and cooperatively bolster air and missile defense. The PRC is DoD's pacing challenge. The PRC is the only country that has both the intent and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological capabilities to fundamentally reshape the rules-based international order. The countries of the Middle East have benefited tremendously from the existing rules-based international order and should have an interest in maintaining it.

The PRC is not working alongside the governments in the region to address strategic threats or improve collective defensive capabilities. In some significant instances, the PRC is actively undermining the region's security, including upgrading strategic relations with Iran, deploying coercive economic tactics to secure contracts for Chinese Communist Party (CCP) companies, and expanding exercises to increase its own power projection operations. The PRC is not a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. It has contributed only negligibly to international humanitarian support to Yemen and Syria and political processes to wind down these conflicts.

As the 2022 China Military Power Report states, the PRC naval forces are increasingly operating outside of home waters, including in the Middle East. PRC forces are a significant contributor to peacekeeping missions in the Middle East, and the PRC is using Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects to develop inroads with governments across the region. In response to the strained economies of many Middle East partners resulting from Russia's unprovoked war in Ukraine, the

PRC is also moving to offer financial incentives to many governments, which could make them more susceptible to PRC coercive influence in the future.

As the PRC's overseas interests have grown, its leaders have increasingly pushed the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to rethink how the military will protect those interests. The PRC seeks to establish a more robust overseas logistics and basing infrastructure to allow the PLA to project and sustain military power at greater distances. A global PLA military logistics network could interfere with U.S. and allied military operations and eventually support offensive operations as the PRC's global military objectives evolve. The PRC likely considers the UAE as a location for PLA military logistics facilities. We encourage allies and partners to carefully consider the potential strategic and security risks of hosting PRC facilities prior to committing to BRI and other economic initiatives.

DoD's approach to competition with the PRC in the Middle East is not maximalist or zero sum. We recognize that our partners seek healthy relations with the PRC, including commercial, trade, and defense ties. However, there are specific categories of engagement that put at risk U.S. defense partnerships, U.S. defense technology, and ultimately, U.S. force protection. Given the robust U.S. force presence and basing across the region, PRC military installations on the territory of our strategic partners is a major concern. We constantly engage our partners to ensure that secure communications networks, U.S.-origin defense equipment, and U.S. military personnel are secure. This is an area that requires constant vigilance and consistent engagement from across the DoD enterprise.

Russia

The NDS describes Russia as an acute threat. Russia's unprovoked war in Ukraine has already produced significant consequences for the governments, forces, and people of the Middle East. Russia's influence and destabilizing activities in the Middle East include Russia's military activity in Syria and deepening military cooperation with Iran. Russia and Syria limit the UN and other organizations from providing sufficient humanitarian aid to Syrian populations in need. Russian forces in Syria interfere with Coalition D-ISIS operations. Russia's procurement of hundreds of Iranian drones, and the use of the drones against Ukrainian civilian targets and critical infrastructure, represent a growing risk to Middle East partners.

Increasing Russian-Iranian military cooperation has altered the perception for those in the region as Russia deepens ties with Iran. Iran is gaining battlefield experience and forging a strategic relationship with Russia, which will have serious implications for the region. The United States is working with partners to issue new restrictions to prevent components found in Iranian drones from making their way onto the battlefield in Ukraine. Additionally, the United States is at the forefront of a global coalition supporting Ukraine with capabilities to defend itself. More than 50 nations, including many Middle East partners, support the Ukraine Defense Contact Group. Middle East partners have an important role to play, from increased humanitarian support to air defense assets to protect population centers.

Many Middle Eastern countries have historically relied on Russian arms imports to supply their militaries. Russia's defense industry has already struggled with numerous challenges, such as

inefficiency, low production capacity, and lack of a modern machinery base. These challenges have only been exacerbated as Russia's military takes substantial losses in Ukraine. Major supply shortages for Russia's forces in Ukraine, in part because of U.S. sanctions and export controls, complicates imports of Russian arms replenishment of spare parts, ammunition, and material. Furthermore, Russian battlefield losses undermine its own portrayal of Russian armed forces and military equipment as highly capable.

Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia

Afghanistan

Under Operation ENDURING SENTINEL, DoD is conducting counterterrorism operations using personnel and platforms stationed outside of Afghanistan to ensure terrorist groups do not use the country to launch attacks against the United States, its allies and interests. DoD retains the ability to conduct kinetic strikes to disrupt terrorist threats within Afghanistan. Our service members and civilian employees remain hard at work to advance our interests in Afghanistan, which includes supporting the Department of State's work to facilitate the relocation of U.S. citizens, Lawful Permanent Residents, and our Afghan allies from Afghanistan.

Central Asia

DoD also continues to work with our Central Asian partners to help counter a wide range of threats to the region and to the U.S. homeland. Of particular note, Congress appropriated \$90 million in the Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2023 to establish aviation-based security cooperation programs in the region that will build the ISR capabilities of partner nations and enhance our ability to work with them on countering terrorism and VEOs while enhancing border security in support of regional stability.

Additional long-term security cooperation programs with our Central Asian partners support their sovereignty and territorial integrity, particularly in light of Russia's demonstrated willingness to coerce its neighbors.

Pakistan

Pakistan is a key partner on several issues that are important to our national interests. We continue to seek and build upon areas of mutual interest to improve regional security and our bilateral relationship. Strategic stability in South Asia remains an enduring interest of both Pakistan and the United States. There are several ways we can continue to cooperate with Pakistan to pursue these interests. For example, counterterrorism remains an area of mutual interest as several violent extremist organizations seek to target U.S. and Pakistani interests. Pakistan also participates in counter-piracy efforts, meant to ensure a rules-based international order with free and open maritime transit.

Africa

Africa's geopolitical importance cannot be understated. With a growing population of over a billion people and increasing political and economic power, there are extraordinary opportunities

on the continent arising from its dynamic workforce, burgeoning private sector markets, and natural resources. Many of the world's most pressing challenges and global solutions will emanate from this rising continent. However, this limitless potential is consistently threatened by episodes of political instability, democratic backsliding, the entrenched presence of VEOs, transnational threats, and the impact of climate change and environmental degradation. Without US-Africa partnerships, the United States cannot successfully accomplish its global strategic objectives and pursue its national security interests in Africa. Advancing the stability and partnerships needed to protect Americans ultimately requires promoting local economies, supporting good governance, and addressing conflict in African countries. Simply put, Africa is increasingly important to U.S. national security.

Over the last few years, the African security environment has become increasingly unpredictable. DoD prioritizes disrupting VEO threats against the U.S. homeland and vital national security interests, working by, with, and through our African partners to build states' capability to degrade terrorist organizations and contribute broadly to regional security and stability. DoD supports interagency initiatives to disrupt malign PRC and Russian activities that present a military risk to the United States.

DoD security cooperation builds resilient defense institutions by promoting civilian oversight of the military, respect for human rights, and gender diversity in partner nation security and defense sectors. To accomplish our objectives, we employ a variety of tools, including key leader engagements, counter-terrorism training and operations, accountability training to minimize civilian harm, military exercises, Department of State's foreign military sales, partner intelligence sharing, institutional capacity building, crisis response, and humanitarian assistance.

DoD works with African defense ministries and other security institutions to strengthen their capabilities to manage and sustain armed forces consistent with the principles of good governance and the rule of law while continuing to build the institutional capacity of defense ministries and other security institutions. DoD enhances our partnerships in Africa through a '3-D' approach that includes diplomatic, development, and defense activities. Working with our partners at the Department of State, USAID, and across the U.S. Government, our holistic approach ensures that U.S. security and governance initiatives are mutually reinforcing and sufficiently comprehensive to address the complex nature of threats in the USAFRICOM AOR. We have increased our programming with African partners in key areas of cooperation, to include cyber security and space technologies. We work together to ensure our programs and activities help Africans advance their security.

Posture

DoD's force posture in Africa is primarily concentrated in the Horn of Africa and in Niger. It is supplemented with modest security assistance investments directed to North Africa, the Sahel, and the Gulf of Guinea regions. Our work streams elsewhere on the continent, such as in Central and Southern Africa, are designed to sustain and advance relationships and encourage more robust bilateral cooperation where possible.

Horn of Africa

In the Horn of Africa, VEOs like al-Shabaab present both near-term and long-term threats to the United States and regional interests. We remain steadfast in our support of regional initiatives and the African Union Transition Mission to Somalia (ATMIS) to counter the threat from al-Shabaab in Somalia and across East Africa, including bilateral support to the troop contributing countries of Kenya, Djibouti, Burundi, and Uganda. Last May, at the request of and in coordination with the Government of Somalia, DoD returned a small, persistent U.S. military presence to Somalia to train and advise partner forces to degrade and deny al-Shabaab the time and space it needs to plot external operations. The next two years could be critical for Somalia as ATMIS is scheduled to draw down its contingent of over 19,000 armed forces, and police and the Federal Government of Somalia assume security responsibilities by 2024. We have seen renewed resolve and determination by the Somali Government and population to combat al-Shabaab. DoD's persistent presence in Somalia has been instrumental in supporting their efforts to defeat al-Shabaab. The United States will continue to support a comprehensive, Somali-led approach to eliminating the terrorist threat and restoring stability.

In Ethiopia, DoD supported the U.S.-facilitated diplomatic peace negotiation mediation efforts in response to the two-year Tigray conflict in northern Ethiopia, which resulted in the signing of a cessation of hostilities agreement in November between the Government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front. Subsequently, parties to the conflict have largely withdrawn military forces from the battlefield, yielding access to humanitarian assistance and a resumption of critical services throughout the region. We are working closely with our allies and partners to facilitate ongoing Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam negotiations between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt.

East and Central

In Sudan, we support a shared commitment to facilitate a successful transition to a civilian-led government, including through security sector reform initiatives that promote regional security and deter strategic competitor malign activities. Instability remains a key issue for political transition and potential spoilers continue to engage to stymie deals and negotiations.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), we share the concern of other U.S. departments and agencies about the loss of life, mass displacement, and escalating tensions in the region. DRC's abundance of natural resources and critical minerals continue to subject it to foreign interference and territorial incursion. Additionally, eastern DRC remains ravaged by over 120 rebel groups that exploit weak governance and corruption, compounding the deteriorating security situation in the Great Lakes Region.

Djibouti is the host of the largest contingent of U.S. military personnel in Africa, with over 3,000 U.S. military and civilian personnel, and it remains a critical U.S. partner even with PRC's naval base only a few miles from our U.S. location. The airfield and port in Djibouti are critical to U.S. capability and capacity for both USAFRICOM and USCENTCOM to disrupt VEO threats and counter illicit activities at sea.

Sahel and West Africa

Security is further deteriorating in the Sahel as instability is spreading to coastal West Africa, resulting in thousands of civilians killed in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger by VEOs, a dramatic increase over the past four years. Currently, the most active and dangerous VEOs in the Sahel are al'Qaida-aligned Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) and ISIS-Greater Sahara. Porous borders and lack of state legitimacy provide an enabling environment for VEOs and transnational criminal networks. The region's security crises have outpaced the ability of governments and local actors to respond, intensifying existing development, humanitarian, and governance challenges. DoD has approximately 1,100 troops in Niger combatting terrorism in the region. The series of coups that have taken place over the last two years in Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso have limited U.S. military assistance, and in turn, little access and influence to help counter VEOs, as well as the malignant influence of the Russian Private Military Contractor (PMC), Wagner Group. In the Sahel, and more specifically Niger, DoD supports the militaries of our African and European partners in their fight against VEOs such as JNIM and ISIS-Greater Sahara through security cooperation, logistical support, intelligence sharing, and capacity building efforts. DoD is focused on improving coordination of these programs to prevent the spillover of instability into littoral West Africa.

In West Africa, strong U.S. partners like Ghana and Senegal have been able to maintain peace and security and counter downward security trends in the region through their strong commitments to democracy and security governance. Despite these notable bright spots, the rising rates of piracy, illicit trafficking, and illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing in the Gulf of Guinea and broader Atlantic impedes global trade and put freedom of navigation at risk. Alongside the Department of State, DoD continues to work with global and regional partners to secure the South Atlantic from maritime threats by executing security cooperation activities and joint exercises that enhance the capabilities of partner nation navies and Coast Guards. DoD is working closely with the Department of State and USAID to develop programs that address the drivers of insecurity, contain the spread of violence, and stabilize the region for coastal West African countries (Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo, Benin, and Ghana) as part of the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability (SPCPS) a ten-year plan to promote stability.

North Africa

In North Africa, Morocco and Tunisia continue to be key security partners that broadly support our common security objectives on the continent and in the southern Mediterranean. As the only two major non-NATO Allies in Africa, Morocco and Tunisia have worked with us to achieve U.S. defense goals in the region and maintain readiness as hosts to the largest land and naval exercises in Africa. Both countries have committed to helping the United States export security to other African partners through training, exercises, and support to UN peacekeeping missions in Mali and the Central African Republic.

Libya continues to struggle with political reconciliation, but recent advances by the UN to push for elections in 2023 may be successful, as popular demand for political progress grows in the country and international stakeholders apply renewed energy to this process. On a positive note,

the 2020 ceasefire is holding. We see Libyan military leadership from major western and eastern factions discussing what a future unified Libyan military under civilian control would look like.

However, Russia's foreign presence, through the Russian PMC, Wagner Group, continues to threaten a peaceful and sovereign Libya. The majority of Libyans want all foreign fighters to leave their country, with Wagner at the top of the list. It is clear that Wagner must leave Libya for the country to sustain real progress on security.

We continue to seek strengthened ties with Algeria. The Algerians see Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the Wagner Groups' destabilizing activities in Africa as reasons to diversify their security relationships with international partners rooted in international norms and respect for sovereignty.

Southern Africa

In Southern Africa, DoD is building partnerships with Angola and Zambia and is reinforcing long-standing partnerships with Botswana and Malawi. In Mozambique, DoD is also working closely with the Department of State and USAID through the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Security to strengthen the resilience of Mozambican communities affected by violent extremism and terrorism. U.S. government security assistance to Mozambique supports the regionally-led Southern African Mission In Mozambique (SAMIM) and focuses on both capacity building and combined training between U.S. special operations forces and Mozambique's armed forces to combat the threat from ISIS in the Cabo Delgado province.

Strategic Competition

Strategic competitors like the PRC and Russia seek to take advantage of weak governance, faltering political institutions, and the misperception of U.S. indifference or withdrawal from the continent. China's influence poses a longer-term risk to the rules based international order, and Russia's use of the Wagner Group undermines the security and resilience of our partners.

The PRC in Africa

The PRC remains our most serious competitor on the continent. Russia, operating through the Wagner Group, is a destabilizing force. The PRC has adapted its model for engaging African partners to emphasize security cooperation, in addition to its large-scale economic investment and its courting of African support in multilateral fora. PRC activities in Africa undercut regional and global work to strengthen local defense institutions and improve long-term stability grounded in international rules and norms. Also of concern to DoD are the PRC's ambitions to expand its military footprint, which has the potential to degrade maritime security and adversely affect U.S. freedom of movement and influence throughout Africa.

As the PRC's overseas interests expand, so too may its military and logistical support systems to protect those interests and eventually projection power. A global PLA logistics network could interfere with U.S. and allied military operations and eventually enable offensive operations. We are seeing warning signs of this in Djibouti, which hosts the PRC's first overseas military base, where the PLA has violated international norms and has sought to restrict access to sovereign

Djiboutian airspace. The base also has implications for security in the Middle East in sight of vital shipping lanes transiting through the Suez Canal.

The PRC government is the only country with the intent and increasingly the capability to challenge the rules based international order. Amid democratic backsliding in Africa, China is pursuing deepened security and defense relationships, sometimes without consideration of international norms and courting an increasingly important bloc of voting nations in the UN.

Russia

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has produced significant ramifications for agricultural and energy imports to Africa. Many countries rely on Russia for agricultural products, oil and gas imports, and arms sales. Russia exerts influence in some countries through PMCs and through historical relationships rooted in its Cold War support for African independence movements.

Russia's security cooperation, assistance, and use of PMCs directly undermines our efforts to advance U.S. interests and democratic values in Africa. Together with interagency partners, we are concerned about Wagner's expanding political meddling, illicit resource extraction, propagation of instability, and human rights violations in Africa. Wagner's destabilizing actions in countries across the continent, such as in Libya, Central African Republic, Mozambique, and Mali, have not led to improved security outcomes. Instead, Wagner mercenaries have increased violence, sowed division, peddled disinformation, and undermined state sovereignty.

We continuously seek to bring Wagner atrocities and dangerous behavior to light when engaging our African partners, making clear that turning to Wagner only serves to prolong conflicts. The United States is also working to support African countries in resisting Wagner's expansion.

