

# THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

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## HEARING

BEFORE THE

## COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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FEBRUARY 4, 2016

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## THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2016

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,  
*Washington, DC.*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:02 a.m. in Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator John McCain (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators McCain, Ayotte, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Sullivan, Lee, Graham, Reed, McCaskill, Manchin, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Donnelly, Hirono, King, and Heinrich.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN, CHAIRMAN**

Chairman MCCAIN. Well, good morning. The Senate Armed Services Committee meets this morning to receive testimony on the situation in Afghanistan.

I'm pleased to welcome General John Campbell before this committee one more time.

General, this committee is grateful to you for your many years of distinguished service and your leadership of the United States and allied forces in Afghanistan at a critical time. We know the many sacrifices you and your family have made. We are proud of the work you have done. We hope to benefit from your abilities and experience after your service in the Army is complete. You have a great deal still to offer our Nation and its security.

General Campbell, you have presided over important progress in improving the capability and capacity of the Afghan military. You've developed a strong and productive relationship with the Afghan Unity Government. When you saw that our hard-won gains were in danger, you spoke up for what was right, that further troop withdrawals should be based on conditions on the ground. Your successor will profit greatly from your leadership and your record of service.

In 2001, United States forces went to Afghanistan because that was where, under the sanctuary of the Taliban regime, al Qaeda planned and trained for the September 11th attacks that killed 3,000 innocent civilians on American soil. Our mission was to ensure that Afghanistan would never again be a safe haven for al Qaeda or other terrorist groups to attack the United States or our allies and partners. That mission has been successful for 14 years, but it's far from over. United States forces are carrying out the mission today by performing two critical tasks: counterterrorism and training, advising, and assisting our Afghan partners. Both of

these tasks are vital to achieving our strategic goals and protecting our Homeland. We're taking the fight to America's enemies in Afghanistan while at the same time building a—sustainable Afghan Security Forces that can stand on its own, take on violent extremists, and deny terrorists safe haven in their country.

I fear that the latest calendar-based withdrawal plan places these missions, and therefore our Nation's security, at risk. While President Obama made the right decision to keep 9,800 United States troops in Afghanistan, he repeated again the strategic folly of setting a timetable for withdrawal that ignores conditions on the ground, discourages our friends, and gives hope to our enemies. I continue to be disheartened by the perpetual political focus on troop numbers. This decision should be, first, about what capabilities we need to protect our national security and, second, about the number of troops it takes to enable those capabilities. The 5,500 United States troops that will be left in Afghanistan if this plan goes forward be—will not be adequate—will be adequate for either the counterterrorism mission or the train, advise, and consent mission, but not both. This smaller American force will inevitably be forced to shoulder a higher level of risk to themselves, to their mission, and to the national security of the United States.

The risk to American forces only grows worse as the terrorist threat in Afghanistan intensifies. The Taliban, al Qaeda, and the Haqqani Network continue to threaten our interests in Afghanistan and beyond. Now ISIL has arrived on the battlefield, raising the specter of yet another ISIL safe haven from which it can plan and execute attacks. This complex and expanding terrorist threat is a test both for us as well as the Afghan military, which must still develop key enabling capabilities, including intelligence, logistics, special forces, airlift, and close air support.

In short, as General Campbell said in his prepared statement, "Afghan has not achieved an enduring level of security and stability that justifies a reduction of our support in 2016." As a result, the conditions on the ground simply do not warrant a further withdrawal of U.S. forces. By now, we should have learned, from the precipitous withdrawal from Iraq and the disaster that ensued, that wars do not end just because politicians say so.

Many of us are also increasingly concerned that our rules of engagement, as dictated by the authorities the President gives to our commanders on the ground, are making our mission more difficult and increasing the risk to our troops. For example, it is stunning that, up until just a few weeks ago, we had to wait for ISIL to attack or threaten our forces in Afghanistan before taking action. General Campbell has talked about the importance of making the fight against violent extremists like al Qaeda and ISIL an away game. I fear that restrictive authorities dictated by a White House overly involved in battlefield tactical decision is inviting a home game, as we saw in Paris and San Bernardino.

To secure Afghanistan and prevent another attack on our Homeland requires the right capabilities in the right places, supported by the right number of people with the right authorities. It's time to give our commanders the resources and authorities they need to seize the initiative and force the enemy to react instead of the other way around.

The world walked away from Afghanistan once before, and it descended into chaos that contributed to the worst terrorist attack ever against our Homeland. We cannot afford to repeat that mistake, because the threats we face are real and the stakes are high for the lives of the Afghan people, for the stability of the region, and for the national security of the United States. President Obama has the opportunity to make decisions now that will empower his successor to do what is necessary to confront the challenges we will face in Afghanistan in 2017 and beyond. I hope he will seize that opportunity.

General Campbell, after your 18 months on the ground in Afghanistan, almost 37 years of distinguished service in the Army, this committee looks forward to hearing what you believe the United States, our coalition partners, and our Afghan friends need to do differently to put 2016 on a better course than 2015.

Senator Reed.

#### **STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED**

Senator REED. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Let me join you in welcoming General Campbell and thanking him and saluting him for his extraordinary service to the Nation and to the Army. I—for the past 18 months, you have led with distinction in Afghanistan. You've seen a significant transition during that period of time. Your leadership has been critical to the successes we've seen there and to the situation we now enjoy.

I look forward to continuing our relationship, but I know you're contemplating retirement, and I want to thank you for your service, and also thank your family, who has served so well and so faithfully with you. So, thank you very much, sir.

I—President Obama announced, on October 15th, 2015, that U.S. troop levels will remain at 9,800 personnel for most of 2016, but with a planned reduction to 5,500 personnel by January 1st, 2017. Our forces, in conjunction with NATO and other allies, continue to have two missions: train, assist, and advise the Afghan National Security Forces, or ANSF, and conduct counterterrorism operations. Key to enabling both missions, the President also announced in October that our troops would remain at a small number of bases, including Bagram, Jalalabad in the east, and Kandahar in the south, rather than falling back to a Kabul-centric footprint. This adequately staffed and geographically dispersed approach has allowed us to support our missions in Afghanistan and encourage political and governmental reforms by President Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah. It is also signals to our allies of our resolve and the need for their continued commitment.

The ANSF recently completed their first calendar year bearing sole responsibility for the security of Afghanistan, albeit with significant enabling support from the coalition. The past year presented the ANSF with an array of challenges, but they maintained their overall operational coherence, despite a notable shift in Taliban operations from seasonal fighting to a continuously sustained effort. In addition, the emergence of the Islamic State in the Khorasan Province, or ISKP, and the continuing and, indeed, increased threat of al Qaeda elements within Afghanistan. General Campbell, I look forward to your assessment of the performance of

the ANSF over the past year, and plans for addressing remaining capability shortfalls.

Given the dynamic security environment in Afghanistan, it is important that we continually evaluate the assumptions underlying our force posture in Afghanistan. As Lieutenant General Nicholson stated last week: If confirmed, he intends to take the first few months of this command to assess what capabilities and associated number of troops he believes we will need to remain in Afghanistan in order to successfully carry out the train-advise-and-assist and counterterror missions. I believe that additional troop withdrawals in Afghanistan should be conditions-based, and that any recommendations resulting from Lieutenant General Nicholson's assessment should be given extraordinary weight.

General Campbell, I hope you will share with the committee your views on the number of the troops and pace of withdrawal you would recommend for 2016, and whether events of the past year have illuminated ways in which we can better enable security operations by the Afghans.

Lastly, as we look forward to the 2016 NATO Warsaw Summit in July, it will be important for the National Unity Government, led by President Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah, to demonstrate progress on anticorruption and other governance initiatives to give the international community confidence that its assistance is being effectively utilized. Continued international support is going to be very important over the next few years.

General Campbell, I would also welcome your assessment of progress on these issues and how your command is assisting the Afghans in providing accountability for support provided to the Afghan Security Forces Fund and other sources.

2016 is going to be a critical year of transition for Afghanistan, and decisions by the United States and our coalition partners over the next few months could significantly impact the trajectory of the country. I believe steady, predictable U.S. presence and assistance is necessary for continued success.

General Campbell, again, thank you for your service.

Thank you, sir.

Chairman MCCAIN. General Campbell, welcome.

**STATEMENT OF GENERAL JOHN F. CAMPBELL, USA; COMMANDER, RESOLUTE SUPPORT; COMMANDER, UNITED STATES FORCES-AFGHANISTAN**

General CAMPBELL. Good morning, Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, and other distinguished members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today while representing all the servicemen and -women of the United States Forces-Afghanistan. I've been honored to lead and represent all of them and what they do, here, for the last 18 months. It's truly been a privilege and an honor to do so.

I'd like to begin by thanking the committee again for your steadfast support our soldiers, sailors, airmans, and marines, and our civilians. Due to your leadership and commitment, they continue to be the best trained and equipped force that our Nation has ever deployed. The remarkable performance bears true testimony to your backing and the backing of the American people.



I'd also like to recognize the unsung heroes of our Nation, and that is our military families. They've stood by us for 14 to 15 years of conflict. They endure the hardships of frequent absences, and they allow us to focus on our mission. Without their love and support, we could not succeed. So, we thank them for their continued support.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge and honor the over 2200 servicemen and -women who have died in Afghanistan since 2001, and the over 20,000 who have been wounded. Tragically, we recently lost six U.S. airmen to a motorcycle-borne IED attack just before Christmas and a Special Forces advisor just after the New Year. These losses remind us that Afghanistan continues to be a very dangerous place. While we take every measure to reduce force-protection threats, our servicemembers, our civilians, and our coalition partners remain in harm's way. We also remember the fallen of the Afghan Security Forces and the loved ones that they've left behind. They now bear the brunt of this conflict as they fight to bring peace and security to Afghanistan. Every day, we honor their memories by assisting our Afghan partners as they fight to improve security and, by extension, help us protect our own Homeland.

The men and women I serve with have not forgotten why we are in Afghanistan, and we remain there to ensure that another terrorist attack originating from Afghanistan and directed at the—against the United States Homeland will never, ever happen again. That is why the counterterrorism mission remains critical to our mutual security interests. Yet, we recognize the importance of our train-advise-and-assist mission as we build a sustainable Afghan Security Force capable of standing alone in its mission of countering violent extremists and denying terrorists safe haven. This is a shared vital interest among Afghanistan, United States, and the international community. Those who serve in this mission understand that Afghanistan is worth our investment. It is their commitment that keeps us focused on our vision for a stable and secure Afghanistan. Together, the train-advise-and-assist efforts, coupled with our counterterrorism mission, underpin our overall mission.

Just 4 months have passed since I last appeared before this committee. Even in that short time, there have been many developments in the security situation, the progress of the Afghan Government and its security forces, our coalition's commitments, and, of course, the U.S. way ahead in 2016 and beyond. Today, I will speak to these developments and answer questions you may have on the state of our efforts and the overall situation in Afghanistan. Specifically, I'd like to address the lessons we learned from this last year, how we intend to ensure that 2016 is different from 2015, and how we see 2017 and beyond.

To assess these questions, we must ask ourselves, What else can we do to enable the Afghan Security Forces, and what else can the Afghans do for themselves to secure their country? 2015 was fundamentally different than previous years of our campaign. It is important to remember this in context as we assess our efforts in Afghanistan:

First, Afghanistan's Government and security forces have managed multiple transitions in 2015.

Second, the U.S. and coalition mission and force structure have significantly changed.

Third, changing regional dynamics, including evolving threats, have presented both challenges and opportunities for our success.

As I travel around Afghanistan, I recognize the changes and the progress made over the years of this mission. This is my third deployment to Afghanistan over the last 14 years, and I have served as senior commander for the last 18 months. I am ever mindful of how far we've come, but I remain clear-eyed about the challenges that lie ahead.

Now more than ever, the United States should not waiver on Afghanistan. The crucial investment we are making provides dividends that achieve our strategic goals, secure our Homeland, and position us well in a region—a region that's been a source of terrorism and instability for decades.

Many of you have heard me say that for every bad-news story we hear coming out of Afghanistan, there are ten good-news stories we don't. While this is to be expected, I think it tints our view of our progress and prospects for success in Afghanistan. It is my intent to provide a balanced assessment that not only exposes the challenges that lie ahead, but also illustrates our gains in the Afghan progress.

With that in mind, I would like to address the concerns over what many feel is an overall declining security situation in Afghanistan. The situation is more dynamic than a simple yes-or-no answer—that a simple yes-or-no answer would adequately address. In fact, as of last week, the units we have on the ground throughout the country report that, of the 407 district centers, eight of them, or 2 percent, are under insurgent control. We assess that another 18, or 4 percent, are under what we call “insurgent influence.” Often, these district centers are in remote and sparsely populated areas that security forces are not able to access very often in force. Additionally, at any given time, there may be up to 94 district centers, around 23 percent, that we view as at risk.

These figures make two clear points. Number one, that approximately 70 percent of the inhabited parts of Afghanistan are either under government influence or government control. Two, the importance of prioritizing Afghan resources to ensure key district centers do not fall into insurgent influence or control.

Over the last 8 years, the Afghan Security Forces have made advancements, beginning as an unorganized collection of militia and developing into a modern security force with many of the systems and processes of an advanced military. They have proven resilient and continue to make significant strides in only the second year in which Afghan forces assumed the lead for security throughout Afghanistan.

They have demonstrated the ability to successfully conduct effective large-scale multi-pillar clearing operations across the country, including in Helmand, Ghazni, and Nangarhar. Following insurgent offenses, the Afghan Security Forces were able to retake key territory, as they did in Kunduz, with strong performances from all the security pillars. Simultaneously, while the tactical units were conducting these operations, the security institutions had to continue developing the force. This includes many complex tasks, such

as budgeting, force generation, personnel management, national-level maintenance, logistics, and procurement. These are areas that challenge even the most advanced militaries in the world. I like to say what we have accomplished there is akin to building an airplane while in flight. While these systems are far from perfect, the foundation has been laid, and we continue to advise and assist the Afghans as they build a sustainable security force that is enduring and capable of standing on its own.

With the Afghans in the lead for security for the first time in 2015, the enemy and the naysayers predicted collapse of the Afghan Security Forces and the Afghan Government. They sought to capitalize on this. Instead, the Afghan Security Forces fought for the very survival of their country, and held firm. They did not fracture, and they kept the insurgents from achieving their strategic goals while inflicting higher casualties on the enemies. They did this while maintaining a significantly higher operational tempo with significantly reduced coalition support.

However, the lessons learned in 2015 underscore the Afghan shortfalls will persist beyond 2016. Capability gaps still exist in the fixed and rotary wing aviation, combined arms operations, intelligence collection, dissemination, and maintenance. More prominently, one of the greatest tactical challenges for the Afghan Security Forces has been the over—has been overcoming the Afghan air force's extremely limited organic close-air support capability. Admittedly, we began building the Afghan air force late and were constrained by the time it takes to build human capital.

