HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE POSTURE OF UNITED
STATES CENTRAL COMMAND AND UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND IN
REVIEW OF THE DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR
2024 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

Thursday, March 16, 2023

U.S. Senate
Committee on Armed Services,
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:29 a.m.,
in Room G-50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Jack
Reed, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Committee Members Present: Senators Reed [presiding],
Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King,
Warren, Peters, Rosen, Kelly, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton,
Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Cramer, Scott, Tuberville, Mullin,
Budd, and Schmitt.
Chairman Reed: Let me call the hearing to order.

Good morning, and the committee meets today to receive testimony from General Michael Eric Kurilla, Commander of the United States Central Command, and General Michael Langley, Commander of United States Africa Command.

Thank you both for your service, and I am grateful to the men and women serving under your command. While CENTCOM has many responsibilities, the top priority remains deterring the Iranian regime's destructive and destabilizing activities without undue provocation. This is a complicated and urgent mission.

Iran is conducting malign activities across multiple arenas, including continuing its own nuclear development, launching drone and missile attacks on neighboring States, supporting proxy groups, violently repressing its own citizens, and deepening a military alliance with Russia, and these threats are likely to increase.

In an unexpected turn, last week, Saudi Arabia and Iran announced they have restored diplomatic relations in a deal brokered by China. Press reports indicate the key parts of the agreement were a commitment by Iran to stop further attacks on Saudi Arabia and cut back on support for Iranian linked groups that have targeted the kingdom.
The two nations plan to reopen their embassies and reimplement a security pact to cooperate on several issues to benefit their mutual national security. As The New York Times stated, the deal is, "a shift that left heads spinning in capitals around the globe."

General Kurilla, given the unpredictability of the Iranian regime, I would like your thoughts on how best to respond to its malign behavior in the region, taking into account the new dynamic of their restoration of relations with Saudi Arabia. What opportunities do we have to collaborate with our allies and partners to counter drone and missile attacks, and how can we address Iran's closer alignment with Russia and China?

Turning to Afghanistan, although we have transitioned all forces out of the country, the Biden Administration has maintained its commitment to ensuring that Afghanistan cannot be used as a base for ISIS, Al-Qaeda, or other terrorist groups to conduct attacks against the United States or its allies.

I would ask for an update on our posture and capabilities, and whether additional regional agreements have been reached to ensure we maintain a robust regional counterterrorism architecture to address the threat from these groups. General Langley, AFRICOM's area of responsibility is becoming increasingly important in the
United States strategic competition with China and Russia.

Many African countries have longstanding military ties with Russia and even deeper economic ties with China. As the United States manages relationships across the continent, we must be mindful of these preexisting ties and avoid taking a with us or against us approach, or we will risk alienating the very nations we seek to engage with.

I would welcome your thoughts on how best to calibrate the US approach to strategic competition in light of these factors. The security situation in East Africa remains dangerously unstable. Since last fall, roughly 500 U.S. service members have been redeployed to Somalia to support the Somali government's fight against Al-Shabaab, one of Al-Qaeda's most powerful global affiliates.

Our renewed presence is an effort to stabilize the Somali government and train their forces, after our departure in December 2020 allowed Al-Shabaab to grow in size and strength. I hope you will share your views on the status of our engagement with Somali partners and the whole of Government strategy to ensure battlefield successes can be effectively translated into longer term gains.

Finally, the security situation in West Africa also continues to decline. Violent extremist operations have expanded across the Sahel, including pushing down into littoral states in the Gulf of Guinea. At the same time,
Russia and China are seeking to increase their engagement in this region.

The Wagner Group continues to seek opportunities to exploit instability in the region, and China has made no secret about exploring basing operations on the West African coast. Both countries are also investing in natural resource extraction across the continent, often at great expense to the long-term health of African partners' ecosystems and economies.

Given these challenges, General Langley, I would like to hear how AFRICOM is seeking to engage with partners in Africa to expose these harmful and manipulative practices. I want to thank you again and look forward to your testimony.

As a reminder for my colleagues, there will be a closed session immediately following this hearing and room SVC-217. Now, let me turn to the Ranking Member, Senator Wicker.
STATEMENT OF HON. ROGER WICKER, U.S. SENATOR FROM MISSISSIPPI

Senator Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank our witnesses for being here. In recent weeks, the committee has heard from top military and civilian leaders about the significant security challenges facing our nation.

Our top adversaries, including China and Russia, are testing American resolve, not just in East Asia and Europe, but also across the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa. In the Middle East, Russia and Iran grow closer. Recently, Iran agreed to purchase 24 advanced Su-35 fighter jets. Today, Russia is deploying Iranian drones to kill Ukrainians.

Meanwhile, China works to displace the United States as the partner of choice for many of our longtime friends in the region. The Chinese Communist Party offers more streamlined arms sales and Huawei 5G networks that would undermine our operational security in the Middle East. In Africa, the Russian mercenary group Wagner does -- Wagner does Putin's bidding.

They sow instability across the continent by supporting coups and spreading lies. They use exploitative practices to get critical minerals. They pressure African governments to move away from the West. At the same time,
China is using economic coercion to gain leverage and expand its military footprint in the basing, something former AFRICOM Commander General Steven Townsend called his number one global power competition concern.

We are right to focus on the growing Russia and Chinese threats, but we cannot take our eyes off the other security challenges coming from the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa. In Afghanistan, the disastrous withdrawal of U.S. troops nearly two years ago left a security vacuum the Taliban, Al-Qaeda and ISIS have filled.

The Biden Administration assured us that the Department of Defense would conduct counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan even without a limited number of U.S. troops on the ground, but the United States has only conducted one strike in more than a year. The withdrawal from Afghanistan emboldened ISIS and Al-Qaeda's affiliates around the world, not just in Afghanistan.

The terrorist threat is real and growing. As a result of the Biden Administration's policies, the world's number one State sponsor of terrorism, Iran, presents an increasing threat to our personnel and partners in the region.

President Biden should have focused on countering Iran's missile program and its support for terrorism. Instead, he focused on returning to the flawed 2015 nuclear
agreement. In the process, this Administration has given them practically everything and got absolutely nothing.

According to the Department of Defense, Iran could now produce enough fissile material for a bomb within just 12 days, and its proxies are on the march nationwide. These facts make it clear continued significant real growth in the defense budget top line above inflation remains essential to our national security.

I will be looking closely to ensure our security assistance funding remains strong in these theaters and that our counterterrorism and contingency forces are fully resourced. This includes additional force protection measures in both theaters, particularly to protect against more complex Iranian backed attacks.

I would also note that the budget zeroing out of LPD amphibious ships is the exact wrong move, when we did not even have the capacity to send one amphibious ship to Turkey to help with their earthquake. Finally, I am interested in how the Office of Strategic Capital might be leveraged to push back against the CCP in these theaters and elsewhere as they seek to buy ports and raw materials across the globe.

I thank our witnesses and look forward to their testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Wicker.

General Kurilla, please.
STATEMENT OF GENERAL MICHAEL E. KURILLA, USA

COMMANDER, UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND

General Kurilla: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, ladies and gentlemen of the committee, I am joined today by Command Master Chief Derrick Walters, the Command Senior Enlisted Leader of U.S. Central Command.

On behalf of the soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, and Guardians who serve this Command, the Central Region, and this nation every day, thank you for allowing me to testify regarding the posture of U.S. Central Command, alongside my Ranger buddy, Mike Langley.

CENTCOM serves as the security integrator for an area of responsibility that encompasses 21 nations, almost 600 million people, and serves as the strategic nexus of the world's most important corridors of trade. I am now 11 months into command.

In that time, I have made 14 trips to the region, and those visits have allowed me first person insights that have informed my strategic approach, which is best summarized in three words, people, partners, and innovation.

People are our greatest asset and our most critical resource. Our service members and civilians in the United States and across the region are our nation's best. I know this body keeps them top of mind that right now in the
CENTCOM region, thousands of troops are in harm's way.

Our people who are closest to the problem understand the opportunities available to solve the region's most complex challenges. That is why we rely so heavily on our partners. Our partners are the nations comparative advantage against competitors like China and Russia.

Across CENTCOM, we cultivate deep abiding partnerships that can serve as a hedge against the threats in the region, while deterring Iran from its most destructive behavior. We have the kind of relationships that elicit candid, sometimes tough, conversations that result in solutions. These kind of relationships make us the partner of choice in the region.

And a critical component of that partnership is innovation, innovation of thought, innovation of process, innovation of concept and technology extends the value of the partnerships. Innovation allows us to move faster, operate more efficiently, and increase progress across all operational efforts.

This is more important now than any time in our history. 40 years ago, the Department of Defense established CENTCOM to counter the malign influence of a revolutionary regime that seized power in Tehran and to compete with a great power in the region, the Soviet Union. The organization's charter, directed by this body, was to
direct and enable military operations and activities with allies and partners to increase regional stability in support of enduring U.S. interests.

That mission remains essentially unchanged to this day. Iran still remains the focus. We now battle violent extremist groups who threaten the region and beyond. The Soviet Union has been replaced with China and Russia as strategic competitors. With these challenges, the CENTCOM region holds the greatest risk of derailing the National Defense Strategy with a flashpoint international incident that may demand a response using unplanned resources and attention.

