

**THE NATIONAL GUARD STATE PARTNERSHIP
PROGRAM: STRENGTHENING U.S. SECURITY,
ONE PARTNERSHIP AT A TIME**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
GOVERNMENT REFORM

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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- * Article, *The Intercept*, “U.S.-Trained Niger Junta Kicks Out U.S. Troops, Drone Base”; submitted by Rep. Crane.
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**THE NATIONAL GUARD STATE PARTNERSHIP
PROGRAM: STRENGTHENING U.S. SECURITY,
ONE PARTNERSHIP AT A TIME**

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25, 2025

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS.
Washington, D.C.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:03 p.m., in room HVC-210, U.S. Capitol Visitor Center, Hon. William Timmons [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Timmons, Cloud, Luna, Crane, McGuire, Subramanyam, and Lynch.

Mr. TIMMONS. This hearing of the Subcommittee on Military and Foreign Affairs will come to order. Welcome, everyone.

Without objection, the Chair may declare a recess at any time.

I recognize myself for the purpose of making an opening statement.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN WILLIAM TIMMONS
REPRESENTATIVE FROM SOUTH CAROLINA**

Mr. TIMMONS. Good afternoon. Thank you for joining us today to discuss one of the Department of Defense's most effective, yet often overlooked, tools of soft power: the National Guard's State Partnership Program, or SPP. Since its founding in 1993 as a post-cold war initiative, the SPP has been instrumental in fostering close military relationships with foreign nations and allies all around the world. Currently, the program boasts over 100 participants throughout every geographic combatant command. From Eastern Europe to the islands in the South Pacific, the State Partnership Program has helped the United States deter our adversaries, enhance allied interoperability, and promote regional stability. It is my hope that this hearing will demonstrate the global impact of this essential program and to provide Subcommittee Members the opportunity to have any questions or concerns answered by the subject matter experts we have before us today.

However, as with most defense programs, this program also brings complexity and the opportunity for waste, fraud, and abuse. A 2022 Government Accountability Office report found that DOD and the National Guard Bureau face serious challenges in tracking completed activities and clarifying legal authorities to partner nations. While the Committee has been assured that these issues

have since been resolved and that the Department has satisfied all GAO's recommendations, I am curious about ways Congress can help continue the success of this program and help prevent any future issues. Additionally, I am curious to hear from our witnesses how these valuable partnerships stay aligned with the Administration's national security priorities as well as how successful outcomes are tracked and measured.

Finally, we must assess the resources that are provided to the program. Currently, the SPP's budget is just one percent of the overall defense security cooperation budget but accounts for almost 30 percent of all geographic combatant command engagements with partners and allies. It is my hope that this hearing will bring to light the need for enhanced funding for the State Partnership Program and the vital mission it supports. I look forward to hearing from the witnesses today, and I want to thank them again for appearing before us.

I now recognize Ranking Member Subramanyam for the purpose of making an opening statement.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I appreciate all the witnesses for coming today. Thank you for being here.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER
SUHAS SUBRAMANYAM, REPRESENTATIVE FROM VIRGINIA**

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. The National Guard is a unique branch of the U.S. military with dual state and Federal missions, and I have had the pleasure of working with the Virginia National Guard in my time serving in Richmond and here in Congress, and I appreciate the great work that they do to protect our commonwealth as well as the Nation. And the State Partnership Program is a critical component of the Guard's global military readiness and America's partnerships around the world, and for more than three decades, the program has built relationships between the National Guard of every state, territory, and D.C., and 100 nations on every continent. It may even be more now. And these partnerships support joint training exercises and disaster response, humanitarian aid, counterterrorism and counter-trafficking activities, and much more.

And the Virginia National Guard currently maintains two relationships under the SPP. One is with Tajikistan since 2003. Tajikistan is a former Soviet Republic, and the partnership has helped both sides develop counterterrorism emergency response and mountain warfare expertise as well, which has been critical, and last year, Virginia also finalized a second partnership with Finland. This builds upon a longstanding relationship between Finland and Virginia. Our troops served alongside each other in Bosnia in 2001 to 2002, and under this new partnership, we are focused on cyber threats, cold weather tactics, and much more, although we will not need those tactics in this weather today. But this program is an important component in America's diplomatic efforts, and these relationships have proven crucial in improving cybersecurity, disaster response, and even in the war in Ukraine as well.

And so, I want to thank our Virginia National Guard as well as the National Guard around the country and thank the witnesses for being here today. I look forward to today's testimony as we look

for how we can be helpful in Congress to the National Guard and to the SPP program. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you. I am pleased to welcome an expert panel of witnesses for today's discussion. I would first like to welcome Mr. Christopher Mamaux, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Global Partnerships at the Department of Defense. Second, I would like to welcome Major General William Edwards, the Director of Strategic Plans and Policy and International Affairs with the National Guard Bureau. Last, I would like to welcome Major General Robin Stilwell, the Adjutant General of the National Guard in my home state of South Carolina. A special thank you, General, for being here today.

Pursuant to Committee Rule 9(g), the witnesses will please stand and raise their right hand.

Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony that you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

[A chorus of ayes.]

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you. Let the record show that the witnesses answered in the affirmative. Please take your seat. We appreciate you being here today and look forward to your testimony.

Let me remind the witnesses that we have read your written statement, and it will appear in full in the hearing record. Please limit your oral statement to 5 minutes. As a reminder, please press the button on the microphone in front of you so that it is on and the Members can hear you. When you begin to speak, the light in front of you will turn green. After 4 minutes, the light will turn yellow. When the red light comes on, your 5 minutes have expired, and we would ask that you please wrap up.

I now recognize Mr. Mamaux for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF CHRISTOPHER MAMAUX
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR
GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD)**

Mr. MAMAUX. Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon, Chairman Timmons, Ranking Member, Mr. Subramanyam, distinguished Members of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, this Subcommittee on Military and Foreign Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to provide an overview of a vital element of United States national security and global defense cooperation: the National Guard State Partnership Program, which we colloquially refer to as the SPP. It is my distinct honor to appear alongside Major General Bill Edwards, the Director of Strategic Plans and Policy/International Affairs at the National Guard Bureau, J-5, in International Affairs; Major General Rob Stilwell, the Adjutant General of the South Carolina National Guard.

