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**FORCE MANAGEMENT LEVELS IN IRAQ
AND AFGHANISTAN; READINESS AND
STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
AND INVESTIGATIONS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS,
Washington, DC, Wednesday, December 1, 2016.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:01 a.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Vicky Hartzler (chairwoman of the subcommittee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. VICKY HARTZLER, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM MISSOURI, CHAIRWOMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

Mrs. HARTZLER. Good morning. I would like to extend a warm welcome to our witnesses testifying before us today. Before I begin, I would like to welcome the members of the committee present today, or who may yet arrive, who are not members of the subcommittee. I ask unanimous consent that these committee members be permitted to participate in this hearing with the understanding that all subcommittee members will be recognized for questions prior to those not assigned to the subcommittee. Without objection, so ordered.

This hearing will help the subcommittee to assess force management levels, or FMLs, which are more commonly known as troop caps. The White House set a troop cap for Iraq and Afghanistan. That cap is 5,262 for Iraq. In Afghanistan, the cap is 8,448 beginning this January. Now, these are very, very precise numbers. Some might argue that setting a troop cap upends an orderly military planning process. Typically, military leaders are first given a mission, and then they determine what resources are required to meet that mission. Setting the cap first, however, constrains subsequent military choices. An imposed force management level leads to potentially dangerous tradeoffs.

Indeed, one consequence of a troop cap may be our military readiness. I look forward to learning about the extent to which readiness factors are, or should be taken into consideration when a troop cap is implemented. In July during a Readiness Subcommittee hearing, the deputy commanding general of the U.S. Army's Training and Doctrine Command expressed concern that because of troop caps, Army aviation brigades were deployed to Afghanistan without maintenance personnel.

He said, and I quote, "Combat aviation brigades are not meeting readiness rates." He noted that soldiers were losing their edge in maintenance skills. This was, he warned, degrading, quote, "the ability of an aviation unit to regain readiness."

I am eager also to know how troop caps affect the deployments of Army brigades, which are charged with the train, advise, and assist mission. As I understand it, although it might be preferable for the Army to deploy entire brigade combat teams for this work, this is not possible, because doing so would breach the troop caps. Therefore, as an alternative, individual senior soldiers are chosen from a variety of units to undertake the TAA mission.

I want to gain a better understanding of how this practice might harm Army readiness, unit cohesion, career development, and retention. Furthermore, I am concerned about how troop caps might influence the positioning of force protection personnel. For example, are medevac [medical evacuation] teams being placed outside of the theater in Iraq because doing so allows them to not be subject to troop caps? If so, can they still respond quickly to recover injured warfighters?

I would also like our witnesses to discuss other considerations associated with setting troop caps. How does the development of a troop cap fit into the planning process?

Before I introduce the witnesses, I turn to my colleague, Mr. Cooper, who is serving as our acting ranking member until Representative Speier arrives, for your comments. Mr. Cooper.

[The prepared statement of Mrs. Hartzler can be found in the Appendix on page 29.]

**STATEMENT OF HON. JIM COOPER, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM
TENNESSEE, SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTI-
GATIONS**

Mr. COOPER. I thank chairwoman and I welcome the witnesses. I look forward to your testimony. I share the chair's concern about the arbitrariness of any troop cap. It seems to be the opposite of a threat-based analysis. I also share your concern about fudging on the cap, manipulating things so that you don't bring your Army aviation maintenance crews with you or keep your medevac folks outside of the region.

Furthermore, I share the concern that when we fund contractors to do the same job we are paying twice essentially for the same work, and also undermining our readiness and Active Duty forces. But, of course, we need to be forward-looking. It is up to the new administration now to solve these problems, and I think the public back home wants some reassurance that we are not going to mindlessly escalate in a region, but also, we want to, when we have forces, use them in a proper fashion. So I thank the chair for having this hearing, and I look forward to the testimony of the witnesses.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Cooper. So I am pleased to recognize our witnesses today. I want to thank them for taking time to be with us. Members have been provided with the full biography of each witness.

But joining us today is Mr. Cary Russell, the Director of Military Operations and Warfighter Support for the Government Accountability Office. Mr. Russell will summarize some of the important work the GAO has done on this subject.

We have retired Army General Carter Ham. General Ham retired from the United States Army in 2013 as the commander of

U.S. Africa Command. He spent nearly four decades in the Army, and is one of a very small number of military leaders who rose from the rank of private to four-star general.

And we have retired Army Lieutenant General Jim Dubik. General Dubik retired from the U.S. Army in 2008 after 37 years of active service. General Dubik's last job on Active Duty was as the commanding general of the Multinational Security Transition Command Iraq, and the NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] training mission in Iraq. So thank you all for being with us here today. We will now hear your opening remarks.

Mr. Russell, we will begin with you.

STATEMENT OF CARY B. RUSSELL, DIRECTOR, MILITARY OPERATIONS AND WARFIGHTER SUPPORT, GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Mr. RUSSELL. Thank you, Chairwoman Hartzler, Representative Cooper, members of the subcommittee. Thank you for having me here today to discuss some of the actions the Department of Defense [DOD] has taken to maximize military capabilities while operating under force management levels. My statement today draws upon a body of work GAO has conducted over the past several years examining aspects of military operations in contingency environments.

Let me start out with some overall context about force management levels and their use in past and present operations. Basically, force management levels, also referred to as force caps, limit the number of U.S. military personnel deployed to a given region and have been a factor in military operations for a very long time, going back at least to the Vietnam War, where troop ceilings were set to manage the number of deployed U.S. forces.

Force management levels are often set by the executive branch, but can also be influenced by external factors, such as host nation limitations and coalition presence. More recently, force management levels have been used to shape the drawdown of forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, and now, in Afghanistan as well as in Iraq and Syria, in support of the fight against ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria], U.S. forces are deployed under force management levels set by the current administration. Those levels are presently 9,800, which are going down, as Chairwoman Hartzler noted, in Afghanistan, and around 5,300 in Iraq and Syria under Operation Inherent Resolve.

While force management levels have long been used as policy tools to shape and direct the deployment of U.S. military forces, they present a unique challenge to military planners, creating a planning paradox of sorts. As military doctrine states, planning begins with the end state in mind, providing a unifying purpose around which actions and resources are focused. Basically, the focus is on defining the military mission first, and then developing plans with the necessary resources to accomplish that mission. Thus, force management levels may have the effect of essentially reversing that order and establishing resource limits that DOD planners and commanders must then work within.

With these challenges in mind, I want to highlight four key take-aways we have observed from current operations where DOD has

leveraged existing capabilities to help work around limited boots on the ground. These include increased reliances on partner nation security forces, U.S. and coalition airpower, U.S. special operations forces, and contractor and temporary duty personnel.

With regard to partner nation security forces, DOD has increased engagement with partner nations through advise and assist missions that rely on partner nation security forces to do the planning, execution, and sustain operations. That is, working by, with, and through our partners more so than ever before. This can create complications, however, for U.S. planners, in terms of providing the necessary supporting capabilities and resources where and when they are most needed.

Further, as we have reported in the past, splitting up U.S. brigade combat teams to provide advisers creates challenges for maintaining readiness in training those brigades. Regarding airpower, DOD has relied on significant U.S. and coalition airpower to provide support to partner ground forces in lieu of U.S. ground combat capabilities. Since U.S. operations related to ISIS began in August of 2014, coalition members have flown nearly 44,000 sorties, releasing more than 57,000 munitions. Air-based intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance [ISR] systems have also proved critical to commanders by providing them timely and accurate information, particularly in the absence of a large U.S. ground presence. However, this reliance on airpower is not without its cost or challenges.

For example, the Secretary of Defense has recently stated that previously that the intensity of the U.S. air campaign against ISIS has been depleting U.S. stocks of GPS [Global Positioning System] and laser-guided munitions. Regarding the use of special operations, DOD has increased its use of U.S. special operations forces to increase its operational reach and maximize capabilities under force management levels. However, the increased use of special forces in these current operations has resulted in a high pace of deployments which can affect readiness, retention, and morale.

Finally, DOD has increased its reliance on contractors in temporary duty assignments to round out its force constrained by force management levels. During operations in Afghanistan and Iraq contractors have played a critical role in supporting U.S. troops and in past operations, sometimes even exceeding the numbers of deployed military personnel. However, the increased use of contractors and temporary personnel to provide support during operations has its complications. For example, DOD has had longstanding challenges overseeing contractors in deployed environments, even when there was a much larger robust troop presence on ground to perform that oversight.

This completes my statement and I would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Russell can be found in the Appendix on page 31.]

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, Mr. Russell, General Ham.

General HAM. Thanks, Madam Chairwoman. I think the members of the committee have my written statement. If it is okay, we'll just let that stand and be ready to progress to questions and answers.

Mrs. HARTZLER. All right, thank you very much. General Dubik? You are all about efficiency. We appreciate it. That is great.

[The prepared statements of General Ham and General Dubik can be found in the Appendix beginning on page 50.]

Mrs. HARTZLER. Well, we will go to some questions. And I will ask General Ham the first question. So in July, Lieutenant General Kevin Mangum, the deputy commanding general of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, testified before HASC [House Armed Services Committee] that deploying combat aviation brigades without their maintainers was causing an, quote, "atrophy of critical skills." When aircraft maintainers are left behind in the United States during their combat aviation brigade's deployment, what task relating to their primary military occupation do they accomplish at home station to remain skilled since they do not have equipment to work on?

General HAM. Madam Chairwoman and Mr. Cooper, thanks again for the opportunity to appear before you. I think that is precisely the right question. In addition to the others that you raised and Mr. Cooper raised in your opening statements. So when a unit is split apart, a unit that is not designed to be severable into various deployable components, there is, I think, a very real readiness concern. So in a specific case of Army aviation units, when most or all of the airframes, most or all of the aircrews are deployed, and most or all of the maintenance capability of that unit remains at home station, there is a very real concern about how do you—how do the remaining maintenance personnel retain their proficiency?

It requires an extraordinary level of effort on the part of the home station chain of command to find opportunities for them. Sometimes that could be at increased cost, sending personnel on temporary duty to other installations where the airframes upon which those personnel need to work to sustain their proficiencies, there could be some increased cost. But for the most part, I think those skills would atrophy. They also lose the cohesiveness of an aviation unit. It is designed for the aircrews and the maintenance, the ground support elements to operate together.

When you separate them, post-deployment, it takes a much longer period of time to rebuild the readiness for which that unit was intended. So there are several consequences that affect readiness and the point that Mr. Cooper raised of essentially paying twice for the same capability. We have those uniformed maintainers. We have paid for them. We have trained them. We have developed them. We have bought their equipment, but, yet, we then pay again to provide a contract maintenance capability in theater.

Mrs. HARTZLER. We have tried to get the dollar numbers from the Department of Defense on how much it is costing to backfill with contractors in Afghanistan. We haven't gotten those yet. Mr. Russell, has the GAO done any study? Do you have an idea of how much money we are expending for contractors to maintain the aircraft in Afghanistan while we leave the maintainers at home here?

Mr. RUSSELL. No. At this point we haven't looked specifically at those costs. They may be difficult to get. I know, in general, trying to pull together contract costs can be a challenge within the Department, but we haven't looked at that specific number.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Okay. General Dubik.