So today, CENTCOM priorities are to deter Iran, counter violent extremist organizations, and compete strategically with China and Russia. Four decades after CENTCOM's formation, Iran remains the primary destabilizing element in the region. We have seen rapid advances in Iranian military capability over time.

The Iran of 2023 is not the Iran of 1983. In fact, today, Iran is exponentially more capable than they were just five years ago. Today, Iran possesses the largest and most diverse missile arsenal in the Middle East, thousands of ballistic and cruise missiles, many capable of striking anywhere in the Middle East. Iran also maintains the largest and most capable UAV force in the region.
The regime continues to enrich and stockpile uranium far above what is needed for commercial use, and Tehran can enrich uranium far faster than it could even two years ago. An Iran with a nuclear weapon would change the Middle East overnight and forever. Iran's vast and deeply resourced proxy forces spread instability throughout the region and threaten our regional partners.

As Iran continues to stabilize the region, we continue to fight against violent extremist organizations. In Syria, we put pressure on ISIS alongside our Syrian Democratic Forces partners. In Iraq, we advise, assist, and enable the Iraqi security forces in their fight against ISIS. While ISIS has significantly degraded in Iraq and Syria, the group maintains the capability to conduct operations within the region and has the desire to strike outside of it.

Our progress in Iraq and Syria contrasts with the security situation in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, the Taliban's hold on security is maintained through ideology, continued humanitarian aid, and the persistent abuse of human rights to dissuade unrest.

Extremist groups see opportunity and ISIS-Khorasan grows emboldened, seeking to expand its ranks and inspire, enable, and direct attacks in the region and beyond, with the ultimate goal to strike on the American homeland.
Amidst these challenges, strategic competition is deeply manifest in the region. The People's Republic of China has chosen to compete in the region. The PRC is aggressively expanding its diplomatic, informational, military, and economic outreach across the region.

China, dependent upon the region for half of its imported oil, is also moving beyond energy-based investments to encompass physical and telecommunication infrastructure that advances its Belt and Road initiatives.

Over half the oil and more than a third of all the natural gas imported by China is supplied by CENTCOM countries. 19 of 21 CENTCOM countries have signed a Belt and Road initiative with China. We are in a race to integrate with our partners before China can fully penetrate the region.

Russia looks to expand its influence in Syria, seeking permanent basing there and undermining our efforts toward stability and security in the region. The U.S. Central Command juts up against Russia with a border six and a half times longer than the Russian border with NATO.

Putin seeks to take advantage of this proximity with a foothold of influence in the Central Asian States, leveraging historical relations and a perceived decline in U.S. engagement to challenge our influence in that critical part of the world. With all these challenges and
opportunities, the CENTCOM region looks to the United States for assurances of our commitment.

For CENTCOM, that commitment is unwavering. In closing, let me thank you for your support to our service members. I would also like to thank the soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, and Guardians who serve and sacrifice in CENTCOM, and all those who have done so for the last 40 years. It is the greatest honor of my lifetime to be their Commander. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of General Kurilla follows:]
Chairman Reed: Thank you, General Kurilla. General Langley, please.
STATEMENT OF GENERAL MICHAEL E. LANGLEY, USMC

COMMANDER, UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND

General Langley: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, distinguished committee members, it is an honor to appear before you today to testify on the State of affairs of the United States Africa Command.

I am proud to testify, along my good friend, General Eric Kurilla, the Commander of the United States Central Command. Now, I assumed command last August, and since then, I embarked upon a campaign of learning over the last seven months to inform our discussion here today.

I undertook this campaign of learning to fulfill my commitment to this Congress to complete a holistic assessment upon confirmation. I made that assessment, and I will continue it throughout my tenure of command.

Upfront, I want to make one thing crystal clear. The team of servicemembers and civilians at AFRICOM is a talent and dedicated body. I am honored to serve among them. I am joined here today by my State Department foreign policy advisor, Mr. Phil Nelson, who represents the exceptionally skilled diplomatic team embedded in our headquarters.

Our entire team is laser focused on implementing our whole of Government approach, with our partners from the Department of State, USAID, the intelligence community, and other U.S. Government organizations. We campaign with our
allies and partners to advance mutual interest and to
promote stability and prosperity on the African continent.

You should be proud of their efforts, I certainly am.

Now, Africa is a vast and dynamic continent of sovereign
nations. Collectively and individually, these nations are
increasingly important players on the global stage. As
such, AFRICOM's contribution to American security must be
viewed through a global lens.

Threats once contained on the continent are
transforming into worldwide threats. Terrorism, poverty,
food insecurity, climate change, and mass migration shadow
African lives. They sow the seeds of violent extremists
and Russian exploitation. The Kremlin's invasion of
Ukraine has aggravated the food insecurity crisis in Africa
by blocking vital food shipments to the same nations that
feel the deepest impact of climate change.

Russia's Bogner mercenaries turned chaos into cash.
It destabilizes entire regions across Africa and cuts at
American interests worldwide. The expansion of the Middle
East based violent extremist groups such as ISIS and Al-
Qaeda, including now the biggest franchise Al-Shabaab,
threatens American lives.

Solutions to these colossal problems must be a shared
burden. African nations need to be at the helm of a
concerted international effort to produce sustainable
results, sustainable outcomes.

Assisting African nations to achieving the goals while advancing American interests can only be accomplished through a synchronized whole of Government approach, a whole of Government strategy.

We call it a 3-D approach, which is a toolkit of diplomacy, development, and defense, but one tool does not succeed without the whole kit. So, I will advocate for my State Department and USAID partners to receive the resources they need to succeed. Now, Africa faces many other challenges.

How we are putting African needs at the forefront of our campaign, reinforced by multilateral and whole Government engagement, will help AFRICOM and our partners work towards a sustainable peace, stability, and prosperity.

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished members of this committee, thank you for having me here today. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Langley follows:]
Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, General Langley. General Kurilla, you have rightly emphasized the critical importance of leveraging allies and partners to counter threats from Iran and Iranian linked groups.

And does our posture change with respect to the new agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and how will it impact our allies in the region or across the globe?

General Kurilla: Thank you, Chairman. Appreciate that question. So, this agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia is the culmination really of three years of discussions that have been going on, but just recently by China.

And I would say an agreement is not implementation. While these discussions were going on, in the last 90 days, we have interdicted five major weapons shipments coming from Iran to Yemen, which those weapons are then used against Saudi Arabia.

One of those shipments included components of navigation systems for short range ballistic missiles. So again, I think the implementation is a completely different matter on this.

Chairman Reed: Will China be held accountable by the Saudis if they cannot limit attacks against the kingdom and weapon transfers, as you described?

General Kurilla: So, I think that remains to be seen,
Chairman. What is concerning on this is China's penetration into the region. In the national instruments of power, they already have their economic in the region, their information, their military with the increase in sales of at least 80 percent over the last 10 years in terms of their foreign military sales. And now we are seeing for the first time really their diplomatic.

Chairman Reed: Thank you. General Langley, you mentioned the presence of the Wagner group in Africa and their behavior, which is contrary to any decency at all in the world.

How are we trying, through the information domain, to expose them and what they are doing, and also obviously expose the Russian government that is supporting them and sponsoring them?

General Langley: Chairman, from the mil-to-mil perspective in engagement with our partners, we do use information operations to effect and address the negative sentiment in their message, the destabilizing in countries in which they enmeshed themselves in, especially in Mali. That is very -- has been very much present, that they have this destabilizing activities. But it has been -- it is reinforced by the UN force there, illuminating and amplifying some of the atrocities that the Wagner group is guilty of. So therein lies the whole of Government
Since I don't have mil to mil, because of sanctions at this point, but we still have a whole Government approach that can take that mantle and still be able to do information operations.

Chairman Reed: Thank you. General Kurilla, when we spoke about China, we also speak about Russia. The aid that Iran is giving to Russia now in the Ukraine fight and what would presumably be the reciprocation by the Russians in many different ways is another factor that has recently emerged.

What is your response to that? What advice can you give to us, and how can we limit this -- the impact of this arrangement?

General Kurilla: Chairman, thank you for the question on that. So, it is very concerning any time we see adversaries working together. We do know that they have shipped hundreds of their advanced unmanned aerial vehicles to the Ukraine.

These are the same ones that have hit our service members in both Iraq and in Syria. They are improving upon them based on what they are learning inside the Ukraine. I am concerned then with the support that Russia can give back.

As you know, the Iran State media announced the
approval of -- don't know the exact number yet what will
come out of the agreement, but the Su-35 is a fourth gen
plus fighter, which has a lot of our partners in the region
considered as well.

Chairman Reed: And what types of steps are you
contemplating or we should be contemplating to try to
disrupt or diminish this threat that is emerging?

General Kurilla: Chairman, I think this will take a
whole of Government approach to include all of the
instruments of national power on this to be able to prevent
that.

Chairman Reed: And with respect to the Iranian
nuclear program, they have made significant steps since the
termination of the JCPOA. Is there any indication that
either Russia or China would encourage them, sponsor them,
or on the other hand, discourage them from moving further?