For over 30 years, the SPP has been developing enduring relationships, increasing cooperation across the globe. It is a simple, yet effective concept: pairing a state or territory's National Guard with a partner nation to foster long-term, mutually beneficial relationships, while enhancing joint military capabilities and readiness in combination with other authorities. Today, the SPP boasts a network of 115 partner nations, strategically aligned with the Na-

tional Guard's presence in all 54 states, territories, and the District of Columbia. Working hand in hand with the State Department and the geographic combatant commands, this extensive reach makes the SPP a critical component of the United States national security framework.

SPP contributes to deterrence, increasing partner countries' burden-sharing capabilities, signaling a unified front against potential adversaries, thereby making America safer. Of critical importance is the SPP's alignment with the Defense Department's Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance to achieve President Trump's mandate of achieving peace through strength. The SPP directly contributes to the objective of ensuring partners can shoulder their share of the burden in our collective defense. In a mark of its evolution since the program began, it has gone beyond what was envisioned and even resulted in numerous co-deployments hinted at earlier with the National Guard soldiers and airmen deploying in harm's way alongside of our partners.

The SPP's success lies in its multifaceted approach, fostering enduring relationships born of a shared understanding for mutual benefit. These partnerships extend beyond traditional military training, encompassing disaster response, border security, and cyber defense. A key example of the SPP's strategic impact can be seen in our relationship with Colombia, a strategic partner for the United States and South America and instrumental in our shared efforts to counter transnational organized crime, narcotics, and illegal migration. This holistic approach allows the program to address a broader range of security challenges, build resilience in partner nations. Additionally, the SPP's brilliance in building interoperability across partners while supporting shared responsibility across the same is another hallmark of success in addressing global security threats. The SPP builds more capable forces, helping make America's alliances and partnerships stronger.

While the success and value of the SPP is evident, it is paramount to ensure its alignment with the President's America First agenda that every dollar we spend makes the American people safer, stronger, and more prosperous. Responsible stewardship requires us to consider an approach focused on optimizing existing partnerships and a strict prioritization of new partnerships to ensure strategic and effective use of resources. Deepening existing relationships and prioritizing partnerships aligned with key U.S. strategic objectives, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, is a crucial step to ensuring the SPP continues to deliver maximum value for the American taxpayer.

A key element involves allocating resources toward developing the most beneficial partnerships and facilitating the development of lethal capabilities, when necessary, for defending the homeland and deterring China. Such actions guarantee the SPP remains a cornerstone of our National Security Strategy. This targeted approach allows us to capitalize on the existing network of SPP and expand in key theaters, while also freeing up resources for other critical defense priorities.

To conclude, I want to acknowledge the vital role to this Committee in ensuring the SPP remains responsible and effective beneficiary of taxpayer dollars. It is important to demonstrate the value

and effectiveness of our activities to the American people, and we appreciate this Committee's dedication to holding us to that very high standard. The SPP represents a significant return on investment, fostering stability and security around the world. Thank you for your continued support, and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you for that. I now recognize General Edwards for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM J. EDWARDS
DIRECTOR, STRATEGIC PLANS AND POLICY,
AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (NGB J-5)
NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU (NGB)**

Major General EDWARDS. Good afternoon. Chairman Timmons, Ranking Member Subramanyam, distinguished Members of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Military and Foreign Affairs Subcommittee, I want to thank you for allowing me to speak on behalf of the National Guard Bureau and in support of the State Partnership Program. I am honored to sit alongside DASD, Mr. Christopher Mamaux, and Major General Rob Stilwell for this hearing.

The State Partnership Program embodies a cost-effective and collaborative approach to peace through strength. It improves security capabilities of our partners and the readiness of our units. Through face-to-face engagements and cooperative training, the State Partnership Program cultivates essential relationships with our partner nations. It improves interoperability and facilitates a shared responsibility to shoulder the regional security burdens of today's global environment. The State Partnership Program is an OSD program managed by the National Guard Bureau and executed by the states. It is done in support of the regional combatant commands' security cooperation strategy and the U.S. embassies' integrated strategy plans for the partner nations. The National Guard Bureau manages the program and resourcing, but the states lead the partnerships, and they are directly responsible for the success of those relationships. So, it is fitting to have the Adjutant General of South Carolina here to showcase the relationship that his state has developed with its partner.

In 2025, the total operating budget for the SPP is approximately \$55 million. This allocation enables the execution of more than 1,000 engagements across all aspects of international civil military affairs. It has also supported the addition of eight new partner nations. The National Guard Bureau uses a structured resource allocation model to portion the funding to the states based off their partnership plans that they develop in coordination with their partners. This allocation model considers the priorities communicated in the National Defense Strategy and the Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance.

An important starting point for our discussion is the program's growth. What began in 1993, and with 13 nations in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Soviet Union, has grown to 115 countries across every geographic combatant command, and there is appetite for more continued growth. We see interest from potential partner nations to join the program from National Guard States, from OSD, and from the geographic combatant commands. In fact, we

are in the midst of pairing eight new partner nations. This year, multiple states have submitted applications for the opportunity to be paired with these nations in a competitive process. The state and partner nation pairing process includes a rigorous strategic and comparative analysis based off the state's capabilities. And with commensurate resourcing, the National Guard has the capacity to continue to grow the program in support of the Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance.

The Chief of the National Guard Bureau, General Steve Nordhaus, testified earlier this month. He said, "We cannot overstate the value of these mutually beneficial security cooperation relationships that are built on trust and shared values." He continued to say that, "For less than one percent of the U.S. security cooperation budget, the SPP strengthens partner capacity, addresses security challenges, and enhances global stability." I am happy to share that since the 2022 Government Accountability Office report, we have made great strides in improving the timely reporting of our State Partnership Program activities using Socium, the Security Cooperation Program of Record.

Our organization has worked with the Defense Security Cooperation University to revamp the training course that we provide to practitioners of the State Partnership Program, both in the states and in my International Affairs Division. This course provides clear guidance related to cradle-to-grave reporting requirements and the process to appropriately pair Section 341 SPP authorities with other appropriate security cooperation authorities. The State Partnership Program is a unique tool in the security cooperation toolbox. It is the only security cooperation program that delivers sustained, enduring relationships with our partners that our competitors simply cannot match. Many of our adjutants general have engaged with their partner nations' leaders, including their chiefs of defense, throughout their careers.