General DUBIK. Madam Chairwoman, I made some calls to some friends of mine who were aviators, asked the same question, anticipated this. The report to me was about 400 to 500 civilian contract maintenance personnel to work on a brigade's worth of aircraft at about \$100 million a year. Now, I would certainly not take those numbers as gospel, because I think, as Mr. Russell pointed out, you really need to bear down on them. But it is a good ballpark figure. And this is for a capability that already exists in the force. So, in addition to paying the cost of a soldier to maintain, you are paying the additional cost as General Ham suggested, of sending some of those soldiers to other places so there is temporary duty costs. You are paying the cost of an additional deployment which is, in fact, what it is on temporary duty, and then the cost of the maintenance. So this is a complex and very costly approach to conducting what could be a military task, should be.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Absolutely. We are paying multiple ways through this scenario, and it is very, very concerning.

Mr. Cooper.

Mr. COOPER. Thank you, Madam Chair. It is relatively easy to beat up on troop caps, or FMLs, as a flawed device. And since I suggested in my opening statement, we need to be more forward-looking anyway, why don't we try to use this panel to focus on what might work in Iraq or Afghanistan, because I think most people would agree a light footprint is better than a heavy footprint, but that is if a light footprint works. And no one really has talked so far about the way special forces are treated, you know, sometimes unacknowledged, sometimes not counted, sometimes counted. So rather than focus on the flaws of a particular tool, why don't we try to choose what tool might work? And I know that requires vast knowledge of what is actually going on in country. But can you gentlemen, with your military expertise, and I am particularly proud of General Ham, because it is remarkable to ascend from private to full general. That is a rare accomplishment.

What might work, because the public back home really doesn't care about these places. They really do care about our troops. They want what is effective, but also what is affordable. You know, there are foreign powers sometimes involved in these regions. Our NATO allies are varying, trustworthiness. You know, this is a very complex problem to figure out and it is easy to criticize. It is hard to perform. So what would be a better policy?

General HAM. Well, Mr. Cooper, I will take a first attempt at that. First, I note for the record that I didn't go from private to four-star general in one step. There were a few years intervening there. But so it took a bit of a while, but thank you for that acknowledgment.

In my experience as a theater commander, as a service component commander, as a director for operations on the Joint Staff, I think there is a role for force management levels. It is in the—in principle, I think force management levels serve a useful purpose in terms of conveying to military commanders and to military planners, the intent of proper civilian authority, the Commander in Chief, the Secretary of Defense, making sure that the level of commitment of the United States Armed Forces are consistent with the intent of the civilian authorities. So I think there is a utility in

force management levels. I think it is in the application where we have difficulty sometimes. It is, as the gentlewoman commented, if you start the planning process with a force management level, I believe that leads you to a flawed planning process, and will preclude military planners from offering civilian authorities the full range of capabilities and options that they ought consider.

So I would, my preference would be to see force management levels applied after a full consideration of a wide variety of options and when the appropriate civilian authority, Secretary of Defense, Commander in Chief, makes a decision. This is what we want to try to achieve. This is the level of effort that I think is about right. That, to me, is the time where force management levels ought be applied.

And I would just finally note, Mr. Cooper, that I think you are right. Again, in application, what troops count, what don't, which don't. I don't believe it was the—it is the intent of force management levels to simply substitute uniformed U.S. military personnel for contractors, or for temporary duty personnel and the like. So getting to the intent, I think, is the right start and the appropriate application of force management levels at the appropriate time in the planning process which, to me, is more toward the end of the planning process rather than at the beginning.

General DUBIK. I can only echo that, Mr. Cooper. When the force management level decision is the product, or the result of an extensive and thorough dialogue between the civil and military authorities, and that dialogue informs the final decision authority, whether Secretary of Defense, or the President, of the range of option and risks, that is the time then to start talking about force management levels.

If that process is aborted, or an arbitrary force management level is set in lieu of having that kind of discussion, then the result is generally a level of force that is unlikely to succeed; just won't fail. And that is not a good position to be in.

Mr. RUSSELL. Thank you, and I will add on to that, too. I totally agree with what the gentleman to my left said about the planning part of it. It is really important, you know, in terms of identifying what your risks are given the risk management level and knowing that and sometimes, I think as we have heard anecdotally anyway, that if you provide a number early on, sometimes it almost serves as an appetite suppressant to folks that would submit requirements, and it may suppress the requirements coming in, so you may not have a full range of unconstrained requirements coming in to look at. So I think that part of risk assessment is right.

Also, Mr. Cooper, what you pointed out, I think is an important point as well, and is what the other gentleman said, was, you know, as you look forward, I mean, troop caps and force management levels have been around a long time. I think you have got to look at them as a way of life. It is likely they could continue in the future. So I think it is important that DOD look at ways to manage its forces in theater given those troop caps. What can be learned? And I think an important aspect of looking at these current operations where the troop caps are fairly low and limited, is how do you manage a force to do that? And in this case, in Iraq, for exam-

ple, working more by, with, and through the Iraqis. How is that working?

In some cases, you know, there is advantages because you do free up ground forces outside of the theater to do other things and maintain and develop readiness. You might have readiness enhancements with the partner forces that you are doing. But in the same sense, if you shift that burden over to other support functions such as air, special forces, that has other effects too. And I think it is up to DOD to kind of look at that whole mix and say what is the optimal way to operate given a force structure? And I think right now, we are really at an optimal point in time, given the operations in Iraq and Syria, and particularly in Iraq, taking stock at lessons learned and saying how are we doing? What have we learned? What has worked well, what hasn't? And DOD could maybe develop that into a model for how they might be able to apply forces going forward in future deployments should that be a continuation in the future.

Mr. COOPER. Not to put too fine a point on it, but lest we be more critical than we are forward-focused, I would challenge the members of this subcommittee, if they don't like the current FML levels, and as Mr. Russell suggests, it is likely that FML approaches will be around for a long, long time. Then what is your favorite number? If you don't like 10,000 or 5,000, pick one, and then justify it, because it is too easy for us to say, oh, you know, whatever the Pentagon does is wrong. What is our approach? Because I think there is an ambivalence in the American public that is very hard to reconcile right now, and we feel that acutely in our districts, because we want to win. But how do you win? And what does it take to win? And that is where the gap is.

So if anyone has any specific suggestions, any particular numbers, because that is what policy boils down to. If you are not for this, what are you for? You can't just be against something.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Very good. Mr. Conaway.

Mr. CONAWAY. Well, in following up on Mr. Cooper's comment, though, we are not in a position to know all of the answers as to what those levels ought to be without the full range of planning that needs to go on. So if force management levels or troop levels are the Holy Grail, not only during the planning phase but in the execution phase, what you see is workarounds. The DOD is really good at working around whatever it is.

Now, they might not have been able to plan it properly on the front end because somebody put an arbitrary number out there, uninformed, like we would be doing, like you just suggested, and then clings to that number against everything else, as if that is the measure of what we need to be doing. It is just the number of people we have got in the fight.

I would rather DOD have the flexibility of putting the range of what the fight needs to look like from the civilian folks, what do you want to accomplish, here is how you do it, and then a policymaker has a better idea of what goes on and how to get it done. Then, as the fight changes, which every fight does, then clinging to a number seems to me to be the wrong mechanic. It ought to be clinging to getting the job done. So what you are seeing is TDY [temporary duty] and contractors and everything else. I mean, the

Department of Defense figures it out some way to get around whatever it is we have done.

So I think the idea that policymakers cling to a number on the front end, uninformed, quite frankly, and you have seen that number change and move around. My question would be, TDY folks, do we have any sense, Mr. Russell, how many of those are involved? What the rotation cycles are? And what and where they are being pulled from and the impact it has, as well as the number has changed, particularly in Afghanistan. As the President got new information, did the mechanics for that process work efficiently enough, and nimble enough, to make sure that the folks in the fight aren't trapped at a number that the workaround can't get to and the mission is hurting as a result of lack of nimbleness in adjusting that number?

Mr. RUSSELL. Yeah, thank you for that question. With regards to the number of TDY, we actually have some numbers but, unfortunately, they are in a classified report. So I don't have it unclassified. But we had delivered a copy to the committee and there is some information in there on troop levels, contractors, and TDY folks.

But with regard to rotations, they are typically 90- to 120-day rotations, which creates some complications. Because one of the things is, you lose that continuity as people come in and come out. You sort of lose that learning curve and that continuity of folks that are working that problem in and out. Right.

Mr. CONAWAY. In terms of General Ham and General Dubik, the process of changing, adjusting, has the Department of Defense been able to get to the White House to get the number changed? Is that nimble enough?

General HAM. Well, Mr. Conaway, I suspect military commanders would always ask for greater flexibility, as you raised. But I think the point is that as conditions change, then there ought be a mechanism by which force management levels can be reassessed and adjusted. For me, I think this is an appropriate role for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the most senior body of military advisers who have a global approach. As a former theater commander, you know, I kind of had my blinders on and my head down and I was mostly concerned, almost exclusively concerned about what was going on in my particular area of responsibility. And so I would place operational demands, requirements for forces based on that.

It is the Joint Staff who, advising the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that has this global view of things, and this is another role I think where force management levels can play an appropriate role in balancing and prioritizing the global effort of the U.S. Armed Forces. So I think a mechanism that allows the Joint Chiefs to consider various force management levels and then render their statutory best military advice to the Secretary and Commander in Chief, I think that process is a pretty good one. And I think that collective body of the most senior military advisers is in the best position to give best advice to the senior civilian authorities.

General DUBIK. So, Mr. Conaway, I agree with General Ham's description of the process. My experience, at least in Iraq in 2007-2008, was that the process is very slow. And that the pace of what happens in theater is much quicker than the pace of decisionmak-

ing back here. And the result is often either having people with the wrong skill set, or having insufficient numbers of people.

Now, that could well have been fixed. It has been 7 years. And the numbers are a lot smaller, so they are easier to manage. But I have to report that my experience is that there is a disconnect in the speed of what happens in theater and the speed of decision-making in adjustment here.

Mr. CONAWAY. Thank you, General, I appreciate it. I yield back.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Representative Graham.

Ms. GRAHAM. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. I have a lot of questions. Historically, you mention, I believe, Mr. Russell, that troop caps have been in place since the Vietnam War. Is that accurate?

Mr. RUSSELL. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. GRAHAM. What have we learned over time of the impact that troop caps have on our ability to fight the fight? And I was recently on a CODEL [congressional delegation] with Chairman Conaway. Good to see you, Mike. And we were in Kuwait at the beginning of the Mosul, liberation Mosul. And so that greatly affected me. And in terms of my question of do troop caps—are they having, over time, historically, what have we learned as to the effect or challenges that troop caps place on our ability to be successful in operations like Mosul? Thank you.

Mr. RUSSELL. Oh, yes, thanks for your question on that. Yeah, I think that is a good question. I am not sure that anybody has captured lessons learned to that extent. I can tell you, though, now, where the environment in my experience is quite different, the troop caps in Vietnam were troop ceilings at a very high level. You can also look at where we were in terms of Afghanistan, with 100,000 soldiers on the ground at one point; 170,000 in Iraq at one point. These are much larger.

I think the real question now, as we look at an environment where it is much, much smaller, and I think that is where, as you get smaller now, the tradeoffs become much, much greater. So I think you are seeing more of an impact and more of a challenge when you get down to that number. And I am not sure yet—that is why I mentioned earlier, I think that the lessons learned now are really critical because it is in terms of what have we been able to accomplish at what cost and what risk in terms of getting the mission done, both in Iraq and now in Afghanistan as the numbers come down even lower. But I think we are kind of in a new area in terms of just the sheer number of constraint with regard to the levels where we are at now. It is kind of difficult to compare it back to those larger operations.