General Kurilla: And, Chairman, I will be able to
talk about that in the classified session immediately
following this.

Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, General. Thank
you both. And again, thank the men and women. Glad to see
the Master Chief is here, so you are well supervised,
General Kurilla. Thank you very much. Senator Wicker,
please.

Senator Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let's stay
with Iran, General Kurilla. You can tell us in a non-classified setting, can't you, whether the threat from Iran has grown stronger or lesser in the past two years.

General Kurilla: Iran's malign behavior has increased in the last two years, Senator.

Senator Wicker: Okay. And what do you need from the Congress of the United States to meet this threat?

General Kurilla: So, as we look at the threat mainly that we face is the ballistic missile and their UAV threat in the region. One of the ways that we are countering that is through regional agreements and a regional architecture.

As we go towards an integrated air and missile defense in the region, we are making progress on that. So, what we need is the continued resourcing, and I want to make sure that I have a sufficient and sustainable posture in CENTCOM so that I can accomplish the missions I have been given to make sure I can mitigate the risk.

If there is one area in the world, I believe that can derail the National Defense Strategy, it is that currently the CENTCOM AOR.

Senator Wicker: So, the resources to help you facilitate these agreements?

General Kurilla: It is the resources, Senator.

Senator Wicker: Okay. Will -- help us be specific about that. Now, after the disastrous Afghan withdrawal,
the departments assured this committee that countering
terrorist groups would still be possible over the horizon.
We have only done that once. Is that correct?

General Kurilla: Senator, we -- actually all kinetic
-- all finishes in the methodology of find, fix, and finish
on counterterrorism targets are not kinetic. There is two
that are non-kinetic that we disrupted and I will talk
about that in a classified setting that involved over five
Combatant Commanders to disrupt those finishes.

Senator Wicker: Okay, so two non-kinetic and one
kinetic.

General Kurilla: Right.

Senator Wicker: Do you think we should
be doing more of those?

General Kurilla: It is difficult right now, as I said
in my confirmation hearing. It is a difficult but not
impossible. One of the things that we are trying to do is
increase our intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance
over that.

We are putting an investment into long duration, high
altitude, alternative airborne ISR that can go up for days
and weeks, because right now I am spending 80 percent of my
time transiting to the region to be able to collect over
the top.

Senator Wicker: Okay. General Langley, tell us what
China is doing. How far along are they on their base in Djibouti? And where do you think they might likely be making their strongest effort for a military base in West Africa?

General Langley: Thank you, Senator, for that question. China's aspirations, especially at Doraleh, they are coming across a thinly veiled front that is all for goodwill. But we know that they are establishing, especially with the destroyer that visited Doraleh last March, shows that they have indications that --

Senator Wicker: Tell us where that is.

General Langley: Duraleh is in Djibouti. I am sorry. So, Ranking Member, their aspirations are pretty clear. That is a strategic line of communication, especially as it embarks upon the Suez Canal and Bab-el-Mandeb, if they wanted to fully militarize that. Duraleh is of concern.

They are saying it is all about goodwill, but I think the other. They do have other aspirations, and in closed session, ranking member, I know that I can be able to lay that out where in West Africa is their next military base aspiration.

Senator Wicker: Okay, but tell us then if you can, and I think you can, how that would affect our security as Americans, and particularly to North America, if the Chinese are able to establish a base in West Africa.
General Langley: It would put us -- it would change the whole calculus of the geostrategic global campaign plans of protecting the homeland. It would shorten -- if they build any capacity on the West Coast, geostrategically it will put them at an advantage. Right now, we have the decisive advantage. They cannot -- we can't let them have a base on the West Coast because it would change the dynamics.

Senator Wicker: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Reed: Thank you very much. Thank you, Senator Wicker. Senator Shaheen, please.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Generals Kurilla, Langley, thank you both for being here this morning. General Kurilla, I want to pick up on a conversation that we had when we met a couple of weeks ago, and I appreciated that opportunity.

But one of the things we talked about was the situation in the ISIS detainee camps in Syria. And can you give us an update on what the current conditions are and what you are doing in CENTCOM to help destabilize what is happening there, and what you need from us in order for us to be more successful there?

General Kurilla: Thanks, Senator. So, I have been to Syria six times. I was in Syria last week. So, as we look at ISIS in Syria, it has three categories. The first
category is ISIS at large. That is the ones that we are fighting right now with our Syrian Democratic partners, and I think we have contained ISIS, but the ideology is uncontained and unconstrained.

The second category is what you may refer to as the ISIS in detention. I refer to them as an ISIS army in detention. There are over 10,000 ISIS detainees spread across 26 different prisons in Northeast Syria. I went inside the Hasaka prison last Thursday.

That is the same prison that January of '22, last year, there was 4,400 ISIS detainees in there. They broke out. Over 1,000 made it outside the walls. And in a ten-day battle that involved both our U.S. forces, air power, and Syrian democratic forces, over 400 were killed. Some escaped, the exact number unknown, and then the rest were captured.

But 121 of our SDF partners were killed in that prison breakout. What we are doing specifically about the detention facilities is we are trying to consolidate them now. This body provided funding for us to build another prison, which we think can consolidate the vast majority of the rest of the prisoners.

We also train the guards that are on these detention facilities and the CTF funds help facilitate that. And lastly, the last category is the potential next generation
of ISIS. I had an opportunity to go into the Al Roj camp and into Al Hol inside and talk to residents. I met -- I talked to women from 16 different countries last week inside the camp to include the woman from Alabama.

And then I also went inside the Al Hol camp and I met three teenagers who had been there for six years. And remember, ISIS really didn't come to Al Hol until about late 2018. These were people that went there to escape ISIS and escape the regime.

And then with the fall of ISIS's territorial caliph in really March of 2019, it swelled from about 35,000 to 70,000. And currently right now there is about 51,000 inside of Al Hol. Over 30,000 of them are children, and they are at risk from radicalization.

About 50 percent of the camp holds or espouses some form of ideology, according to the camp guards, the camp administrators, and the residents, and the other half are trying to escape ISIS.

Really, the only role there is that we can do, is there is no military solution, is the repatriation, rehabilitation, and reintegration back into the society.

Senator Shaheen: And are we having any luck getting some of the countries to repatriate those detainees who came from their countries?

General Kurilla: Absolutely, ma'am. So, we have
actually had more success in the first few months of this year than the last six months of last year. About half of those IDPs that are in Al Hol are from Iraq.

And we work with our Iraqi security partners in the Iraqi government to repatriate them. They have done 1,200 in the last two months. At that pace, it would be about four years to get everybody back. So, we are working with them on how they can increase the throughput.

But right now, it is their ability to go through the Jeddah 1 camp, which is South of Mosul, as they bring them back. What they don't want to do is just move one IDP camp to another, so they are working through that process.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you. Well, I hope you will let this committee know if there are additional resources or other supports that you need. General Langley, the map of Africa shows where the Wagner Group is operating, but it doesn't speak to the success or not that they are having with recruitment.

Can you speak to that, and maybe Senator Reed asked about the success that information or disinformation efforts that they have underway. Can you also talk about what we are doing to respond to that in a little more detail?

General Langley: Senator, first and foremost, I mean, talk about bargainers and tensions. They are all about
power and profit. If they are going to give a false offering of security, it is only for the elites in a particular country.

We are seeing that in Mali. Wagner failed in Mozambique. They tried to entrench upon it. And that government, albeit developing, did not like that false value proposition. They have continuing actions in Dakar, a Central African Republic. And that -- well, in that vein, I think Central African Republic is kind of getting fed up.

So, there is no recruiting going on. It is all about profit, making their way to gold mines, diamond mines, or rare earth mineral mines. That is extension of the Russian Federation.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you. I will submit a question for the record on the disinformation efforts.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Shaheen. Senator Fischer, please.

Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for being here today and thank you for your service to our country. General Kurilla, how long would it take ISIS-K to generate the capability to conduct external operations?

General Kurilla: Specifically, ISIS-Khorasan, Senator? It is my Commander's estimate that they can do an
external operation against U.S. or Western interests abroad in under six months with little to no warning. In the classified session, I will talk about why I make that assessment. It is much harder for them to be able to do that against the homeland.

Senator Fischer: Senator Wicker talked to you quite a bit about over the horizon and our capabilities that we have there, or don't have there in Afghanistan. Do you think that you need any additional resources in our upcoming budget to increase or improve those capabilities?

General Kurilla: So, we have been funded, like I said, for some alternative airborne ISR that will help us get longer duration. But it is not just about ISR. We are also increasing our other intelligence efforts to get penetration into the networks that we want.

A part that goes unseen a lot of times is the analytical back side. These are the analysts, the linguists, and the production capability that help us make the decisions. And there has been a significant decrease shifted from the NDS to go against higher priority targets, but I would like to see to make sure that we don't lose so much of that capability that we cannot see the threat.

Senator Fischer: Because knowing that threat is obviously very important, as you have stated, for the existence that we still see in Afghanistan of the terrorist
groups that are there.

General Kurilla: Correct, ma'am.