Those capability gaps notwithstanding, I still assess that at least 70 percent of the problems facing Afghan Security Forces result from poor leadership. Minister of Defense Stanekzai recognizes this. To date, Afghan National Army has replaced 92 general officers, including the 215th Corps commander in Helmand. The MOI is lagging behind in making leadership changes, but we're taking steps to remedy this through our train-advise-and-assist mission. This kind of change takes time.

I have seen that the consequences of Kunduz and Helmand still weigh heavily on the leadership of both the security forces and the Afghan Government. They realize that, although not strategically significant in the pure military sense, those incidents shaped media coverage and undermine the confidence in the Government. Their desire to do better runs deep and is genuine. In many ways, these events forced a greater sense of urgency to make the changes they greatly require.

Over the last year, there have been many positive trends. However, Afghan Security Forces have not consolidated significant gains of their own, nor defeated the insurgency across Afghanistan. Suffice it to say, the performance this year was uneven. To be fair, this was not unexpected, given the overall conditions.

Ultimately, Afghanistan has not achieved an enduring level of security and stability that justifies a reduction in our support in 2016. That is why the President's decision to maintain current force levels through most of 2016 was welcome and important. This decision set the example for NATO, encouraging other allies and partner nations to maintain or, in some cases, increase their contributions to the Resolute Support Mission.

During this winter lull, we are focusing on steps that best prepare the Afghan Security Forces for the summer campaign of 2016. Their leadership shares this focus, and they are dedicated to resetting the force, implementing reforms to improve training, equipping, and rebuilding of units that have endured unusually high operational tempo for long periods of time, especially those forces in Helmand. Such reforms are critical and are taking root with the Afghan Security Forces, but broader reforms remain important to success in Afghanistan.

The Afghan Government, including its security institutions, continues to show progress in battling corruption and achieving other reforms, such as gender integration. However, much work still needs to be done. We fully understand that many want to see more progress on social and human rights issues before continuing to commit resources to Afghanistan. The National Unity Government also recognizes this and has welcomed our increased use of conditionality to usher change. They understand the importance of stability, opportunity, and hope. They understand the importance that keeping the donor nations engaged, and they understand that hope inspires people to stay in Afghanistan instead of seeking opportunity elsewhere.

Afghanistan is at an inflection point, and I believe if we do not make deliberate, measured adjustments, 2016 is at risk of being no better, and possibly worse, than 2015. To place this into context, I would like to emphasize the uniqueness of 2015 and some dynamics I think we should soberly consider as we assess our way forward.

The enemy has also changed this year. Unlike previous year, the Taliban extended the fighting season and has continued to conduct operations in Helmand, as called for by the Taliban leadership. Even so, the Taliban recognized that they have no lasting gains to consolidate from last year and can afford to cede—and cannot afford to cede the limited ground they do hold. They are also coming out of the year that saw fracturing of their organization, competition from other insurgent groups, resulting in loss of legitimacy and high casualty rates, probably their highest casualty rates in years.

As I meet with Afghan soldiers and police, I remind them that the Taliban are not 10 feet tall and bulletproof. They face significant challenges, and they can be defeated. The fact is often forgotten in prominent media reports. The brief notoriety that the Taliban gained in Kunduz and Helmand is still overshadowed by the significant cost of those efforts, compounded by the loss of credibility and unity as the enemy infighting continues.

The Taliban's public narrative in Afghanistan is waning, too. It is not lost on the people of Afghanistan that the Taliban are killing Afghans, security forces and innocent civilians alike. Recent public information campaigns have also been more forceful, stressing to the public that, "The Taliban have no plan for the development of Afghanistan. The Taliban are here to kill you. The Taliban are against women. The Taliban are against education. The Taliban are against progress for the nation of Afghanistan." As these messages resonate, the government must show that it is the only viable option for Afghanistan. At the city, district, provincial, and national

levels, the people of Afghanistan see that the return of the Taliban represents a return to brutality, criminality, and oppression.

The operating environment is also evolving for the Taliban due to the emergence of other insurgent groups and terrorist groups. One such group is Daesh in Afghanistan or the Islamic State Khorasan Province, ISKP. Daesh continues to conduct brutal attacks against civilians, and directly competes with the Taliban for resources to establish a foothold in the country. They have focused their efforts on establishing a presence in Nangahar and recruiting in other areas. We recently gained the authority to strike Daesh. Since then, we have had considerable success in degrading their capabilities. The rejection of Daesh by local elders who are working with the Afghan Security Forces has also slowed the enemy's progress. The strikes have been effective in mitigating their growth. We must maintain constant pressure on Daesh and dedicate intelligence resources to prevent strategic surprise.

The Taliban has had to adjust to this year's strategy in order to counter the emergence of Daesh and the other insurgent groups. This dynamic has served as a distraction to the Taliban, requiring them to shift precious resources from fighting the Afghan Security Forces to countering opposition groups. More than just consuming resources, the infighting and resultant inability to maintain cohesion has also severely damaged the credibility of the Taliban's core narrative of being a strong, united organization.

Groups aligned with the Taliban, such as al Qaeda and the Haqqani Network, continue to threaten our national security interests. Al-Qaeda has been significantly weakened, but, as evidenced by a recent discovery in an al Qaeda camp on Afghanistan's southern border, they are certainly not extinct. Haqqani Network remains the most capable threat to the United States and coalition forces, planning and executing the most violent high-profile attacks in Kabul. These are certainly not residual threats that would allow for a peaceful transition across Afghanistan. Instead, they are persistent threats that are adapting to changing operational environment. Ultimately, the threats Afghanistan faces require our sustained attention and forward presence.

Reconciliation is a path needed to obtain a negotiated settlement and end the conflict in Afghanistan. Current reconciliation efforts are an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned initiative. Recently renewed quadrilateral meeting in mid-January included Afghanistan, Pakistan, United States, and China.

It's been over a year since the formation of the National Unity Government. It has faced institutional and political difficulties, yet can lay claim to some meaningful reform and progress during its first year. The Unity Government may be fragile, but it is holding, despite being challenged, and it's making continuous progress and building momentum to create an increasingly viable future.

Politically, Afghanistan is postured for both progress and continued strategic partnership with the United States. We have a strong and willing partner—partners in President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah, and this has not always been the case.

So, as I said at the beginning of this statement, we now ask ourselves, What else can we do to enable the Afghan Security Forces, and what else can the Afghans do for themselves to secure their

country? A strategic stalemate without end is not the goal of this campaign, nor is it true to the reason we came here over 14 years ago. In fact, recently submitted NATO strategic assessment makes recommendations for adjustments to the current NATO Op Plan that, in my best military advice, will help push the campaign past this inflection point and increase the prospect of achieving our shared goals. Measures that NATO is considering include advisory adjustments to give commanders more flexibility on the ground and shifting from a yearly outlook to a 5-year vision to give all donor nations, and especially Afghanistan, the confidence that comes with predictability of support.

The United States must continue to show flexibility with our mission in 2016 and beyond. As the commander, I am responsible for aligning our national objectives with ways and means while managing risk. Now that we have been allocated our resources for 2016, I'm assessing the ways in which we assure that 2016 is not a rerun of 2015. Based on conditions and the performance of the Afghan Security Forces during this winter lull, I am also reviewing how well those forces will likely perform in 2017 and the U.S. and coalition resources required for their continued development. This is all part of a broader process in which my assessment is only one part. I will provide my assessments of our strategy to my military leadership as well as my successor, Mick Nicholson.

I think it is important to remember that this time last year, our plan was to transition to 1,000 troops, Kabul-centric footprint. Due to conditions on the ground, the President made the decision to extend 9,800 through most of 2016 and increased our posture to 5,500 in 2017. This decision proved flexibility to make adjustments and represents the kind of conditions-based approach that is so important for our mission in Afghanistan.

Key to this long-term success in the region is the resiliency of the Afghan Government and its security institutions and the ability to serve as a regional partner in our combined efforts to counter violent extremism. It's important to remember that the National Unity Government welcomes our assistance. They are a dependable and steadfast counterterrorism partner in South Asia.

2017 marks a significant change in our approach as we focus our efforts to capitalize on the gains of the past decade and build the capacity of the Afghan security institutions. We now have a window of opportunity to increase our likelihood of achieving strategic success. Of course, our support should not be seen as open-ended, and I believe our approach is sound. This year, we applied greater conditionality to the Afghans in managing the resources we give them. We're also developing a 5-year vision out to 2020 to help better define what we are trying to accomplish and avoid a year-to-year mentality. I believe that by changing our and the Afghan's mindset from a cyclic fighting-season-to-fighting-season view to a genuine long-term outlook that best reflects our commitment, we need to provide the Afghans the time and space for them to continue to build their resiliency. Through their spirit and fortitude, they have proven worthy of our continued support. The actions we take now, combined with their resolve to improve, will, over time, develop a sustainable force capable of securing the nation and, in turn, help us secure ours.

Lieutenant General Mick Nicholson is a good friend of mine. He appeared before this committee last week. I'd urge you to confirm him. He is the best-qualified candidate. If I had to pick one man, I would pick Mick Nicholson to replace me. He will do great in Afghanistan.

Thank you again for your steadfast support of our campaign. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Campbell follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY GENERAL JOHN F. CAMPBELL

- Good morning Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, and other distinguished members of this committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today while representing the servicemen and women of United States Forces-Afghanistan. I've been honored to lead and represent them and all that they do for nearly 18 months. It has truly been a privilege to do so.
- I'd like to begin by thanking this committee for your steadfast support of our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and civilians. Due to your leadership and commitment, they continue to be the best trained and equipped force our nation has ever deployed. Their remarkable performance bears testimony to your backing, and the backing of the American people.
- I'd also like to recognize the unsung heroes of our nation: our military families. They have stood by us for the last 14 years of conflict. They endure the hardships of our frequent absences, and allow us to focus on our mission. Without their love and support, we couldn't succeed. We thank them for their continued support.
- Finally, I'd like to acknowledge and honor the over 2,200 servicemen and women who have died in Afghanistan since 2001, and the over 20,000 who've been wounded. Tragically, we recently lost six US Airmen to a motorcycle-borne IED attack just before Christmas, and a Special Forces advisor just after the New Year. These losses remind us that Afghanistan remains a dangerous place, and while we take every measure to reduce force protection threats, our service members, civilians, and coalition partners remain in harm's way.
- We also remember the fallen of the Afghan security forces and the loved ones they've left behind. They now bear the brunt of this conflict as they fight to bring peace and security to Afghanistan. Every day, we honor their memories by assisting our Afghan partners as they fight to improve security, and by extension help us to protect our own Homeland.
- The men and women I serve with have not forgotten why we are in Afghanistan. We remain there to ensure that another terrorist attack—originating from Afghanistan and directed against the United States Homeland—will never happen again. That is why the counterterrorism mission remains critical to our mutual security interests. Yet we recognize the importance of our train, advise, and assist mission as we build a sustainable Afghan security force capable of standing alone in its mission of countering violent extremism and denying terrorist safe-haven. This is a shared vital interest among Afghanistan, the United States, and the international community. Those who serve in this mission understand that Afghanistan is worth our investment. It is their commitment that keeps us focused on our vision for a stable and secure Afghanistan. Together, the train, advise, assist efforts coupled with our counterterrorism mission underpin our overall mission.
- Just four months have passed since I last appeared before this committee. Even in that short time, there have been many developments in the security situation, the progress of the Afghan Government and its security forces, our coalition's commitments, and of course, the US way ahead in 2016 and beyond. Today, I will speak to these developments and answer questions you may have on the state of our efforts and the overall situation in Afghanistan.
- Specifically, I'd like to address the lessons we learned from last year, how we intend to ensure that 2016 is different from 2015, and how we see 2017 and beyond. To assess these questions, we must ask ourselves: "what else can we do to enable the Afghan Security Forces?" "What else can the Afghans do for themselves to secure their country?"
- 2015 was fundamentally different than previous years of our campaign. It is important to remember this context as we assess our efforts in Afghanistan. First, Afghanistan's Government and security forces have managed multiple transitions in 2015. Second, the US and coalition mission and force structure have

significantly changed. Third, changing regional dynamics, including evolving threats, have presented both challenges and opportunities for our success.

- As I travel around Afghanistan, I recognize the changes and the progress made over the years of this mission. This is my third deployment to Afghanistan over the span of the last 14 years, and I have served as the senior commander there for the last 18 months. I am ever mindful of how far we've come, but remain clear-eyed about the challenges that lie ahead. Now more than ever, the United States should not waiver on Afghanistan. The crucial investment we are making provides dividends that achieve our strategic goals, secure our Homeland, and position us well in the region—a region that has been a source of terrorism and instability for decades.
- Many of you have heard me say that for every bad news story we hear coming out of Afghanistan, there are ten good news stories we don't. While this is to be expected, I think it tints the view of our progress and prospects for success in Afghanistan. It is my intent to provide a balanced assessment that not only exposes the challenges that lie ahead, but also illustrates our gains and Afghan progress.
- With that in mind, I would like to address the concerns over what many feel is an overall declining security situation in Afghanistan. The situation is more dynamic than a simple yes or no answer would adequately address. In fact, as of last week, the units we have on the ground throughout the country report that of the 407 district centers, 8 (or 2%) are under insurgent control. We assess that another 18 (or 4%) are under what we call insurgent influence. Often, these district centers are in remote and sparsely populated areas that security forces are not able to access very often in force. Additionally, at any given time there may be up to 94 district centers (around 23%) that we view as "at risk." These figures make two clear points: 1) that approximately 70% of the inhabited parts of Afghanistan are either under government influence or government control; and 2) the importance of prioritizing Afghan resources to ensure key district centers do not fall into insurgent influence or control.
- Over the last eight years the Afghan security forces have made advancements, beginning as an unorganized collection of militia and developing into a modern security force with many of the systems and processes of an advanced military. They have proven resilient and continued to make significant strides in only the second year in which Afghan forces assumed the lead for security throughout Afghanistan. They have demonstrated the ability to successfully conduct effective, large-scale, multi-pillar clearing operations across the country, including in Helmand, Ghazni, and Nangarhar. Following insurgent offensives, the Afghan security forces were able to re-take key territory—as they did in Kunduz—with strong performances from all security pillars.
- Simultaneously, while the tactical units were conducting these operations, the security institutions had to continue developing the force. This includes many complex tasks such as budgeting, force generation, personnel management, and national level maintenance, logistics and procurement. These are areas that challenge even the most advanced militaries in the world. I like to say that what we have accomplished here is akin to "building an airplane while in flight." While these systems are far from perfect, the foundation has been laid and we continue to advise and assist the Afghans as they build a sustainable security force that is enduring and capable of standing on its own.
- With Afghans in the lead for security for the first time in 2015, the enemy and the naysayers predicted the collapse of the Afghan security forces and the Afghan Government. They sought to capitalize on it. Instead, the Afghan security forces fought for the very survival of their country and held firm, they did not fracture, and kept the insurgents from achieving their strategic goals, while inflicting higher casualties on the enemy. They did this while maintaining a significantly higher operational tempo with significantly reduced Coalition support.
- However, the lessons learned in 2015 underscore that Afghan shortfalls will persist well beyond 2016. Capability gaps still exist in fixed and rotary-wing aviation, combined arms operations, intelligence collection and dissemination, and maintenance. More prominently, one of the greatest tactical challenges for the Afghan security forces has been overcoming the Afghan Air Force's extremely limited organic close air support capability. Admittedly, we began building the Afghan Air Force late and are constrained by the time it takes to build human capital.
- Those capability gaps notwithstanding, I still assess that at least 70% of the problems facing the Afghan Security forces result from poor leadership. Minister of Defense Stanekzai recognizes this. To date, the Afghan National Army has replaced 92 general officers, including the 215th Corps commander in



Helmand. The MoI is lagging behind in making leadership changes, but we are taking steps to remedy this through our train, advise, and assist mission. This kind of change takes time.