Celeste Wallander**Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs**

Celeste Wallander is Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs in the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy at the U.S. Department of Defense. She previously served as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Russia/Central Asia on the National Security Council (2013-2017), as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia/Ukraine/Eurasia (2009 to July 2012). Outside government, she served as President and CEO of the U.S.-Russia Foundation (2017-2022), professor at American University (2009-2013), visiting professor at Georgetown University (2006-2008), Director for Russia/Eurasia at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (2001-2006), Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations (2000-2001), and professor of Government at Harvard (1989-2000). She is the author of over 80 publications on European and Eurasian security issues, focused on Russian foreign and defense strategy. She received her Ph.D. (1990), M.Phil. (1986) and M.A. (1985) degrees from Yale University, and her B.A. (1983 – summa cum laude) from Northwestern University. She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the Atlantic Council of the United States, and the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

13 March 2023

**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
GENERAL MICHAEL “ERIK” KURILLA
COMMANDER, US CENTRAL COMMAND**

**BEFORE THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON THE POSTURE OF
US CENTRAL COMMAND**



I. INTRODUCTION: A LANDSCAPE OF INCREASING COMPLEXITY

In 1983, US Central Command was formed to serve as a hedge against the expansionist goals of Iran – then in the nascent days of its new anti-American regime – and to serve American interests in the Middle East, Levant, and Central Asia amidst strategic competition with the Soviet Union. On November 14th 1982, Caspar Weinberger, the 15th Secretary of Defense, who oversaw the creation of CENTCOM, said: “the central region is among the most important regions in the world as far as we’re concerned and as far as the free world is concerned.” The Senate Armed Services Committee’s January 17, 1982 legislation authorizing this new command explained that “US Central Command, alongside local and regional forces, will be America’s security guarantor in the world’s central region.”

Forty years later, while much of geopolitics and policy has transformed, the security landscape of this part of the world remains largely unchanged. In many important ways, the region’s most vexing problems have grown more complex.

Now, as then, the world’s geographically central region remains critical to American security interests, global trade, global energy, and global security. Today, more than a third of global container traffic transits the Suez Canal and more than a quarter of global oil transits the Strait of Hormuz. The region is home to almost 50% of the world’s known oil reserves and more than 40% of the world’s natural gas. This part of the world produces 37 percent of the world’s oil, 18 percent of its gas, and houses four of the world’s top five OPEC oil producers: Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

The central region remains among the most important regions in the world. A disruption in the maritime choke points flowing through the Middle East or the spread of instability throughout the region could threaten vital national interests and hold the global economy at risk.

Four decades after revolutionary students overran the American embassy, Iran possesses the largest and most diverse missile arsenal in the Middle East, with thousands of ballistic and cruise missiles, some capable of striking the entire Middle East and Levant. The Iranian regime now holds the largest and most capable Unmanned Aerial Vehicle force in the region. The advancement of Iranian military capabilities over the past 40 years is unparalleled in the region; in fact, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps of today is unrecognizable from just five years ago. Even more concerning, Iran has advanced its nuclear program such that Tehran can now produce sufficient fissile material for a nuclear weapon in less than 14 days. In addition, the regime invests heavily in information operations, including broadcasting, coordinated inauthentic activity, and cyber-attacks.

Alongside the state threat posed by Iran, violent extremist groups continue to threaten the security and stability of the region. For example, ISIS, long past its 2014 pinnacle of capability, remains able to conduct operations within the region with a desire to strike beyond the Middle East. Though degraded, the group's vile ideology remains unconstrained.

In Afghanistan, the reduction in collection, analytical resources, and Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance assets means our campaign against Al Qaeda and ISIS Khorasan is challenged; while we can see the broad contours of attack planning, we lack the granularity to see the complete threat picture. ISIS-Khorasan has increased attacks in the region and desires to export those attacks beyond Afghanistan to include the US homeland and our interests abroad.

The group also seeks to expand its operational presence and influence regionally and beyond. We are addressing this through the development of innovative Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance platforms and increasing additional collection methods to build out a more fulsome threat picture.

While Afghanistan's security situation deteriorates, the United States has a moral obligation to safely extract the tens of thousands of Special Immigrant Visa holders, many of whom aided US troops as interpreters, translators, and advisors during our longest war.

Meanwhile, strategic competition in the central region has grown more urgent over the past 40 years. Only now, the Soviet Union is replaced with Russia and the People's Republic of China, both of whom seek to undermine American interests in the region. Russia looks to aggressively expand its foothold of influence in the region amidst its war in Ukraine. Moscow leverages its military presence by propping up Syria to garner influence in the Middle East. The People's Republic of China aggressively expands its diplomatic, informational, economic, and military outreach in this part of the world.

These challenges and complexities, combined with the opportunities offered by our partnerships in the region, form the basis of CENTCOM's three strategic priorities.

II. CENTCOM STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: DETER, COUNTER, COMPETE

Strategic Priority I: Deter Iran

Deterring Iran is arguably more urgent than at any time in CENTCOM's history due to Iran's cutting-edge missile and UAV capability as well as its uranium enrichment program. As it was at

the time of CENTCOM's formation, Iran is the most destabilizing actor in the region. Today, Iran is undeterred from its malign activities, which include conventional threats to neighbors, support to violent proxy groups that spread chaos and instability throughout the region, and support to Russia's war in Ukraine.

The evolution of the Iranian threat – the primary threat against which this command was born – is a story that runs the full timeline of CENTCOM history. Early in the Iran-Iraq war, the regime realized its armed forces could never fully recover from the crippling losses suffered during that ruinous conflict. Instead, to develop an asymmetric advantage against regional militaries, the regime invested in precision missiles with extended reach. It now commands an imposing measure of missile capability it uses to coerce, intimidate, and bully its neighbors.

Tehran has also manufactured increasingly sophisticated Unmanned Aerial Vehicles. The regime now commands an arsenal of drone systems, ranging from small, short-range systems to modern intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems to long-range One-Way Attack platforms. They are building larger drones that can fly further with increasingly deadly payloads. Until the United States helped secure the Yemen truce, Iran was regularly using Yemen as a testing ground for these weapons, threatening both U.S. partners and tens of thousands of Americans in the Gulf.

Meanwhile, Tehran continues to furnish weapons, support, and direction to proxies across the region who engage in acts of terror and undermine local governments, all advancing Iranian interests. The proxy forces are more emboldened and dangerous through the increased proliferation of these Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, which allow them to target US and partner interests with increased speed, range, accuracy, and explosive capacity.

This story grows more foreboding. Today, Iran continues to enrich and stockpile uranium far above what is needed for commercial use. Increasingly more centrifuges are the advanced IRN-6 models, capable of enriching uranium far faster and more efficiently than Iran's first-generation centrifuges. The regime is now stockpiling highly enriched uranium under the guise of commercial use. The International Atomic Energy Agency report released on February 28th on Iran's enrichment program reveals that Iran's stockpile of uranium enriched up to 60% has grown substantially in less than three months and that Iran now has sufficient nuclear material for manufacture of several nuclear explosive devices. The region is increasingly worried about a nuclear-armed Iran.

Iran also puts itself increasingly further outside of international norms; Tehran continues to ignore United Nations Security Council resolutions, violate sanctions and embargos, proliferate weapons to its network of proxies and affiliates, and attack shipping vessels in international waters. The regime continues the brutal beatdown of the rights of its citizenry, crushing dissent, protest, and human rights. Iranian-aligned groups routinely strike at American troops and our partners in Iraq and Syria.

Recently, Iran's advanced weapons are seen on the battlefield of Ukraine alongside their Russian partners. Iran often aligns information operations with or in support of Russia. An internationally isolated Iran has clearly thrown in its lot with an also isolated Russia.

Strategic Priority 2: Counter Violent Extremist Organizations

While Iran poses the most ominous threat to the central region, Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) operating in the Middle East, Levant, and Central Asian States also

represent a danger to security and stability. The Central Command Area of Responsibility serves as the epicenter of violent extremism, with 19 of 21 top tier terrorist groups operating across the region. ISIS and Al Qaeda are the principal Sunni violent extremist organizations in the Middle East and Levant. Both groups maintain numerous affiliates pursuing local, regional, and global objectives.

ISIS continues to organize attacks throughout the Middle East and must not be allowed to operate uncontested. Alongside our Syrian Democratic Forces partners, we continue to put pressure on ISIS in Syria. In Iraq, we continue to advise, assist, and enable the development of the Iraqi security forces in their fight against ISIS.

We see ISIS in Iraq and Syria in three groups:

1. ISIS At Large. This is the current generation of ISIS leaders and fighters we face in Iraq and Syria today. While we have significantly degraded this group's capability, it retains the ability to inspire, direct, organize, and lead attacks in the region and abroad.

This group offers the most straightforward solution: partner with Syrian Democratic Forces and advise, enable, and assist Iraqi Security Forces until ISIS At Large is defeated. The two other groups represent far more complex problems.
2. ISIS In Detention. These are the roughly 10,000 ISIS fighters in detention facilities throughout Syria, and approximately 20,000 in detention facilities in Iraq. We rely on the Syrian Democratic Forces and our Iraqi partners to secure these sites, keeping this population off the battlefield. The Government of Iraq has sufficient infrastructure to keep these fighters in detention. The only long-term solution in Syria, however, is transfer of these detainees to the custody of their countries of origin.

Last week, during my sixth visit to Syria since taking command 11 months ago, I again visited the Hasakah detention facility, which houses more than 5,000 detained ISIS fighters predominately from the terror group's tactical defeat at the March 2019 battle in Baghuz. I observed the structural damage incurred during the January 2022 ISIS attack on the facility in which more than 1,000 ISIS fighters escaped. The vast majority were later recaptured by SDF forces. During that ten-day battle involving SDF and US forces, more than 400 ISIS fighters and 121 SDF Soldiers were killed.

This population of detainees represents a looming threat to Syria, the region, and beyond. Syrian Democratic Forces leaders securing the site as well as camp administration officials described the detainee population as unrepentant and subject to further radicalization. One Syrian Democratic Forces official referred to the more than 5,000 detainees as a "ticking time bomb."

Unlike the first group, there is no military solution to this ISIS detainee population. We must support the Syrian Democratic Forces who continue to secure these sites while working with the countries of origin of these ISIS detainees to repatriate and rehabilitate or find a judicial solution.

3. The Potential Next Generation of ISIS. This, the most concerning group, includes the more than 30,000 children in the al-Hol camp for internally displaced persons and the more than 1,000 children in the al Roj camp who are in danger of ISIS indoctrination on a daily basis.

Last week, while in the al Roj camp, I spoke with dozens of residents from at least 16 countries, including: Russia, Egypt, Türkiye, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Morocco, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Yemen, Tunisia, Iraq, Syria, Canada, and the

United States. These residents told me that the vile ISIS ideology remains a threat throughout the camp. To a person, they all expressed a desire to return to their country of origin.

During four trips to the al Hol camp in 11 months, I've seen first-hand that these children are prime targets for ISIS radicalization. The al-Hol camp is a flashpoint of human suffering, with more than 51,000 residents, more than 90 percent of them women and children, living in tents. These children have little meaningful education, no access to the outside world, limited hot water, and few constructive outlets to develop their potential. They are at risk of becoming casualties to an ideological war within the camps: ISIS leaders want their minds.

As with the second category of ISIS, there is no military solution for this group. Our long-term goal must be the successful repatriation, rehabilitation, and reintegration of the camp residents back into their country of origin.

While progress against ISIS in Iraq and Syria continues apace, the underlying conditions that led to the group's 2013 and 2014 expansion remain. The ruinous effects of Assad's rule and civil war in Syria lingers, employment and educational opportunities remain scarce for many young men, and millions live in appalling conditions. ISIS' vile ideology remains uncontained and unconstrained, and a seething hatred remains open to exploitation.

Our continued, limited presence in Iraq and Syria allows us to assist the Syrian Democratic Forces and the Iraqi Security Forces in maintaining pressure on ISIS to prevent the group's resurgence to 2014 levels. The minimal U.S. troop strength in those countries allows us the ability to advise, assist, and enable partner forces with the goal of the enduring defeat of ISIS

and the prevention of external attack plots against the U.S and nations throughout the region. Our support is essential to ensuring regional stability as well as protecting the homeland.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban's hold on security is maintained through ideology, continued humanitarian aid, and persistent abuse of human rights to dissuade unrest. Extremist groups see opportunity and ISIS-Khorasan grows emboldened amidst the chaos, seeking to expand its ranks and inspire, enable, or direct attacks in the region and beyond. ISIS-Khorasan is building a capability in Afghanistan from which to strike Western interests worldwide, with the ultimate goal of a strike on the American homeland.

Al Qaeda remnants remain in Afghanistan. While the July 2022 death of Ayman al-Zawahiri set the group back, Al Qaeda desires to rebuild. Though this will take time, Al Qaeda remains a long-term threat to American interests and citizens as well as the homeland.

Strategic Priority 3: Compete Strategically

In addition to its primary role as a redoubt against the spread of Iranian-directed instability across the region, this command was established in 1983 to maintain a military advantage over the Soviet Union amidst Great Power Competition. This was, after all, in the moments after the surprising 1979 Christmas Eve Soviet invasion of Afghanistan – the first major combat operation involving Soviet troops outside of Warsaw Pact territory since the close of World War II.

Today, CENTCOM's role in Great Power Competition, clearly defined in the 2022 National Defense Strategy, is more urgent and complex.

Strategic Competition with PRC

China's goal to serve as the world's leading superpower by 2049 puts this region squarely in its crosshairs. The US Central Command area of responsibility shares a 2,200-mile border with the People's Republic of China – larger than the U.S. border with Mexico. China looks across that border and sees only opportunity for advantage in influence. Beijing's willingness to take on higher-risk projects threatens American preferential ties and unfettered access. On its current trajectory, the increased technological and military presence serves as a growing strategic challenge to US partnerships, access, force presence, and security in the region.

The People's Republic of China aggressively expands its diplomatic and economic outreach across the region. Last week's PRC-brokered reestablishment of relations between Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia underscores the emergence of China's diplomatic role in the region. China, dependent on the region for half of its crude oil, is also moving beyond energy-based investments to encompass physical and telecommunications infrastructure. Beijing also encourages greater military cooperation in the Middle East and Central Asia, aiming to challenge our standing in the region. More than half of all the oil and more than a third of all the natural gas imported by China is supplied by countries within the CENTCOM area of responsibility.

Expanding regional arms sales by Beijing provides economic opportunities, expands influence and increases People's Republic of China interoperability in the region. China seeks to undermine American economic, commercial, and security interest in this part of the world to become the region's leading power.

And Beijing has reason for optimism here. China is often viewed by regional partners as more accommodating than the U.S., offering lower costs, favorable financing, faster delivery times and

no end-use monitoring agreements. During my trips to the region and calls with regional Chiefs of Defense, I routinely hear how much faster and easier China's foreign military sales program is than ours. While the American foreign military sales process involves multiple steps going through multiple layers of government bureaucracy, the PRC can move much faster, often making us non-competitive by comparison. Although this multi-layered process is a reflection of our form of government and U.S. law, it often has a deleterious effect on our ability to compete for the sorts of long-term relationships that the sales of major defense systems create.

The Belt and Road Initiative remains a strategic lever to supplant U.S. leadership in the region under the guise of benign economic initiatives and broadening security relationships. Of the 21 countries comprising the CENTCOM area of responsibility, 19 have Belt and Road Initiative agreements with China.

Regional powers see the Belt and Road Initiative as an opportunity to modernize their cities and societies to advance regional economic and social reform programs including Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, Oman's Vision 2040, Qatar's Vision 2030, Kuwait's Vision 2035, and Egypt's Vision 2030. Three Belt and Road Initiative land corridors and one of the three maritime corridors transits the CENTCOM area of responsibility.

As the US reduced force posture in the region, Chinese investment and influence grew steadily.

Consider the following:

- The eight-year period from 2013 to 2021 represented the largest investment period in the CENTCOM region in PRC history with \$408.7 billion in commercial investments;
- From 2015 to 2021, just as it was accelerating commercial investment, the PRC devoted \$2.6 trillion in trade with CENTCOM countries;

- In 2021, in Israel's largest shipping hub, the PRC opened a new, \$1.7 billion modern technological port which is significantly larger than Israel's three international ports and supports large shipping vessels capable of carrying more than 18,000 containers;
- The PRC is building and operating a container terminal in Abu Dhabi;
- The 10-year, \$62 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, begun in 2015, is the BRI flagship;
- Saudi Arabia is China's largest supplier of crude oil and with December 2022's comprehensive strategic agreement, PRC reliance on Saudi crude is set to increase;
- Huawei has 5G contracts with 19 of the 21 countries in the CENTCOM region; and
- The PRC targets Iraq for influence and resources – Beijing invested \$10.1 billion in BRI projects in Iraq in 2021 alone.

China's economic interests, transactional approaches and perceived lack of Chinese bias in internal and regional affairs, will continue to provide inroads in the region.

Strategic Competition with Russia

Today, 32 years after the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia's objectives are to weaken Western security structures in the Middle East and Central Asia and continue to challenge U.S. security interests and critical relationships in the region.

The U.S. Central Command region holds a 4,750-mile border with Russia - more than six times the length of NATO's border with Russia – through the Central Asian States. Since Catherine the Great in 1762, Russia has sought this region as part of its empire. The Kremlin has viewed the Central Asian States as its territory since the 1922 Treaty on the Creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The emphasis on ownership over Central Asia took on a fever pitch

after World War II, when Stalin used the region for resource extraction and strategic depth. Putin seeks to take advantage of this proximity and history by establishing a foothold of influence leveraging long-established relations and a perceived decline in U.S. engagement to challenge our influence in that critical part of the world. Russia retains extensive interests in Central Asia, spanning energy, military sales, counterterrorism, counter-drug efforts, and others.