I want to express my appreciation to Congress for their enthusiastic support of this program. It is an honor to lead a program that is so impactful in growing enduring security relationships on behalf of the United States. I am thankful to the 54 adjutants general and their soldiers and airmen who work tirelessly to increase regional security across the world. It is my pleasure to sit before this Committee, and I welcome your questions.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you for that. I now recognize General Stilwell for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF MAJOR GENERAL ROBIN B. STILWELL
ADJUTANT GENERAL, SOUTH CAROLINA NATIONAL GUARD**

Major General STILWELL. Distinguished Members of the Committee, Chairman Timmons, Ranking Member Subramanyam, thank you for having us here today. I echo the sentiments of my colleagues when I say it is a distinct privilege and honor to receive your invitation to testify before you today. I sit before you today as the Adjutant General of the State of South Carolina, and hopefully I can lend a state's perspective to this discussion and discuss the execution at the ground level of the SPP program.

In South Carolina, we are privileged and honored to be partnered with the Republic of Colombia. Our partnership with Colombia

began in 2012. It is an active and mutually beneficial relationship built on shared commitment to military readiness, regional security, and disaster preparedness. Our security cooperation agreements are executed in accordance with the Department of State and the Department of Defense directives, U.S. Southern Command Theater Campaign Plan for USSOUTHCOM, our partners' intermediate military objectives, and the U.S. Embassy's Integrated Country Strategy. Our efforts align with the President's priority of achieving peace through strength and the Department's Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance.

Areas of emphasis and concern include, first of all, regional stability. A stable and secure Colombia is vital to the security of the entire region. By integrating with and strengthening Colombia's military forces, the SPP contributes to regional stability and protects our national interests. Second, countering transnational criminal organizations. Recognizing Colombia's role as a transit point for illicit activities and the presence of transnational criminal organizations, we actively collaborate with the Colombia military to enhance their capabilities in combating these threats. Next, strategic access. Colombia is a geographically significant location, bordering the Pacific Ocean to the west and Panama to the north. As China persists in gaining a foothold in commercial enterprise as well as trade and port management across the region, our strong relationship ensures continued access to and integration with Colombian military facilities and other strategic access.

Next, engagements. On average, the State of South Carolina and the National Guard participates in 40 SPP events annually. These events will take place both in the United States, in Colombia, and in other regions of the world and involve multiple military organizations. By the end of Fiscal Year 2025, we will have completed 52 engagements, 29 of those in the Country of Colombia. Our focus areas include rotary wing search and rescue operations; aviation standardization, which includes maintenance, safety, and readiness; vertical and horizontal engineering; cyber defense; explosive ordnance, identification, and remediation; disaster preparedness; courtroom procedures; and professional military development.

Notably, ladies and gentlemen, our rotary wing maintenance and readiness initiative just recently paired with the Colombian Army and has helped to surge their helicopter rotary wing aviation readiness from 20 percent to 60 percent, a dramatic 40 percent increase since December 2024. This success is a direct result of targeted engagements led by the U.S. Army South and the South Carolina National Guard, who assisted the Colombian Army to develop effective maintenance schedules, streamline parts ordering, and standardize operating procedures.

Our planning for all of these events begins two years in advance with a series of conferences and bilateral staff talks attended by senior leaders of the combatant command, the embassy, South Carolina, and our Colombian partners. These recurrent events fuel an evolving 5-year plan to identify, improve, and achieve United States-Colombian security cooperation objectives. Our exercises expand interoperability with Colombia. We have worked closely with SOUTHCOM, ARSOUTH, and U.S. Air Force's Southern to support a long and varied list of military exercises and events.

For five years straight, we have supported exercise Continuing Promise, a U.S. Naval Force's Southern Command-hosted medical outreach exercise. Teams of 10 to 15 South Carolina guardsmen, medics, and support staff serve remote communities across Colombia, evaluating and treating more than 200 indigenous people over a 3-day period. In 2021, we embedded a Colombian platoon with our infantry for a grueling deployment to the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana. The year preceding that, we sent those same infantrymen to Colombia to conduct exercises at their chief training center at Tolemaida. Also, we are in the planning processes to send Colombian engineer units with our engineering brigade for a deployment at Operation Spartan Shield in Kuwait, and we hope that we can achieve that. As we meet here today, our 169th Fighter Wing is making final preparations to participate in next month's Relampago de los Andes. Four of our fighter jets and about 150 Swamp Fox Airmen will participate in the Colombian Air Force's largest air and medical outreach exercise.

Ladies and gentlemen, in conclusion, I want to emphasize the dual importance of this partnership, maintaining stability with the region and maintaining readiness, recruiting, retention, and relevance of the South Carolina National Guard. Our mutually beneficial relationship with Colombia allows soldiers and airmen invaluable career-enhancing opportunities to share experiences and participating in meaningful exercises in unique environments, while building lasting relationships with our peers in the Colombian military.

Ladies and gentlemen, as the Adjutant General of the State of South Carolina, my priority is to prepare combat soldiers to meet their Federal mission set, and that is to deploy abroad and engage the enemies of the United States in combat and win. Anything else that I do as the Adjutant General of the State of South Carolina is a distraction. And I can tell you that if this program were not value-added and did not enhance the readiness of my combat soldiers and airmen in the State of South Carolina, I would not be here advocating for it. So, I can tell you right now it enhances our readiness. It is value-added to the readiness of the United States Armed Forces and the National Guard writ large.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for allowing me to be here today, and I look forward to answering any questions that you may have.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you, General. I now recognize myself for 5 minutes of questions.

Mr. Mamaux, security cooperation, like the State Partnership Program, contributes to regional stability and long-term prosperity both in the United States and in partner nations. In a broader strategic context, how does sustained military-to-military cooperation through the SPP help the United States compete with adversaries like China and Russia?

Mr. MAMAUX. Thank you, Chair. As you rightfully pointed out, the strategic importance of the SPP is bar none. It is a peerless program that is a strategic advantage, a competitive advantage, if we use a little more business-term nomenclature here, that benefits the United States of America with enduring relationship building around the globe. Neither China nor Russia have a program that

is even remotely similar, and they certainly do not have the relationships to call on when that time arises. This is something that we see value in. This is something that I think makes a lot of common sense to the American people. As President Trump always underlines, and we have in the Department as well, how does this translate to success in a commonsense way for the average American citizen out there and the walls that depend on us to make sure that we are making the right choices and the right calls? And again, the relationships that we have around the globe through the SPP process for over 30 years of enduring relationships is just one highlight of that example.