- I have seen that the consequences of Kunduz and Helmand still weigh heavily on the leadership of both the security forces and the Afghan Government. They realize that, although not strategically significant in a pure military sense, those incidents shaped media coverage and undermined confidence in the government. Their desire to do better runs deep and is genuine. In many ways, these events forced a greater sense of urgency to make the changes they greatly require.
- Over the last year, there have been many positive trends. However, Afghan security forces have not consolidated significant gains of their own, nor defeating the insurgency across Afghanistan. Suffice it to say, their performance this year was uneven. To be fair, this was not unexpected, given the overall conditions.
- Ultimately, Afghanistan has not achieved an enduring level of security and stability that justifies a reduction in our support in 2016. That is why the President's decision to maintain current force levels through most of 2016 was welcome and important. This decision set the example for NATO, encouraging other Allies and partner nations to maintain, or in some cases increase, their contributions to the Resolute Support mission.
- During this winter lull, we are focusing on steps to best prepare the ANDSF for summer campaign of 2016. The leadership of the Afghan security forces share this focus and they are dedicated to resetting the force, by implementing reforms to improve training, equipping, and rebuilding of units that have endured unusually high operational tempos for long periods of time, especially those forces in Helmand. Such reforms are critical and are taking root with the Afghan security forces, but broader reforms remain important to success in Afghanistan.
- The Afghan Government, including its security institutions, continues to show progress in battling corruption, and achieving other reforms such as gender integration. However, much work still needs to be done. We fully understand that many want to see more progress on social and human rights issues before continuing to commit resources to Afghanistan. The National Unity Government also recognizes this and has welcomed our increased use of conditionality to usher change. They understand the importance of stability, opportunity and hope—the hope that inspires people to stay in Afghanistan instead of seeking opportunity elsewhere.
- *Afghanistan is at an inflection point.* I believe if we do not make deliberate, measured adjustments, 2016 is at risk of being no better, and possibly worse, than 2015. To place this in context, I would like to emphasize the uniqueness of 2015 and some dynamics I think we should soberly consider as we assess our way forward.
- The enemy has also changed this year. Unlike previous years, the Taliban extended the fighting season, and has continued to conduct operations in Helmand, as called for by Taliban leadership. Even so, the Taliban recognize they have no lasting gains to consolidate from last year, and cannot afford to cede the limited ground that they do hold. They are also coming out of a year that saw fracturing of their organization, loss of legitimacy, competition from other insurgent groups, and high casualty rates—probably their highest in years.
- As I meet with Afghan soldiers and police, I remind them that the Taliban are not 10 feet tall and bullet proof. They face significant challenges and they can be defeated. This fact is often forgotten in prominent media reports. The brief notoriety the Taliban gained in Kunduz and Helmand is still overshadowed by the significant cost of those efforts, which is compounded by the loss of credibility and unity as enemy infighting continues.
- The Taliban's public narrative in Afghanistan is waning too. It is not lost on the people of Afghanistan that the Taliban are killing Afghans—security forces and innocent civilians alike. Recent public information campaigns have also been more forceful, stressing to the public that the Taliban, "... have no plan for the development of Afghanistan; they are here to kill you; they are against women; they are against education; they are against progress for the nation of Afghanistan." As these messages resonate, the government must show that it is the only viable option for Afghanistan. At the city, district, provincial, and national levels, the people of Afghanistan see that the return of the Taliban represents a return to brutality, criminality, and oppression.
- The operating environment is also evolving for the Taliban due to the emergence of other insurgent and terrorist groups. One such group is Daesh in Af-

ghanistan, or Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-KP). Daesh continues to conduct brutal attacks against civilians, and directly competes with the Taliban for resources to establish a foothold in the country. They have focused their efforts on establishing a presence in Nangarhar and recruiting in other areas. We recently gained the authority to strike Daesh. Since then, we have had considerable success in degrading their capabilities. The rejection of Daesh by local elders, who are working with Afghan security forces, has also slowed the enemy's progress. The strikes have been effective in mitigating their growth. We must maintain constant pressure on Daesh and dedicate intelligence resources to prevent strategic surprise.

- The Taliban has had to adjust this year's strategy in order to counter the emergence of Daesh and other insurgent groups. This dynamic has served as a distraction to the Taliban, resulting in a shift of precious resources from fighting the ANDSF to countering opposition groups. More than just consuming resources, the in-fighting, and resultant inability to maintain cohesion has also severely damaged the credibility of the Taliban's core narrative of being a strong, united organization.
- Groups aligned with the Taliban such as al Qaeda and the Haqqani Network continue to threaten our national security interests. Al Qaeda has been significantly weakened, but as evidenced by the recent discovery of an al Qaeda camp on Afghanistan's southern border, they are certainly not extinct. The Haqqani Network remains the most capable threat to US and Coalition forces, planning and executing the most violent high profile attacks in Kabul.
- These are certainly not "residual threats" that would allow for peaceful transition across Afghanistan. Instead, they are persistent threats that are adapting to a changing operational environment. Ultimately, the threats Afghanistan faces require our sustained attention and forward presence.
- Reconciliation is the path needed to obtain a negotiated settlement and end the conflict in Afghanistan. Current reconciliation efforts are an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned initiative, recently renewed with a quadrilateral meeting in mid-January that included Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States, and China.
- It has been over a year since the formation of the National Unity Government. It has faced institutional and political difficulties, yet can lay claim to some meaningful reform and progress during its first year. The unity government may be fragile, but it is holding despite being challenged, it is making continued progress, and building momentum to create an increasingly viable future. Politically, Afghanistan is postured for progress as well as a continuing strategic partnership with the United States. We have strong and willing partners in President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah—this has not always been the case.
- So, as I said at the beginning of this statement, we now ask ourselves, "what else can we do to enable the Afghan Security Forces?" "What else can the Afghans do for themselves to secure their country?" A strategic stalemate without end is not the goal of this campaign. Nor is it true to the reason we came here over 14 years ago. In fact, the recently submitted NATO Strategic Assessment makes recommendations for adjustments to the current NATO OPLAN that, in my best military advice, will help push the campaign past this inflection point and increase the prospect of achieving our shared goals.
- The measures that NATO is considering include advisory adjustments to give commanders more flexibility on the ground, and shifting from a yearly outlook to a 5-year vision to give all donor nations, and especially Afghanistan, the confidence that comes with predictability of support.
- The United States must continue to show flexibility with our mission in 2016 and beyond. As the commander, I am responsible for aligning our national objectives with ways and means while managing risk. Now that we have been allocated our resources for 2016, I am assessing the ways in which we ensure that 2016 is not a rerun of 2015. Based on conditions and the performance of the Afghan security forces during this winter lull, I am also reviewing how well those forces will likely perform in 2017 and the U.S. and coalition resources required for their continued development. This is all part of a broader process of which my assessment is only one part. I will provide my assessments of our strategy to my military leadership as well as my successor.
- I think it is important to remember that this time last year, our plan was to transition to a 1,000 troop, Kabul-centric footprint. Due to conditions on the ground, the President made the decision to extend 9,800 through most of 2016, and increased our posture to 5,500 in 2017. This decision provided flexibility to make adjustments and represents the kind of conditions based approach that is so important for our mission in Afghanistan.

- Key to this long-term success in the region is the resiliency of the Afghan Government and its security institutions, and the ability to serve as a regional partner in our combined efforts to counter violent extremism. It's important to remember that the National Unity Government welcomes our assistance. They are a dependable and steadfast counterterrorism partner in South Asia. 2017 marks a significant change in our approach as we focus our efforts to capitalize on the gains of the past decade and build the capacity of the Afghan security institutions.
- We now have a window of opportunity to increase our likelihood of achieving strategic success. Of course, our support should not be open-ended— I believe our approach is sound. This year we will apply greater conditionality to the Afghans in managing the resources we give them. We are also developing a five-year vision out to 2020 to help better define what we are trying to accomplish, and avoid a year-to-year mentality. I believe that by changing our, and the Afghans', mindset from a cyclic "fighting season to fighting season" view to a genuine, long-term outlook best reflects our commitment.
- We need to provide the Afghans the time and space for them to continue to build their resiliency. Through their spirit and fortitude, they have proven worthy of our continued support. The actions we take now, combined with their resolve to improve, will, over time, develop a sustainable force capable of securing the nation, and in turn helping us secure ours.
- Thank you once again for your steadfast support of our campaign. I look forward to your questions.

Chairman MCCAIN. Thank you, General.

I think we're in agreement that we don't want a rerun of 2015 in 2016. General Nicholson said that he agreed with my assessment, in his hearing last week, that the situation—conditions in Afghanistan are deteriorating. Do you share that view?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I said in the opening statement that the situation in Afghanistan is very complex. It has been a very tough year in 2015. We knew it would be. We can't let 2015 be like 2016. There are things that they can do—they are working on those—things that we can do. We can't have a repeat of 2015.

The Taliban have been emboldened by our withdrawal, our—the lack of close air support the Afghans have had. They have had—they have fought the Afghan Security Forces very tough, and we can't let that happen as we move forward. The situation has been a lot harder for them, sir, and we can't let that continue in 2016.

Chairman MCCAIN. I mentioned, in my opening statement and our conversations, that we should not just focus on numbers, but on missions and capabilities that are required to be provided by United States forces that the Afghans simply are incapable of. In my view, and, I believe, General Nicholson's view, that 5,500, you'll either be able to carry out the counterterrorism mission or the train-advise-and-assist, but not both. Is that your assessment?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, the 5,500 plan was developed primarily around counterterrorism. There's very limited train-advise-and-assist in that—in those numbers. To continue to build on the Afghan Security Forces, the gaps and seams in aviation, logistics, intelligence, as I've talked about, we'd have to make some adjustments to that number.

Chairman MCCAIN. Well, my point is that right now the plan is to go down 5,500, the end of 2016. Is that correct?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, that is correct. By 1 January 2017—

Chairman MCCAIN. So, do you think that we would be prepared, by the end of 2016, to go down to 5,500, giving the requirements for both counterterrorism and train-advise-and-assist?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I've taken a look, again, at 2015, and provided my military leadership with what I believe are adjustments to the number. As you said, sir, we don't want to talk about number, we want to talk about capabilities. I think—

Chairman MCCAIN. If—

General CAMPBELL.—that if there are areas that we need to take a look at their capabilities that they lacked in 2015—

Chairman MCCAIN. Yeah, but, General, again, are they going to be able to carry out at—with 2—with 5,500, both the counterterrorism mission and the train-advise-and-insist mission? Are they going to be able to do that with 5,500 troops? I think that's a pretty straightforward question, sir.

General CAMPBELL. Yes, sir. Sir, at 5,500, I believe that they can do the CT mission, the counterterrorism mission, and a very limited train-advise-assist—

Chairman MCCAIN. Will they be able to do both missions adequately with 5,500 troops?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, some of that will depend upon how the Afghan forces continue to make the reforms here in the winter lull, how they continue to improve over the summer. I think we've got to continually assess that. If they don't get after the reforms, if some of the assumptions we made—

Chairman MCCAIN. So, is it correct for us to plan on 5,500 for the end of 2016?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, right now, you know, my last order is to get to 5,500. We're prepared to do that.

Chairman MCCAIN. Do you think—

General CAMPBELL.—at the same time—

Chairman MCCAIN. My question is, is—Do you think that that is appropriate for us to plan on that capability, which we're certainly not sure of today, and, your successor stated, with a deteriorating situation in Afghanistan?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, as the commander on the ground, what I believe is that I have to be prepared for all situations. I will prepare for 5,500, to make sure I can follow those orders. To the same time, based on—

Chairman MCCAIN. I'm asking for your professional opinion; not whether you can do it or not, whether it is the right thing to do or not.

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I believe the right thing to do is to prepare to go to 5,500, as I am ordered, but, at the same time, take a look at conditions on the ground, look at the capabilities, as you discussed, sir, not the number, and to provide those adjustments to my military leadership, and then make those adjustments to the capabilities. If we don't have the capabilities or if the assumptions that we made for the 5,500 plan don't come out true, then, of course, we have to make those adjustments. It—

Chairman MCCAIN. You can't—

General CAMPBELL.—and it seems to me those adjustments—

Chairman MCCAIN.—make adjustments on the—

General CAMPBELL.—would mean an increased number—

Chairman MCCAIN.—fly—you can't make those adjustments on the fly. We all know that, General. I'm—

General CAMPBELL. Sir, we need to make those decisions early on. We need to make those decisions—

Chairman MCCAIN. The present situation, as it is, does it call for continued—either the counterterrorism mission or train-advise-and-consent, but not both? Because that's what 5,500 troops give you.

General CAMPBELL. Sir, again, very little TAA on 5,500. Absolutely right.

Chairman MCCAIN. Are you concerned about the rules of engagement that—for example, I guess that we finally decided to attack ISIS. How long had you known ISIS was there before you got the go—the green light to attack ISIS?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, ISIS—KP, or Daesh, in Afghanistan, started forming probably in the January 2015 timeframe.

Chairman MCCAIN. So, that was about a year later we decided that we had—you had permission to strike.

General CAMPBELL. That's correct, sir.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Reed.

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

Again, thank you, General Campbell, for your service and your testimony.

You made the point, but I think it should be emphasized. In order to effectively be prepared for 2016, the decision about force level should be made earlier rather than later. What do you think the optimal sort of timeframe is to make that decision, regardless of what it is? The next 2 months? The next 30 days?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I would—my advice would be to make that decision as early as you could. It would probably be—I would like to see that made before the summer. What that does is, it really includes NATO. NATO's force-generation cycle, they start looking at that in June. So, if you want to have NATO part of this, you've got to make that call early so they can force-generate so that forces would be ready by 1 January 2017. Same with our forces. You make those decisions late, it would be harder to get the folks trained, ready to be there on 1 January 2017.