Ms. GRAHAM. Do you—and this is, sorry, Madam Chairwoman, I am going a little off topic—but I have not seen recently how we are doing in Mosul. If anyone can give me a brief update? Anyone know?

Mr. RUSSELL. At this point I don't have the update and of course, you have to be careful because a lot of the information is classified where it is going.

Ms. GRAHAM. Right.

Mr. RUSSELL. I think, you know, we are looking now in terms of our current work and enablers and how we are supporting them.

And I think we will have some work coming down the road. It will probably be classified, but we will be looking into how enabling support is working to help the Iraqis. I think the important thing to know about Mosul is, it is really an Iraqi-led operation. We are really working by, with, and through the Iraqis, probably more so than ever before. And so as we look to push through Mosul, I think it will be a real telling sign in terms of how well and how successful we are. I mean, we say the proof is in the pudding, I think the pudding is Mosul and we have to see how it goes.

Ms. GRAHAM. I agree. We don't want to continue to be in this circle in Iraq at some point. We have to figure out how to be successful and get out.

What is the role of, as we replace—based on troop caps, replace with contractors, if we can just talk about Mosul, if you have enough information about that, what is the role in the offensive that contractors will be playing as opposed to troops as we are under a limitation on the troops that we can bring into the offensive?

Mr. RUSSELL. Yeah, I mean, it is kind of difficult to answer, particularly at the classification level, and I don't have the on-the-ground knowledge of how Mosul is being conducted with regards to that. I can step back and say more generally, contractors play a wide role in a military operation. Not just in specific military functions with regards to maintenance as folks have talked about, but they do base security, they do construction, they do dining services, and so there is a great wealth of, I guess, things that happen that contractors are responsible for.

Sometimes it can be difficult to really isolate how much of that is because of a troop cap versus how much of that is just because overall, the force doesn't provide those kinds of services. So it is kind of a challenging answer to really gauge how much contractors are supporting it, but I would just step back and say in any operation, particularly in the last several years, contractors have been an integral part of the fighting force, a lot of perspective.

Ms. GRAHAM. Yes, General.

General DUBIK. Yes, ma'am. With respect to Mosul, there is a lot of open-source information on Mosul and I would commend you and your staff to read the updates from the Institute for the Study of War. They are sometimes daily and at least weekly. And the last update that I had read from those sources, again, all open source, nonclassified, is that the pace of the operations in Mosul had slowed; that as the forces have—Iraqi forces moved into the city from the outskirts and the small villages, that the pace of operations is much slower, both on the east and in the south.

Further, that there is some concern about Iranian-sponsored militias operating west of Mosul and into Tal Afar. So the fight has gone, I think, at least from my experience, about how I expected and I think we will have many more months of fighting there.

With respect to the train and advise mission, and your questions there, my opinion is to ask first, what is the objective? Is the objective merely to raise the tactical proficiency of the Iraqi Security Forces to a level to defeat ISIS in Mosul, and then pat ourselves on the back and say we kicked them out of Ramadi, we kicked

them out of Fallujah, we kicked them out of Mosul now let's go home?

Ms. GRAHAM. Yeah.

General DUBIK. If that is the mission, we are about well-resourced. But under those conditions, we may be doing the Battle of Fallujah Five. So I think the troop cap is the easiest thing to talk about. But what the strategic aim is really the key question. Because if the troop cap is not based on the strategic mission that the country can buy into, it is going to be wrong, regardless of whether it is high or low.

Ms. GRAHAM. I couldn't agree with you more, and I appreciate your comments and I yield back because I am out of time. Thank you very much, gentlemen.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, lady. Mr. Scott.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Madam Chair. General Dubik, your comment large enough not to fail, not large enough to succeed. I didn't get it exactly right. What—do you remember what you said? I thought that was pretty—

General DUBIK. That was pretty much it.

Mr. SCOTT. That is pretty much the way we are fighting our war in a politically correct manner, isn't it? I mean, it is a—

General DUBIK. I wouldn't characterize it as politically correct, but I would characterize it as prolonging an already long war unnecessarily.

Mr. SCOTT. I never served, certainly appreciate those who do, but my granddad was one of those World War II guys, and I can just imagine what he would be saying right now. I know he would ask me before we went into anything, have you made a decision to win it, because if you haven't, then don't waste the lives that it is going to cost if you are not willing to do what it takes to win.

And I want to get to the cost of this, if I can. And just, we know it cost us more than it cost to deploy our men and women that are in the military, to fill most of those gaps with contractors. But if the DOD or the Secretary of State, if they can't tell us how much it is currently costing, then to me, it seems that there is an extreme gap in oversight with regard to this. I mean, if they can't tell you, they can't tell us, they can't tell the Government Accountability Office, who knows what it is costing us?

General DUBIK. I can only defer to Mr. Russell on the cost issue, because I have been out of the business now for detailed knowledge. But the cost, the fiscal cost of the war is an important element of waging this war. And, again, the issue for me is the strategic gain. What are we trying to do? And is the cost, in terms of dollars and lives, worth that strategic gain? That is the key discussion. All money is wasted if we either have no strategic gain, or have one that can't be attained or have the wrong one.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. Russell, who has the information?

Mr. RUSSELL. Various places in DOD, they certainly can track, I think, contract costs. And I agree. I think when you get to your question, it becomes much more difficult and that is, we are trying to understand the incremental cost of what exact contractors are doing that might be related to working under an FML, for example. It just becomes very difficult because then you have to be able to parse out which tasks and which contracts support them, and that

is where you start losing that granularity. Just from a perspective in terms of contractors, right, there is a lot of money in contractors. Now, the information I have is somewhat dated, but going back to Afghanistan in fiscal year 2011, when we had the height of operations, we were spending \$16 billion on contracts. I mean, if you look back at the contracting commission for wartime contracting between 2002 and 2011, we were spending about \$166 billion in Iraq and Afghanistan on contracting.

So you are absolutely right. It is a very large dollar that is being spent and I think where you start to lose that granularity is when you start going down to exactly what are they doing, what are they working on, and which missions are they supporting, it becomes a lot more difficult.

Mr. SCOTT. General Ham, you served at probably more levels than anybody else in the military. Thank you for your service.

What impact does it have on the readiness of our units when you deploy part of a unit and not the rest of the unit? Aviation brigades is something that I am thinking of and what do you think the impact on morale is?

General HAM. Mr. Scott, I think that is a great question. There are, I think, some identifiable readiness impacts in terms of when you split a unit that is not intended, not designed to be severable, when you split it apart, whether it is an aviation unit as we have discussed, separating maintenance from the flying crews, whether it is, as the chairwoman identified, whether it is an advise and assist brigade that most of the young soldiers stay at home and most of the noncommissioned officers and officers deploy.

So you have time and expense to re-form that unit upon redeployment, because they are no longer a cohesive unit. It will take additional money, additional ammunition, additional time to rebuild readiness. But I think the point that you hit upon in terms of morale, esprit, I think that those are somewhat intangibles, but have a very real effect on readiness. If in the same unit you have soldiers who are deployed and those who aren't, you have a little bit of haves and have-nots.

There are, obviously, as the Congress has approved, there are financial advantages to service members who are deployed, that those who aren't deployed don't enjoy. There are different family hardships. Those who are deployed, those who are not deployed. I think those have a yet-to-be-determined effect on unit morale and long-term what the effects may be on retention of some very highly qualified individuals in our service. So I think it is a great question. I don't know that those answers are readily available.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you. Representative McSally.

Ms. MCSALLY. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you gentlemen for your testimony. And Mr. Cooper, I do want to follow up. When you said provide an alternative, an alternative to just random numbers, it would be to set strategic objectives in these theaters, identify what we are trying to do, and then figure out what we need to do to get the mission done, and then that ends up being the number. I mean, this is, you know, to have a number be the driver for causing all of the things that are in the discussion in the testimony today—I led a CODEL back to Afghanistan, been there

myself in uniform, of course, but last—in May, and deep concerns seeing what we are talking about here firsthand with also commanders and others spending a tremendous amount of time to find workarounds and measure the jerry-rigging in order to comply.

So these real concerns are there, and they are taking the time of the commanders to not do the mission, but to actually comply with these random numbers.

I think the first question I would have is, what is the purpose of the caps? What is the purpose of the numbers, the limits on boots on the ground? Is it cost? Is it risk to Americans? Because in these cases, the cost we are seeing is probably higher. As discussed already today, a risk to an American contractor is similar to a risk to an American troop. So it is not even clear what is the objective of these particular force management limits right now in Afghanistan and Iraq? Because it seems like we are not achieving either of them, if it is risk or if it is cost.

And I think about—you know, I remember back when I was at Bagram with my A-10 squadron on Christmas Eve, out on the flight line with my maintenance troops trying to get an engine fixed that had been problematic and had an emergency on Christmas night in the middle of the cold and the snow trying to get this done, and everybody doing everything they can to keep the mission going around the clock; those were my maintenance guys that reported to me.

The one thing with contractors is, they don't report to the commander, they report to some program manager, and if you want to have to get them to do something differently, you can't direct them to do that.

So it hasn't, first of all, the question is about what do you think the purpose is of the caps, because I think we are not achieving any of the purposes, potentially, and then secondly, what is the impact on unity of command, chain of command, because if you have got contractors out there, it is just a different relationship than if they are your unit. General Ham first.

General HAM. I will take, again, a first attempt at that, if I may. I think there are valid purposes for force management levels. I think it does ensure that the application of U.S. Armed Forces is consistent with the policy decisions that are made by the Commander in Chief, by the Secretary of Defense, and within the resource constraints that have been approved by the Congress. So I think there are appropriate—there is an appropriate role for force management levels. From a purely military standpoint, I think it is one way to manage the global force and the requirements that the Department of Defense needs to meet around the globe.

It does have a tendency, it does constrain unanticipated growth, so-called mission creep, from occurring without appropriate approval and authority. So I think there is a proper role for that. But I think you are exactly right, ma'am, to say when the—when activities are driven by a number, rather than by the mission—

Ms. MCSALLY. Right.

General HAM [continuing]. Then I think we have got things out of whack and out of priority. So, again, back to my earlier statement, I think it is—when is the force management level decided upon and the planning and decisionmaking process, and what is

the appropriate mechanism for revisiting that as conditions change?

Ms. MCSALLY. Right. And then comments on the chain of command, or General Dubik, do you want to—

General DUBIK. I will first reiterate that I have been under force management levels three times, first in Haiti, second in Bosnia, third in Iraq. And at each of those times, in my opinion, the force management levels were set correctly by the strategic objective; not as high as the military commanders wanted; not as low as they are now. So there is a role for these things.

In terms of contractors, I have to report that I have only had good experiences with those contractors that had worked for me.

Ms. MCSALLY. Oh, they are great people. Don't get me wrong. I mean, I worked along tremendous contractors as well.

General DUBIK. And in terms of responsiveness, I have had bad experiences, though, with respect to flexibility. Because when you change the task, you have to change the contract. And that is a very timely affair.

For example, we had to change the contract for police development in Iraq in 2008. It took 8 months. I initiated, I left, my successor inherited it. And in that intervening 8 months, we had the mismatch of skill sets and personnel to do the job that was required.