Today, Putin's interests in the Middle East range from energy transit to security relationships to military sales. His overall strategy in the region remains largely unaffected by the war in Ukraine. Despite the recent damage to its reputation and influence, Russia continues apace on several fronts to preserve its influence and access in the Middle East. This includes sustaining military support in Syria that is indispensable to Assad and influential with Syria's neighbors. Russia has more than 2,500 Russian troops in Syria, which Putin views as a base from which to project power and influence throughout the region and into Europe and Africa. Russian maritime forces maintain a permanent presence in Syria's coastal city of Tartus. In 2019, the two countries signed a 49-year lease for rights to Tartus' Mediterranean deep-water port. And, just as CENTCOM was formed to serve as the "security guarantor" of the world's central region, Russia views itself as the security guarantor of the Central Asian States. However, as a result of the invasion of Ukraine, the Central Asian States increasingly view Russia as a threat to their sovereignty.

III. CENTCOM'S STRATEGIC APPROACH: PEOPLE, PARTNERS, INNOVATION

As it enters its fifth decade, CENTCOM requires a new Strategic Approach to guide all operations, activities, investments, and initiatives against these complex and confounding challenges. That Strategic Approach is defined by three words: People, Partners, and Innovation.

People

Throughout CENTCOM's lifespan, its People have served the region, our Nation, and this command. Since our 1983 inception, our People have fought for and provided assistance to the citizens of the world's central region. Over the course of four decades, they have displayed the grit, discipline, compassion, and empathy that the United States expects out of its military force.

Today, our People – our servicemembers, civilian workforce, contractors, and supportive Families – serve as the bedrock of everything we do and how we succeed. They underpin all aspects of our strategic approach and drive us along our strategic priorities.

Our People at CENTCOM are our greatest asset and our most critical resource. We hire, invest in, retain, and care for our People and their families.

Partners

Partners are our nation's comparative advantage against competitors like the People's Republic of China and Russia and serve as a barrier against the ramifications of Iran's most destructive behavior. No nation can face the complexity described above alone. We therefore cultivate

deep abiding relations with forces in the region that can serve as a hedge against threats in the region while deterring Iran from its worst, most destabilizing activity. We are in a race to integrate our partners before China and Russia can deeply penetrate the region.

For China and Russia, partnerships are transactional relationships. For CENTCOM, our partnerships are based in our values and our commitment to the region. China views regional countries as possible customers and clients, while we seek partners and allies. Our values and our commitment make us the partner of choice in the region. We must always hold true to our commitments to partner forces and nations as our actions speak for us to the region.

CENTCOM was formed to serve in support of and alongside Partners – the “local and regional forces” referenced by the legislation directing the formation of US Central Command. Today that focus is more urgent than ever in our 40-year history.

For a period of almost 20 years, CENTCOM served as the priority resourcing requirement for the US Department of Defense. This was an anomaly in America’s national security history: the only period in which the Nation was committed to two simultaneous wars since World War II. With the conclusion of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, we have significantly reduced our force posture in the Middle East. Without the large volume of planes, ships, and troops we had in the region just five years ago, we must integrate our partners into all security constructs to foster regional security and stability.

Referring back to the Senate Armed Services Committee legislation guiding CENTCOM in 1983 – this command was established to serve as a “security guarantor of American interests in the world’s central region.” Today, we uphold that responsibility by serving as a security integrator:

integrating our Partners into a framework of operations, activities, investments, and initiatives that will ensure sufficient regional security to protect our vital national interests.

The kind of deep, abiding partnerships CENTCOM seeks is exemplified by the Coalition Maritime Forces, a multinational maritime partnership led by US Naval Forces Central. The Combined Maritime Forces, the world's largest international maritime partnership, exists to uphold the rules-based international order. Through this mutually supportive partnership, the 38 CMF participant countries counter illicit non-state actors on the high seas and promote security, stability, and prosperity across international waters.

The realignment of Israel from European Command to Central Command 18 months ago has immediately and profoundly altered the nature and texture of many of CENTCOM's partnerships for the good. Back in 1983, the boundaries of the CENTCOM Area of Responsibility excluded Israel; Secretary Weinberger and National Security Advisor William Clark were concerned that CENTCOM leaders would be challenged to build enduring, trust-based relations with Arab military leaders while also partnering with the Israel Defense Force. While that concern may have been well-founded then, CENTCOM today readily partners with Arab militaries and the Israel Defense Force alike. In fact, the inclusion of Israel presents many collaborative and constructive security opportunities. Our partners of four decades largely see the same threats and have common cause with Israel Defense Forces and the Arab militaries in defending against Iran's most destabilizing activities.

Innovation

Through Innovation we multiply the capability of our People and strengthen our partnerships to deter Iran, counter VEOs, and compete with China and Russia for influence across the region.

Innovation will strengthen our partnerships, assist our operations, and allow us to increase progress across all efforts. In so doing, it will allow us to serve as that security integrator on behalf of regional security and stability.

Innovation is not just about technology for us; it is innovation of thought, innovation of concept, innovation of process. We are building a culture of innovation and our partners are with us on this journey. For example, across all domains, through employment of systems on hand and newly acquired systems, we are building an interconnected mesh of sensors that transmit real-time data. When viewed together through data integration and Artificial Intelligence platforms, this real-time data builds a clearer picture of the operating environment. Across CENTCOM, our formations use unmanned systems paired with Artificial Intelligence to give us better information faster. This allows us to employ our manned systems more efficiently and strategically and thereby achieve decision dominance. We're able to cultivate information and use Artificial Intelligence to make decisions faster than our adversaries and use our manned systems more efficiently.

The U.S. Central Command theater holds almost no assigned forces, and with the declining emphasis on defeating violent extremist organizations and the National Defense Strategy shift in primary focus to U.S. strategic competitors, our forces decreased 15% over the course of 2022 alone. CENTCOM force posture saw a reduction of 85% from its 2008 peak. With so many looming and existential threats in the region and such a strong possibility of chaos spreading and driving the region to again become a strategic distractor, we must innovate to expand our presence beyond those allocated forces. This is enabled by the creative application of technology and innovation.

CENTCOM's three innovation task forces – Task Forces 59, 99, and 39 – apply these concepts to specific domains. For example, the most advanced – Task Force 59, our maritime innovation task force – operates a fleet of unmanned vessels, both on the surface of the water and under the water. These unmanned vessels carry sensors which are collecting vast amounts of data. That data, pushed through data integration and artificial intelligence platforms, helps build a clearer picture of the operating environment. Through Task Force 59, 99, and 39 CENTCOM is rapidly improving maritime threat detection and maritime domain awareness and building an integrated, unmanned, and artificial intelligence network to achieve safer seas and stronger protection for global trade.

Just this month, Task Force 59 completed a three-week International Maritime Exercise involving 7,000 personnel, 50 partner nations and organizations, 35 ships, 30 unmanned systems, and more than a dozen AI tools. The exercise, which took place in the Arabian Gulf, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea, Indian Ocean, and East African coastal regions, strengthened participants' interoperability and command and control.

More importantly, our international and regional partners are right there with us. Task Force 59 has established hubs in Bahrain and Jordan. Four months ago, Bahrain participated in a naval drill in the Gulf during which seven crewed ships from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, United Kingdom, and the United States teamed with unmanned systems. By the end of this year, our goal is a Task Force 59 fleet of more than 100 vessels – at least 75 from partner maritime forces – operating together, communicating together, and providing a common operating picture to all participating militaries.

In addition to Task Force 59, which operates at sea in the maritime domain, we have Task Force 99, based in Qatar, operating in the air domain. Through implementation of Commercial Off-The-Shelf Technology and collaboration with industry and academia, Task Force 99 creates a technology transition ecosystem that allows increased awareness and faster decision-making and places cutting-edge tools in the hands of warfighters and decision makers. The task force's three lines of effort (LOEs) are: increasing awareness of the air domain, accelerating the speed of the targeting cycle, and imposing dilemmas on adversaries.

Task Force 99 also focuses on aerial drones complete with tailored payloads and other capabilities operating together to observe, detect, and gather data that feeds into an operations center. This increases our air domain awareness and rapidly accelerates the speed of our decision making. Task Force 99's fleet of unmanned aircraft will impose dilemmas on our adversaries and detect and defeat threats to our systems and to our partners.

Finally, we have Task Force 39, our newest innovation task force. Task Force 39 tests concepts and technology in the land domain with a heavy focus on testing new technology to defeat adversary drones. In the coming months, this task force will experiment with robotic sustainment vehicles.

Through these innovation Task Forces, CENTCOM seeks to serve as the experimentation center for new drone-defeat systems, ideas, and technology, to include directed energy. At CENTCOM, we consider opportunities for innovation as limitless. They are boundless and cross all realms of possibility.

CENTCOM is also accelerating the employment of Joint All Domain Command and Control solutions to combat operations to achieve vertical integration from the Joint Task Force and

Components, all the way to the Joint Staff and National Command Authority. Every day, we drive Joint All Domain Command and Control capability forward to allow our People to make faster, more informed decisions in combat's critical moments.

As a data-centric warfighting headquarters, we've transformed our targeting process from PowerPoint slides to the employment of live data. Our goal is a Single Pane of Glass that builds better situational understanding and allows commanders to achieve decision advantage like never before.

In late January and early February of this year, our headquarters led Scarlet Dragon Oasis, our Joint All Domain Command and Control live fire exercise on the eastern seaboard, the mid-Atlantic Electronic Warfare range, and across the US Central Command region. The operation successfully passed digital targeting data and mission threads between multiple commands across the United States, from Nevada to Utah to Tampa and our operations centers in South Carolina and Bahrain. From computer vision, full-motion video, and synthetic aperture radar algorithms identifying targets, to digital workflow tools improving speed and precision of targeting teams, to optimizing machine-to-machine communication flow, the exercise marked a critical step toward digital warfighting.

Each of these tools, concepts, initiatives, and task forces are singularly focused on providing our People with the best tools, the most comprehensive rapid situational awareness, and the fastest and most accurate decision-making capability. This, in turn, serves a great benefit to our Partners and to the security and stability of the region. Innovation is about linking our People and our Partners with ideas and capabilities that enhance all efforts to deter Iran, counter violent extremist organizations, and compete strategically with Russia and China.

People, Partners, and Innovation and the National Defense Strategy

The strategic approach outlined above is heavily nested underneath the 2022 National Defense Strategy. By empowering our People, building out abiding Partnerships, and embracing Innovation, CENTCOM looks to allow the National Defense Strategy to manifest across the Joint Force. A flashpoint with Iran, a crisis in the region, a successful large-scale attack on a partner country, or an attack on the homeland by a VEO all will likely require a response, drawing resources not forecast away from higher priority theaters to the Central Command region. Therefore, a modest investment in People, Partners, and Innovation serves as a hedge against National Defense Strategy derailment.

Furthermore, the Central Command region is literally and figuratively central to competition with Russia and China – a National Defense Strategy priority for all of the Joint Force. Our strategic approach aligns People, Partners, and Innovation against Strategic Competition with the People's Republic of China and Russia, which the National Defense Strategy identifies as the priority across all global regions.

IV. CONCLUSION: A VISION AND A PROMISE

US Army General Robert Kingston saw the future.

At the pinnacle of a career leading troops in heavy combat – Kingston fought in some of the heaviest fighting of both the Korean and Vietnam wars and was among the most decorated military officers of his generation – he was selected as the first commander of U.S. Central

Command. A soft-spoken, battle-hardened warfighter, Kingston knew the central region from his time leading a contingency force focused on Iran during the early moments of the hostage crisis. He understood the unique set of challenges facing the new command and he knew that the answers to all of them relied on an enduring CENTCOM commitment to regional forces.

In assuming responsibility for US Central Command in a ceremony on MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida on January 3rd, 1983, Kingston told the assembled crowd: "CENTCOM will require regional military forces to accomplish its mission for the Nation."

This posture statement is informed by my 14 trips to the region and the hundreds of calls, video teleconferences, and meetings with partnered Chiefs of Defense and their military component leaders in my 11 months in command. Those engagements crystallized in my mind that 40 years after Robert Kingston spoke those words, one thing is clear: CENTCOM requires regional military forces [i.e. Partners] to accomplish its mission for the Nation. So it will into the future.

The challenges faced by Kingston and his staff and component leaders have only grown more complex. The threats, more capable. The competition for influence with external powers, more urgent.

People, Partners, Innovation is our glidepath to deter Iran, counter VEOs, and compete strategically, allowing us to meet the challenges posed by these threats, complexities, and adversaries and ensure regional security and stability.

We employ this strategic approach along a foundation of regional stability earned by American servicemembers over the course of four decades. In peace, in war, in years and years of sustained combat, in the toughest conditions faced by American servicemembers since the

Vietnam War, these men and women bought time and space for American leadership and preserved our vital national interests in this critical region. From the Tanker War to the Gulf War to the Global War on Terrorism and many contingency and humanitarian assistance operations in between – CENTCOM troops have fulfilled the original promise of this command: “US Central Command, alongside local and regional forces, will be America’s security guarantor in the world’s central region.” Today’s CENTCOM servicemembers have transitioned this command to a security integrator.

Those troops are the forebears of the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coastguardsmen, and Guardians who serve in CENTCOM today – the greatest men and women in the country, thousands of them in harm’s way as you read this, advancing American policy and representing the Nation. It is my life’s greatest honor to lead them.

Armed with the right strategic approach and the right measure of resources, I know they will succeed.

General Michael “Erik” Kurilla, USA
Commander, U.S. Central Command

General Michael “Erik” Kurilla is from Elk River, Minnesota and commissioned into the Infantry from the United States Military Academy, West Point in 1988. Throughout his career, he has led Airborne, Mechanized, Stryker, Ranger and Joint Special Operations units during combat and operational deployments including Operation Just Cause (Panama), Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm (Saudi Arabia/Iraq), Operation Uphold Democracy (Haiti), Operation Joint Guardian (Kosovo-Macedonia), Operation Joint Resolve (Bosnia-Herzegovina), Operation Iraqi Freedom (Iraq), Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan), and Operation Inherent Resolve (Iraq). General Kurilla spent every year from 2004 - 2014 leading conventional and special operations forces in the U.S. Central Command Area of Responsibility.

General Kurilla previously commanded 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry (Stryker), 2nd Ranger Battalion, the 75th Ranger Regiment, the 82nd Airborne Division, and the XVIII Airborne Corps.

In addition to command assignments as a General Officer, General Kurilla served as the Director of Operations and Assistant Commanding General for Joint Special Operations Command, Deputy Commanding General for the 1st Infantry Division, Joint Staff Deputy Director for Special Operations and Counter-Terrorism, and Chief of Staff for U.S. Central Command.

General Kurilla’s awards and decorations include the Combat Infantryman Badge with Star, Master Parachutist Badge with Combat Jump Device, Ranger Tab, and the Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster. He holds a B.S. in Aerospace Engineering from the United States Military Academy, West Point; an M.B.A from Regis University; and a M.S. in National Security Studies from the National War College.

General Kurilla and his wife Mary Paige have two daughters.

STATEMENT OF
GENERAL MICHAEL E. LANGLEY, UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
COMMANDER, UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND
BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

23 MARCH 2023

AFRICAN SECURITY IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, distinguished Committee members, Africa's impact on the world is greater now than at any point in recent history, so United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM) sees our mission through a global lens. The vast potential of African peoples to lead the way in worldwide growth is up against a rising tide of existential challenges. Threats from within the continent are transforming into threats to America's interests and allies. Terrorism, poverty, food and water insecurity, protracted conflict, climate change, and mass human migration disproportionately shatter African lives. Solutions to these colossal problems must be a shared burden, with African nations at the helm of concerted international efforts and a U.S. whole of nation contribution that produces sustainable outcomes. Since 2008, USAFRICOM has been proud to defend American interests and lead the U.S. Department of Defense's inclusive approach to helping African peoples achieve positive outcomes for all.

Crises in Africa set the stage for violent extremist organizations (VEOs) to grow, and for America's strategic competitors to bid for international allies. As the home of some of al-Qaeda's and ISIS's largest and most active branches, Africa is now the epicenter of international terrorism. Russia is expanding its African operations, including via the Kremlin-supported private military company Wagner; destabilization, democratic backsliding, and human rights abuses follow in their wake. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine impaired Africa's food supply, compounding the lingering challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, the People's Republic of China's (PRC's) economic and military presence poses challenges for both African nations and American interests.

Climate change-related shocks drove a surge in African natural disasters last year, killing and displacing millions through protracted droughts, mass flooding, disease outbreaks and tropical storms. All of these crises combine with protracted regional conflicts to impede progress toward a stable continent and a prosperous planet where democracy, human rights, and the rule of law flourish.

The world needs a stable African continent of sovereign nations pulling together toward the universal goals of peace and prosperity. Africa's six maritime chokepoints carry a third of the world's shipping. Economic growth on the continent has accelerated in recent decades, and Africa is increasingly an engine of the global economy. This engine is partly fueled by vast deposits of rare earth minerals – critical ingredients of the world's transition to clean, sustainable energy – and by the human capital of a swelling population that will account for a quarter of humankind by 2050. Sub-Saharan Africa is the UN's largest regional voting bloc, and three of our African partners currently sit on the UN Security Council: Gabon, Ghana, and Mozambique. Africa's national voices increasingly harmonize in organizations like the African Union, regional economic communities, and multinational security forces that welcome American support. Africa is a continent of opportunity.