Senator REED. So, given General Nicholson's obligation and commitment to make a very careful review of—which I assume is stressed 30-plus days, he should be ready to make a recommendation early spring so that the decision should be made early summer, at the latest.

General CAMPBELL. Sir, General Nicholson talked about 90 days. Sir, I'll make sure he has all of my assessments, all—everything that I have, a complete transition that will help him move along in his assessment, as well.

Senator REED. Regardless of what the decision is, it should be made, in your view, by early summer. Say, June.

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I would say it would—it is prudent if we make the decision as early as—

Senator REED. All right.

General CAMPBELL.—we can. Yes, sir.

Senator REED. Let me also ask about the nature of the changing missions, based upon the last year. I think it's important, because the decisions that were made with respect to the current force structure and the projected force structure were made more than

a year ago. In that time, the Pakistan military forces have driven considerable number of insurgents, particularly into Nangarhar Province in the east, including al Qaeda elements. You've also seen the formation in that year of ISKP, which requires, I assume—I'll ask the question—a much more vigorous counterterrorism activity than you contemplated a year ago, or the President contemplated a year ago. Is that accurate?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, that would be accurate. Yes, sir.

Senator REED. So, in the counterterror mission alone, there is a need for increased capacity. That might not be directly related to numbers, but at least increased capacity. Is that correct?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I'd rather discuss on CT in a closed hearing, but on specific numbers and the capability of a CT component. Just suffice it to say we have the very best counterterrorism capability in the entire world. With the additional authorities we received about 2 weeks ago, we've—we have fused those with the resources that I currently have. Yes, sir.

Senator REED. Let me—another variation on this is that, as you suggested in your testimony, because of the—a conflict between—and fragmentation between the Taliban and ISKP, there's been active combat between those two elements. Is that correct?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, that is correct, especially in the Nangarhar Province.

Senator REED. Right. Our efforts now are authorized to degrade ISKP—could leave a situation where the Taliban is—has much more flexibility to attack Afghan National Security Forces. Is that a real possibility?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, we've got to balance that, so, yes, sir, that is a possibility.

Senator REED. So, it raises the issue of authorities, in terms of having the authority to also conduct strikes against ANS—excuse me, against Taliban elements, even though they might not be directly threatening American personnel and force protection. Is that something you're thinking about?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, as I talked about, making sure that 2016 is not like 2015, as I bin that—you know, you can bin more people, more resources, or more authorities. I believe that the—the authorities piece, I have taken a hard look at, and I have provided recommendations on mitigating and adjusting authorities to my chain of command.

Senator REED. One of the aspects here is that the—I know you suggested the complexity in the interrelatedness of all of these different decisions, that the decision to go after ISKP proactively raises the issue of whether the Taliban will take advantage unwittingly of our attacks, and that's something we have to also consider. I think that's a point you would agree with.

General CAMPBELL. Yes, sir. Again, sir, the goal is to build the Afghan capacity so they—

Senator REED. Right.

General CAMPBELL.—can do this, themselves, as well. Absolutely.

Senator REED. The other issue, in terms of military, is the overall requirements to move the Afghan National Security Forces from a static deployment to a much more proactive deployment, and that is something that will require resources in the training-assist mis-

sion, to—not only training, but also providing enablers so that they can get out of those fixed positions to checkpoints, et cetera. That adds another sort of capacity requirement, in your view?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, it could. I think it really depends on the leadership of the Afghan Security Forces. They have been trying to reduce checkpoints. In some corps, they've been able to do it okay; in other corps, they haven't done anything. So, it is about leadership. Additional train-advise-and-assist could potentially provide assistance to them to get after that. This—these are—this is one of the short-term reforms we're trying to get after during this winter campaign.

Senator REED. You'll evaluate that, and that'll help inform you and, more appropriate, General Nicholson when he makes a recommendation.

General CAMPBELL. Absolutely, sir. Yes, sir.

Senator REED. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Fischer.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, General Campbell, and thank you so much for your many years of service to this country and to our people.

When we met yesterday, you talked about transitioning the Afghan army out of a defensive stance into more of a focus on an offensive action. So, I would like to ask, What are the main steps that you see that must be taken in order to accomplish this? You, earlier, mentioned the capability gaps, and we see that with intelligence aviation, but that's going to take quite a few years to remedy. I'd like to focus on how those gaps relate more to operations. Do you think it's going to take years for the ANF—ANSF to move to that defensive stance? How is that transition going to relate to those capability gaps?

General CAMPBELL. Thank you, Senator, for the question.

We've been working on reducing checkpoints, trying to get them more maneuverable, for the last year, the focus during the winter, because they saw the result of not doing that during the fighting season of 2015, where they had more casualties and they were defensive in nature. I think what they are doing now is identifying key terrain in different provinces and districts where they absolutely need these combat outposts, and then reduce where they have probably 80 percent of their force on these type of checkpoints, both in the police and the army. To get there, they have to do better coordination between the MOI and MOD so that you can't have the police come off one, expecting the army will occupy it, or vice versa, have the army come off, expecting the police. They also have to make sure that there's some sort of political consensus with the governors, with the district governors, because sometimes they're an impediment to make sure that the operating forces can adjust their forces.

It's been a continuous struggle, where we've worked with them closely and where they have good leadership and understand how important it is to come off with the checkpoints, be more maneuverable. We're starting to gain a little bit of traction, and we'll stay with them.

How that ties in to the capability gaps. They have a finite number of resources, especially in the close air support. So, if you're—got checkpoints all throughout the country, it'll be hard to get those kind of precious resources out there. So, they do have to prioritize where they apply their 352,000 Afghan Security Forces. So, moving out of the checkpoints into these key terrain places, I think will help them.

The close air support, Afghan Air Force—ma'am, is going to take several more years. It takes about 3 years to build a pilot. So, if we pick somebody today, they won't see that pilot for 3 more years. That's just the human capital aspect, that doesn't include acquiring the platforms, the helicopters and the fixed-wing. They just received four of the A-29 Super Tucano fixed-wing aircraft about 2 or 3 weeks ago. We'll get another four in the April-May timeframe. That's it for this year. So, it's going to take 3 years before they even get all of the equipment for the Air Force, and we'll continue to build upon that.

Senator FISCHER. How does that affect us in our planning our strategy? Are you looking at the need to find a solution for all of this as we look at cutting down troops? How do—how does that all tie in? Because there's a number of operations that are out there. Do we have to fix it all?

General CAMPBELL. Ma'am, I think, for the closer air support, again, it's a long-term effort to make sure that they have the right rotary-wing and fixed-wing support. That's going to take several years. We do have a current plan. What I've asked to do is another study to take a look at a longer-term plan to convert MI-17s, that kind of aircraft, to probably a U.S. aircraft. We're going to need support from this Congress once we get through that, because that is not included in the current financing of the Afghan Security Force as we go forward. The frames that we've bought for them, the MI-17s, based on operational losses, OPTEMPO, over the next couple of years, that's going to continue to go down, and we'll have to figure out the lifecycle maintenance of probably a different airframe.

Senator FISCHER. How important is it for the Afghans and also for our allies that are there to maintain the leadership of our country, America's leadership in this area, to provide—and again, not just the Afghans, but also our allies with the certainty that we are committed? You said this is going to take years—how do we get the message to them that we are committed, they have that certainty, when we have discussions about lowering personnel, lowering our troops in the area without regards to what's taking place on the ground?

General CAMPBELL. Yes, ma'am. We have to—again, we have to talk in longer terms. We can't talk cyclic, one year at a time. I think it begins this year at Warsaw, where we get all the donor nations to commit to long term for financing of 2018, 2019, 2020. If we can finance it that way, we ought to talk about people, equipment, resources the same way, and talk in terms of 5 years.

NATO made their decision to continue Resolute Support after the President made our decision to stay at 9,800. As long as the U.S. leads, then I think NATO will continue to be there with us. Now that they are going to be with us into 2017, as I talked about ad-



justments to the 5,500 number did not include early support to NATO. So, again, that's one of the adjustments I've taken a look at since that decision was made, and I've provided those adjustments that I said we have to make on that 5,500 capability as we move forward.

Senator FISCHER. We're seeing support of our NATO allies when they know that we are going to be there and lead. Do, we also see support with the Afghan people?

General CAMPBELL. Ma'am, I talked to NATO right after the October decision. They're absolutely on board. All the countries continue to support in 2016. Many have already committed for 2017. So, again, I think they understand that NATO—this is NATO's largest mission, NATO's longest operation they've ever had in their history. They want it to be successful. If we continue to lead, NATO will be there.

As far as the Afghan people, you know, every survey, every time I talk to Afghans, overwhelmingly understand that, to continue to build their Afghan Security Forces for the—a secure country, they're going to need our support, and they overwhelmingly want that.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, General.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, General Campbell, for your service. This country certainly owes a debt of gratitude to you and your family for what you have done. I wish you much success in whatever you decide to do next.

I want to continue the conversation you were just having with Senator Fischer, because I think your point in your testimony about the need to provide a long-term commitment to Afghanistan that people can count on, so they don't feel like we're going to be leaving at the end of each year, is very important. Do you—when you talk about the support from the international community and NATO, have they continued to make the financial contributions that they have committed to for Afghanistan? Are they—have you spoken with them about their willingness to commit to a 5-year plan for the country?

General CAMPBELL. Ma'am, I raised the 5-year issue. General Breedlove raised it at the last Chief of Defense Conference, a couple of weeks ago. It'll go ahead to the Ministers of Defense of all the countries next week. I think, based on what I saw from the CHOD Conference, there should be pretty good support as we move forward. I think they're absolutely for that. It gives them the ability to plan, to resource. You know, again, any budget one year at a time is very, very hard to do. So, I think NATO is completely on board with that. All the countries continue to provide the assistance that they pledged at the Chicago 2012 Conference. Again, the United States is the biggest contributor, but the NATO countries continue to provide, and have done so.

I think if we talk in terms of a long-term commitment, it does a couple of things. It gives confidence to the Afghan Government, to the National Unity Government, to the Afghan people, to the Afghan Security Forces. It sends a message to Pakistan, it sends a message to the Taliban, and it sends a message to NATO. So,

again, long-term commitment, talking those kind of terms, conditions-based on the ground, is the way we need to move forward to enable the Afghans to have a—to have predictability and stability. A lot of reason you see a lot of refugees leaving out of Afghanistan this year is because of that instability. Security, of course—

Senator SHAHEEN. Right.

General CAMPBELL.—but, again, the instability of thinking people are going to leave, year after year after year.

Senator SHAHEEN. So, just to be clear, they are current in financial obligations that have been made.

General CAMPBELL. The countries have, yes, ma'am. Afghanistan, based on the Chicago Conference, pledged 500 million a year toward the security forces.

Senator SHAHEEN. Right.

General CAMPBELL. They have met that. They want to bring that—continue to bring that up.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Earlier this week, there were reports of several airstrikes that destroyed a radio station that was operated by ISIS near the border with Pakistan. Obviously the radio station is assumed to be broadcasting extremist messages. I was interested in your comments about the efforts of the central government to—I don't want to call it "propaganda," but to point out the differences, to the Afghan people, between the work of the central government and what they're seeing from the Taliban and, I assume, from ISIS.

So, first, I want to ask, Do the people of Afghanistan distinguish between the Taliban and ISIS? As you say, this battle is really as much as—about the hearts and minds of the Afghan people as it is about the military conflict. To what extent is there support for what the central government is doing in trying to point out to the people of the country the differences between the Taliban and what the central government is proposing? How much are we helping in that effort?

General CAMPBELL. Thank you, ma'am, for the question.

Absolutely, the Afghan people understand and see the difference between Taliban and Daesh or ISIL, and they understand that ISIL has been very brutal. All the countries in the region absolutely understand that ISIL has been very brutal and have talked to Afghanistan about what they can help fight this regional piece about ISIL. President Ghani looks at it as—not as an Afghan problem, but as a regional, and actually a global, piece, and that everybody has to stand up for it.

As far as providing confidence to the people, you know, I think it depends upon what part of the country, what district you're in, what leadership is out there, if you have good district governors. He has good people in his staff that provide what the people want. They care for them, and they absolutely believe that the National Unity Government is supporting them. Other places that they don't have that and all you have is the Taliban, and the Taliban provides some sort of support to them, then they're going to believe the Taliban.

Again, people want the same things we want here. They want their kids to go to school. Taliban don't believe in that. They want folks to have a job, to have a roof over their heads, on and on. So,

overwhelmingly, they don't want to go back to Taliban days. If they don't have support from the government at the lowest levels, they're going to make the choice to go with whoever is supporting them.

The National Unity Government knows it has to do a better job in getting out and being with the people. President Ghani was just in Kandahar yesterday. He is getting out now to all the different provinces to really meet with the leadership. He's doing another thing by taking the Ulama, or the religious leaders, as well, and making sure that they're tied into it, because they absolutely can help get the right message across about what the government is trying to do and how bad the Taliban is.

Senator SHAHEEN. I know my time is expired, Mr. Chairman, but if I could just ask him to follow up on the other part of my question, which is, Are we contributing at all, in terms of direct assistance, to a counter-ISIL, a counter-Taliban message to the people of Afghanistan, that's organized?

General CAMPBELL. Ma'am, I can give you that in a closed hearing, if I—

Senator SHAHEEN. Okay.

General CAMPBELL.—could provide that to you. Yes, ma'am.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. That would be helpful.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Ayotte.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, Chairman.

General Campbell, I want to thank you for your distinguished service to the country and for your leadership. You've done an excellent job. I wish you the best, going forward. I want to thank your family, as well. We're very proud of you.

I wanted to follow up on the questions that Chairman McCain asked you about the drop in troop levels in Afghanistan to 5,500. As I understand your answer, this will enable very little train, advise, and assist, and will be focused on a CT function in Afghanistan. My question to you is, If that decision, in fact, stands, and that's where we remain, what risks do we incur by going in that direction? What—especially as I heard your testimony based on what happened in 2015 in Afghanistan.

General CAMPBELL. Thank you, ma'am, for the question.

Again, the 5,500 number was primarily built around a CT structure. As we've taken a look at that decision and what's changed on the ground, elections are going to happen, potentially in October. That was not considered. Assumptions that the Afghan Security Forces would provide other things to support that number, if they don't make some of the reforms, then General Nicholson will absolutely have to come forward and said, "This assumption did not prove true; therefore, we need X." So, right now, what we're counting on is that the Afghans will make necessary reforms that will complement and enable us to be at that capability and that number. If they don't, as I have said before, I've already looked at and provided the military chain of command ways that we can make adjustments to the capabilities, as Senator McCain talked about, that we're going to absolutely need.