Senator Fischer: Thank you. Have you requested authority to conduct any strikes in Afghanistan against the ISIS-K targets that have been identified?

General Kurilla: So, in a classified study, ma'am, I can talk about where we are in terms of the find, fix, and finish on them.

Senator Fischer: Okay. Do you still have a need for munitions that can hit hard in deeply buried targets?

General Kurilla: I do, ma'am.

Senator Fischer: Do you have specific requests in that area?

General Kurilla: That was in my unfunded priority list last year.

Senator Fischer: Do you plan to include it this year?

General Kurilla: It depends on the full funding, ma'am.

Senator Fischer: Would it be your recommendation and your best military advice to this committee that it would be -- that it should be included?

General Kurilla: So, we did receive funding for in my Fiscal Year 2023 to include the additional procurement of the -- its the Massive Automated Ordinance Penetrator, which goes against hardened, deeply buried targets.
Senator Fischer: Which are growing in number with our adversaries. Is that correct?

General Kurilla: That is correct, ma'am.

Senator Fischer: What is your assessment of Iran and Saudi Arabia reestablishing diplomatic ties? You talked about that a little bit. But how does that affect our mil-to-mil relationships that we have with Saudi Arabia?

General Kurilla: We have very strong mil to mil relationship with Saudi Arabia. I think this agreement is, again, is the culmination of three years of talks between them. The more concerning part is that China is the one that was mediating this.

Senator Fischer: As we look at Iran and their proxies throughout CENTCOM AOR, do they continue to pose a significant threat to our partners and to our own forces in the region? And what more can be done to deter Iran from those malign activities?

General Kurilla: So, we see Iran as the largest malign actor in the region. Less than 60 hours ago, we had rockets attacked from Iranian aligned militia group against one of our bases in Syria.

Senator Fischer: What more can be done to deter them?

General Kurilla: One of the things that we are doing is increasing our defensive posture in these areas. And I want to thank the services for providing a capability. So
particularly the Army has given us some tremendous capability in terms of counter-UAS and counter rocket mortar at our bases.

Senator Fischer: With Syria and Iraq, what do you assess to be the situation in Syria right now? And have you seen any change in Russia's presence in Syria, or has that remained pretty steady since the invasion of Ukraine?

General Kurilla: So, Senator, Syria is very important to Russia. They have taken very little out of Russia since their invasion. They have taken a small number of forces, some munitions, but generally has stayed about the same. What we are seeing, though, is an increase recently in the unprofessional and unsafe behavior of the Russian air force in the region.

Senator Fischer: Can you give us an example of that here?

General Kurilla: I can. So, they fly over our bases with ground attack aircraft with weapons on them in an attempt to try and be provocative. But really, it is unsafe, unprofessional, not what we expect of a professional air force. They want to try and renegotiate the deconfliction protocols that they violate every day.

Senator Fischer: This is not new Russian behavior, is it, sir, especially with regard to the drone incident that we recently have seen.
General Kurilla: It is not new, but we have seen a significant spike since about 1 March in Syria.

Senator Fischer: Okay. Thank you.

General Kurilla: Thank you, ma'am.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Fischer. Senator Gillibrand, please.

Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to continue Senator Fisher's line of questions with regard to Iran. If this was a three year of talks, how recent was China engaged in those talks?

General Kurilla: Ma'am, I understand that it is in the last several months.

Senator Gillibrand: Well, obviously, that raises serious concerns, because I just took -- I just joined a delegation to visit the Abraham Accords countries, and the interest of those countries, UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Israel, is to broaden and strengthen the Abraham Accords, and they were hopeful that they could engage Saudi Arabia in that context.

This seems to me that that would make that extremely problematic, because if China is involved, it would be very difficult to have the kind of technology shared in the Abraham Accords if they are now in alliance with China.

And second, if they are in an alliance with Iran, the whole point of the Abraham Accords is to counter Iran's
malign threats. So, does this make the possibility of extending or expanding the Abraham Accords impossible? And what do you recommend that this committee do to focus on how we create more regional alliances?

General Kurilla: So, ma'am, I believe this is a -- the talks about opening diplomatic relations so much as this is not an alliance between Saudi Arabia and Iran. They have had diplomatic relations in the past while they were still shooting at each other in the past.

So, this is really about opening embassies and opening diplomatic relations when they closed the embassies back in 2016. What this does do, though, is that with China, the most concerning part about this is that China is the one brokering this because it shows that they are bringing the diplomatic aspect of their national instruments of power.

And what we see with China on the military side is that they have a significant increase in bringing their equipment into the region and their foreign military sales. And if there is Chinese equipment there, we cannot integrate it with U.S. equipment.

And so, as we try and build the regional partnerships, and we have been there for the last 75 years, when we try and build these regional partnerships, you want to be able to integrate with your partner. And if there is Chinese equipment there, we are not going to be able to integrate
Senator Gillibrand: Understood. Can you, in this setting, give us more detail on where China has integrated its equipment in the region?

General Kurilla: China has sold equipment all over the region inside the Middle East. And I can take that for the record and give you a specific follow up for that, ma'am.

Senator Gillibrand: And then do you have a focused plan on what to do about that?

General Kurilla: So, one of this is to increase our partnership with these elements. So again, this is a race to integrate before China can penetrate.

Senator Gillibrand: And would you recommend expanding and deepening the Abraham Accords?

General Kurilla: I would, ma'am.

Senator Gillibrand: Thank you. With regard to Afghanistan, I would like an update on what we are doing to get our partners out and whether those operations are continuing, and what are the barriers that you are facing currently.

General Kurilla: So, ma'am, the getting the partners out through special immigrant visas. That is a State Department run program. But from the U.S., from the military side, we are responsible for bringing them into a
place called Camp As Sayliyah in Qatar.

   And we currently have about 2,600 there right now. We provide the in processing, the security, and the basic life support. The State Department runs the actual immigrant visa side. They are averaging about 60 days there before they are moved on.

   In my understanding right now in the pipeline is about 85,000 special immigrant visas, but I would defer to the State Department on the exact number.

   Senator Gillibrand: Again, with regard to Iran, we know that Russia and Iran have escalated their military cooperation over the last year. How is CENTCOM coordinating with EUCOM to ensure that our forces are able to respond to threats that touch both areas of responsibilities?

   General Kurilla: So, I talked to Chris Cavoli often, the EUCOM Commander in the SACEUR. We have done several operations that I can talk about in a classified setting to create additional dilemmas for Russia.

   Senator Gillibrand: And then my last question for you, sir, is you activated the U.S. Space Force Central, which is responsible for space operations within the CENTCOM area of responsibility. How are you incorporating the space domain into planning and training so that your subordinate commanders can effectively integrate space into
their operations?

General Kurilla: We think this is a very big positive of actually having a component of Space Force. Space has always played a large role in the CENTCOM AOR, but now I have a Commander that sits at the table that is able to then integrate more effectively because he has a seat at the table to be able to do that.

And we actually just finished a large with all the Combatant Commands in the region to talk about the lessons we have learned over the last, you know, decade of doing space operations in CENTCOM.

Senator Gillibrand: Thank you. General Langley, despite the size and growing importance of the continent, the 21st century wars in CENTCOM, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the strategic competition with China have dominated much of our focus on this committee. What might we be missing about Africa that you think this committee should take note of in the coming years?

General Langley: Senator, I would say just aspirations of China. The aspirations of China is threefold, one from a geopolitical. They are trying to change the international norms and they are using some of the African countries within the UN construct, whether it be General Assembly or the Security Council, trying to affect votes to change those international norms and the
international system writ large.

And then there is the geostrategic operation. Their aspiration for military bases on the continent of Africa. Just talked to my African partners, they don't want to be militarized in a strategic sense.

And the last piece, Senator, is geoeconomic. Our future economy is dependent upon a number of rare earth minerals. And also, some of our clean energy technologies depend upon the rare earth minerals. About 30 to 40 percent of those minerals are on the continent of Africa. That is forward thinking by the PRC.

They are trying to harvest and leverage upon that through shaky deals, engaging with some of these countries so they can corner a market, if you will. That is what I am concerned about, Senator. Thank you.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Gillibrand.

Senator Cotton, please.

Senator Cotton: Welcome, gentlemen. General Kurilla, I want to return to your answer to Senator Fischer about the threat of terrorist attacks originating from Afghanistan. If I heard you right, you said you believe that such attacks could occur in a mere six months out of Afghanistan against American citizens or allies or partners in Eurasia. Is that right?

General Kurilla: Senator, I said abroad, which I
would also include Europe in that.

Senator Cotton: Eurasia. But you said less than --

more than that against the American homeland.

General Kurilla: It would be harder for them to do

that against the American homeland.

Senator Cotton: If you assessed six months against

Europe or Asia, what would you assess would be the timeline

against the homeland?

General Kurilla: I think it is hard to put a timeline

on that. But again, I assess that they could in as little

as six months with little to no warning. And I will talk

about that in the closed session as to why assess that.

Senator Cotton: How likely do you think a terrorist

attack on the United States or one of our allies is

originating from Afghanistan?

General Kurilla: I think it is a higher probability

overseas than it is in the homeland.