The service members and civilians of USAFRICOM are dedicated to helping our African counterparts seize that opportunity. USAFRICOM promotes security and prosperity in collaboration with the U.S. Departments of State (DoS) and Justice (DoJ), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and others. By aligning our defense efforts with diplomacy and development, USAFRICOM teams with African and

international partners to campaign across the spectrum of diplomacy, development, and defense. By convening those partners in major multilateral exercises like AFRICAN LION, FLINTLOCK, and the ACCORD and EXPRESS series, USAFRICOM tests and shares institution-building best practices – including implementing the 2017 Women, Peace, and Security Act and advocating for strict adherence to the law of armed conflict. By working daily with U.S. embassies and units throughout the Joint Force, USAFRICOM stands ready to deliver life-saving rapid response to flashpoints in remote and unpredictable parts of the world.

America's tools for defense in Africa include military education, intelligence sharing, maritime and cyber domain awareness, medical training, DoS's foreign military sales, and – when warranted and authorized – lethal force to protect American lives and support partner-led counterterrorism missions. This toolkit of security cooperation and operational authorities helps African partners to fight 21st century terrorists and criminals, providing clear alternatives to unfavorable and opaque deals with Russia or the PRC. Whole of nation investments in Africa are opportunities for America to demonstrate global leadership while reinforcing the international rules-based system across all domains of commerce and defense. USAFRICOM is continually innovating fresh ideas with our partners and fielding new solutions for a peaceful and prosperous Africa – an outcome that will underpin America's long-term security.

Underinvestment in African security raises the risk of an unexpected crisis that would abruptly strip U.S. resources away from our top national security challenge of strategic competition. It has happened before. In the late 20th century, al-Qaeda grew

unchecked in Africa culminating in the 1998 bombings of our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. More recently, the Benghazi, Libya attack in 2012, the Tongo Tongo, Niger attack in 2017, and the Manda Bay, Kenya attack in 2020 claimed American lives. These tragedies drew U.S. defense capital away from enduring strategic objectives.

USAFRICOM's mission is to mitigate the risk of such tragedies while guarding NATO's southern flank and protecting the brave Americans who defend our great Nation.

TERRORISM IN AFRICA

The most immediate threat to both American lives and our partners in Africa is terrorism. Al-Qaeda and ISIS sprouted in the Middle East but quickly transplanted onto the African continent where they flourished. Terrorist attacks in the Sahel region accounted for over a third of the world's terrorism deaths in 2021, up from just one percent in 2007.

Today, Africa's VEOs vary in their tactics, resources, and specific goals, but all aspire to target American interests and African governments. These VEOs are dynamic networks that hide in vast under-governed spaces and bustling population centers, creating immense challenges for surveillance and disruption. Their attacks leave countless civilians dead, maimed, and destitute while undermining governance and already struggling economies, which in turn contributes to mass migration into Europe. As VEOs grow, the risk of terrorist plots against U.S. citizens, embassies, and ultimately the Homeland are likely to rise.

USAFRICOM is on the job to counter VEOs in Africa.

Last May, President Biden directed USAFRICOM to move a small force back into Somalia to help its people fight al-Qaeda's biggest and richest franchise, al-Shabaab. Al-

Shabaab dominates swathes of territory that feed their coffers, replenish their ranks, and provide springboards to attack neighboring countries. Without relentless suppression and ultimate pacification, al-Shabaab will seek to attack U.S. embassies and eventually the Homeland itself. Somalia's government under President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud is waging a heroic war against al-Shabaab in collaboration with an array of local and foreign supporters, including the United Kingdom, Türkiye, the United Nations, the European Union, and the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). ATMIS is mandated to gradually draw down until its final exit at the end of 2024.

USAFRICOM plays a supporting role in the fight against al-Shabaab, but our contributions are unique and irreplaceable. Last year, we conducted 15 collective self-defense airstrikes against al-Shabaab, saving the lives of Somali soldiers engaged in combat with our mutual enemy. These airstrikes played a critical role in supporting Somali partners undertaking offensive operations. We also conducted a precision airstrike that resulted in the death of a high value al-Shabaab terrorist, demonstrating our commitment to acting decisively to degrade al-Shabaab's threat to U.S. persons in the region and beyond.. Alongside our DoS colleagues, we are providing financial, materiel, training, logistical and medical support to Somalia's counterterrorism forces. This support includes training and equipping Somali special operations via the Danab Advanced Infantry Brigade, which spearheads missions alongside other Somali and ATMIS forces to clear al-Shabaab strongholds. Enabled by USAFRICOM, a Somali-led offensive has slowed al-Shabaab's offensive momentum. Al-Shabaab has responded with a wave of reprisal attacks against Somali combatants and civilians alike, and Somalia's progress against the group is fragile.

To preserve their battlefield progress and degrade al-Shabaab on an enduring basis, Somalia needs U.S. governance and development support more than ever.

The need for USAFRICOM in West Africa is also acute. Associates of al-Qaeda's second-largest and fastest-growing branch in Africa—Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM)—kidnapped an American citizen in Burkina Faso last year. Her safe release was thanks to our African partners and a U.S. whole of government effort, but JNIM continues to hold another American kidnapped in 2016 and increasingly threatens Americans in West Africa. They are wreaking havoc with our regional partners as their reach outgrows rural havens in Mali and Burkina Faso and now projects into the Gulf of Guinea littoral states. JNIM has dramatically increased attacks on civilians and security forces alike and expanded territory under its influence. The outcome has been thousands of dead and millions of displaced West Africans along with acute political strain that fostered military takeovers of democratic governments in Mali and Burkina Faso. Wagner mercenaries have been quick to turn this turmoil into opportunity. Wagner's draconian operations with its partner in Mali both add to the human cost of terrorism and create more openings for terrorist groups. USAFRICOM is assisting our West African partners to limit JNIM's activity and prevent JNIM's expansion. We are ever vigilant in monitoring for plots against Americans or the Homeland. As JNIM grows, the likelihood of such plots emerging also grows.

ISIS's seven branches on the African Continent also aspire to attack American interests and partners. From the Mediterranean Sea to Mozambique Channel, ISIS cells heed the call of Middle East-based leaders to kill Africans, destroy Africans' infrastructure,

and spread violent jihadist ideology. This ideology feeds off government instability and human rights violations, but our partnership has enabled incremental progress against ISIS. Governments in North Africa and their professional militaries have succeeded in limiting ISIS expansion and crippling the recruitment and outflow of ISIS foreign fighters; U.S. security cooperation has been key to those efforts, and we must maintain these critical partnerships to prevent ISIS and other VEOs from reemerging. In east, west, and southern Africa, a combination of multinational counter-VEO operations and ISIS's competition with rival VEOs is stymying their growth. At President Biden's direction, in January USAFRICOM took down global ISIS finance leader Bilal al-Sudani, which has already yielded new intelligence insights into ISIS's global operations and its plans and intentions in Africa. The credit for successes against ISIS goes to the local peoples, but USAFRICOM has been a crucial partner in this progress by providing training, funding, and intelligence.

However, ISIS cells throughout Africa are finding ways to adapt and reconstitute. ISIS continues to kill and displace thousands in West Africa, Mozambique, and the Great Lakes region. Former ISIS franchise Boko Haram is wreaking similar damage in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin. In concert with national, multilateral, multiregional, and UN forces, USAFRICOM is America's eyes and ears to provide warning and options to disrupt ISIS developments before they threaten the Homeland or U.S. citizens.

STRATEGIC COMPETITION IN AFRICA: RUSSIA

As a producer of food, fossil fuels, and military hardware, Russia has the opportunity to join with the international community in helping African nations overcome terrorism and poverty.

Instead, the Kremlin tramples African interests by leveraging Wagner, a U.S.-designated transitional criminal organization, to aggravate weak governance and feed instability. The Kremlin's motives are power and profit. Recent coups d'état have triggered U.S. restrictions that hinder USAFRICOM engagement, forcing those military regimes to double-down on their dependence on Wagner. Although well intended, U.S. coup restrictions can inadvertently incentivize the most at-risk African countries to dig themselves deeper into the mire of militancy and corruption.

The Kremlin disregards African interests by withholding fuel and food to create political leverage, under-delivers on military hardware and security commitments, and exploits existing friction points to spread Russia's influence. Wagner exploits political fractures in Libya, where Russia seeks to threaten NATO's southern flank. Wagner benefits from Libya's fragmentation, and its interference in parts of Libya risks hindering efforts to form the unified national government and security forces that the Libyan people want and deserve. Wagner lacks accountability to the rule of law and norms of ethics and human rights, making them a deceptively attractive option for some regimes. Wagner's short-term promises can be enticing, but the long-term outcome for African clients are nations mired in corruption and crime that stunt economic growth. Wagner's financial price tag is exorbitant. The full Wagner bill is even worse: the failure of government institutions,

the withdrawal of stalwart security allies, the extraction of mineral wealth, and long-term resource concessions and debt that chips away at Africans' future.

In addition to Wagner's damage, Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine sent African food markets into a crisis. Food prices skyrocketed as grain and fertilizer shipments from Eastern Europe dropped. Without doubt, Africans are victims of the Kremlin's ongoing aggression in Ukraine.

STRATEGIC COMPETITION IN AFRICA: PRC

In contrast to Russia's overwhelmingly harmful influence in Africa, the PRC's deep and diverse investment on the continent is a mixed bag. All sovereign nations are free to evaluate and choose their security and trade partners, and the PRC sees the same promise in Africa's future that the whole world recognizes. The PRC has prioritized Africa for years –and that will not change anytime soon. In January, the PRC's new Foreign Minister used his first overseas trip to visit several African countries – just like every PRC Foreign Minister has done annually for the past three decades. Last year, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) made its inaugural port call at the PRC's first overseas base: Doraleh, Djibouti. Also in Djibouti, the PRC is planning to construct a permanent spaceport. The PRC seeks to establish additional military and space facilities in multiple African countries, notably on the West Coast. This could sustain PLAN combatants in the Atlantic and secure unimpeded circumnavigation of the continent.

USAFRICOM works with U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) to discern the long term outcomes of PRC activities in Africa, which are intensive despite temporary decreases in financial lending and military engagement due to COVID-19. In itself,

Chinese basing in Djibouti – or any future basing project – poses a marginal threat to U.S. interests on the continent. In the event of armed conflict, however, the PRC may leverage its expanded military footprint to project power against the United States, our allies, or global commerce. They already leverage their economic power in Africa to influence UN policy and protect their access to natural resources like minerals and fisheries. At least a third of the world's ships engaged in illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing – a problem that disproportionately harms African communities – are Chinese. Too often, Chinese companies harm African environments and peoples through irresponsible mining and harvesting operations that ignore sustainability and shun local stakeholders and job seekers.

USAFRICOM does not offer any nation an "us-or-them" ultimatum. The PRC is on the continent to stay, and they fill a role in Africa's modernization. USAFRICOM does not seek to block the benefits that the PRC can bring to the continent's nations. Yet all nations must take a clear-eyed approach to dealing with the PRC. African nations must be equipped to enforce laws that protect their fisheries and mineral resources, ensuring the benefits of these national assets accrue first and foremost to their own peoples and economies. The long term outcomes of PRC activity in Africa will be an uneven mix of much-needed infrastructure, equipment, and trade alongside depleted natural resources, polluted ecosystems, corruption and deficient military hardware.

HUMANITARIAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL CRISES IN AFRICA

Climate change-related crises and conflicts rank alongside Russia's war of choice in Ukraine as top catalysts of suffering for millions of Africans. Africa contributes a small

fraction of the total greenhouse emissions, but changes in global temperature, combined with highly erratic precipitation, disproportionately hurt the continent. Climatic changes are accelerating the weather processes that create environmental disasters in Africa - partly by raising ocean temperatures. These rising temperatures are pressuring Africa's coastal fisheries, a crucial food source that is already pressured by overfishing. Rainfall patterns are also shifting. Last year, East Africa's current drought – its worst in 40 years – destroyed crops and livestock, displacing millions. Central and West Africa, by contrast, suffered deadly flooding that displaced millions more. The Lake Chad region saw its most intense rainfall in three decades. Flooding in southern Africa was largely due to a series of tropical storms from the Indian Ocean early last year, and we're seeing that trend continue this year. Desertification is constraining water and food resources in many parts of the continent, exacerbating interethnic fighting and interstate friction.

Tragic in their own right, climate-related shocks in Africa also foster broader population vulnerabilities. The protracted drought in East Africa exacerbated suffering amid a two year civil war in Ethiopia. Climate-related shocks in places with weak infrastructure lead to deadly infectious disease outbreaks, like the cholera outbreak Malawi is currently battling in the aftermath of a devastating cyclone. VEOs like al-Shabaab and Boko Haram have become adept at exploiting the consequences of humanitarian crises to recruit new members and degrade the legitimacy of African governments. The costs of climate change in Africa are numerous, devastating, and often unpredictable, but one thing is predictable: the price tag – in both human suffering and in dollars – will only grow in coming years.

WHAT USAFRICOM NEEDS

The security challenges of Africa are complex and dynamic. Only a whole-of-government strategy can maximize USAFRICOM's effectiveness and efficiency in securing American advantage and promoting African development. Therefore, the requirements of our three whole-of-government tools – diplomacy, development, and defense – are intertwined and mutually supporting. One tool cannot succeed without the whole toolkit.

Diplomacy is the first tool. Fully staffed and resourced diplomatic missions in Africa would multiply USAFRICOM's opportunities. Therefore, USAFRICOM appreciates Congress's work to confirm ambassador nominees and increased staffing for embassies. This boosts our collective ability to implement development and counterterrorism programs under the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability. Congressional and Cabinet-level delegations to Africa go a long way to reassuring our partners of American commitment, as did the U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit in December and two Cabinet member visits in January. USAFRICOM is a key node in protecting U.S. facilities in Africa, and out of the State Department's 31 designated high threat/high risk posts, 16 are under USAFRICOM's purview. Protecting our diplomatic engagements in conflict areas and preparing for short-notice military assisted departures of our diplomats is vital insurance for America's work on the continent. USAFRICOM lowers risk to American diplomatic missions by maintaining operational readiness to conduct hostage rescue, personnel recovery, and rapid response to large-scale emergencies. Yet the DoS-USAFRICOM tie runs far deeper. Our diplomats, defense

attachés, and USAFRICOM military leaders work together daily to pursue a seamless policy on the continent.

Development is the second tool. Three of the five designated beneficiaries of the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability are in Africa – Libya, Mozambique, and Coastal West Africa – but all of Africa needs development assistance. In contrast to Russia and the PRC, nearly 95 percent of America's annual assistance to Africa is delivered through grants to both government and non-governmental organizations, not debt. Expanded funding flexibility would enable USAID to review, reorient, and respond to the ever-changing constellation of African needs. USAFRICOM appreciates the support from Congress to USAID through its \$11 billion per year purse focused on Africa. However, this funding is hamstrung by targeted allocation. In FY21, over 95 percent of USAID's non-humanitarian assistance funding was directed towards a specific allocation. Years in advance, no one can foresee and allocate funding for fleeting windows of opportunity to provide aid where Africans are most in need. USAFRICOM and its partners must be able to act quickly and decisively in response to rapidly changing security concerns and constraints; a sluggish response is harmful to both victims and America's standing as Africa's external partner of choice. Adversaries like al-Qaeda and Wagner are fast and flexible in responding to opportunities, and USAID must have the agility to optimize its budget in ways that maximize America's decisive advantage. U.S. investments focused on stabilization, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, democracy, governance, economic growth and public health attack the roots of terrorism and tyranny more than bullets and air strikes ever will. Working together with DoS and USAID, we

ensure America gets the credit for the U.S. tax dollars that flow to African needs. These dollars are a testament to the generosity of the American people and a critical piece of our informational competition with adversaries.

Defense is the third tool in our whole-of-nation approach. The first key to defense is security cooperation because this is how we win against VEOs and strategic competitors alike. USAFRICOM engages in direct military-to-military engagement and collaborates on U.S. support to UN peacekeeping operations. USAFRICOM drives partner capacity building via train and equip programs and working closely with the DoS International Military Education and Training program. USAFRICOM administers DoS programs like Excess Defense Articles, Foreign Military Sales, and Foreign Military Financing. USAFRICOM is the face of U.S. security cooperation in Africa. If we do not continue to strengthen our African security cooperation, our partners on the continent will be more likely to pivot towards Russia and the PRC to meet their defense needs.

The second key to defense is operational readiness, which USAFRICOM achieves by providing physical and informational spaces for African, international, and U.S. interagency partnerships to grow. USAFRICOM's headquarters is a hub of interconnectivity linking representatives from 13 U.S. government departments and liaison officers from 18 countries. That number is even larger on the continent, where USAFRICOM's activities through Joint Task Forces in Djibouti, Somalia, and Niger bring even more nations together. Protecting these deployed troops is a sacred duty. To succeed in this duty, USAFRICOM needs the resources to provide timely rescue response and defend against the full spectrum of threats, including the alarming proliferation of

weaponized unmanned aircraft systems. Last year, this Command deployed or put forces on alert over 20 times, and with unrest on the rise in West Africa, the demand for crisis response will also trend upwards.