Senator AYOTTE. So, I just want to—

General CAMPBELL. There's very limited TAA at that number, yes, ma'am.

Senator AYOTTE. So, I want to understand, just so the American people understand, What are the risks there, then? If all this doesn't work out perfectly and we still yet go to that number, what kind of risk do we face on the ground that are risks to our interests?

General CAMPBELL. The risk would be that the Afghan Security Forces will not be able to make the necessary adjustments and improve as we thought that they could. It would take them much longer, and it would be a much harder fight against the insurgents in 2016 and 2017.

Senator AYOTTE. Would that also provide more safe haven for, obviously, potential extremist groups and, obviously, the Taliban's resurgence?

General CAMPBELL. It could. Yes, ma'am.

Senator AYOTTE. I wanted to also ask you—you talked about the NATO commitment. I think you said that NATO will follow us. So, if we do cut in half what we have in Afghanistan, what do you expect our NATO partners would do?

General CAMPBELL. Again, ma'am, under the 5,500 number, when that plan was developed, when the President made that decision, NATO had not made their decision yet. NATO made their decision after the 5,500 number, probably in the December timeframe, to continue the Resolute Support Mission into 2017. I believe NATO in—absolutely would welcome, and needs, the U.S. to continue to have the lead. We actually provide some resources to our NATO partners, both in the north and west.

Senator AYOTTE. Do you agree with me, if we go down, NATO's going to—I mean, they're going to diminish, too, or, at some point, get out of this operation?

General CAMPBELL. If our number continues to go down, NATO will absolutely reduce their commitment in Afghanistan. I believe that is true.

Senator AYOTTE. So, Iran. I wanted to ask you to describe for us what Iran's activities are in Afghanistan right now, and also describe for us what activities they are undertaking that concern you.

General CAMPBELL. Ma'am, I think, you know, what Afghanistan is trying to do is have a sovereign-country-to-sovereign-country relationship with their neighbor to the west, Iran. Dr. Abdullah was just there about 2 weeks trying to work through that piece of it. I am concerned that Iran has provided support to the Taliban in order for the Taliban to fight ISIL or Daesh. They are worried about ISIL or Daesh, so they have provided support to the Taliban. I'm worried that that support that they provide to the Taliban could be used against the Afghan Security Forces.

Senator AYOTTE. Are you worried, at some point, that Iran's territory could be used as a potential safe haven, as well, as we've seen in Pakistan for the Taliban?

General CAMPBELL. I think that's a possibility, yes, ma'am. I think we've got to do everything we can to make sure that doesn't happen.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, General.

Chairman MCCAIN. I'd very much like to move the nomination of Lieutenant General Nicholson. I would ask the committee to consider the nomination of Lieutenant General John W. Nicholson, Jr.,

to be general and Commander of Resolute Support and Commander United States Forces-Afghanistan. This nomination has been before the committee the required time.

If there's an objection.

[No response.]

Chairman MCCAIN. Hearing none, then is there a motion to so favorably report Lieutenant General Nicholson's nomination to the Senate?

Senator REED. So moved.

Chairman MCCAIN. Is there a second?

Senator AYOTTE. Second.

Chairman MCCAIN. All in favor, say aye.

[A chorus of ayes.]

Chairman MCCAIN. The motion carries.

Thank you.

Senator Blumenthal.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

General Campbell, thank you for your service in—

Chairman MCCAIN. Could I just—Senator Donnelly, you are in favor of the nomination of General Nicholson?

Senator DONNELLY. If you say so, sir, I—

[Laughter.]

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Campbell, thank you for your service to our Nation in this job and many previous assignments, and your distinction in providing insightful and deliberate testimony to this committee.

You have said, I think, in the past, that 70 percent of Afghanistan's military problems are related to weak political leadership. I may be misstating or exaggerating, but my question is directed to less the technical strength or viability of the military capacity of the country and more to the effectiveness and reliability of the political leadership. In your view, is Afghanistan's political leadership up to the job?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, if I can just say about the 70 percent, I was referring to military leadership; 70 percent of the problems they have in the MOI and the MOD is based on the leadership they have there. If they pick the right leaders, and they hold them accountable, that'll take care of many of their issues.

Sir, your question on the political piece—and again, I—

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I stand corrected, and I apologize for—

General CAMPBELL. I understand, sir. I—on the—whether or not President Ghani, Dr. Abdullah—I think you asked, sir, the National Unity Government is viable—can it govern as we move forward? Sir, it survived the last 15–16 months under very, very tough fighting season, where Afghanistan was fighting for its survival. It survived President Ghani reaching out to Pakistan to try to change the dynamics on the ground in that relationship. It sustained opposition, like President Karzai doing different things out there. So, it's been a rough road. We shouldn't make light of that, sir. President Ghani and Dr. Abdullah, on the big policy issues, I believe there's no daylight between them. They continue to work very hard, because they understand how important it is for the future of Afghanistan, and they know there's no other viable option.

When it comes to picking governors, ministers, other folks, I really do think it's the people around the President, people around Dr. Abdullah, that are stirring up the waters. I see both Dr. Abdullah, President Ghani many times a week, and they are a great partner, and they understand how—and they value the—their foundational partner is the United States. I think we have to continue to work with them. They understand the issues and challenges they have to work on. It's going to take them a while to do that, sir. I think we've just got to continue to provide the assistance we can to help them move that forward.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. You'd agree that, as we saw in Iraq, an inclusive and effective government in Afghanistan is essential to military success.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Sir, absolutely. I mean, there's no comparison between what you had in Iraq with Maliki and then what you have in Afghanistan today with the National Unity Government.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. On the issue of political relationships, I want to mention Pakistan. Are you satisfied with progress that has been made, if there has been progress, in combating the flow of both militants and munitions across the border from Pakistan?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I—when I think about Pakistan, I think about, you know, both political issues, economic issues. I most deal with the military-to-military issues and make sure that the Pak Army and the Afghan Army continue to talk corps-to-corps, and they talk those kind of issues. So, they understand that they have to continue to do that, to fight this enemy that knows no borders, and that it's good for both of them to continue to develop that relationship. If they're not talking, they're not going to go anywhere.

I am concerned about what is going across both from Pakistan into Afghanistan and, quite frankly, as General Raheel has talked to me about, the chief of the Pakistan Army, potential stuff going from Afghanistan into Pakistan, as they believe happened a couple of weeks ago on a school attack there.

So, I think the more mil-to-mil they can work together to improve discussion between corps-to-corps, what goes on between that very open border, that it'll only get better. I am concerned about what's going across. Yes, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. My time is expired, but I thank you very much.

Thank you.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. General, thank you and your whole team. I had the pleasure to meet most of your folks over there, and I think you can look back on your time and say, "Well done."

You kept Afghanistan together. It's not Iraq. Let's talk about that for a second.

Kunduz. When the Taliban came in and dislodged the police and the security forces, the town was retaken by the Afghans. Is that correct?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, that is correct.

Senator GRAHAM. There's a big difference between Kunduz, Mosul, and Ramadi?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, absolutely. I mean, the fortitude and resilience of the Afghan forces to get back and take over a town of 300,000 in a very short time was pretty remarkable.

Senator GRAHAM. If we had no U.S. troops there, how hard would it have been to accomplish that task?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, in my estimation, it would have taken a lot longer to be able to do that.

Senator GRAHAM. Right now, at this moment, if you had to tell this committee should we stay at 9,800, based on what you know right now, at this moment, for the rest of the year and into next year, what would you say?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, then I would be violating what Senator McCain told me to talk about, about capabilities, sir. I—and as—again, sir, what I've done—

Senator GRAHAM. You're not bound by that.

[Laughter.]

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I'm—what I'm telling you is that the 5,500—I am glad we're at 5,500, sir. We're in a much better place than we were.

Senator GRAHAM. You mean the 9,800.

General CAMPBELL. 5,500—we're at 98—now, yes, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. Yeah.

General CAMPBELL. So, we're in a much better place than we were. I am very glad that we're there. As we look at going down to 5,500, I've got to manage it. I want to keep 9,800 as long as I can in 2016 before I have to drop to 5,500. To do that after the fighting season, between the October-November-December time-frame, is going to be very, very difficult, but I have to figure out a way, and I'll pass it—

Senator GRAHAM. Is the 5,500 a military goal or a political goal?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, the 5,500 was a number based on certain assumptions and mission sets that were required to accomplish—

Senator GRAHAM. If I ask you right now, "Do you think we should be at 5,500 at the end of the year?" is that a good military thing?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I would have to base it on conditions on the ground.

Senator GRAHAM. Yeah. You want to do counterterrorism, right?

General CAMPBELL. Yes, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. So, 5,500 is mostly counterterrorism-centric.

General CAMPBELL. It's most CT. It has limited TAA—

Senator GRAHAM. You just described to Senator Fischer tremendous gaps in their air capability of the Afghans. You've talked about 2015 being tough. I just—is—I just don't see where the 5,500—did the military recommend 5,500, or was this just a number picked by the White House?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, that was part of a long process that the military was tied into. Yes, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. I mean—well, no. My question is, Did the military say, "We think, based on everything we know about Afghanistan, 5,500 is the right number"? Or did that come from the politicians in the White House?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I don't believe that came from the politicians. That was an overall process—

Senator GRAHAM. What general recommended 5,500?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I don't want to go into, you know, discussions—

Senator GRAHAM. I just want to know where this number came from. I want to know, Is it a politically-driven number or is it a military-driven number?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I think it's a number driven based on the mission sets, the narrow mission sets of TAA, limited as I talked about, and a CT mission. In the—but, again, there were assumptions made—as every course of action, there are assumptions made. If those assumptions don't prove—

Senator GRAHAM. Did the military suggest we just do two things in Afghanistan—counterterrorism, train-advise-and-insist—or did that come from the political leadership?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, the military has an opportunity to provide their best military advice on the—you know, the purpose of why we're there, the mission sets that are assigned—

Senator GRAHAM. The only reason I mention this is that we're in Iraq in a state of disarray. I've been hearing, for a long time, that it is the Iraqis who said no to residual forces. I don't believe that for a moment. I know what the military recommended to the White House, and I know how we got to zero. The same people that pushed us to zero, I think, are pushing us to 5,500. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe 5,500 is the best military configuration at the end of 2016. I just have real serious doubts about that. Am I wrong to doubt that?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, as I said, I have already provided what I think are adjustments to that number—

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

General CAMPBELL.—based on the capabilities that will be required to move forward—

Senator GRAHAM. Is the Taliban an enemy of this country?

General CAMPBELL. I didn't hear the question, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. Is the Taliban an enemy of the United States?

General CAMPBELL. The Taliban—as far as helping al Qaeda and Haqqani and other insurgence groups, Taliban have been responsible for—

Senator GRAHAM. If the Taliban were in charge of Afghanistan tomorrow, would our Homeland be threatened?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I think it would be more at risk.

Senator GRAHAM. Are you prohibited from attacking senior leadership of the Taliban?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I have all the authorities I need to protect our coalition—

Senator GRAHAM. Can you attack the senior leadership of the Taliban?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, if there's senior leadership of the Taliban that are attacking—

Senator GRAHAM. I'm not talking about force protection. I'm talking about, Can you go after the Taliban who are trying to take over the country of Afghanistan that would invite terrorists back into that region to attack us? Can you attack the Taliban?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I believe that the Taliban are a threat to us, and I'd attack them if—I cannot attack Taliban—



Senator GRAHAM. Without shooting at a soldier, can you attack them? If they're not shooting at one of our soldiers, can you attack them?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I have to make a force-protection nexus to the Taliban.

Senator GRAHAM. So, our limitations on the Taliban is that they've got to have a direct threat to U.S. forces. Right?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, again, I don't go into rules-of-engagement authorities in open hearing. What I would tell you is that our country has made the decision that we are not at war with the Taliban.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you think we're at war with the Taliban?

General CAMPBELL. I think the Taliban have killed many of my soldiers—

Senator GRAHAM. Do you think they're at war with us?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, the Taliban continue to—

Senator GRAHAM. Do you think the Taliban would welcome an attack on the United States if they could help make one happen?

General CAMPBELL. I do, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. Yeah.

Thank you.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Donnelly.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, thank you for everything you've done for our country. We are really in your debt.

When the 9,800 level was set, in light of the things that have happened on the ground—push here, push there, those kind of things—does the 9,800 level being there—when you set that number, did you anticipate things like this would happen? I mean, has that number, in your mind, needed to be adjusted because of what's happened, or do you think it's sufficient to meet the challenges that you deal with every day?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, the 9,800 number was already determined before I got there.

Senator DONNELLY. Right.

General CAMPBELL. All right? So—and we were going down to 1,000 when I got there. We had no CT capability at 1,000. We were Kabul-centric. Today, we have a CT mission and the ability to work that mission, and we're not Kabul-centric. So, I think we have great flexibility as we move forward because of the decisions that have been made.

The 5,500 number, as I've said several times today in testimony, is—I have made my recommendations to adjustments on the capabilities that are required based on what we learned in 2015. The 5,500 number is primarily focused on CT. If the Afghans cannot improve, we're going to have to make some adjustments, and that means that number will most likely go up. So, yes, sir.

Senator DONNELLY. When you look at the situation and make a judgment, what are the things that worry you the most as you look at what lies ahead?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, always number one in my mind is force protection of our men and women, to make sure that we have all the resources, the authorities to be able to protect them, and whether they're sitting at Bagram or whether they're sitting in

Kabul, whether they're doing expedition advising on another combat outpost someplace in Afghanistan. So, that's number one.

Number two is, I want to make sure that we continue—or I worry about the Afghans not putting the right leadership and having a sense of urgency to continue to move forward. They've made so many gains, they've done so well over the last 14 years to get to where they're at, that, if they do—don't do some of the things here because of how long it's taken, they'll lose the confidence of the donor nations; and if they don't have the money, then they can't move forward. They absolutely need to have the continued support of the coalition and the nations that provide the funding. They will not have the funding, their economy will not be able to support, by all the reports I've seen, a—without any help, til about 2024. We're looking at the Warsaw to get them through 2020. Again, President Ghani is doing everything he can to build upon a regional peace to get their economy going.

So, I worry about our force protection, I worry about them being able to continue to make progress without other nations losing confidence and abandoning them.

Senator DONNELLY. When you look at Afghanistan, and some of the challenges with the Taliban have been in the more rural or outlying areas, where they've had an outsized influence, is it that the people in those areas are more accepting of the Taliban, or they just have the ability to push back as much?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I think it's probably a little bit both, but probably more the latter, that, you know, they would like to push back, but, if they don't have the police, the army to be able to support them in those areas, and if the Taliban threatens them—in some areas, they stand up, and they do a great job. That's where we get Afghan local police, and they work through that. In other areas, you know, they want to continue to survive, and they'll—the Taliban put that pressure on them.