Senator Cotton: When you add up all the troops you

have in your area of responsibility and American citizens

who are there for business or tourism or pilgrimages on any

given day, what are we talking about? Probably hundreds of

thousands, right?

General Kurilla: At least.

Senator Cotton: So, hundreds of thousands within

range of a terrorist attack, in your assessment, in a mere
six months from Afghanistan. Okay, I want to turn to Iran.

Senator Wicker: I don't think we heard the answer.

General Kurilla: Yes, I do assess it.

Senator Cotton: I want to turn to Iran. You said in your written statement they can produce sufficient fissile material for a nuclear weapon in less than 14 days. You also say that deterring Iran is arguably more urgent now than any time in CENTCOM's history due to one, their cutting-edge missile and UAV capability. And two, their uranium enrichment program. That is correct?

General Kurilla: That is correct, Senator.

Senator Cotton: Yet you also say Iran is undeterred from its malign activities. So that is not good. That it is more urgent to deter them than in any time in Central Command's history, but they are undeterred. Why is Iran undeterred right now?

General Kurilla: Currently, right now we see them, that their malign activity is increasing. We see them again in the last 90 days. We have some of the highest numbers of our advanced conventional weapons and munitions that we have seen going from Iran to Yemen.

We see their attacks on our U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria increasing, and we see the threat streams that I can talk about in a higher classification.

Senator Cotton: I mean, those are more the results of
the lack of deterrence against Iran. Do they feel undeterred because they feel safe that neither the United States or our partners are going to threaten anything they hold dear?

General Kurilla: I can't say the exact reason why they feel that, but I know right now when I look at them, I believe they are undeterred.

Senator Cotton: I mean, there is a history -- you are right throughout your statement. There is a history of Iran being deterred by the credible threat of military force or actual military force. That is right, isn't it?

General Kurilla: I think that deterrence is always temporal, so you can deter for a period of time and then it will wane. I do believe the Suleimani strike was a deterrence.

Senator Cotton: We can go back much further than that. Iran waged war with Iraq for eight years and Ronald Reagan sunk half their navy in the spring of 1988. And surprisingly, that war ended just a few months later.

And Iran also stopped its enrichment program in 2003, after the United States had invaded and toppled governments on both its East and its Western border. And then, as you say, they took only very tentative steps towards higher enrichment in 2019.

And then after we killed Kassam Soleimani, they did
nothing at all for most of 2020 is that right?

General Kurilla: They -- it was a higher level of
deterrence after that.

Senator Cotton: Last week on the Intelligence
Committee, we had our annual worldwide threats briefing and
the director of National Intelligence cited the killing of
Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, a notorious Iranian nuclear scientist,
in November 2020, as the reason Iran accelerated its
enrichment program. Do you agree with that assessment?

General Kurilla: Senator, I think any talk of the
Iran nuclear program would be best in a classified setting.

Senator Cotton: I pointed out there is also something
that happened in November of 2020 besides the killing of
Mohsen Fakhrizadeh that might have emboldened Iran, and
that was the election of Joe Biden that gave the Iranians
confidence that they were no longer going to be held
militarily at risk.

Speaking of that time frame, I think it was December
of 2020, didn't we face threats to our personnel in Iraq
from militias and the Former President tweeted what he
called some friendly health advice to the Ayatollahs that
if a single American was harmed in Iraq, he would hold them
responsible?

General Kurilla: I am not familiar with that specific
tweet.
Senator Cotton: That did happen. It is okay. There are a lot of them. You don't have to be familiar with every one of them. But I also don't think those attacks happened. So, I think what we can learn here whether it's from Kassim Soleimani or the tanker wars or anything else, that the only thing that will deter Iran is the credible threat of military force.

One final question, I know you have added Israel to your AOR, and you right in your statement that you readily partner today with Arab militaries and the Israel Defense Force alike. In fact, the inclusion of Israel presents many collaborative and constructive security opportunities.

One of the opportunities I see is having Israeli Air Force personnel training alongside American personnel on KC-46 tankers, which we expect to be providing them in the future, and that is training that we can provide them so they will be ready to operate those aircraft as soon as they get them.

Do you think that would be what you call a collaborative and constructive opportunity between the United States and Israel?

General Kurilla: I think when they get closer to getting their aircraft, starting to train those pilots so they can retain that training and go right into the execution of operating them.
Senator Cotton: Thank you.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Cotton. Senator Hirono, please.

Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to turn to another part of your missions. In both Central Command and in Africa Command, U.S. diplomatic efforts are -- diplomatic efforts are at the forefront of your missions. The military-to-military engagement is one very important aspect of your responsibilities, but your organizations are just one part of a whole of Government approach.

General Langley, I note your team's work in implementing the 2017 Women Peace and Security Act. Amid the many extremist threats in both of your areas of operations, it is more important than ever, as far as I am concerned, to work for equality for women and girls around the world. Generals, how are your commands supporting and protecting women and girls in your AOR?

General Langley: Senator, thanks for that question. As Women's Peace and Security Act passed in 2017, I have seen from afar what AFRICOM has started to do. We didn't wait for the plan or the construct over years.

CENTCOM -- excuse me, AFRICOM got after it. I saw this, you know, because I was at CENTCOM and I was at the J5, and we got out there as well at that time. But how far
that CENTCOM, that CENTCOM and AFRICOM has gone in the vein of the intent of women's peace and security -- Senator, I would like to just make note, we have it -- we have been to our Africa campaign plan to effect in working with the Department of Defense to finish out the construct.

But we just didn't -- we didn't wait for the word to go. Just for your information, Senator, across the Horn of Africa, our JTF, we have a Major General Shawley, and she is affected that in every exercise that we do all the way down from Djibouti down to Kenya.

And even her, Valerie Jackson, Brigadier General, the United States Marine Corps, as they work with other countries, they get it. President Assad Sheik Mohammed sees a representation of our talent base in our military and in our U.S. military, that 50 percent of the talent base are women, and they are showing that it is effective.

And it is -- and for partners on the African continent, they realize that. So, it is changing culture.

Senator Hirono: General, I think we have to be very intentional about the support we provide to women and girls, because wherever there is instability, and certainly both of your AORs are characterized by what I would call instability, women and girls are the ones who bear the brunt of the challenges. General Langley, would you like to add to what General Kurilla said? Because you are doing
a, I would say, a pretty good job.

General Kurilla: Ma'am I think--

Senator Hirono: Please.

General Kurilla: Ma'am, I think you are referring to me on that. So, the -- I value the program.

Senator Hirono: I am sorry. Yes, I was referring to you, General Langley. Go ahead.

General Langley: Yes, Senator. And so, in execution, as we work with even in the West in our exercises, we ensure that we do represent and within the spirit and a letter of intent, of the Act of WPS, that we -- that our partners ensure that their culture is changing and women and girls get meaningful opportunities within the overall governance and society.

And that is why I brought up Major General Shawley as she makes her travels across. They see that America gets it and they start to get it as well. It is very compelling, Senator.

Senator Hirono: Thank you. General Langley, further question for you. You noted in your testimony the climate as a challenge in Africa. Can you describe the destabilizing impact of climate change on African nations and what we can do to counter this impact, or these impacts?

General Langley: Absolutely, Senator. That is a
driver of instability, especially with irregular patterns across the Sahel. We are seeing that. Across a whole of Government approach as I work with USAID, I would say just more flexibility, trying to predict where the effects are going to go.

We need to stay ahead of this. And that is why Administrator power is action for non-humanitarian actions, so she can move resources, so we can address the effects of climate change, because it is hard to predict. Even the USAID being an evidence-based organization can't predict where the next, two years out, where the next atrocity is going to happen as a result of climate change.

So there needs to be flexibility across State Department and USAID, then backed up by military, by building a capability, adaptability within our partners and our military so they can go out and assist the affected people as a result of climate change.

Senator Hirono: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I am particularly interested in what we are doing to counter climate change impacts in Africa, because I agree that this is a very destabilizing situation. So, I will continue to pursue inquiries along these lines. Thank you.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Hirono. Senator Rounds, please.

Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen,
first of all, thank you both for your service to our country and to your teams as well. A question for both of you.

With regard to our country's refocus with regard to the threat that we see from both the other major powers in the world, specifically China, Russia to some degree as well, what impact has that had in terms of the discussion and the clear evidence that we have turned from literally more than 20 years of fighting terrorism to where we are now focusing on this major power competition.

What is the impact in terms of the countries within your AORs, and how are they perceiving the United States interest in your regions of the world? General Kurilla.

General Kurilla: So, Senator, we are concerned. Again, as I said, this is about a race between integration with our partners and Chinese penetration into the region. There has been a significant increase both in their economic $460 billion in infrastructure development in the last five years, $2.6 trillion in trade.

And really, we see their military capability where they are trying to sell military equipment and foreign military sales. In the last 10 years, we have seen a 30 percent decline in the U.S., but an 80 percent increase in Chinese on foreign military sales. And when they buy a Chinese system, we cannot integrate it into our systems.
Senator Rounds: General Langley.