USAFRICOM works in concert with the U.S. State Department to facilitate direct training through Security Forces Assistance Brigades, the State Partnership Program (SPP) and health programs. All these efforts show high return for the investment in Africa and USAFRICOM stands ready to scale them up. This training works to modernize and professionalize African security forces that are desperately under-resourced. All USAFRICOM training for partner forces emphasizes respect for human rights, law of armed conflict, avoidance of civilian casualties, and civilian control of the military. Our commitment to African forces will span decades. The U.S. National Guard Bureau's SPP connects Americans and Africans in ways that create long-term ties of mutual benefit. Africa is fertile ground for SPP growth; we're seeing strong demand from both African partners and U.S. States. Sixteen partner nations currently pair with 14 State National Guards. Most recently, New Hampshire joined forces with Cabo Verde last year, and more partnerships are in the works. These partnerships in Africa will yield long-term benefits in advancing our shared security and prosperity.

Institution-building is central to the USAFRICOM contribution to our partners' defense. Through various engagement channels we assist African security forces and defense ministries establish and strengthen processes for logistics, financial reporting, and communications. Not only does this capacity building help our partners secure their borders, coastlines and vulnerable populations, it also enables many to take on the role of

regional security anchors, providing security assistance to other partners and peacekeeping operations on the continent. USAFRICOM invests in a growing cadre of states that leverage U.S. military training to, in turn, train fellow African partners, multiplying USAFRICOM's efforts. USAFRICOM is doing this through multilateral exercises and USAFRICOM's Africa Distribution Network Forum, which enables the community of African and external partners to pool airlift logistics capabilities, creating financial efficiencies in supplying missions across a continent that is over three times the land mass of the continental United States.

This Command is not alone. Our international partners – including Brazil, the European Union, France, Germany, Japan, South Korea, and the United Nations – bolster African partner forces maritime awareness and enforcement capabilities. African sea lines of communication are the highway of world commerce, but illicit income from IUU fishing, piracy, arms smuggling, wildlife trafficking, and human trafficking bankroll VEOs and enable narcotics flows through Africa to Europe and the Americas.

Our partners in the Gulf of Guinea and the Horn of Africa need robust and interoperable maritime security infrastructure to protect their borders and marine resources. USAFRICOM engages and trains with coastal forces by leveraging two naval assets: the USS Hershel "Woody" Williams and the USNS Trenton. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) augments these vessels with temporary cutter deployments; the USCG Cutter Mohawk made numerous port calls and patrols last year, and this year USCG Cutter Spencer flew Old Glory off Africa's West Coast. Our naval and coast guard ships in the USAFRICOM

AOR reinforce America's friendship with littoral countries, bolster food security, and deter crime, including PRC-linked IUU fishing.

USAFRICOM's challenges go beyond the African continent. Our headquarters staff stretches over two overseas locations: Kelley Barracks, Germany and RAF Molesworth, United Kingdom. USAFRICOM's component commands base in multiple European countries and in two enduring Forward Operating Sites in Africa: Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, and Ascension Island. The Command also operates out of twelve other Posture Locations throughout Africa. These locations have minimal permanent U.S. presence, and have low-cost facilities and limited supplies for these dedicated Americans to perform critical missions and quickly respond to emergencies. With the exception of Special Operations Command-Africa, USAFRICOM's components are dual-hatted, dividing their time and assets between USAFRICOM and United States European Command (USEUCOM). USEUCOM's role in Ukraine's defense draws from the same resource pool as USAFRICOM requirements.

To expand reach, USAFRICOM relies on developing deeper partnerships; National Guard involvement through the SPP; naval assets, including USCG deployments. Most of all, USAFRICOM needs to maintain funding and training for African partners that are poised to becoming regional security drivers in their own right. These partnerships have track records of producing consistent return on investment for America's security objectives in Africa.

CONCLUSION: THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

USAFRICOM's priority is maximizing America's global advantage. The dangers in Africa- terrorism, strategic competitors, climate change, political conflict, and infectious disease - threaten the international community as much as they threaten our partners on the continent. These threats merge into a symbiosis that generates outcomes of violence, resource scarcity, state fragility, and unrealized economic potential. The only way to counter this toxic alliance is through the collaboration of a team of partners: sovereign African nations, the international community, and U.S. government institutions. Africa remains a continent of opportunity. Its nations and peoples want freedom and democracy and a level economic playing field. These shared values underpin our ocean-crossing ties.

The ties between Africa and our nation date back to the Founding Fathers. After the Revolution, Morocco and Tunisia were among the first countries to sign treaties of friendship and trade with the United States, and today they are Major Non-NATO Allies and critical security partners for AFRICOM. Societies on both sides of the Atlantic continue to grapple with the painful past of a vast African slave trade. USAFRICOM seeks to secure a bright future by fostering positive outcomes for Africans and Americans alike. To keep terrorists out of the Homeland, we must fight them in Africa. To compete effectively with strategic adversaries, we must do it in Africa. To protect the flanks of our neighboring Geographic Combatant Commands, we must do it in Africa. To energize the world's struggle for human rights, individual liberty, the rule of law, democratic governance, and free commerce, we must do it in Africa. In this struggle, USAFRICOM and our partners are on the job.

Gen. Michael Langley, USMC
Commander, U.S. Africa Command

Gen. Michael E. Langley, U.S. Marine Corps, became the sixth commander of U.S. Africa Command in August 2022. Headquartered in Stuttgart, Germany, U.S. Africa Command is one of seven joint-service geographic combatant commands and is responsible for all U.S. military operations and activities to protect and advance U.S. national interests in Africa.

A native of Shreveport, Louisiana, Langley graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington and commissioned in 1985. He commanded at every level from platoon to regiment – including Battery K, 5th Battalion, 11th Marines, in support of Operation WILDFIRE in the Western U.S.; battalion and regimental commands in 12th Marines forward deployed in Okinawa, Japan; and both the 201st Regional Corps Advisory Command-Central and Regional Support Command – Southwest in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan.

As a general officer, his command assignments include Deputy Commanding General, II Marine Expeditionary Force and Commanding General, 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade; Commander, Marine Forces Europe and Africa; and Deputy Commanding General, culminating as Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic; and Deputy Commander, culminating as Commanding General, Marine Forces Command and Marine Forces Northern Command.

Langley's staff and joint assignments include serving as a division officer for Marine Corps Institute, Marine Barracks 8th and I; Deputy G-1, 1st Marine Division deployed in support of Operation RESTORE HOPE in Somalia; Naval Surface Fire Support Requirements Officer in the Expeditionary Warfare Division (N75) and Joint Integration Officer in the Surface Warfare Division (N76), Office of the Chief of Naval Operations; Policy Action Officer in the Strategic Plans and Policy Directorate, Joint Staff J-5; Iraq Desk Officer in the Operations Directorate, Joint Staff J-3; Deputy Executive Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Assessments Branch Head, Programs and Resources, Headquarters, Marine Corps; Assistant Division Commander of 3d Marine Division; Deputy Director for Operations, Joint Staff J-3; Assistant Deputy Commandant for Programs and Resources, Headquarters, Marine Corps; and Director for Strategy, Plans, and Policy, J-5, U.S. Central Command.

Langley's formal military education includes U.S. Marine Corps Amphibious Warfare School and College of Naval Command and Staff. He holds multiple advanced degrees including Masters in National Security Strategic Studies from the U.S. Naval War College and Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College.

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

MARCH 23, 2023

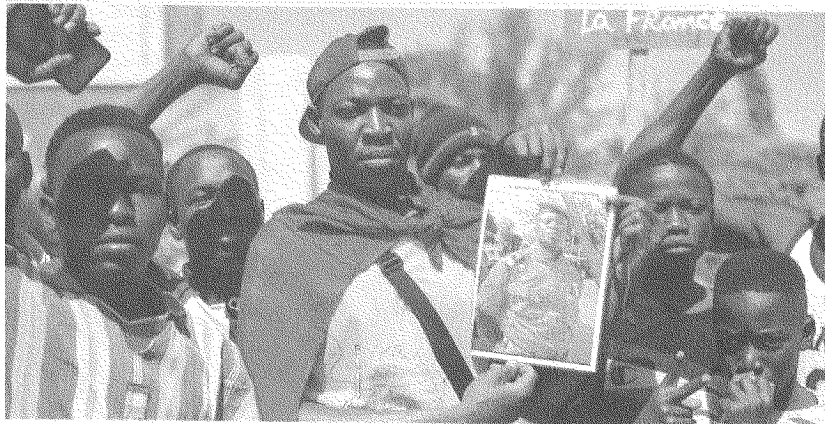
ANOTHER U.S.-TRAINED SOLDIER STAGES A COUP IN WEST AFRICA

The leader of a coup in Burkina Faso is the latest in trained soldiers who overturned civilian leaders.

The
Intercept



Nick Turse



Earlier this week, the military seized power in Burkina Faso, ousting the country's democratically elected president, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré.

The coup was announced on state television Monday by a young officer who said the military had suspended the constitution and dissolved the government. Beside him sat a camouflage-clad man whom he introduced as Burkina Faso's new leader: Lt. Col. Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, the commander of one of the country's three military regions.

Damiba is a highly trained soldier, thanks in no small part to the U.S. military, which has a long record of training soldiers in Africa who go on to stage coups. Damiba, it turns out, participated in at least a half-dozen U.S. training exercises, according to U.S. Africa Command, or AFRICOM.

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In 2010 and 2020, he participated in an annual special operations training program known as the Flintlock exercise. In 2013, Damiba was accepted into an Africa

Contingency Operations Training and Assistance course, which is a State Department-funded peacekeeping training program. In 2013 and 2014, Damiba attended the U.S.-sponsored Military Intelligence Basic Officer Course-Africa. And in 2018 and 2019, he participated in engagements with a U.S. Defense Department Civil Military Support Element in Burkina Faso.

Damiba is just the latest in a carousel of coup leaders in West Africa trained by the U.S. military as the U.S. has pumped in more than \$1 billion in security assistance to promote “stability” in the region. Since 2008, U.S.-trained officers have attempted at least nine coups (and succeeded in at least eight) across five West African countries, including Burkina Faso (three times), Guinea, Mali (three times), Mauritania, and the Gambia.

Since the 2000s, the United States has regularly deployed small teams of commandos to advise, assist, and accompany local forces, even into battle; provided weapons, equipment, and aircraft; offered many forms of training, including Flintlock, which is conducted by Special Operations Command Africa and focused on enhancing the counterterrorism capabilities of nations in West Africa, including Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal.

“When the U.S. prioritizes tactical training, we overlook longer-term goals that could create more stable governments,” said Lauren Woods, director of the Se-

curity Assistance Monitor, which is a program of the nonprofit Center for International Policy. “We need more transparency and public debate on the foreign military training that we provide. And we need to do a much better job thinking about the long-term risks — including coups and abuses by forces we train.”

AFRICOM emphasizes that its security cooperation and “capacity-building activities” foster the “development of professional militaries,” which are disciplined and committed to the well-being of their citizens. “U.S. military training regularly includes modules on the law of armed conflict, subjugation to civilian control, and respect for human rights,” AFRICOM spokesperson Kelly Cahalan told *The Intercept*. “Military seizures of power are inconsistent with U.S. military training and education.”

But coups d’état by U.S.-trained officers have become an increasingly common occurrence in Burkina Faso and elsewhere in the region.

Since 2008, U.S.-trained officers have attempted at least nine coups (and succeeded in at

Last summer, for example, American Green Berets arrived in Guinea to train a special forces unit led by Col. Mamady Doumbouya, a charismatic young officer who had also served

**least eight)
across five West
African
countries.**

in the French Foreign Legion. In September, members of Doumbouya's unit took time out from their ongoing instruction — in small unit tac-

tics, tactical combat casualty care, and the law of armed conflict — to storm the presidential palace and depose the country's 83-year-old president, Alpha Condé. Doumbouya soon declared himself Guinea's new leader and the U.S. ended the training.

In 2020, Col. Assimi Goïta, who worked with U.S. Special Operations forces for years, participating in Flintlock training exercises and attending a Joint Special Operations University seminar at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida, headed the junta that overthrew Mali's government.

"The act of mutiny in Mali is strongly condemned and inconsistent with U.S. military training and education," Marine Corps Lt. Col. Anton T. Semelroth, a Pentagon spokesperson, said at the time.

After staging the coup, Goïta stepped down and took the job of vice president in a transitional government tasked with returning Mali to civilian rule. But nine months later, he seized power again in his second coup.

Goïta wasn't even the first U.S.-trained Malian officer to overthrow the country's government. In 2011, when a U.S.-backed uprising in Libya toppled autocrat Muammar Gaddafi, Tuareg fighters in his service looted the regime's weapons caches, traveled to their native Mali and began to take over the northern part of that country. Angered by the ineffective response of his government, Amadou Sanogo — an officer who learned English in Texas, received intelligence training in Arizona, and underwent Army infantry-officer basic training in Georgia — took matters into his own hands and overthrew his country's democratically elected government.

"America is a great country with a fantastic army," he said after the 2012 coup. "I tried to put all the things I learned there into practice here."

In 2014, another U.S.-trained officer, Lt. Col. Isaac Zida, seized power in Burkina Faso amid popular protests. Two years earlier, when he was a major, Zida attended a counterterrorism training course at MacDill Air Force Base that was sponsored by Joint Special Operations

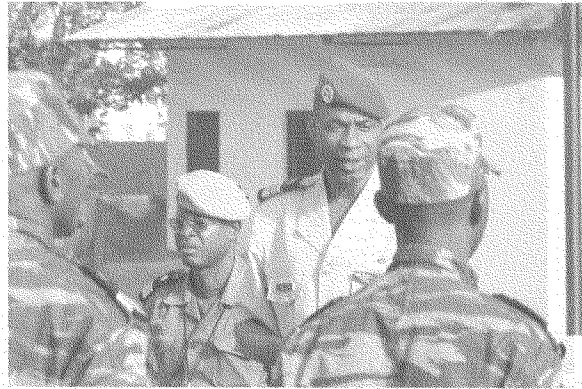
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Then-Col. Maj. Gilbert Diendéré addresses Burkinabe soldiers prior to their deployment to Mali in support of AFRICOM's Flintlock 10 exercise in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, on May 1, 2010.

In 2014, two generations of U.S.-educated officers faced off in the Gambia as a group of American-trained would-be coup-makers attempted (but failed) to overthrow another U.S.-trained coup-maker, Yahya Jammeh who had seized power back in 1994. The unsuccessful rebellion claimed the life of Lamin Sanneh, the purported ringleader, who had earned a master's degree at National Defense University in Washington, D.C.

"I can't shake the feeling that his education in the

United States somehow influenced his actions,” wrote Sanneh’s former NDU mentor Jeffrey Meiser. “I can’t help but wonder if simply imprinting our foreign students with the ‘American program’ is counterproductive and unethical.”

In 2008, *Stars and Stripes* reported that Gen. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, the leader of a coup against Mauritania’s elected president, “has worked with U.S. forces that train in the African country.” Arrested and charged with corruption after a decadelong rule, Aziz was recently released on bail due to ill health.

U.S.-trained coup-plotters aren’t strictly confined to West Africa. Before Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi deposed Egypt’s first democratically elected president, Mohammed Morsi, he underwent basic training at Fort Benning, Georgia, (in 1981) and advanced instruction at the U.S. Army War College (in 2006).


A 2018 study by the military’s go-to think tank, the Rand Corporation, cast doubt on the notion that U.S. military training breeds coup-makers.

“[T]here is little evidence that overall [security sector assistance] (measured in dollar terms) associates with coup propensity in Africa,” according to the study, which was written for the Office of the Secretary of Defense and did note that there was a “marginally significant” association in the post-Cold War period.

A year before, however, a study by Jonathan Caverley

of the U.S. Naval War College and Jesse Savage of Trinity College Dublin in the *Journal of Peace Research*, analyzing data from 1970 to 2009, found “a robust relationship between U.S. training of foreign militaries and military-backed coup attempts” despite the authors limiting their analysis to the International Military Education and Training program — “which explicitly focuses on promoting norms of civilian control.”

US forces trained the Guinean colonel behind the recent coup in West African country

 [dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9980777/US-forces-trained-Guinean-colonel-recent-coup-West-African-country.html](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9980777/US-forces-trained-Guinean-colonel-recent-coup-West-African-country.html)

Gina Martinez

September 11, 2021

REVEALED: US Green Berets TRAINED the Guinean colonel behind the nation's recent coup: 'Embarrassed' Pentagon officials deny any involvement but admit they were caught off guard

- Col. Mamady Doumbouya led special forces into the presidential palace and deposed the country's 83-year-old president Alpha Condé
- Doumbouya is a familiar figure to American forces who have help train 100 Special Forces members led by the Colonel and have worked with him for years
- Due to the timing and the close relationship with the Colonel the current situation has been an 'embarrassment' for the Pentagon, the Times reported
- A video of American soldiers smiling as they make their way to the U.S. Embassy on Sunday has led to suspicion of American involvement in the coup
- Doumbouya's coup was most likely fueled by tensions within the defense establishment who deprived his Special Forces unit of resources

By Gina Martinez For Dailymail.Com

Published: 15:03 EDT, 11 September 2021 | Updated: 13:02 EDT, 12 September 2021

U.S forces were caught off guard when a Guinean colonel they trained turned out to be the mastermind behind the country's recent coup and is now the leader of the West African nation.