Senator DONNELLY. When you look at the Taliban, what are the biggest advantages that they bring to the fight on their side? What's our best way to counter that?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, again, the Taliban—what they've done well is, they have—they've—the Afghan people, or really the Afghan Security Forces in—the first time I've seen it—and that's why I said the Taliban can be beaten, they're not 10 feet tall—but, in many areas, their propaganda, their information ops have convinced many of the security forces that they can beat them. They can't. They can't. They're not manned, they're not equipped, they're not trained. The advantage they have is, they don't follow any rules, they can kill civilians, they can target whoever they want to target, they can put out little IEDs out there that just kill indiscriminately. So, that's what they do. I mean, that—they're terrorists. That's how they take advantage. They put fear in the hearts of the people. The Afghan Security Forces are like any of our other militaries that we want; they have to abide by rules, they have to watch out for civilian casualties, they have discipline. The Taliban don't have any of that. They offer nothing to the future of Afghanistan.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you very much.  
Thank you.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Cotton.

Senator COTTON. General Campbell, it's good to see you again before this committee; for the last time, it would appear. Thank you for your service, not just in Afghanistan, but your service for many years in uniform. You certainly are in the right to drop the rucksack and ask someone else to pick it up now.

I want to return a topic that Senator Graham was addressing. You said, quote, "Our country is not at war with the Taliban," end quote. People have to make decisions for countries. Is that a decision that was made by the Commander in Chief, that our country is no longer at war with the Taliban?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, that's a policy decision.

Senator COTTON. Okay. When you were asked if the Taliban would attack the United States today if they could, you answered, "I do." That's correct?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, they're attacking forces in Afghanistan. Again, the network in Afghanistan, where you get Haqqani, al Qaeda, LET—it's all intermingled. We know for sure that ISIL, we know for sure that AQ and some of its remnants have already attacked the U.S. and want to continue to—have vision on doing that. So, the Taliban support that in other ways, yes, sir.

Senator COTTON. Okay. In your opening statement, you indicated that newly authorized airstrikes against the Islamic States in Afghanistan have been effective in slowing their growth. Would you expect the use of United States airpower against the Taliban to have similar effect on the Taliban's progress in the country if you used airpower against the Taliban?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, again, I'm trying to build the Afghan capability to do that. As I take a look at adjustments that need to be made, authorities is one of those for 2016. As I said up front, I have provided my leadership some mitigating efforts that I think will improve the Afghan forces and their probability of success against the Taliban as we move forward. Yes, sir.

Senator COTTON. As you were suggesting to Senator Graham about responding to the Taliban if they're attacking coalition forces, David Petraeus wrote, in the Washington Post approximately 3 weeks ago, that, "Airpower currently is used only, one, to attack validated al Qaeda targets; two, to counter specific individuals or groups who have attacked coalition forces previously; and three, to respond directly to attacks on coalition forces. According to leaders on the ground, United States and NATO forces are not otherwise allowed to attack Taliban targets." Do you think the lack of United States airpower being employed against the Taliban accounts for some of their gains in the country?

General CAMPBELL. I think the Taliban know that we've downsized, and I think the Taliban understand that, in the past, they couldn't gather in larger formations. I think we've seen, this year, that they have taken advantage of the reduction of the number of coalition aircraft, absolutely.

Senator COTTON. Thank you.

I want to turn now to the attacks in Helmand Province on January 5th in which Army staff sergeant Matthew McClintock died. There's been some reporting in the media that the Quick Reaction Force was not allowed to deploy rapidly, and that an AC-130

gunship was in the air and was not allowed to engage during the firefight. I'm sure you're up to speed on this event. Could you—would you care to share with the committee your thoughts on what happened that evening?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, that's under investigation right now. As you know, when investigations are ongoing, we don't discuss it. What I would tell you is that, you know, we'll do everything to provide force protection. I've said that's number one utmost in my mind. We'll make sure whenever we employ our forces and they are in a train-advise-assist role with the Afghan Special Operating Forces that we have all the necessary resources required to reduce the threat to them. I mean, whenever we send folks out, there is a CONOP process that goes forward to make sure that we have the right Medevac, we have the right Quick Reaction Force, on and on and on.

So, this investigation will find out what exactly happened on that. I need to hold off on that until that investigation is brought forward to me.

Senator COTTON. Are the restrictions that you face, both in the resources available to you and the way you employ those resources, potentially at play in what happened in Marjah that evening?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, again, I have no restrictions on providing force protection—

Senator COTTON. Well, you only have 9,800 troops there, right?

General CAMPBELL. We're authorized 9,800, yes, sir.

Senator COTTON. If you were to reduce from 9,800 to 5,500, or even lower than that, might we be more likely to see something like this happen once again in the future because the next commander, General Nicholson, is constrained in the resources he has and the way he can employ those resources?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, there is no restraint on force protection. So, I think General Nicholson, before he would allow soldiers to go out and do a train-advise-assist mission with the Special Operating Forces, he and the commanders on the ground would make sure they had all the necessary requirements there to do that, as they did, I'm sure, in this case here.

Senator COTTON. So, the—but, the way they were—

General CAMPBELL. I don't see the number—I don't see the tie between that number—

Senator COTTON. So—but, the way the restraint might play out then is a limitation on the kind of missions they can conduct if they don't have the resources to support the force protection in the CASEVAC for those missions. Is that fair to say?

General CAMPBELL. What's fair to say is, I would not let them go out on a mission unless we have the right CASEVAC, unless we had the right Quick Reaction Force. No, sir.

Senator COTTON. Which necessarily means that some missions may not be able to be accomplished.

General CAMPBELL. We work within the resources we have. Yes, sir.

Senator COTTON. Well, thank you very much, again, for your service. I know you've been a commanding general of the Screaming Eagles. It came to our attention at his confirmation hearing that General Nicholson had never served there. He had only served

in the 82nd. I hope that he can overcome this deficiency in his background. I do understand he once served under 101st Headquarters at—in Afghanistan, so maybe if you leave the combat patch in your desk, he'll get—hit the ground running.

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I'll do that. I also have three tours in the 82nd, sir, so I've got a great affinity for the 82nd.

Senator COTTON. You capped it off at the 101st Air Assault.

General CAMPBELL. I did. Thanks, sir.

Chairman MCCAIN. Thank you, Senator Cotton, for that summary of General Campbell's career. We appreciate it very much.

[Laughter.]

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator King.

Senator KING. General Campbell, you had a narrow escape, a few minutes ago, when the Chairman asked for unanimous consent to move that nomination. I almost objected, not because of any reservations about General Nicholson, but about my extreme admiration for you and my desire to keep you there. So, you—we—I'm thinking of introducing a resolution forbidding your retirement, but—

General CAMPBELL. Sir, you'll have to deal with Mrs. Campbell—

Senator KING. Yeah, thank you. I—

General CAMPBELL. That's what I'd say.

Senator KING. I appreciate that.

We've been talking around an issue today that's really troubling to me. I can't understand any good reason to announce in advance to an enemy that you're going to reduce your troop levels. I just can't—I can't—if I were the Taliban, I'd say, "Okay, fellows, let's go to Acapulco for 6 months, and we'll come back in the fall, when the Americans are no longer going to be doing anything but counterterrorism." Why—I—help me with this.

First—and you've been very diplomatic this morning—but, first, isn't it true that in order to go to the 5,500, which is a fundamental change of mission—as you've testified this morning, it's a change of mission from train-and-assist and counterterrorism to almost entirely counterterrorism. When does that change of—that qualitative change have to start? It's not January 1st of 2017. Isn't it sometime late this summer, early fall?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, again, it—you know, it becomes physics, at some point in time, on how you can move forces out responsibly and safely. I would like to keep—and I—my recommendation to General Nicholson will be to keep 9,800 as long as you can during the most violent part of the fighting season, which is the summer. So, probably in the October timeframe, they'd have to really work hard to make sure they got down to the right number if they continue on the path to go to 5,500.

Senator KING. You've been so diplomatic in your testimony this morning. In your professional military opinion, does it make any sense to announce to an enemy that you're going to reduce your—not only your troop level, but your mission, particularly as it pertains to them, in advance? I just don't—I do understand trying to motivate the Afghans to understand that they can't rely on us forever. That's the one policy I do understand. It's countervailed, it

seems to me, by the signal it sends to the enemy that all they've got to do is wait for 6 or 8 months or a year.

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I'd—you know, again, this is a policy decision, not a military decision. The announcement is——

Senator KING. I'm asking a military man. As a general, you would not put a bulletin out the day before a battle, saying, "We're going to fight you guys like hell until midnight, but then we're going to withdraw our troops."

General CAMPBELL. Sir, any military leader would want to keep all the advantage to him, not provide any advantage to the enemy.

Senator KING. I'll take that as a——

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I'm not trying to be diplomatic.

Senator KING. No, I understand.

General CAMPBELL. What I'm trying to tell you is that, you know, any guy on the ground, any military commander, is going to want to have as many resources as he can, as many soldiers as he can, and he's going to want to accomplish the mission. At the same time—what I'm trying to do here—and I'm not trying to be disrespectful—what I'm trying to do is make sure that I provide my military leadership the opportunity to make those judgments and pass that to our political leadership, and not debate it in open, because I think that hurts us, as well. I think that—that gives the enemy an advantage and non-advantage. What I'm trying to say—just as Senator McCain said, it isn't about numbers; it is about the capability. Right now, where we were to where we are with Bagram, Jalalabad, Kandahar——

Senator KING. We're way ahead of where we were a year ago.

General CAMPBELL. We have options now. I think we ought to take advantage of those options as we move forward.

Senator KING. I completely agree. I just—I'm—as you can tell, I have real reservations about the policy.

General CAMPBELL. Announcing numbers provides the enemy, maybe in their mind, that they can wait us out.

Senator KING. Bingo.

Close air support. One of the asymmetric advantages we have is airpower. You testified this morning about the limitations on Afghan airpower and how long it's going to take. Wouldn't it make sense for us to maintain—forget about all the other missions we're talking about, but to maintain a close-air-support capability without the limitations, necessarily, that we have now for some longer period of time? Wouldn't that be a tremendous advantage to the Afghan Security Forces?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, you can give me all the resources you want and all the people. If you don't have the authorities, you've got a mismatch. Or we can have——

Senator KING. I can——

General CAMPBELL.—all the authorities you want, and if you don't have the right resources—so, you've got to—we've got to have that balance, absolutely.

Senator KING. I'm talking about resources and authorities. That—what I'm asking is—close air support would be a significant advantage to the Afghan Security Forces if we had the resources and the authority.

General CAMPBELL. Sir, the close air support has been the—has been the one resource in the capability that the Afghans have asked me for every single day. Again, a couple of years ago, 150 attack helicopters, two squadrons, air force. When we started Resolute Support, they were down to five MI-35s. They have zero at the end of the fighting season. They just picked up three because India passed those on to them. That'll make—that'll really help.

Yeah, they desire that. We would have to work TTPs, have the right authorities to provide the right assistance on the ground for them.

Senator KING. I would hope that, in your final recommendations as you're—in your exit interview, if you will—that you would emphasize the importance of that—

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I absolutely will.

Senator KING. Thank you. Thank you again for your service, General.

General CAMPBELL. Thank you, sir.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Rounds.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, thank you for your service, and thank you to your family for sticking with you and working through this marvelous career, and, at the same time, all of the sacrifice that you've made is most certainly a sacrifice which they have endured with you, and I appreciate that.

General, last time that you were here, we had asked you for some specific responses to what had happened in Kunduz with the very unfortunate incident where a hospital was attacked. I want to thank you for having a—in a timely fashion, to having responded to our request and providing a very good answer to our questions. It is appreciated.

Also, I just—I know that you've already talked about this somewhat with Senator Blumenthal, but I'd like to give you the opportunity to perhaps specifically work in with regard to governance and the challenges there. We know that ultimately effective governance will be required for the counterinsurgency effort to succeed. To what extent has effective governance evolved during your time in Afghanistan? How do you see the relationship between the effective governance and the U.S. troop level that should remain?

Let me preface the question with this. In October, when we came and you had the opportunity to show us kind of what you were doing and how you were working with this government, this Unity Government, was at the same time that the announcement was that we would maintain 10,000 and eventually have to come down to 5,500. I got the impression that it was because of the governance and the capabilities that were there that we were even considering doing that. Yet, at the same time, it seemed to be reported that this was there because of the incompetence of the Afghans rather than because we could see progress being made.

I'd like you to have the opportunity to comment on that and get your thoughts.

General CAMPBELL. Sir, thanks for the question. Several years ago, when I was there before, sir, we had Provincial Reconstruction Teams, PRTs, we had an influx of civilians that would help at district levels, and we had prioritized districts. We tried to help build

the Afghan capability all the way down to the district level. You could see the services that were provided to the people of those districts and provinces continue to rise. We've gone away from PRTs over the last several years, as we believe that the Afghans could pick that up, themselves.

For me, again, even on the governance side, it's about leadership, it's about having the right people in the right position, and giving them the authority, and then holding them accountable. President Ghani and Dr. Abdullah are trying to do that. You know, it starts with governors of the 34 provinces, and picking the right folks there. Then it goes down to the 407-plus districts, and having the right people there. If you have the right people and you don't fill out the staffs, they don't have the budget—I mean, that—so, it's a hard process. I do see them getting after it.

I sit right next to the—I do to the National Security Council meetings with the—that President Ghani allows me to go to once a week, 3 or 4 hours at a chunk—right next to me is the IDLG, which is—works through all the governance. He and I have many conversations as he tries to work after getting the right people in place to really start that. They reach out to many other countries to help them in different ways, to have programs that help build their governance capability.

From a military standpoint, all I do, really, sir, is work to help build the security forces so they can provide security down to those districts that would embolden the governance to take shape.

Senator ROUNDS. General, right now you have the option of maintaining 9,800 or so troops. I know that you have a responsibility. You've been directed that you must get that down to approximately 5,500 by the end of the year. If the current plan is allowed in place, how long can you maintain the adequate levels for both the counterinsurgency and the training mission, which I know you believe in—how long can you maintain the higher number until you have to start drawing down in order to meet the obligation that you've been given?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, we're working through, and we'll have very detailed plans that show that glide slope. My opinion right now is, I'm going to try to keep 9,800—recommend to General Nicholson to keep 9,800 all the way through most of the fighting season, but, at some point, as I said before, it becomes physics, and you have to get people out of different areas and bring them in. That's a—we've done that over the years, from 100,000-plus to where we are today. So, we have a very methodical, well-thought-out process. Our logisticians are the best in the world to be able to get that done.

Senator ROUNDS. Your goal is to maintain as many as possible for as long as possible, just in case there may be a change in heart with regard to what we need there. Would that be fair to say, sir?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I'm going to try to keep as many as I can, as long as I can. Understand I have an order to get down to—

Senator ROUNDS. Yes, sir. I appreciate that.