Mr. TIMMONS. I think we all see how China is using the Belt and Road Initiative to try to create a stranglehold on developing economies and developed economies alike. Would you say that SPP, in addition to the IMF and World Bank, are kind of our counterbalance to that effort?

Mr. MAMAUX. I would presume that the SPP partnership predates the actual implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative that we have seen over the past couple of decades, not nearly the 30-year process that SPP has been around the globe. So, I would say there is a primacy there in terms of an equal footing of a partnership, shared responsibility, shouldering the burden together with our partner nations, and making sure that there is a value add for both us and our partner nations across the globe.

I think that it would not be too far to speak out that the BRI initiative that China has been developing over decades now is something that becomes a little more predatory in process, so that once a critical mass point has been reached, the tipping point is crossed, and then the, we will call it the affected targeted nation, at that point no longer has the ability to have any sort of equal footing. That is never the case with the SPP. This is an enduring partnership that the United States takes pride in, and we continue to develop it.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you for that. General Edwards, how do you envision the SPP evolving over the next five to ten years to meet emerging security challenges?

Major General EDWARDS. Thank you for the question, Chair. I think we are going to take the lead from the National Defense Strategy. We have the Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance now. I know the Administration is working on the National Defense Strategy as we speak, expected to be published end of the summer. What I expect to do in collaboration with the geographic combatant commanders and their Security Cooperation Office is to adapt the individual partnerships to ensure that we are meeting those goals as directed from the higher guidance and also support the readiness requirements of the units that are involved in the partnership events.

And adjutant generals have a key role there, the Department has a key role there, and my office, my team, gets to help coordinate all that with our partners in the geographic combatant command. So, we will take all of our guidance from the Department. It is an OSD program, as I like to remind everybody, and we do it to support the geographic combatant command's goals.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you for that. General Stilwell, you spoke about this in your opening statement. Could you elaborate on how the partnership with Colombia has enhanced the South Carolina Guard's ability to operate in joint or multinational environments?

Major General STILWELL. Of course. So, we have the opportunity, we have the privilege of going to Colombia, of course, and training in very real settings with foreign militaries. They come to South Carolina and they do the same. So, in any mission set that we have to prosecute in the United States military, it is just a series of standard steps, and that is mobilize; deploy; conduct sophisticated, complex mission sets; redeploy; reorganize. And each and every time we have the opportunity to do that, each and every time we have the opportunity to take some swings in the batting cage, as it were, we get better. It increases our readiness. Having the ability to do that in a peacetime setting, in a controlled setting with a foreign military, not only Army and Air, but Navy and also security forces, it gives us the benefit of being able to work in that joint environment.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you, gentlemen. With that, I now recognize Mr. Subramanyam for 5 minutes of questions.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Thank you. Major General Edwards, I know the SPP program evolved from post-Soviet roots, or started from post-Soviet roots, and how has the program evolved over the years, and what changes do you think may happen in the future?

Major General EDWARDS. Ranking Member, thank you for the question. I think, how has it evolved? It has had a steady growth over the many years, the 32 years, since inception. That first grouping of 13 nations, as we both, I think, discussed earlier, came from the breakdown of the wall between East and West. Since that time, it has continued to grow, on average, about five countries a year. This year is kind of a less, current year, we had eight new countries added to the program from all across the world. If you go by geographic combatant commands, SOUTHCOM, of which Colombia is in that area of responsibility, that is a saturated market, so to speak. All the countries in the SOUTHCOM AOR are in the State Partnership Program and partnered with a state.

We are about 29 countries in the European and EUCOM area of operations. We have got 18 in INDOPACOM and 25 in Africa. So, the opportunity to kind of expand the program into, clearly, the priority theater for the Administration is INDOPACOM, we definitely want to support that. And I think there is also an opportunity to grow the program, again, based off the Department's priorities, to counter China, to counter our adversaries in areas such as Africa and the Middle East. So, without identifying countries that could join the program, I would say we follow the priorities of the Administration that starts in INDOPACOM and everywhere else that China has began to expand its influence across the world, and I think we can certainly match that with continuing to grow the State Partnership Program.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Yes, thank you, and, you know, I talked to a lot of defense contractors in my district and across Virginia, and they are saying that the future of warfare is changing, right? It is certainly not horses and bayonets anymore, but no longer even tanks or ground troops as much. A lot of it is fought online with

cybersecurity, hacks, and, you know, offensive and defensive digital warfare. And so, has the National Guard and the SPP, has that taken that into account? Are there any programs to look at the future of warfare?

Major General EDWARDS. Absolutely. That is part of what we do. As we adapt our forces and as the global environment changes, we adapt to follow that. I will cite the Virginia's partnership with Finland. I know there was a cyber exercise recently, collaboration between the Virginia National Guard and the Finnish cyber defense forces. And I think what is particularly important about that, and I was once told, you know, from a colleague in the Finnish Armed Forces that the cold war never ended for them. So that exercise, focusing in the cyber domain, happened, you know, on the door front of a potential adversary and in that gray space, that hybrid warfare environment that I think describes the situation as you stated.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. And we have talked a lot in this Committee about, again, new tactics in warfare. And so, I know Tajikistan, the program is looking at mountain warfare. We have talked even about drones and drone warfare. I am curious what other types of, kind of, cutting-edge initiatives are happening in the SPP and how can Congress be helpful moving forward?

Major General EDWARDS. Yes. I think as all our forces adapt to the new character of war, as it has been called, and include, you know, the transparency of the battlefield, which is what drones and unmanned aerial systems provide. We adapt our tactics. We adapt our formations. I know the Army is going through a big adaptation right now. All of our forces are anticipating the changes that will be required in this new character of war. And so, as we change, it actually helps our partners change with us. That maintaining interoperability with the State Partnership Program, I think, is key. So, whether it be through cyber operation, cyber exercises, unmanned aerial surveillance systems or even ground maneuver with bayonets, because I do not believe that will ever completely go away. But we will adapt the ratios of those dimensions of warfare as the situation requires, and we will share that and leverage some of those insights that we gain from our partners. As I stated, some of our partners who are closer to the adversary physically than our forces are, they have a lot to share with us.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Thank you. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you. I now recognize the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Cloud, for 5 minutes.