Col. Mamady Doumbouya has declared himself the new leader of Guinea after he led special forces into the presidential palace and deposed the country's 83-year-old president, Alpha Condé, on September 5, the New York Times reported.

He is said to have slipped away to mount the coup early Sunday, raising suspicions he did so while his US instructors were asleep.

They had been working with Doumbouya and other Guinean service personnel to train them in counterterrorism techniques, and to help them prop up their civilian government.

Guinea's new leader and his allies are said to have been angered after Condé successfully changed the country's constitution to enable him to serve a third term as president.

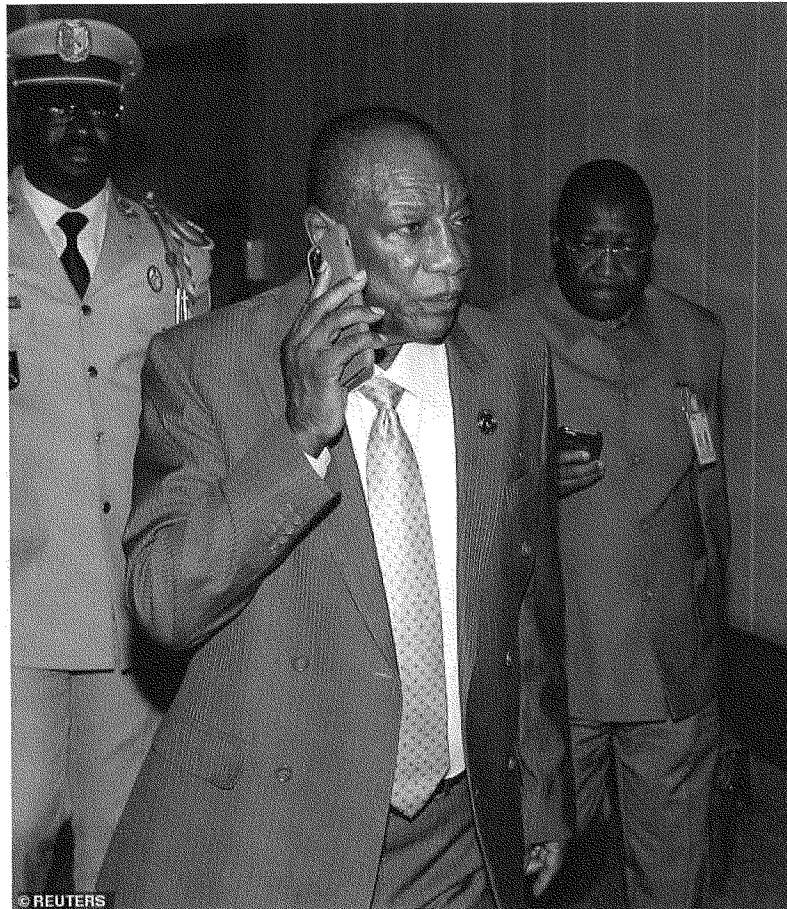
Doumbouya, once a close ally to Condé, is a familiar figure to American forces, who have been in the country since July to train a group of about 100 Special Forces members led by the Colonel and have worked with him for years.



Col. Mamady Doumbouya (pictured) led special forces into the presidential palace and deposed the country's 83-year-old president Alpha Condé.



Doumbouya (center) is a familiar figure to American forces who have helped train 100 Special Forces members led by the Colonel and have worked with him for years



83-year-old president Alpha Condé, (pictured) whose popularity in the country has been declining for years, was deposed

Kelly Cahalan, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Africa Command, told the Times the coup is 'inconsistent with U.S. military training and education.'

U.S. officials also told the Times, who obtained a photo of Doumbouya posing with U.S. military officials outside the American Embassy, they were 'puzzled' by his decision to stage a coup at a moment when he was working so closely with Americans.

U.S. officials said they were looking into reports that Doumbouya and his conspirators slipped away from the training base in the middle of the night while instructors were sleeping, the Times reported.

Due to the timing and the close relationship with the Colonel the current situation has been an 'embarrassment' for the Pentagon, the Times reported.

U.S. officials have even had to clarify that the U.S. did not have previous knowledge or any involvement in the coup.

'We do not have any information on how the apparent military seizure of power occurred, and had no prior indication of these events,' Bardha S. Azari, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Africa Command, told the Times in an emailed statement.





On Sunday green berets are recorded driving a four-wheel drive vehicle with Guinean soldiers hanging from the back as they smile and touch hands with locals chanting 'freedom!'



People celebrate as the Guinean Special Forces arrive at the Palace of the People in Conakry on Monday



People celebrate in the streets with members of Guinea's armed forces after the arrest of Guinea's president, Alpha Conde

Leading to further suspicion of American involvement is a video of American soldiers smiling as they make their way to the U.S. Embassy on Sunday.

A group of green berets were recorded driving a four-wheel drive vehicle with Guinean soldiers hanging from the back as they smile and touch hands with locals chanting 'freedom!'

American officials were forced to clarify that the recorded incident was not reflective of any support for the coup.

'The U.S. government and military are not involved in this apparent military seizure of power in any way,' Azari told the Times.

Doumbouya, who at 41 is now the second-youngest leader of an African state, served in Afghanistan and Ivory Coast and completed a commando training course in Israel, before serving as a French Legionnaire, the Times reported.

Following last Sunday's storming of the presidential palace which killed 11, the Colonel appeared on television draped in the country's flag and claimed he was forced to seize power because of the actions of President Condé, whose popularity in the country has been declining for years.

The Times reported that despite his 'disaffection' with president Condé, Doumbouya's coup was most likely fueled by tensions within the defense establishment, specifically with Guinea's defense minister, Mohamed Diané who the colonel said deprived his Special Forces unit of resources.

Read more:

US Forces Were Training the Guinean Soldiers Who Took Off to Stage a Coup - The New York Times

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**WITNESS RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED DURING
THE HEARING**

MARCH 23, 2023

RESPONSE TO QUESTION SUBMITTED BY DR. DESJARLAIS

General KURILLA. As identified during the hearing, countering adversary Unmanned Aerial Systems is a top priority for CENTCOM. Across the region, we've developed a series of programs and exercises to advance this priority. I will provide the performance data on countering UAS systems in a classified document.

For example, we've just established Red Sands, an experimentation center in Saudi Arabia for new tactics, techniques, procedures, processes, and technology to counter Unmanned Aerial Systems. Red Sands is our partnership with the Royal Saudi Armed Forces to test and experiment and ultimately improve tactics, techniques, and procedures to defeat Unmanned Aerial Systems. Our firm, longstanding military-to-military relationship with the Royal Saudi Armed Forces allowed us to quickly develop and implement the program, which serves as a benefit to both military forces.

We conducted our first Red Sands live fire exercise event in mid-March in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. During the live fire, we executed a complex multiple Unmanned Aerial System threat against a layered defense that included both U.S. and Saudi systems.

We will evolve the program in the coming months, with additional capabilities, systems, and technology. During the next iteration of Red Sands in September, we will defend against more complex drone attacks. While Red Sands is currently a bilateral event, both CENTCOM and the Saudis intend to expand the program to other regional partners in the future.

We have also established Green Sands, a five-day program to certify every Base Defense Operations Center entering the CENTCOM region against complex theater specific threat-based Unmanned Aerial Systems—prior to deployment into theater. Green Sands will ensure all sections are more capable of defeating complex, multi-drone attacks using multiple systems and platforms.

In addition, Task Forces 39 and 99 constantly test and field new counter-Unmanned Aerial System capabilities, working closely with our partners to implement best practices. The aim is to develop an integrated air and missile defense system to defeat adversary drones, inclusive of electronic warfare, directed energy, traditional systems, AI-based systems, and increased sensors and data collection. For CENTCOM, this is about taking ideas, concepts, and systems from industry, from our partners, in practice in Ukraine, and applying them to the threat we face in the region. We seek an integrated air and missile defense architecture that is ubiquitous within the region, integrated with our partners, and capable of defending our forces and assets. [See page 22.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

MARCH 23, 2023

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. TURNER

Mr. TURNER. As of March 2023, Iran has obtained uranium enrichment of 83.7% purity. Amid this news, U.S. Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Colin Kahl cited that Tehran could produce enough material for a nuclear bomb in 12 days.

Given its demonstrated record of using military force to coerce its neighbors, how would a nuclearized Iran change the security environment of the Middle East?

What should the U.S. and our allies do from a defense perspective to prepare for the reality of a nuclear threat from Iran?

General KURILLA. *a) Given its demonstrated record of using military force to coerce its neighbors, how would a nuclearized Iran change the security environment of the Middle East?*

A nuclear Iran would change the Middle East overnight and forever. A nuclear weapon would allow Iran to more actively intimidate its neighbors, hold the entire region at risk, and embolden Tehran to spread its malign influence more broadly and more violently across the region.

A nuclear Iran would also introduce a regional nuclear arms race with several regional countries pursuing the capability in order to offset Iran's power. The ensuing proliferation of nuclear weapons would introduce greater instability.

Further, nuclear weapon capability would instantly transform Iran from a regional concern to a global menace, capable of holding the Region and Western interests at risk. Regional partners may move closer to Russia and China in an attempt to mitigate the impact of a nuclear armed Iran.

b) What should the U.S. and our allies do from a defense perspective to prepare for the reality of a nuclear threat from Iran?

Accepting a nuclear Iran as a reality is inconsistent with this administration's policy. We must not allow a nuclear-armed Iran. I've been consistent on this point since my confirmation hearing in February, 2022. U.S. policy makes it clear that a nuclear Iran is unacceptable.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. WITTMAN

Mr. WITTMAN. In February 2021, CENTCOM published an article that discussed Russia's influence in the AFRICOM/CENTCOM AORs, including destabilizing arms sales and possible permanent bases in Syria and Sudan. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, have they continued destabilizing efforts in the region? Are Russian arms being sold/funneled into the country even though Russia is facing munition shortages in Ukraine? Moreover, what effect is foreign influence and/or military sales having on the geopolitical stability in South Sudan?

General KURILLA. *a) Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, have they continued destabilizing efforts in the region?*

Yes, Russia's destabilizing and aggressive posturing in the region continues. In fact, amidst its war in Ukraine, Russia looks to aggressively expand its influence and undermine U.S. credibility in the Middle East, Levant, and Central and South Asian States. Right now, Russia has more than 2,500 troops in Syria, which Putin views as a base to project power throughout the region and into Europe and Africa. Russian maritime forces maintain a permanent presence in Syria's coastal city of Tartus. Moscow also seeks to assert itself as the security guarantor of the Central and South Asian States. All these actions place American influence and interests in the central region at risk.

In Syria—already a complex battlespace with multiple state and nonstate actors and risk of miscalculation—Russia continues to violate established protocols for operations as they continue their support of the Assad Regime. These protocols were established in 2019 and agreed to by Moscow to avoid armed confrontation between our forces as they cross paths in the sky and on ground. These violations have grown increasingly bellicose over recent months. Such unsafe, unprofessional disregard for established protocols and deconfliction rules is inconsistent with the actions of a professional Air Force.

b) Are Russian arms being sold/funneled into the country even though Russia is facing munition shortages in Ukraine?

Russia continues to resupply its bases in Syria and provide limited arms to Syrian forces through air and sea routes. The quantity of weapons has decreased significantly since Russia invaded Ukraine. Russia concurrently seeks redeployment of some weapons systems to support its illegal invasion of Ukraine.

Mr. WITTMAN. Over the past few months, there has been an uptick of reported UAS incidents. CENTCOM has stated that the region is facing daily threats from small quad-copter drones to larger Shaheds. Lt Gen Gregory Guillot has said that “though CENTCOM has a lot of integrated defense capability in theater, the adversary is advancing very quickly.” How has CENTCOM accelerated their process to fill this capability gap? What steps has CENTCOM taken to accelerate the acquisition process to meet this threat? Finally, in as much detail as possible, please describe how CENTCOM is viewing directed energy, specifically HPM technology, to fill this capability gap. Is CENTCOM working with a particular service to acquire and develop these capabilities?

General KURILLA. *a) How has CENTCOM accelerated their process to fill this capability gap?*

Defeating adversary Unmanned Aerial Systems is a top functional priority for CENTCOM. CENTCOM developed a series of integrated programs and exercises to work this priority.

For example, we’ve just initiated Red Sands, an experimentation center in Saudi Arabia for new tactics, techniques, procedures, processes, and technology to counter Unmanned Aerial Systems. Red Sands is our partnership with the Royal Saudi Armed Forces to test and experiment and ultimately improve tactics, techniques, and procedures to defeat Unmanned Aerial Systems. Our firm, longstanding military-to-military relationship with the Royal Saudi Armed Forces allowed us to quickly develop and implement the program, which serves as a benefit to both military forces.

We conducted our first Red Sands live fire exercise event in mid-March in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. During the live fire, we executed a complex multiple Unmanned Aerial System threat against a layered defense that included both U.S. and Saudi systems.

We will evolve the program in the coming months, with additional capabilities, systems, and technology. During the next iteration of Red Sands in September, we will defend against more complex drone attacks. While Red Sands is currently a bilateral event, both CENTCOM and the Saudis intend to expand the program to other regional partners in the future.

We have also established Green Sands, a five-day program to certify every Base Defense Operations Center entering the CENTCOM region against complex theater specific threat-based Unmanned Aerial Systems—prior to deployment into theater. Green Sands will ensure all sections are more capable of defeating complex, multi-drone attacks using multiple systems and platforms.

In addition, Task Forces 39 and 99 constantly test and field new counter-Unmanned Aerial System capabilities, working closely with our partners to implement best practices. The aim is to develop a layered system to defeat adversary drones, inclusive of electronic warfare, directed energy, traditional systems, AI-based systems, and increased sensors and data collection. For CENTCOM, this is about taking ideas, concepts, and systems from industry, from our partners, in practice in Ukraine, and applying them to the threat we face in the region. We seek a counter-Unmanned Aerial System program that is ubiquitous within the region, integrated with our partners, and capable of defending our forces and assets.

b) What steps has CENTCOM taken to accelerate the acquisition process to meet this threat?

We have submitted Joint Urgent Operational Needs Statements to address the capability gaps for detection and defeat of increasingly complex Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS). CENTCOM is actively working with the Army, Air Force and the Navy on potential solutions. CENTCOM is working with the Army PEO Missiles and Space on employment of munitions and weapons systems to meet the threat imposed by UAS in the region as well as providing feedback after UAS engagements to improve the performance of the counter-UAS we are currently employing in theater.

c) Please describe how CENTCOM is viewing directed energy, specifically HPM technology, to fill this capability gap.

High-Power Microwave technology will play a significant role in defeating multiple and swarm drone attacks. While High-Power Microwave systems are still very nascent and much more development is needed in this field, the technology has the capability to disrupt and shut down drone swarms in seconds without a kinetic requirement. Furthermore, once these systems are fully developed, a High-Power Microwave finish will cost a fraction of an interceptor missile.

We are working with the Army to deploy their Maneuver Short Range Air Defense Directed Energy (MSHORAD-DE) system in the coming year. This will add a 50kw directed energy capability to our layered defense against UAS.

Given the volume and diversity of Unmanned Aerial System threats against our troops and Coalition forces in the CENTCOM region, as well as the diverse mix of geographic and environmental conditions, I believe CENTCOM should serve as the experimentation center for High-Power Microwave technology as well as an “experimentation sandbox” for all emerging technology to defeat adversary drones.

d) Is CENTCOM working with a particular service to acquire and develop these capabilities?

We have reached out to all military services in the development of these capabilities. In particular, we are working closely with the Army’s Rapid Capabilities and Critical Technologies Office to deploy the next available High-Power Microwave system as well as the Maneuver Short Range Air Defense Direct Energy system. We are simultaneously working in coordination with the Air Force Research Lab to bring the next-generation THOR system to the CENTCOM region. I have offered to all the Services that given the volume and diversity of Unmanned Aerial System threats against our troops and Coalition forces in the CENTCOM region, as well as the diverse mix of geographic and environmental conditions, I believe CENTCOM should serve as the experimentation center for all emerging technology to defeat adversary drones.

Mr. WITTMAN. In 2022, CENTCOM established Task Force 99 to leverage commercial, off the shelf drones to focus on several mission areas. How do you see this agile unit being utilized within CENTCOM missions? As the proliferation and threat of drones are speeding up, not only from our side but from VEOs and Iran, does CENTCOM plan on standing up another entity to focus on counter UAS solutions?

General KURILLA. *a) How do you see this agile unit being utilized within CENTCOM missions?*

Through implementation of commercial off-the-shelf technology and collaboration with industry and academia, Task Force 99, which is based in Qatar, creates a technology transition ecosystem that allows increased awareness and faster decision-making and places cutting-edge tools in the hands of warfighters and decision makers. Task Force 99 has three lines of effort:

- Increasing awareness of the air domain;
- Accelerating the speed of the targeting cycle; and
- Imposing dilemmas on adversaries.

Task Force 99 also focuses on aerial drones complete with tailored payloads and other capabilities operating together to observe, detect, and gather data that feeds into an operations center. This increases our air domain awareness and rapidly accelerates the speed of our decision making. The task force’s fleet of unmanned aircraft will impose dilemmas on our adversaries and detect and defeat threats to our systems and to our partners.