General Langley: Senator, you know, as Eric just alluded to, we had the same effects on the continent as well, as far as investments by -- from a military standpoint, both the PRC and Russia. And, you know, how we partner -- that really segways into the main issue as far as how slow our 333 program of our arm, train, and equip our partners. So, they do know that they have choices.

Now, as we saw down in South Africa, they want to show the world that they have choices and that is why they had Mosi II exercise. But up in our partners in the Gulf of Guinea region, they are pressurized by all kinds of -- by extremist organizations threatening their borders.

And they come in, they asked, and they said, hey, you know, General Langley, we don't want your boots on the ground. We want your equipment. We need help so we can put up a good fight and take care of these violent extremist organization across all the affiliates.

But as slow as our processes are, we have 333 and also 332, our other Title 10 authorities is moving to slow, Senator. Just moving too slow, and they make the wrong decisions.

Senator Rounds: Let's dive into that just a little bit more for both of you. The foreign military sales, or FMS, is a critical part of our foreign policy. It requires
not just the availability but also the approval process. Could each of you share with me your opinion about the approval process and whether or not there needs to be a more expedited process in order to allow us to continue with FMS? General Kurilla.

General Kurilla: Senator, they say about 95 percent of all FMS goes according to plan. 5 percent doesn't. 80 percent of those 5 percent are in the CENTCOM AOR. The challenge we have is the time it takes to get equipment to our partners.

And there is, you know, the DOD, Department of State, Congress, and industry all have a role in that. But what China does is they come in, they open their entire catalog, they give them express shipping, they give them no end user agreement, and they give them financing, which at the end of the day can end up being some type of predatory financing.

But they are much faster to need, and our security partners have real security needs and we are losing our ability to provide our equipment so that it can integrate into the region.

Senator Rounds: They would prefer to have our equipment, wouldn't they?

General Kurilla: Absolutely. So, when you buy U.S. equipment, you buy -- you get the quality, you get the
training, the sustainment, the upgrades, but you are also buying into the bureaucracy, right now.

Senator Rounds: They just can't get it because of our bureaucratic processes is delaying the delivery of that product. If it is available, it is still a bureaucratic mess to get it there.

General Kurilla: There is some that goes very fast and some that goes very, very slow.

Senator Rounds: General Langley.

General Langley: Absolutely, Senator. We see that just all along, and I fully concur with Eric about our training and the capacity is more of a quality. But the sense of urgency, especially in West Africa, across the Sahel, across Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and Benin, and Togo, they need equipment. They need weapons now.

So even with our significant security cooperation initiatives, that process is not any faster. It is designed to be faster, so they make choices, and they make the wrong choices in siding with -- going with either PRC or Russia for especially lethal aid.

Senator Rounds: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Rounds. Senator Warren, please.

Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So, the Biden Administration announced last week that it is
requesting $842 billion for the Pentagon budget. It is one of the largest budget requests ever.

Despite this already massive number, every year DOD pushes to get even more money by using unfunded priority lists or what I call wish lists that don't go through the other budgeting screens. The services and Combatant Commands ask Congress for billions more in funding for programs from these lists.

Other Federal agencies have to balance their must haves and their nice to haves, but DOD doesn't. Instead, it games the system by submitting a second list of items that they want so that their budget can grow even bigger. I know that there are colleagues on both sides of the aisle who are concerned about this and want to see this practice stop.

Last year, both your predecessors at AFRICOM and CENTCOM submitted these wish lists. So, what I am asking today is about whether you plan to do the same. General Langley, AFRICOM requested an additional $353.6 million in unfunded priorities last year.

In its submission, AFRICOM argued that if some of these programs weren't funded, it would result in, "unacceptable risk." So, my question is, this year will AFRICOM be putting all of its priority projects, if it is that important, if it is putting us at unacceptable risk,
will you put that into your base budget request?

    General Langley: Senator, and just be transparent, I will be submitting an unfunded priority list and here is why. Because of the emerging threats. When President Biden directed us back in last May to return to our persistent presence in Somalia, and I took command a few months after that.

    And I asked, being a former programmer, I said, okay, what is the fully burdened cost? I need to communicate to Congress what the fully burdened costs. I need to communicate to the Department first.

    And I did that. I did that after budget submittal to -- from the services to the Department. So that emerging cost was informed by the risk that we have --

    Senator Warren: So, you are telling me that this request, the ink is not dry on the budget request from Congress and from the President, and you are already saying that you know that it is not enough.

    And I want to remind you about emerging threats. DOD already has transfer and reprogramming authorities to deal with emerging threats. You have the ability to come back to Congress if you can justify an emerging threat.

    We have a panel looking at whether or not there are more changes that are needed. But these unfunded priority lists are just another way to game the system. If it is a
priority to cover something like this, then I think you should be covering it.

So, are you telling me that the only things that will be on your unfunded priority list are things you couldn't have known about when you submitted your budget?

General Langley: Senator I -- even my predecessor also put the other piece of that cost on there on ISR. We never had enough.

Senator Warren: I am not hearing a yes or no. Are you telling me that your unfunded budget priority list will have nothing on it except things that you could not have known about when you submitted your budget?

General Langley: There is a persistent threat that we have to account for. So, on that, on the list it will include that.

Senator Warren: That is what your budget is for, accounting for the persistent threat. Let me ask General Kurilla the same. Last year, CENTCOM submitted a request for $35 million in its unfunded priority list. Are you planning to submit a wish list again this year?

General Kurilla: Senator, I am. But on last year's, I am the one who signed last year. That was for the Massive Ordnance Penetrator for heavy, deeply buried targets. I do not have procurement dollars in my baseline budget, that is why I requested it.
Senator Warren: So, what you are really telling me is that this unfunded priority list is just a way to say I need a bigger base budget.

General Kurilla: I don't have that color of money, Senator, to ask to request that. But what I what I do as a Commander is I mitigate risk and I go through my priorities and the missions I have, and then when I have any risk left over, by the law, I will submit per the UPL.

Senator Warren: You know, look, I appreciate this -- you all know I have raised this issue before. If we are going to have a budget, we ought to have a budget. And there is no reason that DOD shouldn't be able to work within the budgeting process like every other part of Government.

I am out of time on this, but I am going to be submitting more questions for the record, Mr. Chairman, on what these commands are doing to prevent civilian harm. DOD is on the right path, but I remain concerned about whether or not we are getting accurate and honest reporting. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Warren. Senator Mullin, please.

Senator Mullin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you both for being here. General Kurilla, I just want to personally tell you how much I appreciate your service.
Upon reading more about you, I was even more impressed. Any of us that have been in situations like you were in Mosul. And being able to keep your head in the fight after being shot three times and still be able to direct fire, I commend you for that.

That is while it should be common, everyone in front of you or, and behind you knows that is not always common. So, thank you for doing that. I want to talk about Afghanistan a little bit. The American withdrawal from Kabul in 2021, as you know, was a complete disaster. And it brought in systematic failures from the top down across multiple agencies. But it is not enough to just say this was a disaster and move on.

Lives were lost and our posture on the world stage has been forever changed. As you reach one year in your current position, can you explain what you have learned in the aftermath of the Afghanistan withdrawal and how we can prevent these types of failures moving forward?

General Kurilla: Senator, just for clarity, specifically about the withdrawal or overall?

Senator Mullin: The lessons we learned from the withdrawal, and how we can prevent this from happening again, and how this has changed your position.

General Kurilla: So, in terms of the actual withdrawal, one of the top lessons we learned is the
importance of partners' access, basing, and overflight. We
would not have been able to execute the actual execution of
the withdrawal without all of our partners that we have in
the Middle East --

Senator Mullin: I think executing would be a hard
word to say.

General Kurilla: It would not have been possible, at
the scale at which we did it, without our partners who
provided the access, basing, and overflight. I think one
of the other big lessons learned initially, it was just the
mission was given to CENTCOM. It became a five Combatant
Command mission, and then also with our partners, bringing
them all into that planning session.

Senator Mullin: Do you think people should be held
accountable from that withdrawal?

General Kurilla: I think anybody should be held
accountable if there is a failure in something.

Senator Mullin: You know, as you know, there was a
tit for tat going on between a couple of people during that
whole situation. Gerald Mackenzie, General Donoghue. I
found myself caught in the middle of that as we were trying
to get -- out with the team that I was part of. At the day
we did end up getting over 300 Americans out. But it
wasn't from the assistance of our Government.

In fact, I found that it was easier to work for the
Taliban because I knew the price, I was going to have to pay for each one, than it was to get them out dealing with it, unfortunately, us. In fact, Ambassador Pommersheim that was over Tajikistan literally told me, Mr. Mullin, I was told not to assist you or your group in any way. Unfortunately, it cost the life of a three-year-old young girl.

And at the same time, I see no one, not a single person held accountable. In fact, General Donahue is now over 18th Airborne. The irony of that is he is looking over Europe now and deterrence in Europe. General Mackenzie retired. No one in the State Department has been held accountable. What does that say to our partners?

Our partners that lost lives. I was with His Highness in UAE and he was even upset about it. He said that if America is willing to walk away from the billions of dollars that they spent in Afghanistan, what does that say about our region?