Mr. CLOUD. Thank you, and thank you for being here, and thank you again for your service to our country.

I would like to hear a little more. I appreciate the insight you have provided on the deployments, Colombia being an example, and what we can learn in drug interdiction in working with them, and also the lessons and how they are applicable, but how often do these deployments happen? What are some other examples in other countries? How do you prioritize which mission to go to, especially in light of, you know, limited budgets? And then what is on the stop doing list, as you are looking for more capabilities with limited budgets, may have to stop doing some things to increase our capabilities in other areas?

Major General STILWELL. So, thank you for the question, sir. What I would tell you is in our relationship with Colombia, I have always said that that our operations, our deployments, our engagements, are really only limited by imagination and inclination. So, we are very active with Colombia. You talk specifically about deployments. There have been other states, and I will defer to General Edwards on those other states who may have had deployment experiences, but we are sending, again, as I mentioned before perhaps, and planning to send some engineering assets from Colombian Army with our engineer brigade. We have also had, again, those infantry units marrying up and training together. In a lot of instances, the way we determine who is going to train and/or deploy with whom, is really looking at like units with like mission sets so that they can marry up and they can prosecute the very same mission set when they get into either a training environment or when they get overseas.

I know, and this speaks a little bit to the Ranking Member's question as well, but we are talking about deployments. The cyber end of it is very active as well in Colombia. We have a cyber battalion in the State of South Carolina, and we have had three engagements with the Colombians so far this year, and right now as I speak, we are engaging in our fourth. We have begun to speak with the embassy about perhaps sending some of our cyber personnel down there during Colombia's elections that are upcoming as well just to perhaps assist or advise to the extent that they may want that. So, we are doing it continuously.

Mr. CLOUD. If I could say, the remaining of the time, to get you all's, your perspective on that, General Edwards and Mr. Mamaux. Did I pronounce that all right?

Major General EDWARDS. Absolutely.

Mr. CLOUD. Thank you.

Major General EDWARDS. And I think, you know, the case study with South Carolina and Colombia is a good one. I get to read about the different programs from him and his 53 colleagues from the other states. And one of the things that I would, I guess, offer from a comprehensive point of view is one of the great things about the State Partnership Program is its flexibility and adaptability. And what I mean by that is that both the size of any given exchange or engagement from one or two people conducting a shared subject matter exchange to entire units conducting a combined exercise together, that varies. And we have got 54 states, territories, and the District of Columbia. We have got 115 partnerships, so you can imagine the number of combinations that would ensue, and it is flexible, it is adaptable, and so they vary in scale.

I think the prospect of a combined deployment came up that General Stilwell mentioned, there is one going on right now. The Iowa National Guard just completed a rotation from the Joint Readiness Training Center and of its state partners, Kosovo, had a platoon not only go through that exercise, through that training event, but they are going to co-deploy with the brigade from the Iowa National Guard to the Central Command AOR in coming weeks. So, that is kind of on the high end or the large scale of the potential combinations that could ensue and varies all the way down to subject matter exchanges, one, two, three, four people, for

three, four days to a week to two weeks. So, it varies incredibly and depends on, again, what the geographic combatant commander is trying to achieve with its security cooperation goals and what the readiness goals are for the units conducting the exercise or exchange.

Mr. CLOUD. Thank you.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you. I recognize the gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. Lynch, for 5 minutes.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Subramanyam. Mr. Mamaux, Major General Edwards, Major General Stilwell, and folks behind you, thank you so much for your service to your country. I really appreciate you, and we honor your service. Thanks for being here and being willing to answer questions before the Committee and help us with our work.

Originally, I had planned to address the refusal of President Trump to consult with California Governor Gavin Newsom and Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass before making a unilateral decision to deploy the National Guard and the United States Marine Corps against the civilian population of Los Angeles. Unfortunately, more recent events have now overtaken and amplified this same problem of unilateral dictatorial decisionmaking by our President. I am, of course, referring to President Trump's refusal to include Congress in a meaningful way on the decision to deploy U.S. forces in a military operation against the Islamic Republic of Iran. I will not ask you any questions about that. It would not be fair to you. You are not prepared to address that issue, but I do want to get this on the record.

So, this decision to deploy U.S. forces in a military operation against the Islamic Republic of Iran where uranium enrichment, potential nuclear weapons development, and the custody of over 800 pounds of near weapons grade fissile material remains unaccounted for. I think a lot of Democrats and a lot of Republicans agree that should be the hearing we are having.

Mr. TIMMONS. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. LYNCH. Not yet. What is also deeply troubling is the deliberate decision by the President to share less than complete information with even some of my Republican colleagues, especially senior Republican Members, while completely concealing information and thereby misleading duly elected Democratic Members of Congress who should have been immediately and fully informed. And that is different in this country. That is a real departure from how we usually deal with moments of crisis in the country, especially when it involves our military. We have not seen that before, because in the past, from President Washington to Wilson to President Roosevelt, Eisenhower and Johnson, to both President George H. and George W. Bush, and up until the present day, every one of those Presidents, Democrat and Republican, has kept faith with the basic premise that on those very rare occasions when diplomacy fails and our national security is threatened and we need to send our sons and daughters into battle, that we do not do so as Democrats or Republicans. We do it as a country, as Americans. We go into battle together, fully informed.

That principle was abandoned last week when President Trump allowed spiteful and small-minded mentality to get in the way of

a larger mission. And he divided this Congress, and he divided the American people into those who were informed and those who were misled. He once again treated a very serious situation in an unserious way. We need to defend democracy. And remember, while the President is Commander-in-Chief, he is not a dictator and not a king, and Congress must be informed, and that decision to deploy U.S. forces must meet a higher standard. We owe that to our sons and daughters in uniform, and we owe it to their families.

We do not want the U.S. military acting on the basis of some alternate reality that has no basis in fact, or on cooked-up intelligence, and that has happened before. There has to be someone in that circle, in the Gang of Eight, who was not afraid to point out to the President that he might be mistaken. And to be completely honest, there is very little risk today than anything Trump says would be challenged by a Republican Member because they seem to be unwilling to do so.