Task Force 99, our innovation task force focused on the aerial domain, complements Task Force 59, our innovation task force which operates at sea in the maritime domain, and Task Force 39, our innovation task force which operates on land. Through these three innovation Task Forces, CENTCOM seeks to serve as the experimentation center for new drone-defeat systems, ideas, and technology, to include directed energy. At CENTCOM, we consider opportunities for innovation as limitless. They are boundless and cross all realms of possibility.

b) As the proliferation and threat of drones are speeding up, not only from our side but from VEOs and Iran, does CENTCOM plan on standing up another entity to focus on counter UAS solutions?

Defeating adversary Unmanned Aerial Systems is a top functional priority for us. CENTCOM developed a series of integrated programs and exercises to work this priority.

For example, we have just initiated Red Sands in Saudi Arabia, an experimentation center for new tactics, techniques, procedures, processes, and technology to counter Unmanned Aerial Systems. Red Sands is our partnership with the Royal Saudi Armed Forces to test and experiment and ultimately improve tactics, techniques, and procedures to defeat Unmanned Aerial Systems. Our firm, longstanding military-to-military relationship with the Royal Saudi Armed Forces allowed us to quickly develop and implement the program, which serves as a benefit to both military forces.

We conducted our first Red Sands live fire exercise event in mid-March in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. During the live fire, we executed a complex multiple Unmanned Aerial System threat against a layered defense that included both U.S. and

Saudi systems. We are incorporating more systems capabilities as well as even more complex threats including Land Attack Cruise Missiles.

We will evolve the program in the coming months, with additional capabilities, systems, and technology. During the next iteration of Red Sands in September, we will defend against more complex drone attacks. While Red Sands is currently a bilateral event, both CENTCOM and the Saudis intend to expand the program to other regional partners in the future.

We have also established Green Sands, a five-day program to certify every Base Defense Operations Center entering the CENTCOM region against complex theater specific threat-based Unmanned Aerial Systems—prior to deployment into theater. Green Sands ensures all sections are more capable of defeating complex, multi-drone attacks using multiple systems and platforms.

In addition, Task Forces 39 and 99 constantly test and field new counter-Unmanned Aerial Systems, working closely with our partners to implement best practices. The aim is to develop a layered system to defeat adversary drones, inclusive of electronic warfare, directed energy, traditional systems, AI-based systems, and increased sensors and data collection. For us, this is about taking ideas, concepts, and systems from industry, from our partners, in practice in Ukraine, and applying them to the threat we face in the region. We seek a counter-Unmanned Aerial System program that is ubiquitous within the region, integrated with our partners, and capable of defending our forces and assets.

Mr. WITTMAN. The U.S. State Department reported that over 50,000 civilians were displaced in late 2022 after attacks killed scores of civilians in the Upper Nile and Jonglei areas of South Sudan. That is in addition to the already 2.2 million internally displaced civilians and 2 million refugees that have fled since major fighting broke out in 2016. While other countries in the region confront their own humanitarian, security, and economic issues, how has the displacement of millions of South Sudanese people affected the security of the region? With already porous borders, how has this displacement allowed for extremist groups, including Al-Shabaab and the Islamic State, to move throughout the region? Has there been an increase in attacks in the last five years? Or ten years? Furthermore, can those attacks be connected back to the instability in South Sudan? Finally, could cultural or ethnic violence occur in neighboring countries where South Sudanese refugees are settling?

General LANGLEY. Most displaced Sudanese persons reside in Sudan and Uganda. Ethiopia, Kenya, and the Democratic Republic of Congo also host considerable refugee populations. Most of these host countries are experiencing, or have recently experienced, internal conflicts. All of them face domestic challenges that leaves few resources for assisting South Sudanese refugees. As a result, most of these refugees continue to experience humanitarian hardships even after they have left South Sudan. However, we have not observed cultural or ethnic violence occurring in these countries as a result of hosting South Sudanese refugees. Many South Sudanese share ethnic, linguistic, cultural, or historical ties with communities that straddle national borders. Cross-border violence driven by criminality and banditry is common along South Sudan's poorly guarded borders, and we continue to monitor for any indications that the region's many armed groups might seek to exploit the refugee situation. We have not observed any movement or activity of violent extremist groups in the region connected with instability in South Sudan or South Sudanese refugees.

Mr. WITTMAN. In February 2021, CENTCOM published an article that discussed Russia's influence in the AFRICOM/CENTCOM AORs, including destabilizing arms sales and possible permanent bases in Syria and Sudan. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, have they continued destabilizing efforts in the region? Are Russian arms being sold/funneled into the country even though Russia is facing munition shortages in Ukraine? Moreover, what effect is foreign influence and/or military sales having on the geopolitical stability in South Sudan?

General LANGLEY. Russia continues to express interest in a permanent base in Port Sudan. However, currently it is unknown how the recent fighting in Khartoum, Sudan has impacted Russia's interests. Delays by the Sudanese transitional government may have prompted Russia to approach Eritrea as an alternative location, though no formal announcements have been made. The conflict in Ukraine has had only minimal effects on Russia's posture in Africa, though some military equipment deliveries to African nations have been delayed. Completed arms transfers have been limited mostly to basic military capabilities that would not exacerbate current munition shortages in Ukraine, but that would demonstrate Russia's commitment to honoring existing agreements. Finally, though South Sudan's current political and security status renders it vulnerable to Russian influence, we have yet to observe any specific intent on behalf of Moscow.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) placed an arms embargo on South Sudan in 2018 in response to the civil war and has extended the embargo until March 2024. South Sudan is awash with weapons, which have helped fuel chronic violence between government forces and an array of rebel groups, communal violence, and extensive abuses against civilians by both rebels and government forces. Juba looks to both Russia and China as potential diplomatic partners to undermine the UNSC arms embargo. China's investment in South Sudan's oil industry has likely facilitated corruption by South Sudanese elites, who have amassed considerable personal wealth despite the country's extensive poverty.

South Sudanese officials have persistently lobbied to lift the embargo, and they have complained that the embargo impedes the arming of the Necessary Unified Forces (NUF)—a national military meant to merge government and rebel forces as part of the country's ongoing peace process. The embargo includes exceptions for arming the NUF suggesting Juba seeks access to weapons for use against its domestic rivals rather than to fulfill its obligations under the peace process. Furthermore, South Sudan has likely violated the arms embargo, illicitly importing small arms and armored vehicles that play no role in equipping the NUF.

Mr. WITTMAN. As drone use increase in both conventional and unconventional warfare in AFRICOM's AOR, both as warfighting tools and geopolitical bargaining chips by China and Iran, how can the defense ecosystem better support COCOM in combatting this threat? What can Congress, the broader DOD, and the DIB do to ensure that AFRICOM has the tools necessary to address these threats?

General LANGLEY. Besides policies and authorities to mitigate drone threats, continued Congressional funding to assist adoption of commercial technology and defense innovation initiatives will assist USAFRICOM to acquire and field next level counter unmanned capabilities.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. SCOTT

Mr. SCOTT. Ambassador Herman J. Cohen wrote an article in the March 2022 issue of Proceedings entitled, "The Time is Right for a Pivot to Africa." Do you agree with Ambassador Cohen that, "The United States must see African aid, development, and investment as worthy security projects in their own right"?

Dr. WALLANDER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. Do you agree with Ambassador Cohen that, "The potential for security, sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, trade, and better governance is simply tremendous. The mutual benefits that could be realized under a more proactive approach are impossible to ignore. But officials and experts will need to believe it themselves first, and the continuation of great power competition narratives for U.S.-African relations is a worrying sign. The United States must not be stuck in this outmoded and colonial way of thinking"?

Dr. WALLANDER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. How can the U.S. Coast Guard be better integrated with USCENTCOM?

General KURILLA. The US Coast Guard is a significant contributor to CENTCOM and our mission. For example, the Patrol Forces Southwest Asia in Bahrain and the Maritime Infrastructure Protection Force Training and Advisory Group in Saudi Arabia are integrated with our partnered naval forces in support of our mission sets. In fact, the missions of our partnered maritime forces more closely resemble those of the US Coast Guard than the US Navy. Missions such as homeland defense, law enforcement, drug interdiction, and search and rescue—all critical to security and stability at sea across and the region—are routine to our Coast Guard forces.

We greatly value the Coast Guardsmen who serve in the CENTCOM region alongside our partnered maritime forces every day.

Mr. SCOTT. Can you talk about the importance of the National Guard's State Partnership Program to your respective AOR? Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this highly successful program?

General KURILLA. The State Partnership Program in the CENTCOM region supports the National Defense Strategy priorities and CENTCOM campaign objectives through the establishment of enduring, abiding relations. These relations build partner defense capability and persistent engagement with our partners, both of which foster regional security and stability.

CENTCOM currently has nine state partnerships supported by seven States:

- Egypt is partnered with Texas;
- Jordan is partnered with Colorado;
- Kazakhstan is partnered with Arizona;

- The Kyrgyz Republic is partnered with Montana;
- Oman is partnered with Arizona;
- Qatar is partnered with West Virginia;
- Tajikistan is partnered with Virginia;
- Turkmenistan is partnered with Montana; and
- Uzbekistan is partnered with Mississippi.

Our state partnerships include all of the Central Asian states, where we compete with Russia and China and achieve a significant relational return from a very small investment. Just two months ago, we extended the program to include the Sultanate of Oman, which is now partnered with the Arizona National Guard. This represents a real opportunity for both Arizona and Oman, which already have strong ties: the majority of the Royal Air Force of Oman's F-16 Fighting Falcon multirole aircraft pilots trained in Arizona, and there is cooperation between universities.

The State Partnership Program creates a foundation of readiness for both the state National Guard and the partnered country that will endure across time and distance. One reason for this is many Guardsmen remain in their positions far longer than their active duty contemporaries. Through the State Partnership Program, this translates into enduring relationships that foster trust at all levels. As a result, Guardsmen are force multipliers as we compete for influence in the region. America's participant Citizen Soldiers gain a better understanding of the global environment and CENTCOM's operating environment.

To enhance this program, CENTCOM intends to expand our state partners to include the remainder of the Gulf states. Pursuant to that goal, we maintain a standing order of merit list of eligible countries and work closely each year with the National Guard Bureau to ensure our candidates are considered.

Mr. SCOTT. What is the Wagner Group's center of gravity in Africa?

General LANGLEY. Wagner does not have a single center of gravity in Africa. Instead, they rely on flexible deployments of experienced fighters, information operations, funding from its resource extraction activities, and support from the Kremlin to execute its operations in Africa. Approximately 3,500–5,000 Wagner contractors are deployed across the Central African Republic, Libya, and Mali, where they conduct counterinsurgency operations and provide regime security in exchange for lucrative contracts to extract natural resources. Africa Polity—a Wagner-linked, U.S. sanctioned political strategy firm—complements Wagner deployments with information operations that use affiliated news sites and local journalists to denigrate Western influence and exaggerate the benefits of Wagner and Russian military support. Kremlin backing bolsters Wagner's credentials with African leaders and ensures regular logistic support from the Russian Ministry of Defense. Please see a classified response for additional information.

Mr. SCOTT. How can the U.S. Coast Guard be better integrated with USAFRICOM?

General LANGLEY. U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) cutters and law enforcement detachments provide important skills and capabilities for our strategic plan to address maritime security and develop partner nation naval forces in Africa. We could better integrate the USCG if we had the fiscal authority and accompanying appropriation to fund USCG deployments to advise and assist African navies. We could also use clear fiscal and operational authority to fund African naval personnel to ride aboard US naval vessels or pay for fuel for African naval vessels when USCG personnel are attached to support their missions.

Ultimately, these authorities would facilitate combined U.S. and African partner operations for up to 179 days to support a multinational crew for integrated IUU fishing operations, counter-piracy patrols, and other maritime security and law enforcement activities.

Mr. SCOTT. The Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, located at Fort Benning, GA, provides professional military education and training to eligible U.S. and Partner Nation Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational (JIIM) organization personnel to confront the uncertain and complex security challenges of the Western Hemisphere. Could USAFRICOM benefit from a similar institute geared towards Africa if properly resourced by Congress?

General LANGLEY. Such an institution would complement USAFRICOM's Joint Exercise Program, State Department's International Military Education and Training program, and our relationship with the Africa Center for Strategic Studies at the National Defense University. It could prove a beneficial venue for U.S. touchpoints to contribute to the professionalization of African partner military forces.

Mr. SCOTT. Ambassador Herman J. Cohen wrote an article in the March 2022 issue of *Proceedings* entitled, "The Time is Right for a Pivot to Africa." Do you agree with Ambassador Cohen that, "The United States must see African aid, development, and investment as worthy security projects in their own right"?

General LANGLEY. I agree that the United States must see African aid, development, and investment as worthy security projects. Africa is central to global development with its human potential, trade opportunities, and critical minerals that will fuel our future economy. It has some of the world's fastest growing populations, largest free trade areas, and most diverse ecosystems, and important regional voting power in the United Nations (UN) General Assembly. The threats that challenge Africa are challenging the global community, such as, terrorism, poverty, food insecurity, climate change, and mass migration. These threats contribute to a rise in violent extremism as well as state fragility, which global competitors exploit.

Mr. SCOTT. Do you agree with Ambassador Cohen that, "The potential for security, sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, trade, and better governance is simply tremendous. The mutual benefits that could be realized under a more proactive approach are impossible to ignore. But officials and experts will need to believe it themselves first, and the continuation of great power competition narratives for U.S.-African relations is a worrying sign. The United States must not be stuck in this outmoded and colonial way of thinking"?

General LANGLEY. I agree that Africa's potential for security, sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, trade, and better governance is tremendous. As I travel across the continent, I see opportunities for Africa to become safer, more stable, and more prosperous. Some of that progress can be achieved through partnerships with the U.S. government, civil society, diaspora, and private sector. We have heard loud and clear from African leaders that they value our partnership. At the same time, they want to maintain a diversity of partners, and do not want to be put in a position where they are forced to choose between partners. China and the United States have both convergent and divergent aims on the continent, and we need to recognize that China can play a positive role in the development of African countries, while at the same time shining a light on China's malign or coercive behavior and offering comparative advantages from partnership with the United States.

Secretary Blinken articulated America's goals in his speech at George Washington University on May 26, 2022: "We don't seek to block China from its role as a major power, nor to stop China—or any other country for the matter—from growing their economy or advancing the interests of their people. But we will defend and strengthen the international law, agreements, principles, and institutions that maintain peace and security, protect the rights of individuals and sovereign nations, and make it possible for all countries . . . to coexist and cooperate."

Mr. SCOTT. How much does USAFRICOM need to request in FY24 funding for a mixture of B-350 and MQ-9 contract ISR services, and additional bandwidth to enable USAFRICOM and USSOCOM to meet 100 percent of Departmental ISR High Risk requirements for the USAFRICOM area of responsibility?

General LANGLEY. To meet 100 percent of the Department's Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) High Risk requirements, USAFRICOM will require an additional \$430,124,355.74 in FY24. This is in addition to projected FY24 Global Force Management allocation. Additionally, the lack of documented personnel able to meet foreign language requirements in critical languages needed to support the additional ISR platforms is a concern.

Mr. SCOTT. Can you talk about the importance of the National Guard's State Partnership Program to your respective AOR? Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this highly successful program?

General LANGLEY. As a posture-limited command, USAFRICOM relies heavily on the National Guard, which provides an outsized return on investment through the State Partnership Program (SPP). SPP is funding-limited, not capacity limited. Predictable funding—even at current levels—through the Presidential Budget would stabilize planning and increase execution rates with the partner nations. Cross-fiscal year spending authority would allow the National Guard to complete a much higher percentage of our planned events, demonstrating our reliability as a partner. Properly staffing the SPP is critical to its overall success.

Mr. SCOTT. Lieutenant Commander Stuart J. Ambrose, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, wrote an article in the August 2019 issue of Proceedings entitled, "Guard the African Coast." Do you agree with the author that, "The Coast Guard should set to work immediately with the Navy's Fifth and Sixth Fleets to increase the periodicity of Coast Guard cutter operations off the coasts of Africa"? What is the ideal number of USCG cutter days in USAFRICOM?

General LANGLEY. The ideal number of U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) cutter days would consist of at least one cutter year-round in Africa, and similar Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) deployments, allowing USAFRICOM to make significant strides toward maritime security objectives in Africa. The USCG supports USAFRICOM capacity building programs with training teams and participates in USAFRI-

COM maritime security exercises and combined operations with cutters and LEDETs.

USCG's unique maritime law enforcement authority and expertise fills a critical DOD gap, allowing USAFRICOM to maximize capacity-building efforts among African navies, most of which have coastal defense and law enforcement missions. USAFRICOM lacks the fiscal and operational authority to fund USCG LEDET deployments to advise and assist African navies in the execution of their maritime security mission.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. KIM

Mr. KIM. In February 2023, CENTCOM and the IDF conducted joint air defense, cybersecurity, intelligence, and logistics exercises. What are some of the greatest challenges CENTCOM has experienced in conducting cyber exercises with our partners in the region and what resources do you need from Congress in order to build our regional allies' capabilities in cyberspace?