And he went on to say that I fight, him, his Royal Highness fought in Afghanistan, his two sons fought in Afghanistan, and every single soldier that they lost, he visited their house personally. And yet we pulled out, loss of lives of -- that didn't have to be lost. Not to mention our 13 soldiers, Marines. And no one, not a single person, has been held accountable. You think that is
right?

General Kurilla: Well, Senator, if I could. I have great respect. And I have known Frank McKenzie and Chris Donahue --

Senator Mullin: I know you do. I am very familiar with the relationship. It doesn't make any differences underneath their command, and no one was held accountable.

In fact, the only person that was chastised about it was the one Colonel that came out and chastised the withdrawal mechanism, and how dare him speak out negative about something. I get it. I get the chain of command.

I remember he broke protocol. But don't you think someone -- you cannot sit here and tell me that that was successful withdrawal. Don't you think that someone should be held accountable? It was an absolute disaster.

General Kurilla: Senator, I served five years in Afghanistan every year from 2009 to '14.

Senator Mullin: I know. I am aware of it.

General Kurilla: I am vested in there.

Senator Mullin: So am I.

General Kurilla: The actual thing. I was not part of the --

Senator Mullin: I know.

General Kurilla: -- force provider. But I would say that the execution --
Senator Mullin: You were there before Donahue and you came back. You know it intimately. I am just asking you, once again, shouldn't someone be held accountable. If someone is below your command, and they went through this, and they had an absolute disaster like this, losing Marines. Don't you think someone at that point would be held accountable?

General Kurilla: I think it is an absolute travesty that we lost those 13 Marines at Abbey Gate --

Senator Mullin: But you don't think anybody should be held accountable?

General Kurilla: I don't know if accountability has been assigned to anyone, Senator.

Senator Mullin: Well, you know, it hasn't. I mean, I get what you are saying, but you know there hasn't. At some point, we have got to -- our adversaries and our allies are both taking a look at this and we look weak.

And I know you are dealing with this and we are dealing with this. And it is time for someone to be held accountable. And what I am looking for is your help and your assistance in moving forward. We got to right this wrong. With that, I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Mullin. This issue of accountability is a serious one, but it would take in a 20-year history of the struggle in Afghanistan. And based
on the operation, NEO was one of the most difficult operations, General Kurilla. Evacuating over 120,000 people was something I think was remarkable. Would you concur?

General Kurilla: I absolutely agree. Again, I think the execution of bringing the people out was done very effectively in terms of the numbers. We would not have been able to do the numbers.

Chairman Reed: Thank you. Senator Kelly, please.

Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Langley, good to see you again. Thank you for being here.

As you know, I recently returned from a bipartisan CODEL to Africa, where I had the opportunity to travel across the continent to Niger, Zambia, South Africa, Morocco, Botswana, Cote d'Ivoire, and had conversations with a lot of experts, senior leaders on a wide variety of topics that we care about, including food security, conservation efforts, critical minerals and defense.

And while we, the United States, is doing a lot of great work across the continent, I worry that it is not well known that we are providing this. At the same time, it is clear that China and Russia have a lot of influence in Africa. This concerns me a lot. And I know it does concern you, too.

I mean, Africa has strategic importance to us for a
number of reasons, including that many critical minerals that our defense industry requires are mined in Africa. And this is something that China knows and they have begun to exploit.

You know, last year, Senator Cotton and I introduced the Reshore Act to reduce our reliance on China for these critical minerals. But the important work on securing U.S. supply chains need to continue.

So, General Langley, what are you seeing in Africa with respect to China's mining activities and their infrastructure development?

General Langley: First of all, Senator, thanks for that question. And thank you for going on the CODEL, as I saw in Munich when you were on your way down there. That that really matters. That shows -- those are assurance actions of our nation's leadership going on to the continent, and I thank you for that.

And it pressurizes and it makes -- causes hesitation in countries that are thinking about picking the PRC or even Russia as their partner of choice, because those are assurance actions that matter and resonate.

Yes, I agree, we are not telling our story well enough. And that is why, you know, when the CODEL came through, right after I took command on their way to the continent, they asked what was being done on the continent. Show us
-- we know what the PRC is doing, their investments.

Show us what we do. And that is why I provided a blue map just to show our investments. So, all that falls into collectively across our whole of Government approach as I engage across the interagency and also State Department, USAID, how we can be able to coalesce this into actions that resonate.

Senator Kelly: General, can you talk a little bit about what China is doing and how it is impacting countries that we have had relationships with. You know, I don't want to, you know, lead you into, but I am really interested in the negative impact that China's mining and infrastructure activities have had on the continent.

General Langley: Yes, Senator. So, yes, I also provided to the foreign actor reliance on the African metal stores, and that is a very compelling story.

So, for economic reasons and also how they go about striking deals with some of the countries on some of our critical assets for not only for our rare earth minerals that feed into our clean energy, but also into the military side, as well as our high technical type of our arsenal and equipment.

China is trying to harvest that. So, it is their engagement with countries laid out on the slide, the last slide we have, on the critical reliance on foreign
minerals. This is our new economy. This is going to be a big demand as we start to modernize our forces and China realizes that.

So those are actions they are trying to take on the illustrated countries that we have highlighted on here. So, yes, it is a strategic consequence that we need to be able to face and in turn to these countries to ensure that they have a partner of choice.

Senator Kelly: General, how do we do a better job telling our story? Because you got China in there making bad deals, building bad infrastructure. This isn't good for, you know, the African nations. You know, at the same time, the Russians have Wagner in there supporting, you know, essentially, you know, terrorism. What can we do to better tell our story on the African continent?

General Langley: Senator, illuminate and amplify. I saw a good story this morning in the press about the Kenyans have gone to the street tired of some of the stuff that the PRC is doing for them, how they are taking advantage of their economy and taking advantage of their environment.

News stories like that resonate. They change ideas. I guarantee you the rest -- if it happened in Kenya, is happening all across the continent of Africa, and people read these stories and it resonates. People are taking
action.

Senator Kelly: Thank you, General. And Mr. Chairman, I will have a couple of questions for the record. Thank you.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Kelly. Senator Scott, please.

Senator Scott: Thank you, Chairman. The -- first, I agree with Senator Mullin that we need to have some way to, you know, hold people accountable for what happened in Afghanistan.

So, I have had a bill that would have a bipartisan committee that would investigate exactly what happened there. I want to thank the military for what they did, but the decisions that were made don't seem to make much sense.

What does the American public not know about China that if they knew would change -- because I assume you spend a lot of your time thinking about what China is doing all over the world.

So, what does the American public need to know about China that they don't know right now that maybe would impact, would have a positive impact on impacting their ability to spend the resources to impact Africa anywhere in the world? For both of you.

General Kurilla: Senator, so I would go to what one of the chiefs of defense told me. He says, you have no
idea how much they have closed the gap on you and your
technology. And this is someone who is buying Chinese
equipment.

I also think that the American public don't have an
understanding of how much they have penetrated into the
Middle East in terms of their diplomatic, informational,
military, and their economic instruments of national power.

Senator Scott: General Langley.

General Langley: Senator, I agree with my good friend
Eric here. China, we have enjoyed for a number of years a
decisive overmatch. But that gap is closing because of
China's advancements or stealing our technology, you name
it. How they are -- the procedures they are executing to
close that gap.

That is what has me concerned. And even in the
economic realm, as they are trying to harvest a lot of the
critical minerals on the continent of Africa, all that
falls into them being able to, from an economic standpoint,
to actually try to close the gap on that decisive overmatch
as well.

And then also changing the international order and
international system as they try to get some of the African
countries to vote or abstain, something that is not along
social norms or the right thing to do in voting, especially
with mining or other things that -- or humanity, or human
rights, because they commit some of those atrocities back
in China or some activities they do in Hong Kong.

So just changing the economic system. So, in those
three areas is where it is most pressing of the list of the
activities of the PRC.

Senator Scott: So, if elected leaders spend more time
explaining exactly what China was doing with the end result
that every American would call out China for their human
rights violations or stop buying their products or not
putting their devices on our phones.

Would that, you think that would impact their ability
to do the bad -- you know, to spend their money on the
resources to counteract our military, not be able to go
into places around the world and lend money at unreasonable
terms?

General Kurilla: Senator, I think education is very
important that people understand what China is doing.

General Kurilla: Senator, I think it will impose
costs on them as well that they will have to reckon with.

Senator Scott: Yes. General Kurilla, what is the
optimal cooperation you envision among U.S., Israel, and
the Arabian, or Abraham Accords members? Is it air
defense? What would you hope out of that?

General Kurilla: So, I think there are several areas,
Senator, that we can do. So, the Abraham Accords are also
economic, and I think that is going to -- the economic
benefit you get in terms of job creation also is a --
reduces instability and some of the Abraham Accords
countries. We do have, we talked about Middle East air
defense. We talked about maritime security and cyber
defense as well.

Senator Scott: General Langley, you talked about what
is happening in Kenya. On top of the public being up in
arms about what is going -- what China is doing, are the
governments pushing back at all in Africa?

General Langley: Senator, that is part of the
problem, because what they invest in, and when they strike
these deals, they are striking the deals for mostly
autocratic or authoritarian type of governance. Those of
democracies have a voice because they know that the people
are watching. So, I think it really matters what
particular country that they are pressurizing.