In a press conference yesterday, Senate Majority Leader Thune could not even answer basic questions about the attacks because he had not been fully informed. In fact, it became apparent that there was more communication between Trump and the officials in Iran than there was between U.S. elected officials in this government. At present, Members of Congress only have access to Defense Intelligence Agency after action battle damage assessment. Having read that battle damage assessment, there seems to be great difference, huge difference, between what the President has told us and what the Defense Intelligence Agency says about those same attacks.

Again, I do not want this to reflect on the current Chairman of the Subcommittee or the current Ranking Member. They do serious work, bipartisan work, and I greatly appreciate that because it is rare. But those were facts that I just wanted to get on the record. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you for that. I now recognize the gentleman from Arizona, Mr. Crane, for 5 minutes.

Mr. CRANE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing today. Thank you to our panelists for coming.

It is interesting when I looked up to find out whether Representative Lynch, who just went off on the President for not notifying Congress, I could not find any public comments of him condemning the Obama Administration for bombing Iraq, Syria, or Yemen without notifying Congress. So, I would just say, if you are going to be critical, at least be consistent. I also wanted to say thank you to you gentlemen for coming. Thank you for your service. My staff and I recently toured Camp Navajo in Arizona. We had a great experience out there and really appreciate everybody who represents and serves out there. Mr. Mamaux, is that how you say it?

Mr. MAMAUX. Mamaux, Mr. Congressman.

Mr. CRANE. Mr. Mamaux, based on the information I could find, it looks like the National Guard State Partnership Program supports roughly 25 African nations. Does that sound about right?

Mr. MAMAUX. That is correct, to my knowledge, yes.

Mr. CRANE. The program provides tactical training, correct?

Mr. MAMAUX. It certainly can encompass that, yes.

Mr. CRANE. Do you vet or disqualify participants in this training, or do you simply train whoever State Department sends your way?

Major General EDWARDS. Thank you for the question, Mr. Congressman. The vetting piece is an interesting component of this, and it makes sure that America's sons and daughters are, in fact, safe when we have these partnership engagements.

Mr. CRANE. Thank you. I am going to read you guys a list of National Guard units and their deployments, and I would like to see if any of you can tell me what they have in common. Indiana National Guard deployed to Niger in 2017, D.C. Guard deployed to Burkina Faso in 2018, Michigan National Guard deployed to Sierra Leone in 2024, and the Wyoming National Guard deployed to Tunisia in 2004. Either of the generals, would you like to take a stab at what they have in common?

Major General EDWARDS. Go ahead, Congressman.

Mr. CRANE. All these nations experience military coups at some point after U.S. military training: Niger coup in 2023, Burkina Faso coup in 2022, Sierra Leone attempted coup in 2023, and Tunisia coup in 2021. Can we put up the image please?

That is U.S. Army Captain Michael Tu, on the left, Commander 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team in support of State Partnership Program with Niger Special Forces Commander, Brigadier General Moussa Barmou, to the right, who conducted a coup in 2023. Obviously, you guys, I am sure you are well aware that the American people are getting pretty tired of some of our efforts overseas leading to increased volatility in regions like this. And I know that you guys are just trying to do your jobs. And when I talked to the some of you guys in my office just yesterday, I realized that you are good men. You are trying to serve your country, and, like when I served in the military, you guys follow orders like I did. Can you tell me what, if anything, are you guys doing to make sure that when you go in and train some of these partner states or countries, it does not lead to whoever you are training going ahead and launching a coup? I will start with you, Major General Edwards.

Major General EDWARDS. Thank you for the question, Congressman. I guess what I would start with is, all our activities are in line with the geographic combatant commanders' cooperation strategy, so we take a lead from them. All our events are coordinated with their international affairs folks, their security cooperation goals, and they are the experts on the region. While our soldiers and airmen do have some experience, historical experience, all our activities and events are harmonized with the GCC. So, in the case of—

Mr. CRANE. I understand that, sir. But does it feel to you, looking at the record that I just presented to you, go ahead, can you poke holes in any of what I just read you?

Major General EDWARDS. With respect, Congressman, the only thing I would offer is the State Partnership Program is one tool available to—

Mr. CRANE. Right. I understand there are several other tools, but does it bother you that often when we send our units in to train some of these countries and partner forces, these partner forces often take the training that we are giving them and launch coups against their elected governments? I yield back.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you. I now recognize——

Mr. CRANE. Can you answer the question?

Mr. TIMMONS. I am sorry.

Major General EDWARDS. What I am certainly concerned about, Congressman, is a program that is designed to promote regional stability and when regional stability may not follow that, but as I would say, SPP is not the sole factor that may contribute to that. That is all I would say in response, sir.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you. I now recognize the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. McGuire, for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGUIRE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses for being here today. You know, we would not have a country without our men and women who protect our freedom at home and abroad, so to all of you, thank you for your service. As a veteran myself, I see this as a way to continue service to our country.

The Virginia National Guard, by the way, has been in partnership with Tajikistan for over 22 years, I think, and the relationship has benefited all parties and has resulted in shared subject-matter expertise during 200 military-to-military engagements. Those engagements helped counterterrorism, deter violent extremism, expand emergency response capabilities, develop professionalism among leaders and staff, and promote shared values and national sovereignty and security. As of last year, Virginia is now partnering with Finland as well, and, General, I think you mentioned the Cyber Shield exercise in Virginia Beach. I actually was there witnessing 13 countries, and it was amazing what they can do, and obviously, God forbid we need to have that collaboration. That was great.

You know, one thing, I, when I was talking with the folks in Finland, they called themselves a frontline country, so I would say, General—I am sorry, if I cannot say your name right—is it Edwards? Why would they call themselves a frontline country?

Major General EDWARDS. They have the largest land border with the Russian Federation, so they view that as their frontier.

Mr. MCGUIRE. Yes, and Finland has closed their border ever since they joined NATO because Russia has weaponized immigration, and I believe that is what is happening in our Southern border, and thank God we have got folks like you making sure that we can secure that border and keep Americans safe. Major General Edwards, how would you describe the benefits that Virginia, the United States, and Finland may expect to see as a result of this new partnership with Finland?

Major General EDWARDS. Thank you for the question. I think I described one of the contextual benefits earlier. The fact that they are collaborating with a partner that has that front line, as you described, living in that hybrid gray zone space, I think that provides a useful context and an environment to help provide the realism needed for Virginia National Guard units. The other thing I would say is that I have heard General Ring talk about, Adjutant General for Virginia, is the opportunity to employ portions of the 29th Infantry Division, which is between Virginia and Maryland, to conduct Arctic operations and, you know, whether it be the command post or on the ground level, in partnership with the Finnish mili-

tary. So, those are two vignettes, I guess, I would offer that help provide readiness improvements for the Virginia National Guard.