Ms. MCSALLY. Got it. Just a final comment on the TDY element when I was there in the spring. We had entire units TDYed to Helmand Province to help stop the bleeding there. You don't go TDY to Helmand Province. You go TDY to Nellis Air Force Base. To be calling TDY to a combat zone to be out there addressing the combat situation is ridiculous and that is what these random force management levels have, you know, have created. I mean, that is just insane. And I would just say—I know I am out of my time—Mr. Russell, if there is any study of the exact costs, I would ask that it would consider also the cost of stationing air assets outside Iraq and Afghanistan, like combat search and rescue [CSAR], ISR, tactical airlift that are now in the theater, but further away. Both the financial costs with fuel and the other assets, and then the risks. If you don't have CSAR right there, you are talking about risk to lives because you are not as responsive. And these things need to be included in any discussion as well.

Thank you, Madam Chair, I appreciate it.

Mrs. HARTZLER. You bet. Mr. Russell, will there be a study on that?

Mr. RUSSELL. At this point, we are not looking at it. We can look into it. We do have a study going on where we are looking at enabling support that is being provided. So potentially, as we look at that, we could get into some those issues as well in terms of what enabling support is being provided. But we will have to look at that and see.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Yeah. I would encourage you to do that and get back with us on that because I think that Representative McSally brings up a really good point. It would be great to have you look into that.

Mr. RUSSELL. Yes, ma'am.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Representative Walorski.

Mrs. WALORSKI. Thanks, Madam Chair. Thank you, gentlemen, for your service to our country. I very much appreciate it. Just as a follow-up, I mean, there has been a lot of the same kind of questions going down the same trails here, but are there areas now that are critical to the ANSF's [Afghan National Security Forces] future viability and success that we can't effectively impact due to the low troop cap? I wanted to just do a follow-up on that really quickly.

For example, are soldiers unable to advise certain units who may need it simply because we don't have the boots on the ground necessary to adequately secure the training area? And I want to wrap this third question into this, to follow up on that in a more quantity versus quality question, if General Nicholson were to see progress in one area like basic soldiering, but not in another like vehicle maintenance, or command and control, does he have the flexibility to alter the composition of the troops on the ground, or is that the kind of flexibility, General Ham, that you were speaking of that there just needs to be more flexibility?

General HAM. Ma'am, I am sorry. I am not sufficiently current with the answer to your questions about the ANSF. I think they are absolutely valid questions, to be sure.

Mrs. WALORSKI. Sure.

General HAM. On the last point, my sense is that the theater commander has the ability to determine the requirements within the troop cap. I mean, he can request certain capabilities so if he needs more maintenance and less infantry, I think he has the ability to make—there is a process through which he makes those changes in the requirements so long as they stay within the force management level. I think it is much more difficult for him to make a recommendation—the processes we have discussed—to exceed, to change the force management levels is a much more cumbersome, much more time-consuming process.

Mrs. WALORSKI. General Dubik.

General DUBIK. Yes, ma'am. With respect to the ANSF, my guess is that the allocation of forces there is insufficient. And I base that on a general knowledge of the task. This is what I had done in Iraq, and I have been to Afghanistan about four times looking at the ANSF and overall mission. When you are trying to build a self-sufficient Army, there are four pieces of that Army that you have to look at. The first is, I will say, the tip of the spear. That is the tactical proficiency.

The second is a layers or echelons of command that support the tip of the spear.

The third part is the senior military commands that generate the resources, people, things, and money to flow down through the chain of command.

And the last is the ministry of defense, which of course, has the mission to acquire people, acquire things, determine the size of the force, make policy decisions.

All four of those are necessary for a self-sufficient Army. And my belief is that the current numbers are insufficient to adequately address all four pieces simultaneously. So what General Nicholson has to do is a matter of priorities where he wants to shift closer to the tip, closer to the, you know, and that is part of his job.

Mrs. WALORSKI. I appreciate it. Thank you, Madam Chair. I yield back.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you. Mr. Russell.

Mr. RUSSELL OF OKLAHOMA. Thank you, Madam Chairman, and thank you for calling this panel here today. I had the honor to serve with General Ham on several assignments and his thumbprint is pretty deep in my life with his influence. And General Dubik's reputation is second to none, also. Thank you for being here. I think, Mr. Cooper, you ask an important question that we rarely ask, and it has been articulated here by several of us. What will work?

And I want to echo, establish the purpose of what it is that we want to do and then the tasks that would accomplish that purpose and then put troops to the task. It really is that simple. Military leaders do that all the time. And, yet, oftentimes what happens is that after those requests are made, we have to have the political will as politicians—as much as I hate that word being a warrior most of my life—we have to have the political will to back up the recommendations. And at that point, support it rather than equivocate and we need to avoid accusations when we force them into a cap area that wasn't adequate to accomplish the task by saying, well, it is mission creep. And you keep coming back and asking for more. It probably wasn't adequate to begin with.

Civilian authority often fails to recognize that the most humane thing you can do in battle is to end the carnage and suffering as quickly as possible. That is rarely achieved with halfhearted or restrained commitment. I guess my question, General Ham, sir, to you, would be, would you say that military capacity that is translated to contractors increases efficiency and saves money? Or reduces it and causes more money to correct lack of continuity and cohesion on both ends of active operations and redeployment?

General HAM. Well, thanks, sir, and it is great to see you again. And I guess I would make the argument that your imprint is perhaps deeper on me than mine on yours. But thanks for that and thanks for continuing to serve.

I think this—the issue of contractors is one that deserves lots of study. Mr. Russell and others have looked at this, and I think appropriately so. There is, in my view, an absolutely appropriate role for contractors in combat theaters. There are a number of functions that they can perform, often at less cost than uniformed personnel, but not all tasks.

I think where we, in my view, where we get it wrong is when—whether because of force management levels or other factors, we seek contractors to perform inherently military tasks. If the military doesn't, if we don't have sufficient capacity, if that capability is applied somewhere else in the world and it certainly isn't—and just isn't available, then to me it makes sense, perhaps, to turn to a contracting option.

But in the example that we have cited a number of times this morning for aviation maintenance as one example, aviation units, as you know very well, are built with organic maintenance capability. To not employ that, but employ contractors in lieu of that uniform capability seems to be not only fiscally a bad choice, but operationally a bad choice as well. But I certainly would not, you

know, discount the important role that contractors perform in a wide variety of functions.

Mr. RUSSELL OF OKLAHOMA. And I appreciate the distinction of contractors having a role on tasks that are not inherently military. I would totally agree with that. I think where we have made errors, since the peace dividend days where we have reduced everything and put so much shift to contractors is that we have forced them into a lot of military roles, complicating things, such as civilians on the battlefield, the laws of land warfare and many other aspects that we fail to recognize.

General DUBIK, I guess in a follow-on on this, sir, would be if contractors cannot support certain combat operations due to the limitations of their contracts, and I know you faced this in some unique environments from disaster support, to failed government, to also combat operations, what impacts does contractors' lack or limitation in those roles have on the ability to swiftly accomplish the tasks as a commander?

General DUBIK. Well, thank you, sir. I actually have just a slightly different perspective and that is that contractors can perform the tasks that they are contracted to do actually pretty well. But there is zero flexibility for the commander beyond that.

Mr. RUSSELL OF OKLAHOMA. Right.

General DUBIK. With a soldier who is a cook, or a mechanic, or a clerk, and you need additional force protection people, there they are. You need additional convoy security people, there they are. So a soldier deployed is much more flexible than a contractor deployed.

Mr. RUSSELL OF OKLAHOMA. He is probably cheaper, I am guessing?

General DUBIK. I would say at least as expensive, if not way cheaper.

Mr. RUSSELL OF OKLAHOMA. Thank you, sir. And thank you, Madam Chairman, for allowing me to join today.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Great questions. I have a few more questions I would like to ask and welcome the ranking member here. And I know she has some questions so we will turn to her in just a minute.

But I wanted to go back to the maintainers issue and how they are splitting those out of the units. Is there any rational reason where you would split those in developing the number, the troop levels? Do you think that was considered?

General HAM. Madam Chairwoman, I think it goes back to the point that General Dubik has raised. It starts with what is the purpose that you want to achieve? And if in the analysis of that purpose, and in an articulation of a mission, if you come to the conclusion that the right application of force is perhaps not all of a unit so, would take an aviation brigade, maybe you don't need the entirety of the aviation brigade that you would only deploy part of it, then I think there would be some rationale for deploying part of the unit, leaving part at home.

But to me, that would be, you would deploy airframes, aircrews, maintenance and ground support in proportion to the mission, and those that would stay at home station would also retain the capabilities of maintenance, ground support and the like. So again,

these units that are not designed to be severable, you have to be very careful when we do, in fact, separate them, particularly if the purpose is to meet a number rather than to meet a mission.

Mrs. HARTZLER. So you would assume that the 8,448 number that they came up with has caused the maintainers to stay home. There is no rational reason for them, in their planning, to send an entire unit over there and leave their maintainers at home?

General HAM. Madam Chairwoman, it is my understanding that in those cases where those decisions were made, they were made primarily as a consequence of the force management level.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Very good. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Russell, how are—how does the U.S. Government oversee contractors in the theater? So, say, the maintainers?

Mr. RUSSELL. Yeah, and I think that is a great point because for the last several years, we have looked at oversight issues and oversight challenges, and typically, when you are in theater, you have contractors' offices' representatives that would be assigned, and typically, these are military personnel that get this as a secondary duty, and they would be responsible for making sure the contractor does what is supposed to be done under the contracts that they are required to do.

They are basically the eyes and ears of the contracting officer. And even when we look at the heyday, when there were 100,000 troops on the ground in Afghanistan, we found challenges where the contracting officer representatives had too many contracts, and they weren't able to get out and actually observe the performance of the contracts, leading to all sorts of undesirable effects, such as, in one case, a five-compound building was built, for example, outside the wire of a base. The contracting officer just couldn't simply get out there and do the job they had to do.

And so while adjustments have been made, and DOD has made some progress, it does raise big questions when you have a smaller troop ground, can you be able to absorb that oversight capacity in addition to all the other missions that you are trying to accomplish under the same cap.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Good point. I want to follow up on the TDY questions. Do TDY forces cost more than other deployed forces?

Mr. RUSSELL. I am not sure if I have any information to be able to answer that question. I think one of the—to get to the point, though, about TDY, one concern I would like to bring up is the fact that when you do the TDY, sometimes you lose visibility over the total force that is actually doing the mission.

I think that is some of the risk that you face with the TDYs, are we capturing and tracking and matching that up to the folks that are on the ground to ensure that that is the real requirement and that is what it takes to get the job done.

Mrs. HARTZLER. So has the use of temporary personnel strained in any way medical or logistical support forces?

Mr. RUSSELL. I have not looked at that, so I wouldn't be in a position yet to be able to say that. So with the ongoing work, may get into it. Of course, that would be a classified level. We can talk about that in that kind of a venue.

General HAM. If I may, Madam Chairwoman, I think, again, it goes back to purpose. If we are making a decision to send people

into an operational theater in a temporary duty status as a means of circumventing the force management level, then I think that probably ought to be questioned. There are certainly legitimate purposes for people to go into an operational theater on temporary duty.

For example, perhaps fielding a new piece of equipment might, you know, a short duration, specific purpose, temporary duty might be exactly the right status for those individuals, but if it is just intended to keep them below the force management level, that probably is circumventing the intent.

Mrs. HARTZLER. General Dubik.

General DUBIK. That is all I was going to say.

Mrs. HARTZLER. All right. Very good.

Ranking Member Speier.