Thank you once again for your service and for your answers today, sir.

General CAMPBELL. Thank you, sir.



Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator HIRONO.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I add my thanks, General, to you and your family for your years of service to our country.

In the series of questions and your responses regarding what is the appropriate number of United States forces in Afghanistan, part of the assessment from your testimony is that we need to assess the capability of the Afghan—Afghani military to protect themselves. So, I know that—in your testimony, that you assess that at least 70 percent of the problems facing the Afghan Security Forces results from poor leadership, and that there are some positive changes occurring with regard to replacing the poor leadership, which I assume is poor leadership in the Afghan military. That's what you're referring to, right?

General CAMPBELL. Yes, ma'am.

Senator HIRONO. Military. So, the army has replaced 92 general officers, which I assume is a positive change that was made.

General CAMPBELL. Ma'am, for the most part, those were all very positive changes. That's happened just probably in the last 3 months.

Senator HIRONO. So, I don't know out of how many general officers—how many more general officers do you think needs to be replaced in order to strengthen the capability of the Afghan army?

General CAMPBELL. Ma'am, on the MOD side, on the army side, I think we're down to very few. There's a couple of key positions that the Minister of Defense is taking a look at that I know that he wants to change out, that I would concur with him.

Senator HIRONO. Although—

General CAMPBELL. I think more—we've got to get to the MOI side, on the police side. We have not made very many changes on the police side. I think that's really where we have to go next.

Senator HIRONO. So, that's what you were referring to when you said, "These changes will take time." It's on the police side, military police side.

General CAMPBELL. Yes, ma'am.

Senator HIRONO. Not necessarily—

General CAMPBELL. I mean, the future of both the army and the police are the great young leaders they have today—the captains, majors. They're building their noncommissioned officer corps. They have folks who have been trained in the United States, the U.K., Germany, other places. We've got to continue to put them in the right leadership positions. I think that's the hope, that's the future of their security force.

Senator HIRONO. So, what kind of factors will need to be in place to ensure that these kinds of leadership changes continue to occur in Afghanistan?

General CAMPBELL. Ma'am, you have to have leaders of courage that want to make those decisions based on merit, based on standards, not based on patronage. You have that in the National Unity Government.

Senator HIRONO. So, you need political leaders with that kind of perspective, as well as military leaders. That kind of—

General CAMPBELL. You do, ma'am, because the general officers, for sure, the two-, three-, and four-stars, are picked by the political leadership. Below, the one-star, it really is with—inside the Ministry of Defense, but that's also political leadership.

Senator HIRONO. So, since the changing leadership is such a critical part of assessing—it's going to have an impact on what would be an appropriate number of U.S. forces, what is the length of time, do you see, of—that would be necessary for these kinds of changes to occur in Afghanistan?

General CAMPBELL. Ma'am, I would hope that they would make all the critical ones prior to this summer fighting season, so they can get those in place and have a better opportunity to change the dynamic of 2016 verse 2015. So, I would hope they could make most of those here very quickly.

Senator HIRONO. So, that's very positive.

I know that we use—turning to conditionalities when it comes to the distribution of our aid and resources in Afghanistan—one of the areas of conditionality involves women's rights in Afghanistan. What progress has the Afghan Government made with regard to women's rights? Can you express your thoughts on that—

General CAMPBELL. Yes, ma'am. Thank—

Senator HIRONO.—point?

General CAMPBELL.—you for the question. I mean, they're doing much better in the MOI and the police than they are in the army. They're working both, but they're—there's institutional challenges on the army side to recruit women, because the army is a national force, and I think the women want to join and stay where they grew up. The police, they can do that. The army, they usually can't. So, they're working around that. They've done, actually, again, quite good on police side, of encouraging women to join, sending them to Jordan and other—Turkey—to get schooling, and then bringing them back in. The money that has been appropriated from our Congress specifically towards women issues, I think, has encouraged many to continue to join. We'll continue to push. President Ghani has talked about this. Dr. Abdullah's talked about it. They just have to continue to implement.

Senator HIRONO. So, do you think we should increase the direct funding that we provide to the women who want to be a part of, you know, what Afghanistan needs to do?

General CAMPBELL. Ma'am, I think right now we're very good on where we're at on the funding. I think the numbers that we're at are fine for where we're at. I think what we've done differently here the last year or so is, in the past, we would take that money and say, "Hey, they need this or they need that," not really understanding what the women of Afghanistan really needed. Now what we've done is bring them into the process. We have a Women's Advisory Committee, that I chair along with Ms. Ghani, that helps us determine some of those pieces. We take their feedback more now, which makes us be more efficient with the money we have.

Senator HIRONO. That makes a lot of sense.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General CAMPBELL. Thank you, ma'am.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator TILLIS.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Campbell, thank you for being here, for your service. I have to say that, when I visited Afghanistan last year, I came away inspired by the morale on the ground and by their utmost confidence in your leadership and the leadership of your team. So, thank you.

A quick question. I know you've been pummeled on the troop levels. Can you at least concur that, at the time the decision was made to go to a Kabul-centric 1,000-person footprint, that that in no way reflected the force needs that we had in—based on the conditions on the ground?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I don't know when the 1,000 Kabul-centric was made, tell you the truth. I wasn't there.

Senator TILLIS. When the policy decision was made, I mean, what—can you imagine any time, whether you were there or not, that that made sense, based on the conditions on the ground?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, the 1,000 Kabul-centric, you know, limits what you can do—

Senator TILLIS. Yeah, just—

General CAMPBELL.—no CT with that 1,000. So, I believe we need a CT mission, going forward, to protect our Homeland—

Senator TILLIS. Yeah.

General CAMPBELL.—to build the Afghan capability. So, I—

Senator TILLIS. It just seems to me that that was a—that that policy decision, which at one point was made, could not have possibly been based on any on-the-ground assessment of what we needed to do there.

To move on, I want to talk about something else that I mentioned in General Nicholson's hearing last week, and it's something that I picked up on when you briefed us last year. That has to do with something that's really outside of your lane, but very important. That's the economic assistance. You discussed, in the hearing last year, about the tail in 2017 and the need to sustain funding well beyond that. To what extent do you think our apparent reduction in force influences the investments that are made by other partners in the region, and potentially puts that at risk?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, again, I can only speculate on that, but I would—I know for sure that our forces going down have taken—have hurt the economy of Afghanistan. They were very dependent upon a lot of the influx of money that was provided based on the number of forces from the coalition, especially in the transportation arena and the services. So, as we've come down, I'm sure that's had a negative effect on—

Senator TILLIS. Do you think that the change—in your testimony, you talked about how the Taliban have changed their strategies, they've extended the fighting season—do you think that a reduction in that economic assistance, the continued changes in the Taliban could have a negative impact, in terms of the conditions on the ground and stress a 5,500 troop level?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I think—

Senator TILLIS. Our risk assessment, likelihood of that actually stressing those levels.

General CAMPBELL. Yeah, I'm not sure it would have an impact on the number, sir, but what it would do would—it would give the

Taliban, you know, the opportunity to use that against the National Unity Government, against the coalition.

Senator TILLIS. As we retreat to a strictly counterterrorism role and the army—the Afghan army and the police continue to deal with the counterinsurgency, how would you assess their ability, as it exists today with 9,800 troops on the ground, and their ability of—let’s say, their ability now is at—on a scale—a random scale of 1 to 10; and let’s say they’re an 8 now with our train-advise-and-assist capability—it’s going to be reduced, obviously, with our withdrawal back to purely counterterrorism—how, on that scale—does it stay the same? Is it appreciably lower, in terms of their ability to take the fight to the Taliban without our train-advise-and-assist capabilities?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, you’re not going to like the answer, but it depends. So, if I can give you—if I can give you an example. You know, we’ve only been doing train, advise, assist at the corps level on four of the six corps, two that we came off of. The 203rd Corps in Ghazni and the 215th Corps in Helmand were two that we didn’t have advisors there all the time. The 203rd Corps, over the last fighting season, led—because of the leadership of General Yaftali, the corps commander, has actually done pretty well. We haven’t had to provide a lot of other advisors to them over this past fighting season. The 215th, completely different story. It’s because of the leadership, but also because of the threat and the fight they had down in Helmand. I’ve had to apply more resources, and I’ve made Helmand the main effort for not only our advisors, but also the Afghans have made that their main effort over the winter campaign, to build the 215th back up.

So, again, I think it does have a lot to do with leadership. Again, they value any advising they can get. President Ghani welcomes all of our nations. He welcomes to continue to professionalize both the army and the police. He knows that he needs the United States to lead to do that.

Senator TILLIS. Well, General Campbell, I would maybe close with just a comment, but I will tell you, when we met there, and we met—we went to the forward operating base—we met with the Afghan general there. It was very clear to me what a confidence-builder your presence was there, and an inspiration for their troops just to execute at a higher level. It seems to me, as someone who’s not served in the military, that that reduction—there’s going to be some proportionate reduction in their confidence. As they’re gaining their capabilities, there was no doubt in my mind, when that general looked over to you and your team and talked about what great mentors you were, that’s a loss that they’re going to feel. Hopefully the conditions on the ground will not change to a point to where we ultimately have to rebuild and go back in.

The last thing I want to tell you is, thank you for your service. I want you to seriously consider at least a retirement home near your 82nd Airborne folks, down Pinehurst. There’s a golf course that I think’s really going to gain some notoriety there that you may want to consider coming and spending time. A man of your stature, we would greatly welcome back to North Carolina. Thank you for your service.

General CAMPBELL. Sir, I am looking at that. Thank you.

Senator REED [presiding]. On behalf of the Chairman, let me recognize Senator Sullivan.

Thank you, Senator Tillis.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, you probably know that a lot of members of the Army also retire in Alaska, so I want to make sure you keep that option open, too.

[Laughter.]

Senator SULLIVAN. We don't have good—we don't have such great golfing, but we have better hunting and fishing than North Carolina.

General CAMPBELL. Yes, sir.

Senator SULLIVAN. So, I hope you keep that—keep an open mind on that.

Like all the other members of the committee, I want to thank you for your service—exemplary service. Not only to you, but your family, as well. Because, as you know, families serve when their members are serving. Just want to thank the whole clan for your decades of service.

I wanted to follow on the question that Senator King raised. I'm just asking your view on it, because I think sometimes we actually—certainly I do—get a little confused on the difference when we have members of the military testifying in front of this committee—you broke down the difference between what you called a policy decision versus a military decision. To me, I'm not sure there's such a clear dichotomy. So, how do you think we should be thinking about those issues?

Let me give you an example. Is the—was the troop-strength decision a military decision, or was it a policy decision, or did you bring a military decision to the civilian leaders and they came up with a different policy decision? How—I'm not clear what you meant by the distinction. I'm not 100 percent sure there's a fine, you know, bright line between the two.

General CAMPBELL. Sir, thanks for the question. Sir, what I would tell you is that, you know, the military has an opportunity to provide its best military advice. When we look at, as Senator McCain talked about earlier, the requirements and the capabilities required to accomplish a mission that you've been given by your senior leadership—in this case, the President of the United States—and so, we take many different—we take some assumptions of that plan, and we work through that. Usually there's three or four different courses of action. The 5,500 is probably one of those different courses of action.

What I can't get into, sir, is all the giving back and—going back and forth and taking a look at that from—both from a military perspective and then as you engage with the interagency, because there's—you know, there—what we look at is risk to force and risk to mission. So, you know, the military absolutely has the responsibility to provide, you know, what it thinks is necessary to accomplish the mission, but there are also outside factors that tie into that, that we have to understand. If some of those come in and adjust the capability or the requirements that you need there, then what we're required to do is go back and say, "Okay, we can still

do the mission, but the risks may be higher, or the risk goes down.” That’s how I think we—

Senator SULLIVAN. Well, your military decision in this case was the COAs that you provided on troop strengths that came with certain risks, depending on what the COA was. The policy decision was ultimately the decision chosen by the President to go with 5,500? Is that a good way to think about it?

General CAMPBELL. Well, sir, I think, again, that the decision—ultimately, the President makes the decision, and that’s the policy that we follow. There’s a lot of give-and-take as we go through there, and I—and we have the opportunity, at all different levels, to provide our input. Sometime the input is taken, sometime it’s not taken. I think that’s part of the process as we move through there. I think we’ve learned many of those lessons over the—over several years, of how we work within this process to do that. I’m very proud that, you know, we have great leaders, like Joe Dunford and others—General Dempsey and others that have been—that have helped us get through this process.

We absolutely have to provide our input. If we can’t live with that, you know, if there’s something we can’t live with, then we have to say so.

Senator SULLIVAN. Right.

General CAMPBELL. Then—

Senator SULLIVAN. Okay.

General CAMPBELL. We follow orders, sir. You follow—

Senator SULLIVAN. I know.

General CAMPBELL.—the last orders first, and—

Senator SULLIVAN. I appreciate that.

General CAMPBELL.—if you can’t live with it, if it’s not immoral, it’s not illegal—all right?—then you’ve got to do the best of your ability to make sure that you can accomplish the mission.

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me ask you another question on the safe haven issue on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Is that solvable? If it’s not solvable, do we have a perpetual problem with the Taliban, with the Haqqani Network, with al Qaeda? I mean, how should we be thinking about that? Because it doesn’t seem like that looks like it’s going away anytime soon. It certainly has had to be an enormous frustration for you, to have a—be ready for a fighting season and then know that some of the enemies that we and the Afghan army were battling go to the other side of the border, train, equip, rest, and then come back at us. How should we think about that issue, which seems to not get as much attention as it deserves, but, in my view, seems to be one of the most critical issues we face in the entire region?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, thanks. Again, I think we have to continue to work with Pakistan. Pakistan and Afghanistan have got to work together. They’ve got to talk military-to-military on how they can get after a common enemy that knows no border, knows no boundaries. Transnational terrorism does that. Pakistan and Afghanistan have a lot of ungoverned space. This is going to be a problem for years and years and years. This is a—the terrorism piece is a generational issue.

The one way that we can get after it is to continue to build upon the capability of the Afghan forces to fight this enemy. I believe

we're always going to need a CT presence of some sort as we continue to build their presence, to keep pressure on so that we don't allow this transnational terrorism to come to the Homeland of the United States.

Senator SULLIVAN. If I may, Mr. Chairman, I know my time's up, but, seeing that I'm the—

Senator REED. Go ahead.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you.

I just want to follow up on the last point you made. One of the things that I think is important for our military leaders, civilian leaders, Members of Congress, is—make sure that we're having a discussion, not only in these kind of settings, but with the American people on what—the challenges that we face, what the—the cold truth on some of the challenges that we face. Because, I think, when we do that, you have better policy, you have better support, ultimately, from the American people, which is fundamentally critical to any successful policy.