Mr. MCGUIRE. I just spent a day at Fort Pickett with General Ring. I think he is doing an excellent job, and he probably should write a book about the 29th ID. I think they have a very storied, a very patriotic history. Major General Stilwell, the United States and Colombia have recently had some disagreements over deportation flights. Has this impacted your operations with them?

Major General STILWELL. No, sir. It has not altered or amended any of our plans, any of our engagements. Many of our engagements are at the company grades, senior-field grade, or, excuse me, middle-field grade levels, so those engagements have continued to go on just as normal. We have not seen any appreciable change in the relationship between the State of South Carolina, SOUTHCOM, or the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. MCGUIRE. Okay. I have got a question for anyone up here. If one of these partnership nations begins to work against American interests, is there a plan to sever that partnership?

Mr. MAMAUX. Thank you for the question, Congressman. Severance is not something that the SPP has a mechanism for now because we have never had to use it. I can give you some examples of Venezuela, which, obviously, is no longer a favorable nation and has not been for some time. What happens in those country partnerships, Mr. Representative, is they become dormant. So, there are no more funds, there is no more training, there is no more allocation of American talent, treasure, or material that flows to those partner nations, and they become dormant, for lack of a better term.

Mr. MCGUIRE. That makes sense, and last question is, for the partners that we do have and then we have a good relationship, how is the funding? Do we have enough funding for those relationships?

Mr. MAMAUX. Thank you for the question. The funding, I think, is an issue where we have a true partnership, specifically with the various components that we have already listed here before, but the funding is a both-sides-of-the-coin-type deal, right? We have some funding that we put toward capabilities. The partner countries have funding that puts toward capabilities. A highlight, I think, would be the State of Vermont and the Country of Austria where they both opened separate, but sort of similar centers, sort of you come to visit me, I come to visit you, and that is just a great highlight of what this looks like for actual burden sharing with true partnerships across the SPP.

Mr. MCGUIRE. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you. In closing, I want to thank our witnesses once again for their testimony today. I now yield to Ranking Member Subramanyam for his closing remarks.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Thank you. Thank you so much to our witnesses for coming today and for all your work and all you are doing for our country. I think the SPP program shows that not only are you focused on defending our Nation and our states, and you are also focused on seeing how we can be better all the time and using that collaboration and that diplomacy through the SPP program to strengthen ties with countries around the world. And, you know,

something was mentioned earlier about, you know, regime change. I think these programs have, in pretty much every case, predated quite a bit some of those regime changes, and just because the National Guard is there does not mean the National Guard was the reason for that regime change.

I think what is happening here with those programs, we are simply working with every country that is willing to work with us, and that makes sense to work with, to try to improve our own defenses as well as to work collaboratively with them. And as mentioned, you know, in another meeting with some of the witnesses, these collaborations have ended in really important ties and even individual relationships that have been crucial to our diplomacy with some of these countries and around the world. And so, I think it is a great program. It is something that Congress should continue to support.

And one last thing. It is not related, but I think I have to bring it up. You know, the recent events in California with the National Guard being deployed there, you know, it was the first time in 60 years that a President has deployed the National Guard without request from the state's Governor, and it was unnecessary and escalatory. And one of the things that really bothers me about that is, you know, our folks in the National Guard are doing their jobs, and they are serving our country, and by the time that they were deployed, those protests had been under control, and it was completely unnecessary. And what ended up happening was, according to one report, the troops reportedly arrived without lodging or Federal funds for food, water, or other supplies, and it was unclear whether additional troops would stay or how enough portable bathrooms would be supplied. And only 300 troops were actually deployed, and the rest were sitting unused in Federal buildings without orders.

And, you know, I think what was happening was, we were making a political point when the President sent the National Guard there, and the upshot of it was it cost taxpayers tens of millions of dollars. I think one estimate put it at \$134 million, and so it was completely unnecessary. And I think the weaponization of the National Guard and of our military is wrong, and we should stand up against it. So, I will yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. TIMMONS. We will stand at recess for one second.

[Recess.]

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you. And I now recognize the gentlewoman from Florida, Mrs. Luna for 5 minutes.

Mrs. LUNA. Hey, Generals. How are you doing? Major? Nice to see you guys. First and foremost, thank you so much for coming in today. You know, I love it when we get lectured on the Guard from people that have never served in the Guard and/or provide context. I am just saying that. Not to ask you to respond to that.

Anyways, I wanted to give you time, though, today to explain to me exactly the purpose of the National Guard and your mission because I think a lot of people overlook how effective the Guard has been, especially in mission readiness. Specifically, in regards to there has been a lot of talk with DOGE, but from what I gather, the Guard has been doing great. Specifically, with limited resources, we would like to get you more but being able to accomplish

the mission at hand. So, I am actually going to just give this to you, Major General. I have about 4 minutes and 21 seconds. Respond, Major General Stilwell, if you want to jump in, but this floor is yours.

Major General STILWELL. Thank you very much for the question, and I answer this question a lot in our communities because a lot of people do not necessarily know what the role of the National Guard is, but the National Guard is the combat reserve of the active Army and the active Air Force. We have a Federal mission set, which is to deploy abroad and in the homeland, and to engage with the enemies of the United States in combat and win. We are man trained and equipped by the Federal Government for that mission set. We also have a second state mission set, a corresponding mission set, which is to respond to emergencies, crises, or other catastrophes at the direction of the Governor of the several states. And in that capacity, we are the only military organization that has that dual state role and operates under state active duty for and on behalf of the Governor and the citizens of the several states.

So we are, more or less, the Swiss army knife of the Department of Defense. We do a lot of things that other parts of the military simply cannot do because of legal restraints and because of proximity. One of the great strengths of the National Guard is that our soldiers are in the communities, and because they are in the communities, they have great support from the population, but they are also there and ready to respond in their communities when there is a crisis. So, I could go on for hours talking about the National Guard and our role and who we are, but I will leave it at that, ma'am, and answer any additional questions that you have.