Ms. SPEIER. Thank you, Madam Chair.

And thank you for participating today. I apologize for not being here at the beginning, but we have organizational hearings going on and other committee hearings that I had to participate in, but I am here now, and I thank you.

I would like to just clarify the term FML. It is my understanding that force management levels are not set in stone. This is a question for you, General Ham, and that the administration has been relatively flexible about this. What flexibilities for adjustments are there?

General HAM. Well, ma'am, thanks. It is good to see you again. I think that once a force—once a force management level is decided upon by an appropriate civilian authority, there ought be sufficient flexibility to adjust that based on changing conditions on the ground, and I think, in my experience, that system is pretty cumbersome. And from a military standpoint, it has been more difficult, I think, to adjust the force management level, so that is where—that is why I think we have seen military commanders make some decisions to keep the troop level underneath the force management level, the use of contractors, some of the issues that Mr. Russell articulated in terms of—

Ms. SPEIER. Okay.

General HAM [continuing]. Special operations forces and the like.

Ms. SPEIER. So what you are suggesting, then, is that the FML is too inflexible, and you don't have the opportunity to increase it by 3 percent, 2 percent, 10 percent.

General HAM. As a former military commander, I would argue for greater flexibility and agility for the appropriate civilian authority to adjust force management levels, based on changed conditions and recommendations of the theater commander, and of the Joint Chiefs in their role as managing the global force.

Ms. SPEIER. Which is a really important point, because in the end, it is a game that is being played, right, in terms of numbers? So if you have the FML and you can't exceed it, then you are going to hire more contractors to do what you need to do, sounds like. Is that right?

General HAM. Well, I think, ma'am, we certainly have seen some—you know, some examples of that, and I believe—and I do believe that there is an appropriate role for force management lev-

els, but I think we have seen in implementation what I think some—

Ms. SPEIER. Adverse consequences?

General HAM. Yeah, ways to get around it.

Ms. SPEIER. To what extent is the FML determined in conjunction with another sovereign nation?

General HAM. It is an important consideration. Certainly, you know, in most of the places where U.S. Armed Forces are deployed, there is a sovereign government, not always, but when there is a sovereign government, certainly that is a very, very important consideration. And I think it certainly has been the case, and I think that has been one of the reasons why—one of the determinants of what the force management level is.

I think that is appropriate that the host nation would have some say in that, but it has also got to be a communication between the U.S. Government and that host nation government in terms of, you know, what is achievable at various levels of forces.

Ms. SPEIER. Well, in the end, unless we do it in conjunction with the host country, we are in occupation mode, correct?

General HAM. Yes. I think certainly, you know, we respect the sovereignty of these nations, and it is important to do this in conjunction with them.

Ms. SPEIER. So my understanding is that Iraq has been fairly clear that they want us in advisory roles and at limited FML. Is that correct?

General HAM. That is my understanding, yes, ma'am.

Ms. SPEIER. All right. And in terms of the whole issue of readiness, and, you know, I think there probably is a difference of opinion on the committee in terms of how many more troops we want to have in engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan, and that is one question. But then the other question is really one about readiness and whether or not we want them there or ready to engage in other conflicts.

So let me ask you this question, and you might have to take it down to make sure you get your answer right. I am going to ask all three of you this question. If you had a choice, if you could spend more money, would you, A, give it to our troops in terms of more time at home to rest, train, and recuperate between deployments; B, increase the number of troops we have in Afghanistan; C, increase the number of troops we have fighting ISIS in Iraq and Syria; or D, forward deploy to increase deterrents in Europe?

So Mr. Russell, what would be your answer?

Mr. RUSSELL. Well, I wouldn't want to speak on behalf of the administration in terms of what the best course of action to be. I think you have to go back to look at what are the objectives and have we really defined what it is we are trying to accomplish. I think, as you mentioned, just as a precursor, when you look at FMLs, you do have advantages and disadvantages that go with it that have to be—the tradeoffs have to be compared. I mean, as you mentioned one of the things, to the extent that you have a smaller force cap, obviously, the more troops you are going to have available to do other things. And so I think having the objective and the force cap lined up right has to be looked at globally across the board.

So I think those are some of the significant considerations that have to be made in order to make those choices.

Ms. SPEIER. So you are not going to answer my question?

Mr. RUSSELL. It is a little difficult for me to pick one from where I sit.

Ms. SPEIER. All right. General Ham, would you—

General HAM. Yeah, I think I find myself probably in the same case as Mr. Russell in terms of not giving you a precise answer.

Ms. SPEIER. You are a politician, you realize that.

General HAM. But I—but this is—the question you raise, ma'am, is exactly the right question, because this is—there are finite resources, and so this is the balancing between operational requirements in theaters across the globe, balancing that with readiness for future contingencies, some of which are unforeseen, so we have to have some capability to meet that.

Certainly, the preservation of the All-Volunteer Force, I think, is a very, very high priority, and that means you have got to have—afford a quality of life for people that they are not constantly deployed, so that is a balance.

The one I would answer specifically, and I will fall back on my time on the National Commission on the Future of the Army, I do believe there is a requirement for an increase in forward deployed forces in Europe.

Ms. SPEIER. So you would answer D?

General HAM. I would answer D for an increase in forward deployed.

Ms. SPEIER. I would concur. Thank you.

General DUBIK.

General DUBIK. Yes, ma'am. So I am looking at readiness in two senses: readiness for current operations and readiness for the unforeseen contingencies. With respect to the first, I would answer D also, but I would do so not in a rotation basis, but a PCS [permanent change of station] basis, because then you can accomplish both A and D at the same time.

But the other part to the question, readiness for contingency operations, is one that is equally important. For example, right now we have five brigade combat teams doing train and assist kind of things. Well, that means you have five doing it, five preparing to do it, and five recovering. That is 15 brigade combat teams allocated to that task, and as soon as they deploy with all of their leaders but not their soldiers, you have five brigades instantly unready for a contingency operations, and when they return, you have five brigades that are unready for 1 to 3 years—1 to 2 years in terms of preparation.

So I would answer the second part for contingency operations, actually E, we have not allocated, I think, a sufficient number, the total end strength of the Armed Forces, to serve the global requirements of the United States. And part of the contractor issue, part of the force management issue is a mask to that requirement that is not being met, and we are taking significant risk being focusing on near-term readiness for current operations, which is absolutely required, but the risk is being unable to respond to a contingency operation.

And as Secretary Gates has famously said, you know, we are always 100 percent wrong and 100 percent surprised, and we have placed the armed services in a very risky situation if anything happens other than current operations.

General HAM. Ma'am, could I add one more?

Ms. SPEIER. Of course.

General HAM. So the other place, I think would be helpful would be increased flexibility, authority, and resourcing for the Reserve Components of the U.S. Armed Forces so that they can be more operationally employed. Certainly on a predictable basis and certainly not as frequently as the regular forces, but there is great capacity, great skill, great experience in the Reserve Components. We want to keep them ready as well.

Ms. SPEIER. All right. Thank you all. I yield back.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Great questions. Well, I think we have had very good discussion today. It has been very helpful to look at where we are now, what are some of the issues that we are facing with the troop levels, caps that have been set into place, and as we look to move forward, you know, what needs to be done, and so I appreciate your expertise. Thank you for being here. Thank you for your continued service to our country, and this hearing stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:12 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

DECEMBER 1, 2016

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

DECEMBER 1, 2016

**Opening Remarks of Chairwoman Vicky Hartzler
Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigation Hearing
“Force Management Levels in Iraq and Afghanistan; Readiness and Strategic
Considerations”
December 1, 2016**

Good morning. I'd like to extend a warm thank-you to our witnesses testifying before us today.

Before I begin, I would like to welcome the members of the committee present today (or who may yet arrive) who are not members of the subcommittee. I ask unanimous consent that these committee members be permitted to participate in this hearing with the understanding that all subcommittee members will be recognized for questions prior to those not assigned to the subcommittee.

Without objection, so ordered.

This hearing will help the subcommittee to assess “Force Management Levels,” or “FMLs,” which are more commonly known as “troop caps.” The White House set a troop cap for Iraq and Afghanistan. That cap is 5,262 for Iraq. In Afghanistan, the cap is 8,448 beginning this January. These are very precise numbers.

The committee has previously received testimony that Force Management Levels can lead to potentially dangerous trade-offs. Readiness of our military forces is one consequence.

In connection with the Afghanistan theater, this committee's readiness subcommittee learned this in a July hearing. The Deputy Commanding General of the U.S. Army's Training and Doctrine Command noted that, because of troop caps, Army aviation brigades were deploying to Afghanistan without maintenance personnel. This has grave implications.

Private contractors have been hired to do this work in Afghanistan instead of Army helicopter maintainers. This not only costs more, but deprives the soldiers the opportunity to gain the skills needed to work on their unit's aircraft.

The general said (and I quote) “Combat Aviation Brigades are not meeting readiness rates.” He noted that soldiers were losing their edge in maintenance skills. This was, he warned, degrading “the ability of an aviation unit to regain readiness.”

In addition to discussing this further, I am interested in knowing if there are other similar issues.

I am eager also to know how troop caps affect the deployments of Army brigades which are charged with the Train, Advise, and Assist mission. As I understand it, although it might be preferable for the Army to deploy entire brigade

combat teams for this work, this is not possible because doing so would breach the troop caps. Therefore, as an alternative, individual senior soldiers are chosen from a variety of units to undertake the TAA mission.

I want to gain a better understanding of how this practice might harm Army readiness, unit cohesion, career development, and retention.

Furthermore, I am concerned about how troop caps might influence the positioning of force protection personnel. For example, in Iraq are medevac teams being placed outside the theater because doing so allows them to not be subject to troop caps? If so, can they still respond quickly to recover injured warfighters? Troop caps which limit essential missions like combat search and rescue are detrimental to our military's effectiveness and responsiveness.

I would also like our witnesses to discuss other considerations associated with setting troop caps. How does the development of a troop cap fit into the planning process?

But before I introduce the witnesses, I turn to my colleague, Mr. Cooper, who is serving as our acting Ranking Member until Rep. Speier arrives.



United States Government Accountability Office

Testimony
Before the Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations, Committee on
Armed Services, House of
Representatives

For Release on Delivery
Expected at 10:00 a.m. ET
Thursday, December 1, 2016

OVERSEAS CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS

Observations on the Use
of Force Management
Levels in Afghanistan,
Iraq, and Syria

Statement of Cary Russell, Director,
Defense Capabilities and Management

GAO Highlights

Highlights of GAO-17-246T, a statement before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The United States has engaged in multiple efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria since declaring a global war on terrorism in 2001. Currently, in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, U.S. forces are deployed under force management levels set by the administration. Force management levels and similar caps limit the number of U.S. military personnel deployed to a given region and have been a factor in military operations at least since the Vietnam War. Force management levels were also used to shape the drawdowns of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. In June 2016, the President announced that the force management level for Afghanistan is 9,800. According to DOD, in September 2016 the United States authorized additional troops for Iraq and Syria, for a total of 5,262.

Today's testimony discusses some of the actions DOD has taken to maximize military capabilities while operating under force management levels in ongoing operations.

In preparing this statement, GAO relied on previously published work related to operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria since 2001.

What GAO Recommends

GAO made 18 recommendations in prior work cited in this statement. DOD has implemented 12 of them. Continued attention is needed to ensure that some recommendations are addressed, such as improving visibility in total Special Operations funding to determine whether opportunities exist to balance deployments across the joint force.