So, let me just ask a final followup. You talk about a generational struggle. General Abizaid has talked about “the long war.” You've had experience battling the long war for quite some time now. You know, one of the things that I think where the President hasn't really leveled with the American people is when we talk about, “Well, we're—we've ended combat operations in Afghanistan.”

The CT mission is clearly a combat operation. We've had soldiers, unfortunately, killed recently. Could you talk about how we, again, should be thinking about this issue of what you term “generational struggle,” General Abizaid's talked about “the long war”—you know, there's different models here, and some people talk about Korea, some people talk about Germany—what's the historical analogy that we should be trying to think about with regard to our troop presence in Afghanistan or other regions where the threat of transnational terrorism is not going away next year, it's not going away 2 years from now, it's probably not going away in 5 years? How should we be thinking about that, from a policy perspective, but also in terms of leveling with the American people?

General CAMPBELL. Sir, thanks.

Again, I do believe that—you know, that transnational terrorism, the—it's a global threat. You know, 9/11 changed our lives forever. I think we're very fortunate that the men and women of our country, for the most part, you know, don't worry about a lot of it now, because they have great men and women, less than one-half of 1 percent, that continue to serve willingly, voluntarily, to do what they can to make sure that they—that they're safe. It's good that our—

Senator SULLIVAN. Are on offense in many parts of the world.

General CAMPBELL. Absolutely. So—but, again, there are going to continue to be bad people who want to do bad things to the United States and our way of life, and we shouldn't try to hide that. That's going to be out there. So, we ought to do everything we can to continue to have the very best military in the world that we can, the strongest military. We're dependent upon Congress to provide us the money to be able to do that. We appreciate that great support. It's going to take a global effort. The U.S. can't do all this by itself.

It's going to continue to take a global effort as we move forward. I think we've got to talk in those kind of terms.

It'll be hard to take a model like Germany or Korea or Japan or something like that, to say, "Hey, we're going to continue 30,000." You know, I don't think we're in that case. Technology—you know, the—has changed the world we live in, so I think there's other ways to get after this. Bottom line is, we're going to have to continue to keep pressure on it. The way you do that is, continue to provide the right equipment, the right training, and the right leadership for the men and women who volunteer to serve our country. Once you neglect them, then we're in trouble.

After 37 years of begin in the—almost 37 years of being in the Army, with my son, who I talked about the other day, who's at Fort Hood, Texas, so I haven't seen since August of 2014, in Jalalabad, on his second tour, who's getting ready to go on his third tour. If I didn't think this was important—what I said the other day is, I'd tell him to get out of the Army. I absolutely think it's important, and I think people need to go find ways that they can serve our country. The military is one way, and it's been very good to me.

Again, sir, it's a global thing. We're going to have to stay on it. It's going to take continued leadership from the United States. That's the only way I see it going in the future.

Senator SULLIVAN. Well, General, thank you again for your exceptional service to our country, and your son, and for that very wise wrap-up.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator REED. Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

In behalf of the Chairman, I will thank you again for your testimony, for your extraordinary service to the Nation, to the Army, and for your testimony this morning.

With that, the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:01 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN

##### AFGHAN DISTRICTS

Senator MCCAIN. In your testimony you stated "... as of last week, the units we have on the ground throughout the country report that of the 407 district centers, 8 (or 2 percent) are under insurgent control. We assess that another 18 (or 4 percent) are under what we call insurgent influence. Often, these district centers are in remote and sparsely populated areas that security forces are not able to access very often in force. Additionally, at any given time there may be up to 94 district centers (around 23 percent) that we view as "at risk."

1. Please name the district centers that you assess are under insurgent control, influence, and at risk. Please also provide definitions for the terms "control," "influence," and "at risk."

General CAMPBELL. [Deleted.]

#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROGER F. WICKER

##### UPCOMING TRANSITION TO GENERAL NICHOLSON

Senator WICKER. I am sure you have given lots of thought to what has been accomplished during your time in Afghanistan and what you will hope to see from a well-deserved CONUS vantage point after you finally come home.



2. What are some ways in which you would like to see the Afghans continue to make tactical and operational progress in 2016?

General CAMPBELL. GIRoA and the ANDSF must operationalize the sustainable security strategy that we have developed in close coordination with the Afghan leadership. It emphasizes a fight-hold-disrupt construct that will adjust the force alignment of the Afghan army and police. GIRoA should apply this concept by prioritizing key terrain to posture and utilize the ANDSF effectively and efficiently. Implementation of this strategy has begun, but it will be an ongoing effort into 2017 and beyond. In 2016, I would like to see the ANDSF progress by reducing the number of static checkpoints, improving leadership, effectively utilizing organic CAS (A-29s) and key mobility platforms, while improving logistics management.

I'm also interested in your views regarding our long term involvement in Afghanistan. There are many on both sides of the issue: Some argue for a limited United States commitment with an expiration date, and some see this as a persistent conflict that will require a sustained partnership with a small United States combat and advisory capability in Afghanistan for the foreseeable future.

3. Senator WICKER. What has been your recommendation to your leadership? Do you think our intent is understood amongst the Afghani people and makes a difference to them? To the Taliban?

General CAMPBELL. My recommendation is for a long-term commitment to Afghanistan from the US, NATO, and Coalition nations. We must move beyond a year to year mentality and began looking at Afghanistan from a multi-year perspective. I have recommended to my chain of command that we begin a five year outlook. With a continued relatively modest investment we can secure our vital national interests in the region and help protect our Homeland.

Unfortunately, our intent is not widely understood by the Afghan people. Far too often a single bad news story overshadows ten good news stories and many people just have not heard the United States' current intent to extend our commitment. However, those that have heard are supportive and thankful for our continued presence. Our intent absolutely makes a difference in not just their day-to-day outlook, but their prospects for a successful future as well. As for the Taliban, with our continued support of the Afghan Government and the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, they most certainly understand our intent. Following the Taliban's loss in Kunduz, and the difficult fight they are facing in Helmand (along with increased train, advise, and assist support from the Coalition), our continued presence and support is having a definite effect on the them as well.

#### PAKISTAN

Senator WICKER. I would like to ask some brief questions about Pakistan—a partner in the region with whom we have a complex relationship.

First, let me touch on the increasingly positive working relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan:

One such example is President Ghani's call to Pakistan Prime Minister Sharif to condemn the Taliban attack on Badaber Air Base in Pakistan last year. According to press reports, President Ghani told Prime Minister Sharif that Afghanistan will "never allow its land to be used against Pakistan by anyone."

4. What is your assessment of the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan now? Has the relationship improved during your time in Afghanistan?

General CAMPBELL. [Deleted]

Senator WICKER. Second, let me ask you about terrorist groups that operate in and out of Pakistan:

The Haqqani network maintains a safe haven in North Waziristan, Pakistan, across Afghanistan's southeastern border. The Institute for the Study of War (Fred Kagan) refers to this Pakistani Taliban terrorist group as one that "has the backing of elements within the Pakistani security establishment."

5. How would you assess the current state of the Haqqani network?

General CAMPBELL. [Deleted.]

6. Senator WICKER. Are the Pakistanis doing enough against the Haqqani Network in your opinion? What more should they be doing?

General CAMPBELL. [Deleted.]

7. Senator WICKER. Has the level of cooperation between you and your counterparts in the Pakistan security apparatus improved during your time as Commander? How should your successor enhance cooperation with Pakistan?  
General CAMPBELL. [Deleted]

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR KELLY AYOTTE

AFGHAN CHALLENGES AND CAPABILITY GAPS—NUMBER OF UNITED STATES TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN

Senator AYOTTE. You have noted that “budgeting, force generation, personnel management, and national level maintenance, logistics and procurement” remain challenges for them. You also said that “Capability gaps still exist in fixed and rotary-wing aviation, combined arms operations, intelligence collection and dissemination, and maintenance [as well as] close air support.”

8. Do you believe those challenges will be fixed and those capability gaps will be resolved in the next year?

General CAMPBELL. We are committed to developing a sustainable, effective, and affordable ANDSF through increased financial discipline, financial oversight, and policy adherence. In the past year we have placed conditions-based financial controls, are developing improved personnel and pay systems, and continue to fight corruption. The ANDSF are increasing effectiveness in employment, sustainment, and strategic management of enablers, but still depend on the Coalition and US. For example their demand for CAS and CASEVAC exceeds organic capability. They will still not have independent and organic capability in 2017—they must field material and systems, but must also build sustainment programs and the human capital to employ these capability, which takes several years.

9. Senator AYOTTE. In your professional military judgment, will reducing the U.S. military presence from 9,800 to 5,500 service members make it easier or harder to address those challenges and capability gaps?

General CAMPBELL. Reducing from 9,800 to 5,500 will make it harder to address Afghan National Defense and Security Forces’ challenges and capability gaps. These shortfalls are best addressed through train, advise, and assist (TAA) efforts. Our ability to conduct TAA operations at the 5,500 force management level (FML) is limited to the national/ministerial level in the Afghan Security Institutions, and down to the tactical level only with the Afghan Air Force and the Afghan Special Security Forces. This FML does not allow for continued TAA to address challenges at the corps level within the conventional ANDSF.

NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY

10. Senator AYOTTE. Have the Never Contracting with the Enemy Provisions been helpful in improving vetting and keeping our tax dollars out of the hands of our enemies?

General CAMPBELL. Yes. Section 841 provisions, combined with the vendor vetting processes outlined in USFOR—A vendor vetting orders, have improved our visibility of entities actively opposing US and Coalition forces enabling contracting agencies to terminate or deny awarding of contracts and for commander’s to deny those vendors access to US and Coalition personnel, installations, and/or equipment. To date, more than 2,100 vendors have been denied contracts by Department of Defense contracting agencies because the vetting process determined those vendors posed a high force protection threat to troops and/or funneling money to the enemy. Task Force 2010, USCENTCOM’s Vendor Vetting organization, is working with OSD to provide new NDAA language that further supports the vendor vetting program. Due to Task Force 2010’s proactive approach, which focuses on preventing covered entities from receiving contracts, no companies in 2015 were recommended for Section 841 designation.

11. Senator AYOTTE. Since it became law, how many contracts and subcontracts have been terminated and how much money has been kept out of the hands of our enemies utilizing the Never Contracting with the Enemy provision?

General CAMPBELL. To date, over 8,100 vendors have been vetted and 26% of them, over 2,100, were denied contracts due to their assessment as posing a high risk to troops or providing money to the enemy. Under Section 841 of the NDAA, 112 entities have been identified and prohibited from receiving government contracts safeguarding over \$47 million in contracting funds. No companies or entities have been identified for termination under FY 15 NDAA Section 841 due to the

proactive vendor vetting process used by Task Force 2010 and the absence of a specified designation authority.

12. Senator AYOTTE. According to the National Defense Authorization Act, the next report on the use of these authorities is due on March 1 of this year

In anticipation of submitting this report, has your command provided this information to CENTCOM for Afghanistan?

General CAMPBELL. Yes. The required information was provided to CENTCOM in January 2016.

13. Senator AYOTTE. Do you expect the report to be on time and complete?

General CAMPBELL. Yes. I expect CENTCOM to submit the complete report on time.

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#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOM COTTON

##### CONTRACTORS IN AFGHANISTAN

Senator COTTON. "A Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) report from 2013 said that the Afghanistan Government has levied nearly a billion dollars in business taxes on contractors supporting United States efforts in Afghanistan in contradiction to agreements exempting them from these taxes. Contractors have reported that this remains a problem, including for past, wrongly issued, tax bills, and is impacting their ability to fulfill commitments to the United States in Afghanistan. Among the concerns they have raised is: the harassment of their employees, the Afghan Government's refusal to provide visas or necessary licenses, and the Afghan Government putting contractors on no-fly lists unless the contractors pay all or part of the sums in question.

14. As most of these contracts are in support of Operation Resolute Support, what is being done to help contractors in addressing this issue and stop this "shakedown" of U.S. companies and which is also having a negative impact on their services there?

General CAMPBELL. [Deleted]

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#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR CLAIRE McCASKILL

##### BUILDING AND SUSTAINING AFGHAN FORCES

Senator McCASKILL. The US and NATO have been training the Afghan security forces (Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police) for over eight years and the forces are near their target end strength level of 352,000. I understand the Afghan security forces perform well when conducting deliberate, planned offensive operations, but often struggle in quick reaction responses and are often overmatched when attacked at static sites, such as checkpoints. They, like the Iraqi forces we also trained, are heavily reliant on their special forces to conduct clearing operations which is a typical conventional activity that should not require elite units.

15. Are we building the forces Afghanistan needs, wants, and can sustain or are we building the forces the US and NATO want?

General CAMPBELL. As we continue to conduct our train, advise, and assist (TAA) mission, we are ever mindful of the progress Afghanistan has made in the last eight years. We should temper our comparison of Afghan National Defense and Security Force (ANDSF) with modern armies. Considering they began as an unorganized collection of militia and have developed many of the systems and processes of an advanced military in less than a decade, the progress ANDSF is actually quite substantial. Planning, force management, procurement, sustainment, systems fielding, and management of the ANDSF is primarily done by the ministries alongside US and Coalition advisors. The ANDSF are not executing our plan, we are advising them as they build their own.

##### US CONTRACTORS IN AFGHANISTAN

Senator McCASKILL. According to information compiled by the Congressional Research Service, as of June 2015, there were approximately 9,000 US troops in Afghanistan but almost 29,000 DOD contractors. While the total number of contractors is trending down (there were more than 51,000 contractors in Afghanistan in June 2014), we have now hit a point where we have three contractors for every one US servicemember in Afghanistan.

16. How are you able to ensure these contractors are receiving the appropriate level of oversight?

General CAMPBELL. USFOR-A has both automated and manual systems in place to provide proper contractor oversight. The automated systems include the Synchronized Pre-deployment and Operational Tracker (SPOT) that track contractors as they move into, within, and out of Afghanistan. We have Contracting Officer Representatives (CORs) that work closely with contractors who monitor the day to day activities and levels of effort that each one performs. Larger contracts have multiple CORs assigned as well as Military subject matter experts who help monitor and track technical and service levels of performance.

17. Senator MCCASKILL. We currently expect about 9,800 US servicemembers to remain in Afghanistan through most of 2016. If a decision is made to reduce our troop presence, do you expect to see a continued reduction in the number of contractors?

General CAMPBELL. Yes. Total contractor numbers will decline, however the ratio of contractors to service members may climb as the total number of service members declines to our enduring 5,500. Contractors will decline as part of the military reduction, but contract solutions will also be utilized to perform some essential support missions formerly performed by military personnel. With this, the overall ratio of contractors to service members is expected to rise from our current approximate level of three contractors to each service member.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

COUNTERPROPAGANDA

18. Senator MCCASKILL. What is the United States currently doing to support our Afghan partners to counter propaganda from terrorist groups such as the Taliban and ISIS? I understand it may be necessary to review your response in a classified setting.

General Campbell. [Deleted]