Mrs. LUNA. Excuse me. They turned off my mic. Major General Edwards, I know that I actually had the privilege of talking with you prior to this hearing. You have a lot of good things to say about specifically what the Guard has been able to do in regards to back filling for active duty and maybe reserves. Can you please elaborate on certain programs and also where you need help from Congress? You had figured this would be more of a bipartisan issue. I apologize if people made it partisan while you guys are being questioned.

Major General EDWARDS. Well, I think General Stilwell summed it up quite well, and especially in his position as an adjutant general, who actually is responsible for the manning, training, and equipping of his formations, both Air and Army. But if I were to just, kind of, maybe complement his words, you know, we are citizen-soldier force, over 80-some-odd-percent of our soldiers and airmen, they have a civilian career outside of uniform. Using myself as an example, I worked at HP for 25 years before retiring, and through that entire time, I was a citizen-soldier, working at HP and also serving in the Army National Guard, and in my case, in the State of Oregon for those 25 years.

Mrs. LUNA. You and I both were at Oregon.

Major General EDWARDS. Excellent.

Mrs. LUNA. So, former Guard member here.

Major General EDWARDS. Excellent.

Mrs. LUNA. Just real quick. What do you guys need? If you could do a magic wand on an appropriation request to help the National Guard, what would it be? We only have about a minute left.

Major General EDWARDS. I am not going to cite a number, but I will cite—

Mrs. LUNA. Smart man.

Major General EDWARDS [continuing]. Predictability.

Mrs. LUNA. Okay.

Major General EDWARDS. Predictability, and coming back to the State Partnership Program, which I think is, you know, our focus today, the ability to properly plan and execute the engagements of the variety that I described to Congressman Cloud earlier, that requires time, and knowing you have the resources and in time to have that exercise or that event is key. So that predictability is that would be the one thing I would ask for your help with, Representative, to ensure predictable funding.

Mrs. LUNA. Got it. Okay. And then I just have one more question. So, I got badly hit with hurricanes this past hurricane season, and, obviously, we have been pushing really, fairly hard with the Secretary of Defense for a Guard unit's Special Tactics Squadron. I know that that is Air National Guard purview, but you guys are the Guards, so I just figured I would ask you while you are here. I mean, since when does the Guard say no to another STS unit? You guys are obviously in support of more funding and more bases, but would you support an additional Guard unit, just out of curiosity.

Major General STILWELL. So, I would be ill-advised to answer for the enterprise writ large. We are always looking for additional capacity. Being the Adjutant General of the State of South Carolina, I am very familiar with hurricanes, and what we find, again, is that we have been successful in working with what we have. If you come to me and you tell me, I am going to give you additional force structure, and I am going to give you additional capacity, and I am going to give you additional funding, then I would say thank you very much.

Mrs. LUNA. Well, thank you, gentlemen. We appreciate you guys being here. Honestly, it has been a pleasure. You guys make me miss the uniform, but I am glad you guys are here serving continuously. Thank you.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you for that. I appreciate the Ranking Member allowing us to yield to Mrs. Luna. I now yield to the Ranking Member again for as much time as he needs.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to, based on a previous comment, cite an article by the former number two of the National Guard, Randy Manner. He said, "I led the National Guard and regular Army units, and using the military to intimidate Americans is 100 percent wrong." And I will enter to the record with unanimous consent a *Fox News* article entitled, by Randy Manner, "I led the National Guard and regular Army units, and using the military to intimidate Americans is 100 percent wrong." And in it, he says a lot of important things, which is that, "by setting this precedent, we are taking away our military readiness, and we are instead using our own military against our own civilians, our own people, and so I think this is a dangerous prece-

dent.” And I agree with Mr. Randy Manner that it is wrong, so I yield back.

Mr. TIMMONS. Without objection, so ordered.

I now recognize myself for closing remarks.

I guess, first, law and order is important. Keeping property safe, keeping people safe is important, and when elected heads of our individual states are unwilling to protect life and property, if the President wants to step in, he has the authority, and I would argue the obligation, to do so. Second note, as far as I am aware, two Republicans disapproved of the President’s decision to strategically bomb Iran’s nuclear capacity, and has, according to the Iranian intelligence unit, set them back years, if not decades. Ninety-nine percent of the House and Senate Republicans fully approved it and embraced it. Interestingly, about half of my colleagues across the aisle in the Senate and the House agreed with the President’s decision. And finally, in the eight years of the Obama Administration, 27,000 bombs were dropped on seven countries. I could make arguments that the 2001 AUMF applied to some of those, but I cannot make that argument for all. So, again, I think my colleague from Arizona said it best: we have got to be consistent with our critique of different administrations.

All right. Back to the subject at hand. We talked about it a little bit, but I want to expand on it. The National Guard is very unique in that people can serve for decades in a single Guard unit. My friend and mentor, General Butch Bowers, I think he is at 45 years, and, you know, he has been to Colombia dozens and dozens of times. He has built bonds with his fellow officers in the Colombian military. And if you think about it, all the State Department officials, they come, they go. They are there for a year or two. Elected officials come and go, but the military leadership of different countries and of different Guard units lasts, and those relationships last, and I think that is something that is extremely valuable that we cannot get anywhere else. I mean, you know, even tours of duty for the military, you are there for a year, two, three years at most.

So, the National Guard and the State Partnership Program is really one of the only areas that we build lasting relationships. We build the trust and the respect of our counterparts, and I think that that has immense value and that we need to appreciate that and to continue to invest in it. I have seen firsthand the value of the State Partnership Program in South Carolina. I am one of four Members of Congress still serving in the Guard. I am a captain, most are very senior, but, you know, it is really just incredible, as General Stilwell said, there are not many opportunities to have real-world training exercises where you are going to be forced to go hours and hours away and engage in real-world training. I mean, we just do not get this kind of opportunity in many other capacities, and the bang for the buck is enormous.

So, I think that we need to make sure that everyone in Congress appreciates the importance of the investment we are making. The return on the investment is enormous relative to the cost, and I will do everything I can to continue to prioritize our spending on the State Partnership Program and expand it wherever possible. And, gentlemen, I cannot thank you enough for taking the time to

be with us today. And I said 90 minutes, and I am 17 minutes early, so look at that.

With that, and without objection, all Members have five legislative days within which to submit materials and additional written questions for the witnesses, which will be forwarded to the witnesses.

If there is no further business, without objection, the Subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:13 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