View GAO-17-246T. For more information, contact Cary Russell at (202) 512-5431 or RussellC@gao.gov.

December 1, 2016

OVERSEAS CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS

Observations on the Use of Force Management Levels in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria

What GAO Found

Military officials planning for and executing operations under force management levels have taken various actions to maximize military capabilities deployed to countries under those limits, as discussed below:

- Increased Engagement with Partner Nation Security Forces.** The Department of Defense (DOD) has increased its engagement with partner nations through advise-and-assist missions that rely on partner nation security forces to conduct operations. While this action helps leverage U.S. resources, it can create complications for U.S. planners in terms of allocating capabilities and resources. In 2011, GAO reported that the Army and Marine Corps have faced challenges in providing the necessary field grade officers and specialized capabilities for advisor teams, as well as challenges regarding the effect on the readiness and training of brigades whose combat teams have been split up to source advisor teams. GAO made three recommendations related to advisor teams. DOD concurred and implemented two recommendations relating to improving the ability of advisor teams to prepare for and execute their mission.
- Reliance on Airpower.** DOD has relied on U.S. and coalition airpower to provide support to partner nation ground forces in lieu of U.S. ground combat capabilities. For example, since U.S. operations related to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) began in August 2014, coalition members have dropped more than 57,000 munitions. Air-based intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems have also proved critical to commanders by providing them timely and accurate information. While effective, this reliance on air power is not without its costs or challenges. For example, the Secretary of Defense stated in February 2016 that the intensity of the U.S. air campaign against ISIS has been depleting U.S. stocks of certain weapons.
- Increased Pace of U.S. Special Operations Deployments.** DOD has increased its use of U.S. Special Operations Forces to increase its operational reach and maximize its capabilities under force management levels. However, the increased use of U.S. Special Operations Forces in operations has resulted in a high pace of deployments which can affect readiness, retention, and morale. GAO made 10 recommendations to DOD related to U.S. Special Operations Forces. DOD concurred or partially concurred and has implemented 7 recommendations relating to security force assistance activities and readiness of U.S. Special Operations Forces.
- Increased Use of Contractors and Personnel on Temporary Duty.** DOD relies on contractors to support a wide range of military operations and free up uniformed personnel to directly support mission needs. During operations in Afghanistan and Iraq contractor personnel played a critical role in supporting U.S. troops and sometimes exceeded the number of deployed military personnel. However, the increased use of contractors and temporary personnel to provide support during operations has its challenges, including oversight of contractors in deployed environments. GAO made four recommendations to improve oversight of operational contract support. DOD concurred with all four, and has implemented three of them. GAO also made a recommendation that DOD develop guidance relating to costs of overseas operations, with which DOD partially concurred and which remains open.

United States Government Accountability Office

Chairwoman Hartzler, Ranking Member Speier, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today to discuss some of the actions the Department of Defense (DOD) has taken to maximize military capabilities while operating under force management levels in ongoing operations. Currently, in Afghanistan and in the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, U.S. forces are deployed under force management levels set by the administration. Force management levels limit the number of U.S. military personnel deployed to a given region and have been a factor in military operations at least since the Vietnam War. Force management levels have also been used in the past to shape the drawdown of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. In June 2016, the President announced the force management level for Afghanistan is 9,800. For Iraq and Syria, the Lead Inspector General for Overseas Contingency Operations reported that, as part of Operation Inherent Resolve, the United States authorized an additional 615 troops in September 2016, bringing the total authorized forces in support of that Operation to 5,262.^{1,2}

While force management levels have long been used as a policy tool to shape and direct the deployment of U.S. military forces, they can present a unique challenge to military planners. Under joint doctrine, the joint operational planning process consists of a set of logical steps to examine the mission; develop, analyze, and compare courses of action; select the best course of action; and produce a plan or order. The focus is on defining the military mission and developing and synchronizing plans to accomplish that mission. As Joint Publication 5-0, Joint Operation Planning, states, "Planning begins with the end state in mind, providing a unifying purpose around which actions and resources are focused."³ As the process proceeds, the commander identifies the forces needed to accomplish the concept of operations. Although force management levels

¹Lead Inspector General for Overseas Contingency Operations, *Operation Inherent Resolve: Report to the United States Congress* (Washington, DC: July 1, 2016-September 30, 2016).

² Operation Inherent Resolve is dedicated to countering the terrorist threat posed by the ISIS in Iraq, Syria, the region, and the broader international community. The U.S. strategy to counter ISIS includes support to military operations associated with Operation Inherent Resolve as well as diplomacy, governance, security programs and activities, and, separately, humanitarian assistance.

³Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub. 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning* (Aug. 11, 2011).

may be part of the input as plans are developed, and may be taken into account as existing plans are assessed and updated, they may also have the effect of essentially reversing the planning order and establishing resource limits that DOD planners and commanders need to adjust to or work around as they develop and execute their plans.

My statement today discusses some of the actions DOD has taken to maximize military capabilities when operating under a force management level in its ongoing operations. This statement is based on our body of work on DOD's contractor oversight, its use of advise and assist teams, key enablers in operations, and other GAO reports.⁴ To perform our prior work, we analyzed DOD guidance and personnel and readiness data, and we interviewed cognizant DOD officials involved in planning and operations. The reports cited throughout this statement contain detailed discussions of the scope of the work and the methodology used to carry it out. The work on which this statement is based was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform audits to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

U.S. Operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria

The U.S. government has engaged in multiple efforts in Afghanistan since declaring a global war on terrorism in 2001 that targeted al Qaeda, its affiliates, and other violent extremists. These efforts employ a whole-of-government approach that calls for the use of all elements of U.S. national power to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda and its affiliates and prevent their return. In March 2011, U.S. forces shifted their role from carrying out combat operations to advising and assisting Afghan forces as lead security responsibility was transitioned to Afghan forces.

U.S. government efforts for the global war on terrorism in Iraq began in 2003 with Operation Iraqi Freedom. Similar to U.S. efforts in Afghanistan, U.S. military operations in Iraq shifted focus from combat and

⁴A list of related classified and unclassified GAO products is provided in appendix I.

counterinsurgency to that of an advising and training role for Iraqi security forces. The U.S. and Iraqi governments signed an agreement in 2008 to draw down U.S. forces in Iraq to a complete withdrawal no later than December 31, 2011. In 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) emerged as a major force in Iraq and Syria.⁵ In September 2014, the President announced the U.S. strategy to degrade and ultimately destroy ISIS. Also in 2014, Congress passed and the President signed legislation authorizing DOD to provide assistance, including training and equipment, to vetted Syrian opposition forces to fight ISIS, among other purposes.⁶ Similar legislation authorized assistance to military and other security forces of or associated with the Government of Iraq, including Kurdish and tribal security forces or other local security forces with a national security mission.⁷

Use of Force Management Levels

Force management levels and similar caps are generally set by the Executive Branch to limit or manage the number of military personnel deployed at any one time to specific countries. Force management levels can also be derived from various other sources. For example, we reported that during the Balkan operations of the 1990s, DOD limited U.S. troops to 15 percent of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization force in Kosovo. Also, the overall number of U.S. forces may be limited by the host nation to which they are deploying. Force management levels and similar caps have been a factor in military operations for a long time—dating at least to the Vietnam War, during which troop ceilings were used to manage the number of deployed U.S. forces. As such, operating under limitations to the total number of deployed forces is something with which DOD has become familiar.

The executive branch used force management levels to shape the drawdown of forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. In Iraq, U.S. forces drew down from a peak of over 170,000 “boots on the ground” in November

⁵The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria is also known as Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, Daesh, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

⁶See Continuing Appropriations Resolution, 2015, Pub. L. No. 113-164, § 149 (2014); Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015, Pub. L. No. 113-235, § 9016 (2014); Carl Levin and Howard P. “Buck” McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015, Pub. L. No. 113-291, § 1209 (2014).

⁷See Pub. L. No. 113-291, § 1236. The assistance is subject to certain conditions, including the vetting of planned recipients. See *id.* § 1236(e); see also Pub. L. No. 113-235, div. C, tit. IX.

2007 to their withdrawal at the end of 2011. In Afghanistan, U.S. forces have drawn down from a peak of almost 100,000 in March 2011 to 9,300 as of the middle of 2016. In the current counter-ISIS fight in Iraq and Syria, force management levels limited the initial deployment of forces and have been increased over time to enable the deployment of additional forces to carry out the mission.

**Actions DOD Has
Taken to Maximize
Military Capabilities
While Operating
under Force
Management Levels
in Ongoing
Operations**

Military officials planning for and executing operations under force management levels have taken various actions to maximize military capabilities deployed to countries under those limits. For example, we reported in 2013 that with the initial drawdown of forces in Afghanistan starting in 2011, which occurred as U.S. forces shifted from carrying out combat operations to advising and assisting Afghan forces, there were a number of key areas that military planners and operational commanders would have to consider regarding the military capabilities DOD retained in Afghanistan to enable the success of Afghan partner forces. These would include considerations regarding what types of key enablers—such as air, logistics, intelligence, and medical evacuation support—were needed to support Afghan National Security Forces. Similarly, as force management levels in Afghanistan were further reduced to below 10,000 forces in early 2015, military planners and operational commanders faced more fundamental issues about the structure of the U.S. presence in Afghanistan. Among other things, planners had to consider how reduced force levels would constrain resources for the advising mission, given for example the increasing dedication of resources and personnel to base force protection, the number of enduring base locations, and reduced medical reach. As the force management level in Afghanistan has continued to decline, these are the questions that military planners and operational commanders continue to address through various actions.

Similarly, in the current counter-ISIS mission in Iraq and Syria, planners and commanders have been assessing how to maximize military capabilities while providing the needed support for the mission they are executing under current force management levels. Among the actions DOD has taken to accomplish these goals in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria is that of increasing its reliance on: (1) partner nation security forces; (2) U.S. and Coalition airpower; (3) special operations forces; and (4) contractor and temporary duty personnel.

Increased Engagement with Partner Nation Security Forces

One of the tools DOD has used to maximize the number of mission-focused personnel under a force management level to achieve its objectives is to increase engagement with partner nation security forces through a range of security cooperation efforts.⁸ For example, as part of the overall transition of lead security from U.S. forces to Afghan National Security Forces and the drawdown of U.S. forces after 2010, the U.S. mission in Afghanistan shifted from a combat role to an advise-and-assist mission. As a result, DOD has used a variety of approaches to provide U.S. advisors to carry out the advise-and-assist mission. In early 2012, the U.S. Army and Marine Corps began to deploy small teams of advisors with specialized capabilities—referred to as Security Force Assistance Advisory Teams—that were located throughout Afghanistan, to work with Afghan army and police units from the headquarters to the battalion level, and advise them in areas such as command and control, intelligence, and logistics.

Relying on partner forces to conduct operations has both positive and negative potential effects. On the positive side, limited U.S. capacity can help to ensure partner forces take the lead, such as in Iraq, where Iraqi Security Forces are leading the attack on Mosul as part of Operation Inherent Resolve. However, as the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency stated, the Iraqi Security forces lack the capacity to defend against foreign threats or sustain conventional military operations without continued foreign assistance. For example, the recapture of the Iraqi city of Sinjar in November 2015 and the Ramadi government center in December 2015 depended on extensive coalition airstrikes and other support.⁹ As a result, this can create complications for U.S. planners in terms of allocating capabilities and resources within the force management levels. In addition, in 2011 we reported on challenges DOD has faced when supplying advise and assist teams, such as in providing

⁸Security cooperation is the broad term used to describe DOD activities to build defense relationships that promote specific U.S. security interests, develop allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and multinational operations, and provide U.S. forces with peacetime and contingency access to host nations. See Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub. 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Nov. 8, 2010) (as amended through Feb. 15, 2016). For more information see, e.g., Department of the Army, Field Manual No. 3-22, *Army Support to Security Cooperation* (Jan. 22, 2013) (with change June 21, 2013).