General KURILLA. With support of U.S. Cyber Command, we conduct joint exercises with our allies and regional partners to improve our shared cyberspace defense posture. All such exercises focus on defensive, not offensive, cyber operations. The greatest challenge we face in conducting cyber exercises with our partners is the wide variety of partner cyber capability. Some of our partner forces have emerging cyber defense capability and some are more fully developed.

We are often challenged to share cyber threat information due to security classification restrictions on much of this information. Sometimes we are simply unable to declassify some of the threat information.

Legislation like the Cyber Regional Security Legislation proposed by the SASC last year, has the potential to assist in addressing both challenges, paving the way for cooperative bilateral and multilateral cyberspace defense initiatives. These may integrate our capabilities with our regional partners, building a layered defense posture. Additional opportunities are the sharing of cyber threat information and collaboration on best practices with our partners.

The cyber domain will continue to experience a steady increase in priority and a need for commensurate resourcing.

Mr. KIM. General Kurilla in your Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) testimony on March 16, 2023 you stated that "It is my commander's estimate that [ISIS-K] can do an external operation against U.S. or Western interests abroad in under 6 months with little to no warning". In your House Armed Services Committee (HASC) testimony on March 23, 2023 you qualified this statement by saying it could be an ISIS-K inspired attack on the homeland within six months. Could you explain to the committee the intelligence you received that caused you to state that ISIS-K could conduct an attack on the homeland in six months? What lead to the apparent change/clarification between your testimony from the SASC to the HASC? Does the rest of the intelligence community (IC) draw the same conclusion from reporting on ISIS-K capabilities that you do? If ISIS-K can conduct an inspired attack within six months, what is the likely timeline for a directed attack, what is the mostly likely timeline, and does the IC agree with your assessment? Is it more likely that ISIS-K would direct an external attack closer to Afghanistan than the United States? Is ISIS-K in the position where it can begin to plan for external attacks, unless directed by the Siddiqui office, as it is still in a continual struggle with the Taliban? I request a classified response.

General KURILLA. *a) Could you explain to the committee the intelligence you received that caused you to state that ISIS-K could conduct an attack on the homeland in six months?*

On March 16th, I testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee that ISIS-K "can conduct an external operation against American or Western interests abroad in under six months with little-to-no warning." In response to a question on that statement, I further testified that an attack on the homeland would be "much harder" to execute. I reaffirmed both statements in open testimony before the House Armed Services Committee on March 23rd.

ISIS-K is developing the ability to inspire, enable and direct attacks in the region and beyond.

The group can inspire an attack by a lone actor outside the region through its propaganda and vile ideology right now, today—this includes the United States.

We have seen ISIS-K enabled attacks abroad against western interests. Enabled attacks are those in which they provide funding and some direction for the attacks. As I stated in my testimony, enabling an attack against the homeland is much harder and I do not have a realistic estimate for that timeline.

Directed attacks—those that are directed and command and controlled directly from ISIS-K are even more difficult; however, ISIS-K is working to develop that capability.

Our intelligence of ISIS-K planning and attack capabilities drives my commander's assessment that ISIS-K can conduct an external attack against American or Western targets abroad in under six months with little to no warning. These attacks will most likely be inspired or enabled but they are working on directed attacks as well.

b) What lead to the apparent change/clarification between your testimony from the SASC to the HASC?

My testimony did not change. On March 17th, I testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee that ISIS-K "can conduct an external operation against American or Western interests abroad in under six months with little-to-no warning." I also testified that an attack against the homeland would be "much harder". On March 23rd, I testified before the House Armed Services Committee that "Really what we see right now is their [ISIS-K] ability to do that in under six months is the enabled attack against U.S. or Western interests abroad. Obviously, much harder to do against the homeland."

c) Does the rest of the intelligence community (IC) draw the same conclusion from reporting on ISIS-K capabilities that you do?

I represent US Central Command and do not speak for the US Intelligence Community which is why I stated in my comment that it was my commander's assessment.

d) If ISIS-K can conduct an inspired attack within six months, what is the likely timeline for a directed attack, what is the mostly likely timeline, and does the IC agree with your assessment?

On March 23rd, I testified before the House Armed Services Committee that ISIS-K can enable an attack against American or Western interests abroad within six months. An inspired attack, driven by an individual actor or group inspired by ISIS-K's vile ideology, could occur with little-to-no warning—it could happen today—to include in the United States or anywhere in the world. To clarify, my six-month timeline accounts for an inspired and/or an enabled attack. A directed attack, which would require more planning and logistical support is more difficult. I command US Central Command and do not speak for the Intelligence Community which is why I stated it was my commander's assessment.

e) Is it more likely that ISIS-K would direct an external attack closer to Afghanistan than the United States?

A directed attack by ISIS-K near the Afghan borders would certainly require significantly fewer resources and less intensive planning than an attack on the homeland. Proximity to its central networks and resources in Afghanistan increases the likelihood of ISIS-K attempting directed attacks in the region. Should ISIS-K attempt an attack further away from Afghanistan, the group would likely apply lessons learned to refine its processes for future attacks outside the region.

f) Is ISIS-K in the position where it can begin to plan for external attacks, unless directed by the Siddiqui office, as it is still in a continual struggle with the Taliban?

ISIS-K can enable an attack against American or Western interests abroad within six months through funding and resourcing and enabling its network. A directed attack, which would require more planning and logistical support, would take longer. ISIS-K remains in conflict with the Taliban, which limits its ability to resource and plan for a directed attack outside the region.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. GALLAGHER

Mr. GALLAGHER. From docking warships in Brazil, to developing cutting-edge unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technologies, to moving ever-closer to a nuclear weapons program, it is clear that Iran is not just a destabilizing force in the region, but a malign actor with global ambitions. Is CENTCOM adequately resourced and postured to counter the threat of an increasingly aggressive Iran within the AOR? And what consequences do you foresee on a global scale if Iran's destabilizing actions are allowed to continue unchecked? How does the Administration plan on countering these actions?

Dr. WALLANDER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

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what consequences do you foresee on a global scale if Iran's destabilizing actions are allowed to continue unchecked? How does the Administration plan on countering these actions?

General KURILLA. *a) Is CENTCOM adequately resourced and postured to counter the threat of an increasingly aggressive Iran within the AOR?*

The resources I have currently assigned and allocated against my current missions place me at high risk to counter the threat of an increasingly aggressive Iran within the AOR.

Iran is the single biggest malign actor in the region. I dynamically assess risk and assign resources against all of my assigned missions, not just deterring Iran. My mission set also includes countering violent extremist organizations and competing strategically with China and Russia—all while partnering and increasing partner capacity in the region.

I have outlined to the Secretary and the Chairman the resources required for each mission and the risk associated with each mission based on the resources allocated.

In the event of increased risk from Iran we always have the ability to request more resources on a time sensitive basis to lower the risk.

b) And what consequences do you foresee on a global scale if Iran's destabilizing actions are allowed to continue unchecked?

Iran perceives a minimal measure of risk of consequences in response to its strikes on American and Coalition forces in Syria and Iraq, attacks against partner nations, attacks against international maritime shipping, and its support to proxy forces throughout the region. Should its destabilizing actions expand with impunity and continue to build its ballistic missile and Unmanned Aerial Vehicle stockpile, it may force a reaction from Regional partners that may set a conflagration in motion that may impose risk beyond the Middle East. A nuclear-capable Iran would change the Middle East overnight and forever and present further global risk as countries in and around the region may seek to match nuclear weapons to counter the threat.

c) How does the Administration plan on countering these actions?

This question is best directed toward the National Security Council, which maintains a whole-of-government approach to deterring Iran.

Mr. GALLAGHER. What investments on the part of the U.S. are necessary to counter the threat posed by the rapid development of Chinese dual-use space infrastructure and telecommunications architecture in places like Djibouti?

General LANGLEY. A whole of government approach, in concert with US Space Command, industry and our closest allies and partners, is required to develop competitive space and telecommunication alternatives. USAFRICOM appreciates the Congressional efforts to safeguard export-controlled U.S. advanced technology from supporting the PRC's space and telecommunications industry. The transfer of U.S. technologies to China's military-industrial complex poses a threat for U.S. industrial competitiveness, including in Djibouti and across Africa.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MS. SHERRILL

Ms. SHERRILL. General Kurilla, I am very concerned about the ongoing tensions and unrest along the West Bank. What is your team doing to ensure stability in the region, especially as the region continues to face increased violence? What is CENTCOM doing to protect and strengthen our interests and reach in the region? What additional resources do you need to accomplish your mission?

General KURILLA. *a) What is your team doing to ensure stability in the region, especially as the region continues to face increased violence?*

I maintain, open, honest, and constant communication with my Israel Defense Forces counterparts on a wide range of issues including the West Bank and the Israeli Defense Force's role as the State of Israel's security guarantor. I just visited Israel on April 27th to 28th where I met with Defense Minister Gallant and Israel Defense Forces Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Herzl Halevi. We discussed the relationship between the Israel Defense Forces and the Palestinian Authority and conditions in the West Bank. I also maintain regular dialogue with US Army Lieutenant General Mike Fenzel, the US Security Coordinator of the Israel-Palestinian Authority, a neutral observer in the West Bank who seeks to moderate behavior on both sides.

b) What is CENTCOM doing to protect and strengthen our interests and reach in the region?

We protect and strengthen American interests in the region by serving as a security integrator: integrating our partners into a framework of operations, activities, investments, and initiatives that will ensure sufficient regional security to protect

our vital national interests. It is through deep, abiding partnerships across the region that we can strengthen our influence and thereby secure American interests in the region.

c) What additional resources do you need to accomplish your mission?

I have outlined to the Secretary and the Chairman the resources required for each mission and the risk associated to each mission based on the resources allocated—this includes the resources required to lower risk to force and risk to mission.

In the event of increased risk in any of our assigned missions, we always have the ability to request more resources on a time sensitive basis to lower the risk.

Ms. SHERRILL. General Langley, the African continent is full of vast and untapped rare earth mineral deposits, including bauxite, cobalt, copper, lithium, and nickel, that are vital to both the defense industry and the global energy transition. What are you doing to increase stability in the region and to increase partnerships between our African allies and our organic defense industrial base, allowing the U.S. to strengthen our presence in the area and improve our critical minerals posture? Specifically, how are we working with critical mineral rich developing African nations, such as Guinea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, and Mozambique?

General LANGLEY. USAFRICOM supports U.S. government and private industry efforts to build partnerships in the mining, energy and mineral trade areas to support the U.S. Defense Industrial Base. This Command focuses on building the capacity and professionalism of militaries in these countries to enhance security so that their civilian administrations can focus on economic and natural resource protection and development.

In Mozambique, the Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) is supported by countries with which we have bilateral capacity-building activities through military-to-military exchanges, Security Forces Assistance Brigade (SFAB) engagements and training, Joint Combined Exchange Training engagements, exercise participation and building partner capacity activities. The proliferation of armed groups and extensive instability in eastern DRC limit the capacity of the government to protect natural resources across the DRC. In Madagascar, USAFRICOM efforts center on maritime domain awareness, supporting one aspect of Madagascar's efforts to protect natural resources. Lack of governance contributes to instability across these countries and limits legal access to minerals by industry. USAFRICOM also works with other DoD Agencies such as the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) to assist countries in preventing illegal trafficking of specific subsets of rare earth and critical minerals. USAFRICOM is interested in working with Guinea on developing its natural resources, but Section 7008 restrictions imposed after the September 2021 coup limit our bilateral relationship.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MRS. McCLAIN

Mrs. McCLAIN. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mark Milley and the Commander of US Central Command, General Michael Kurilla have both testified before the House Armed Services Committee and have given conflicting statements concerning US ISR capabilities over Afghanistan.

General Kurilla testified that the United States is severely lacking in over-the-horizon ISR capabilities over Afghanistan in order to monitor and engage ISIS-K and other terror threats. He went as far as to say his ISR assets only spend 20% of the time on station.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs testified to HASC that there has indeed been a degraded ISR capabilities due to the lack of boots on the ground, however our capabilities for over-the-horizon are strong and he has no concerns.

Rep. McClain is demanding clarity as to:

- What were our over-the-horizon ISR capabilities in September 2021?
- What are our current over-the-horizon ISR capabilities today?
- Has General Kurilla briefed and voiced all his concerns with his perceived lack of ISR assets to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense?
- What has caused these conflicting statements? Has Chairman Milley's staff been in constant communication with the command staff of CENTCOM?
- Does Secretary Austin agree with Chairman Milley's assessment? Or does he share General Kurilla's concerns?

General KURILLA. *a) What were our over-the-horizon ISR capabilities in September 2021?*

In September, 2021, after the withdrawal from Afghanistan, CENTCOM had eight MQ-9 airborne Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance sorties flying to Afghanistan each day. These sorties provided approximately 32–40 hours on station

per day based on target location—this is approximately 20% of the total time the MQ-9s were flying based on the distance to target, i.e. approximately 80% of the time the MQ-9s are flying are spent in transit.

b) What are our current over-the-horizon ISR capabilities today?

There is no change to the Over-The-Horizon Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance assets from September, 2021 to today; however, we are about to experiment with several long duration alternative airborne Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance platforms in the next several months.

c) Has General Kurilla briefed and voiced all his concerns with his perceived lack of ISR assets to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense?

I have shared in writing several times our need for improved ISR to maximize our collection in Afghanistan. My 4 Oct 2022 Joint Urgent Operational Needs Statement addressed this concern, which I submitted to the Chairman and Secretary. I've also submitted the findings from the CENTCOM Alternate Airborne Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Summit in November 2022.

Also, last November 2022, I provided my FY24 Sourcing Assessment Memo to the Secretary of Defense, through the Chairman, laying out my concerns with Airborne Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance allocation. I also provided an assessment of impacts to Operation Enduring Sentinel and Operation Inherent Resolve of planned MQ-9 reductions for Fiscal Year 2024.

While I am concerned with resource allocations in CENTCOM, the Secretary and Chairman must balance these concerns with resourcing requirements across the entire globe and other priority theaters and missions. I am confident my concerns are heard.

d) What has caused these conflicting statements?

My concerns about our Intelligence, Reconnaissance, and Surveillance capabilities are covered in my previous responses. I continue to work with the Joint Staff, Intelligence Community, and regional partners on this dynamic problem set. I am confident my concerns are heard by the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MS. TOKUDA

Ms. TOKUDA. How significant of a security risk is IUU fishing and piracy in West African coastal waters? What specific measures by the United States and/or our partners in Africa is the Department and USAFRICOM supporting related to this issue? Which of these measures or lines of effort are most effective? Are the authorities and funding currently available to the Department and USAFRICOM to address IUU fishing and piracy in West Africa adequate? If not, what additional authorities and/or funding are required?

Dr. WALLANDER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Ms. TOKUDA. How significant of a security risk is IUU fishing and piracy in West African coastal waters? What specific measures by the United States and/or our partners in Africa is the Department and USAFRICOM supporting related to this issue? Which of these measures or lines of effort are most effective? Are the authorities and funding currently available to the Department and USAFRICOM to address IUU fishing and piracy in West Africa adequate? If not, what additional authorities and/or funding are required?

General LANGLEY. Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and piracy imposes significant security, economic, and societal risks for West African states. Fisheries are a key contributor to the food security of more than 200 million Africans and provide income for more than 10 million people. IUU fishing removes billions of dollars in economic benefit, eliminates employment opportunities, exacerbates food insecurity, and stokes political instability. All these factors contribute to an environment ripe for extremist groups and piracy to thrive.

USAFRICOM draws from the Maritime SAFE ACT and the President's National Security Memorandum on Combatting IUU-Fishing and Related Labor Practices for guidance regarding the Department's role in countering IUU fishing.

USAFRICOM is making progress on maritime domain awareness through the Department of Transportation's SeaVision common operating platform and related training during our annual Obangame Express maritime exercise. Additionally, we are seeking the resources to place maritime advisors in seven West African regional command and control centers under the Yaoundé Architecture for Maritime Security.

Surface vessel deployments (USN and USCG) conducting combined enforcement operations with African partners are the most effective means to address IUU-fishing and piracy in Africa. Currently, USAFRICOM has one full-time USN vessel to

support African navies in addressing these maritime security challenges. We are working to leverage the presence of European navies—especially the European Union’s Coordinated Maritime Presences Initiative—but we need greater U.S. surface vessel presence to deliver the optimal operational support Africans need.

USAFRICOM lacks appropriate fiscal authorities to conduct combined enforcement operations with African partners. USAFRICOM is seeking the authorities to fund U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement detachments to advise and assist African partner nations and host international ship-riders aboard U.S. vessels. Ideally, ship-rider operations would last for up to 179 days to support a multinational crew in the conduct of integrated IUU fishing, counter-piracy patrols, and other maritime security and law enforcement activities. Finally, USAFRICOM is seeking to utilize 10 USC 331 authorities to deliver needed logistics, supplies, support, and services to African partner nations to actively patrol their Exclusive Economic Zone, e.g., fuel costs for partner nation vessels during maritime operations.

When USAFRICOM pursues bilateral agreements with African partners, the most important assessment of capability is the country’s legal system. USAFRICOM’s Office of Legal Counsel determines the country’s ability to prosecute maritime crimes before conducting further agreements. Additionally, during each maritime exercise USAFRICOM provides training to all participants who attend the exercises to include evidence collection, chain of custody and case package preparation.