⁹Vincent R. Stewart, Lieutenant General, U.S. Marine Corps, Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, statement before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 114 Cong., 2nd sess., February 9, 2016.

the necessary field grade officers and specialized capabilities.¹⁰ We also found that splitting up brigade combat teams to source these advisor teams had an effect on the readiness and training of those brigades.¹¹ We made three recommendations to the department to ensure that the activities of individual advisor teams are more clearly linked to command goals and to enhance the ability of advisor teams to prepare for and execute their mission. DOD concurred with our recommendations and has implemented two of them.

U.S. and Coalition Airpower

With a limited U.S. footprint under the current force management levels in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, DOD has relied on U.S. and coalition airpower to provide support to partner ground forces in lieu of U.S. ground combat capabilities. For example, U.S. Air Force Central Command reported that since the 2011 drawdown began in Afghanistan, coalition members have flown nearly 108,000 sorties and dropped approximately 16,500 munitions.¹² Additionally, since U.S. operations related to ISIS began in August 2014, coalition members have flown nearly 44,000 sorties and dropped more than 57,000 munitions. While effective, according to senior DOD officials, this reliance on air power is not without its costs or challenges. For example, according to the Secretary of Defense in February 2016, the accelerating intensity of the U.S. air campaign against ISIS in Iraq and Syria has been depleting U.S. stocks of GPS-guided smart bombs and laser-guided munitions. As a result, DOD requested an additional \$1.8 billion in the fiscal year (FY) 17 budget request to purchase more than 45,000 more of these munitions. Furthermore, DOD is exploring the idea of increasing the production rate of these munitions in the U.S. industrial base.

Similarly, airborne intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) systems have proved critical to commanders to support military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. The success of ISR systems in collecting, processing, and disseminating useful intelligence information

¹⁰GAO, *Iraq and Afghanistan: Actions Needed to Enhance the Ability of Army Brigades to Support the Advising Mission*, GAO-11-760 (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 2, 2011).

¹¹GAO, *Security Force Assistance: More Detailed Planning and Improved Access to Information Needed to Guide Efforts of Advisor Teams in Afghanistan*, GAO-13-381, Washington, D.C.: April 30, 2013.

¹²Note that these figures are generated from the start of calendar year 2011 and are drawn from public information released by U.S. Air Force Central Command. We did not independently assess the reliability of the sortie and munitions numbers in this paragraph.

has fueled growing a demand for more ISR support, and DOD has increased its investments in ISR capabilities significantly since 2002. According to a senior DOD official, as the United States reduces its footprint in Afghanistan, it is imperative that U.S. intelligence collection capabilities be constant and robust to support forces on the ground. With respect to Iraq and Syria, according to this senior official, there is also a need for significant ISR capabilities to develop and maintain situational awareness of the security environment, particularly in the absence of a large U.S. ground presence. As he noted, ISR platforms with full-motion video capabilities have become fundamental to almost all battlefield maneuvers, adversary detection, terrorist pattern-of-life development, and force protection operations.

**Increased Pace of U.S.
Special Operations
Deployments**

In a force management level-constrained environment, DOD has increased the use of U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF), who are specially organized, trained, and equipped to conduct operations in hostile or politically sensitive environments. As a result, these forces increase the operational reach and capabilities of the limited number of ground forces that can be deployed under a force management level. However, SOF deployments in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria have placed significant demand on the force during this period. As we reported in 2015, DOD has increased the size and funding of SOF and has emphasized their importance to meeting national security needs.¹³ Specifically, the number of authorized special operations military positions, which includes combat and support personnel, increased from about 42,800 in FY 2001 to about 62,800 in FY 2014.¹⁴ Funding provided to U.S. Special Operations Command for special operations—specific needs has more than tripled from about \$3.1 billion in FY 2001 to about \$9.8 billion in in FY 2014, in FY 2014 constant dollars, including supplemental funding for contingency operations. We made three recommendations to the department to improve budget visibility for SOF and to determine whether certain traditional SOF activities can be transferred to or shared with conventional forces. DOD partially concurred with our recommendations, and they remain open.

¹³GAO, *Special Operations Forces: Opportunities Exist to Improve Transparency of Funding and Assess Potential to Lessen Some Deployments*, GAO-15-571 (Washington, D.C.: July 16, 2015).

¹⁴For purposes of this testimony, “authorized special operations positions” refers to those positions that have been approved by DOD components for funding for a specific fiscal year.

While DOD has taken some steps to manage the increased pace of special operations deployments, we have reported that opportunities may exist to better balance the workload across the joint force because activities assigned to SOF can be similar to activities assigned to conventional forces.¹⁵ Conventional forces have been expanding their capabilities to meet the demand for missions that have traditionally been given to SOF, such as stability operations, security force assistance, civil security, and repairing key infrastructure necessary to provide government services and sustain human life. For example, in 2012, we reported that the services were taking steps and investing resources to organize and train conventional forces capable of conducting security force assistance based on identified requirements.¹⁶ We made two recommendations: to improve the way in which the department plans for and prepares forces to execute security force assistance, and to identify and track security force assistance activities. DOD partially concurred with and implemented both recommendations. Recently DOD began establishing conventional forces, such as the Army's regionally aligned forces, with more extensive language and cultural skills, which are capable of conducting activities previously performed primarily by SOF.

In a May 2014 report to Congress, DOD noted that SOF personnel have come under significant strain in the years since September 11, 2001.¹⁷ Both the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict and the commander of U.S. Special Operations Command acknowledged in 2015 that SOF have sustained unprecedented levels of stress during the preceding few years.¹⁸ Specifically, the commander of U.S. Special Operations Command testified that continued deployments to meet the increasing geographic combatant command demand, the high frequency of combat

¹⁵GAO-15-571

¹⁶GAO, *Security Force Assistance: Additional Actions Needed to Guide Geographic Combatant Command and Service Efforts*, GAO-12-556 (Washington, D.C.: May 10, 2012).

¹⁷Department of Defense, *Review and Assessment of United States Special Operations Forces and United States Special Operations Command* (May 5, 2014).

¹⁸Honorable Michael D. Lumpkin, Assistant Secretary of Defense, Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, statement before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 114th Cong., 1st sess., March 18, 2015 and General Joseph L. Votel, U.S. Army, Commander, United States Special Operations Command, statement before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 114th Cong., 1st sess., March 18, 2015.

deployments, the high-stake missions, and the extraordinarily demanding environments in which these forces operate placed not only SOF but also their families under unprecedentedly high levels of stress. According to the commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, the high pace of deployments has resulted in both increased suicide incidents among the force and effects on operational readiness and retention due to a lack of predictability.¹⁹ The Commander's statements are consistent with our prior work, which has found that a high pace of deployments for SOF can affect readiness, retention, and morale.²⁰ In that work, GAO made several recommendations to maintain the readiness of SOF to support national security objectives and address human capital challenges. DOD concurred or partially concurred with our recommendations and has implemented them. The military services have also acknowledged challenges that SOF face as a result of operational demands. For example, in 2013 Air Force officials reported that a persistent special operations presence in Afghanistan and elsewhere, increasing requirements in the Pacific region, and enduring global commitments would continue to stress Air Force special operations personnel and aircraft.²¹

Increased Use of Contractors and Personnel on Temporary Duty

In a force management level-constrained environment, DOD relies on contractors to support a wide range of military operations and free up uniformed personnel to directly support mission needs. During operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, contractors played a critical role in supporting U.S. troops with the number of contractor personnel sometimes exceeding the number of deployed military personnel. According to DOD, the level of contracted support has exceeded that required in previous wars, and this level is not expected to change in future contingency operations. For example, even as troop levels began to drop below 90,000 in Afghanistan in early 2012, U.S. Central Command reported that the number of contractor personnel in country grew, peaking at 117,227. As of mid-2016, U.S. Central Command reported that there were 2,485

¹⁹See, for example, General Joseph L. Votel, statement before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives.

²⁰GAO, *Special Operations Forces: Opportunities to Preclude Overuse and Misuse*, GAO/NSIAD-97-85 (Washington, D.C.: May 15, 1997); *Special Operations Forces: Several Human Capital Challenges Must Be Addressed to Meet Expanded Role*, GAO-06-812 (Washington, D.C.: July 31, 2006).

²¹Department of the Air Force, *U.S. Air Force Posture Statement 2013* (Apr. 12, 2013).

DOD contractor personnel in Iraq, as compared with a force management level of 4,087 U.S. troops in Iraq.²² DOD has used contractors as a force multiplier, and with a limited force management level, such as in Iraq, contractors have become an increasingly important factor in operations.

DOD uses contractors to provide a wide variety of services because of force limitations on the number of U.S. military personnel who can be deployed and a lack of required skills. The use of contractors can free up uniformed personnel to conduct combat operations and provide expertise in specialized fields. The services provided by contractors include logistics and maintenance support, base support, operating communications networks, construction, security, translation support, and other management and administrative support.

While contractor support plays a critical role in operations, we have previously reported on DOD's long-standing challenges in overseeing contractors in deployed environments, and the failure to manage contract support effectively could undermine U.S. policy objectives and threaten the safety of U.S. forces. For example, we reported in 2012 that DOD did not always have sufficient contract oversight personnel to manage and oversee its logistics support contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Without an adequate number of trained oversight personnel DOD could not be assured that contractors could meet contract requirements efficiently and effectively.²³ We made four recommendations to improve oversight of operational contract support. DOD concurred with our recommendations and implemented three of them. Since DOD anticipates continued reliance on contractors for future operations, it may face similar challenges related to oversight in current and future operations, such as Operation Inherent Resolve, particularly if force management levels limit the number of military personnel available to conduct such oversight.

In addition to contractors, DOD also relies on personnel on temporary duty (TDY) to augment subordinate unified commands and joint task forces during contingency operations. Joint task forces, such as Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve, are established for a focused and temporary purpose; however if the mission

²²These data are drawn from public information released by U.S. Central Command. We did not independently assess the reliability of these data.

²³GAO, *Operational Contract Support: Management and Oversight Improvements Needed in Afghanistan*, GAO-12-290 (Washington, D.C.: March 29, 2012).

is a continuing requirement, the task force may become a more enduring organization. According to DOD, temporary personnel requirements for short-duration missions should be supported through augmentation, TDY tasking, augmented hiring of civilian personnel, or other temporary personnel solutions. We have previously reported that the combatant commands utilize augmentation to support staff operations during contingencies.²⁴ We have also reported that CENTCOM's service component commands, such as U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, and theater special operations commands rely on temporary personnel to augment their commands.²⁵ We made one recommendation that DOD develop guidance related to costs of overseas operations. DOD partially concurred with our recommendation and it remains open. According to DOD officials, TDY personnel are not counted toward force management level limits. As such, in a constrained-force management level environment, TDY personnel can be used by joint task forces to free up their assigned personnel to meet mission requirements. However, to the extent that force management levels are intended to shape the number of forces deployed to a given country, the use of TDY personnel may not provide a complete picture of U.S. forces engaged in operations.

Chairwoman Hartzler, Ranking Member Speier, and Members of the Subcommittee, this completes my prepared statement. I would be pleased to respond to any questions that you may have at this time.

Contacts and Acknowledgments

If you have any questions about this statement, please contact Cary Russell, Director, Defense Capabilities and Management Team, at (202) 512-5431 or russellc@gao.gov. In addition to the contact named above, James A. Reynolds, Assistant Director; Alissa Czyz; Lori Kmetz; Sean Manzano; Marcus Oliver; Alice Paszel; Michael Shaughnessy; Mike Silver; and Cheryl Weissman made key contributions to this statement.

²⁴GAO, *Defense Headquarters: Geographic Combatant Commands Rely on Subordinate Commands for Mission Management and Execution*, GAO-16-652R (Washington, D.C.: June 30, 2016).

²⁵GAO, *Defense Headquarters: Guidance Needed to Transition U.S. Central Command's Costs to the Base Budget*, GAO-14-440 (Washington, D.C.: June 9, 2014).

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Cary B. Russell
Government Accountability Office

Cary Russell is a Director in the Defense Capabilities and Management Team at the Government Accountability Office (GAO). He is responsible for managing a wide variety of GAO evaluations involving the Department of Defense's (DOD) military operations and programs to support deployed combat forces. Key projects under his leadership have included reviews of DOD's use and roles of advisors in contingency operations, management and oversight of wartime contingency contractors, counter-IED efforts, air mobility capabilities, distribution of supplies and equipment to Iraq and Afghanistan, and testing and fielding of combat uniforms, body armor and other personal protective equipment for U.S. military personnel.

Since joining GAO in 1990, Mr. Russell has served in various assignments in the agency's headquarters and field offices. From 1990 to 1998, he was an evaluator in the Dallas Regional Office, where he worked on a variety of topics, including immigration, science and technology, and military operations. From 1998 through 2007, Mr. Russell was an analyst at GAO's headquarters in Washington, D.C. in the National Security and International Affairs Division and in the Dallas and Atlanta field offices where he led engagements covering a variety of defense issues to include DOD's land mine detection research, Defense Logistics Agency supply support to the military services, base realignment and closure issues, and logistics support for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. From 2007 through 2011, Mr. Russell served as an Assistant Director in the Atlanta field office leading multiple complex engagements in GAO's warfighter support issues area, when he was appointed acting director in 2011 and relocated to GAO's headquarters in 2012.

Mr. Russell graduated from Texas A&M University in 1990. He also holds certificates as a National Security Management Fellow from Syracuse University and for Key Executive Leadership from American University. Mr. Russell is a Certified Public Accountant and a Certified Government Financial Manager.

29 November 2016

**STATEMENT FOR THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT & INVESTIGATIONS
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

I am honored to have been invited to appear before the Subcommittee as the Members address the matter of force management levels, commonly referred to as "troop caps."

In my military experience, force management levels serve a useful function by ensuring that the level of U.S. military commitment remains consistent with the decisions made by the Commander-in-Chief and the Secretary of Defense.

However, it is also my experience that force management levels can have negative effects if applied at the wrong time in the decision-making process and can cause unintended readiness challenges in affected units.

At times, a "troop cap" number may be introduced very early in the planning process. Doing so limits options and, in my opinion, constrains military planners and advisors from offering a full range of military options. Far better, in my view, is for the force management level to be addressed later in the decision-making process.

My concern regarding readiness is that, to stay within force management levels in a particular theater, military commanders "break" units, meaning parts of whole units deploy while other parts remain at home station. In addition to creating an immediate readiness shortcoming, such decisions may have longer-term consequences affecting morale, cohesion, professional development and retention. In some cases, notably Army aviation units, some military capabilities such as unit maintenance have been contracted in order to keep uniformed personnel headcount under the force management level (it is my understanding that, to date, force management levels have applied only to uniformed personnel). Doing so creates numerous problems: 1) we are essentially "paying" twice for the same capability, the uniformed personnel who do not deploy as well as the contractors performing the maintenance function in theater 2) the "stay-behind" military personnel often are unable to sustain their proficiency because the equipment they routinely work on is in the deployed theater and 3) when the unit does reform post-deployment, more extensive training is required to attain the requisite levels of readiness.

I look forward to discussing this important matter with the Members on Thursday, December 1, 2016.



CARTER F. HAM
GENERAL, U.S. ARMY RETIRED

General Carter Ham, USA (Ret.) *President & Chief Executive Officer, Association of the United States Army.*

General Carter Ham is the President and Chief Executive Officer for the Association of the United States Army, a Virginia-based, private non-profit organization with 119 chapters worldwide that acts primarily as an advocacy group for the Army and its soldiers.

General Ham retired from the United States Army in 2013 as the Commander, U.S. Africa Command where he traveled to 42 countries as part the Command's efforts to enhance America's security by establishing and developing partnerships and building the military capacity of African nations. He directed all U.S. military operations in Africa, including leading coalition forces during the Libyan conflict in 2011, hostage rescue operations in Somalia and counter-terrorism operations in several countries.

Prior to leading AFRICOM, General Ham was the commander of all U.S. Army forces in Europe, where he oversaw troops deployed to the Balkans, to Iraq and as part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization mission in Afghanistan. He spent nearly four decades in the Army and is one of a very small number of military leaders who rose from the rank of Private to four-star General.

General Ham served in various capacities both in the field and in the Pentagon. In January 2004, he assumed command of Multinational Brigade (Task Force Olympia) – North in Mosul, Iraq serving there until February 2005. He commanded the First Infantry Division (the Big Red One) and, later, served as the Director of Operations, J3, at the Joint Staff. In retirement, he chaired the Congressionally-mandated National Commission on the Future of the Army.

He is a 1976 Distinguished Military Graduate of John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio. General Ham earned a Masters Degree from the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island. He and his wife, Christi (also a John Carroll graduate and a lifelong educator), have two grown children and three fast-growing grandchildren.

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2014

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None			

30 November 2016

**Statement for the Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations
Committee on Armed Services
United States House of Representatives**

I am honored to have been invited to appear before the Subcommittee as the Members address the matter of force management policies, commonly referred to as “troop caps.”

I would like to make three points as a matter of record:

1. The source of Force Management Policies. Force Management Policies should be the result of a civil-military dialogue which clarifies the strategic aims of the force being used and the size and type of military force necessary to achieve those aims. When Force Management Policies are determined in this way, they can be very useful. When the policies become a substitute for such a dialogue, however, and used as directives derived from artificial reasons independent of the strategic aim being sought, they have negative effects that, in turn, have second and third order negative consequences.
2. The purpose of Force Management Policies. Force Management Policies are not ends-in-themselves. Rather, they are—or should be—means to increase the probability of properly aligning strategic aims being sought in a particular situation with the means allocated. If Force Management Policies become ends-in-themselves, they obstruct this purpose and set the conditions for prolonging the use of force unnecessarily and for long-term erosive effects of military forces.
3. The effects of Force Management Policies.
 - a. The quality of a military force is a dynamic and iterative characteristic. Force Management Policy decisions and actions over time can continually increase the quality of a force. Similarly, decisions and actions over time can have the opposite effect: continually eroding the quality of a force. Readiness, cohesion, leader development, and morale are such iterative characteristics that are affected by policy decisions.
 - b. Military forces are organic wholes. Some parts of the whole can be detached and used separately, at least for a time. Force Management Policy decisions that detach parts of a force, especially over many rotations, affects the whole, and those effects should be part of the civil-military dialogue from which the Force Management Policy decisions are made. Effects of partial unit deployments are not felt by the Combatant Commanders. They are felt by the Service Chiefs, which demonstrates

the necessary inclusion of both Combatant Commanders and Service Chiefs in the Force Management Policy dialogue.

- c. Military forces are an official arm of the government. Contractors often fill the gap in those cases where the actual force-level requirement is greater than what is allowed by Force Management Policy decisions. When the gap is small, contractors may make sense, especially in cases where the host government may be sensitive to the number of in-country U.S. military personnel. When the gap is large, however, using contractors may take on the hue of “outsourcing” foreign policy or military operations or of “masking” the actual requirements not only for a specific mission but also for the overall size of U.S. Armed Forces . Additionally, contractors, which may seem the cheaper alternative in the short-term, are not actually cheaper in the long-term since the government is already paying for the military capability that contractors provide.

I look forward to discussing this important matter with the Members on Thursday, December 1, 2016.

James M. Dubik
Lieutenant General
U.S. Army, Retired

Lieutenant General (Retired) Jim Dubik, PhD retired from the US Army after 37 years of active service. He and his wife Sharon formed “Dubik Associates, LLC,” an international consulting firm. Jim is also a professor at Georgetown’s Security Studies Program, a Senior Fellow at both the Institute for the Study of War and the Institute of Land Warfare, the Chairman of the Board of the National Leadership Roundtable for Church Management, and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. His latest book is entitled, *Just War Reconsidered: Strategy, Ethics, and Theory*. He writes regularly for *Army* magazine. He has published over 150 essays in a variety of publications. His latest Institute of Land Warfare paper, “Lessons from Lincoln: On Being a War President,” as well as his monthly articles are available at www.ausa.org. His Institute for the Study of war papers on indigenous security forces—“Creating Police and Law Enforcement Systems,” “Accelerating Combat Power in Afghanistan,” and “Building Security Forces and Ministerial Capacity: Iraq as a Primer,” as well as “The U.S. In Iraq Beyond 2011”—are available at www.understandingwar.org.

Jim entered the Army in 1971, going first to the 82D Airborne Division, then two Ranger Battalions. He commanded a battalion in the 25th Infantry Division, a brigade in the 10th Mountain Division, the 25th Infantry Division, and the 1st US Corps. As a brigade commander, he led US and Multinational Forces in Northern Haiti in 1994-95. In 1999, he was Deputy Commanding General of Task Force Eagle and Multinational Division North, Bosnia-Herzegovina. He stood up the Army’s first Stryker Brigade Combat Team and developed the training and learning methodologies for these formations. He also led experiments on future warfare concepts for the Department of Defense.

Jim’s last job on active duty was as the Commanding General of the Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq and the NATO Training Mission-Iraq; he relinquished command in Baghdad on 3 July 2008. There he led the accelerated growth—in size, capability, and confidence—of all Iraqi Security Forces, military and police, and improved the capabilities of Iraq’s Ministries of Defense and Interior as well as the Joint Headquarters. The men and women of his command—representing all of the US services and 15 nations as well as civilian governmental employees and contractors—contributed to improving political and security situation in Iraq in 2007 and 2008.

Jim completed an MIT fellowship program for national security studies as well as executive programs in national security at Harvard’s JFK School of Government and Syracuse University’s Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. He holds a BA in Philosophy from Gannon University, a Military Arts and Sciences from the Army Command and General Staff College, and a Doctorate in Philosophy from the Johns Hopkins University. He’s also graduated from the Marine Corps’ Amphibious Warfare School, Army Command and General Staff College, and the Advanced Operational Studies Fellowship Program, U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies. He taught Philosophy at the US Military Academy, West Point, and Military Arts and Science at the US Army School of Advanced Military Studies. He was also the 2012-13 Omar Bradley Chair for Strategic Leadership co-sponsored by Dickinson College, Penn State Law School, and the Army War College.

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Witness name: James M. Dubik

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