Senator Scott: General Kurilla, do you have the
resources and personnel that you need to conduct your
counterterrorism mission that is laid out in the National
Defense Strategy?

General Langley: So, Senator, we are currently
balancing the missions that we have with the resources we
get. And I am adjusting risk every day dynamically with
the resources that I have. I am requesting the additional
resources I would need to be able to accomplish all of my
tasks.

Senator Scott: And what you requested is adequate?

General Langley: The -- what I have requested is
adequate, and then it is up to the allocation of those
resources in accordance with the national defense
priorities.

Senator Scott: Thank you. Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Scott.

Senate Rosen, please.

Senator Rosen: Thank you, Chairman Reed. Appreciate
it. Appreciate you holding this hearing. And I would
really like to thank Generals Kurilla and Langley for your
service and for being here today. And I am just going to
kind of get right into it about Iranian aggression, of
course, top of everyone's mind.

So, General Kurilla, the Pentagon estimates that
hundreds of American troops have been killed by Iranian
backed militias in Iraq and Afghanistan, yet Iran's regime
has never been held accountable for orchestrating attacks
against Americans. The men and women who gave their lives
are taken by these state forces. There are thousands of
families there without their loved ones as a result.

And so today, Iranian aligned militias, they are
increasingly targeting U.S. installations, service members
in Iraq and Syria via rocket and drone attacks. On a regular basis, we know Iran, the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism, is threatening the U.S. and our allied interests in the Middle East and around the world again via both direct attacks and also through their support for Hezbollah and the Islamic Republic's other terrorist proxies.

So, could you discuss in this setting some specific threats the Iranian aligned militia groups pose to the U.S. and our coalition forces? And what can we do to proactively not just defend against them, what can we do to proactively maybe push them back?

General Kurilla: Thanks, Senator, for the question. So, again, Iran is the number one malign actor in the Middle East. The latest attack we just had was less than 60 hours ago on one of our bases in Syria that we know that was Iranian aligned militia groups that conducted this attack.

We do see the threat that we face from them are from rockets, from unmanned systems that are increasingly longer range and more accurate. Just in January, we had three UAVs attack our base in on Al-Tanf garrison in Syria.

That was Iranian drones that did that. So, we do see that across the region, and also against our allies and partners, whether that was from the Houthis coming out of...
Yemen against Saudi Arabia and the UAE, or from Lebanese Hezbollah against Israel, or from elements coming out of Iraq and Syria against Iranian aligned militia groups. What we can do is it is going to take a whole of Government approach to be able to go after this problem set. It is not just a military solution.

Senator Rosen: So, we can work with you on the resources we need to take care of that. Because I want to get to something we talked about a little bit earlier, Task Force 59 and some other interesting things we are doing, but really, Israel's transfer to CENTCOM. It is now within your area of responsibility.

And it is my sincere hope that this realignment is going to potentiate even greater military cooperation between the U.S. and our shared goals, as well as greater cooperation between our Arab and Israeli partners, as we see with things like the Abraham Accords coming forward.

So, I know that I am pleased to see the increasing pace of joint exercises between the U.S., Israel, Arab partners. And so can you tell us a little bit about the progress you have made in advancing the integration of Israel into your multilateral maritime partnerships, like the very exciting task force, the development they are doing.

I was able to learn about them when I recently visited
NAVCENT in Bahrain.

General Kurilla: So, thank you, Senator. We think it is going very well with the integration of Israel into the CENTCOM AOR, including our exercises and our training as well. We did have a bilateral exercise called Juniper Oak that we just did in January, which was the largest exercise with 142 aircraft that we participated with them in January.

When you talk about Task Force 59, that is our Maritime Security Innovation Task Force. Is an unmanned and undersea unmanned vessel task force, where we basically are enhancing the manned platforms that we have.

So, one police car -- one destroyer in the Red Sea is the equivalent of one police car patrolling the state of California. When we take a bunch of unmanned platforms like sail drones and other unmanned surface vessels and undersea vessels, they act as a series of indications and warnings with sensors out there in a mesh network.

They can feed it back into a structured database that then we run algorithms against to help us make decisions. Is that normal behavior, abnormal behavior, to then use our manned platforms better to be able to get after the problem set.

Senator Rosen: I am going to -- hopefully you will come and show us all a briefing on what you are doing
there. It is pretty exciting. But in the few seconds I have left, we are talking about the region integrated air missile defense, naval maritime partnerships.

How is CENTCOM reassuring our regional partners that the U.S. is really committed to regional stability and security? When we were there leading the Abraham Accords caucus delegation when I was there, this was the number one thing people wanted to know. Are we committed to the region? How are you showing them that?

General Kurilla: I spend 50 percent of my time in the region. We have a series of exercises and training events. So last 41 training and exercises that we do multilateral and bilateral, and that is the way we are trying to build up our partner capacity with them by integrating them into the systems that we have as well.

Senator Rosen: Thank you. I see my time is up, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Rosen. Senator Budd, please. Oh, excuse me, Senator Tuberville has arrived. Senator Tuberville.

Senator Tuberville: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Generals, thanks for being here, and thanks for your service. You have got your hands full. General Kurilla, in your organization, Task Force 59, has had some great success building unmanned systems. I am familiar with one
of their platforms, Saildrone.

It seems like these systems have a lot of potential for both CENTCOM and the Navy, and it is encouraging to see your command taking advantage of cutting-edge technology commercial sector. What do you think has contributed to the success of Task Force 59 work with systems like Saildrone?

General Kurilla: I think what is successful is the people. It is the people that we hire that are innovative and creative and critical thinkers. And when we push these systems into their hand, they are using them in ways that we never thought possible. A lot the systems in the unmanned and the undersea that we use, they are used for commercial fishing.

When fishermen go out, they are not going out to find fish, they are going out to catch fish. And so, we use a lot of these systems with their integrated sensors.

I think Saildrone initially was an environment -- was used for maritime oceanographic capabilities, and we have turned that into something they can act as indications and warnings with the sensors that are on it.

Senator Tuberville: Yes, we almost lost a couple a couple of Saildrones. I think Iran tried to load a couple on one of their ships. Was that during your --

General Kurilla: It was.
Senator Tuberville: Yes. How did that go out?

General Kurilla: We got him back.

Senator Tuberville: You got them back? Good. Well, that is good to know. At one time, we had 60 balloons over Kabul, Afghanistan. Our ISR is very limited. How confident are you in the intelligence you have to see new threats rising from the Taliban?

General Kurilla: So currently our intelligence has degraded since we are no longer in Afghanistan. I believe we can see the broad contours of an attack. Sometimes we lack the granularity to see the full picture. And we are working to close that gap with our alternative airborne ISR and some of our other intelligence that we are working to penetrate into those networks.

Senator Tuberville: It seemed like for some reason this Administration is going to accept Iran developing a nuclear weapon. If Iran does develop a nuclear weapon of mass destruction, which the United States spent trillions trying to keep out of the hands of dictators in the Middle East, how will that scramble your AOR?

General Kurilla: It would change it overnight and forever.

Senator Tuberville: General Langley, I am aware of several vacancies in key diplomatic posts. I was in South Africa recently. China is there daily, trying to move in.
Is that important to you, the diplomatic post being filled?

General Langley: Senator, absolutely it is. It builds capacity. As I talk about the 3-D construct, having full-fledged bolstered capacity at our diplomatic posts is essential and it makes a difference of us being able to maintain our partnership and capacity. Moreover, ensuring our strategic access.

Senator Tuberville: Could you talk a little bit about South Africa and what you have done since you have been there, your relationship that you have made and what you see coming from China, and maybe even Russia?

General Langley: Senator, I haven't been to South Africa yet. I will be going there in the coming months. But right now, what I am really concerned about is Mosei II, that exercise, that naval exercise. That was just a messaging campaign by the Russian Federation and also by the PRC. So, I have been having discussions with Ambassador Brigety down there and saying, what is South Africa's story?

South Africa, they are -- they have been a good partner. We are building that relationship, but they don't want to be pressurized in who they choose. So, I have to use assurance actions to compel them that we are the partner of choice.

Senator Tuberville: Don't you think it is vital that
we keep China from overtaking that port there in South Africa?

General Langley: Absolutely, sir, because as we look at the Cape of Good Hope and look at how much transit that our commerce goes across, and as also -- it can also be a power projection point as well. So, we can't ill afford, from a geostrategic opposition, allow either the PRC or even Russia to use that as a platform.

Senator Tuberville: Yes, I know it is not your purview, but they are trying to do the same thing in Argentina, you know, which is the point of South America. And we definitely don't need to lose those two points -- contacts in terms of navigation. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Tuberville.

Senator Peters, please.

Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Kurilla, welcome. Good to have you here. I, along with my colleagues on the committee, have worked to strengthen our partnership with Israel.

In particular the collaboration and synergies between our two countries in the innovation space, I believe probably has never been greater, and it certainly is an area that I believe the United States must do more to take advantage of our friendship with like-minded, I guess you
could call them techno democracies that are highly sophisticated in that area.

I was proud to sponsor legislation creating a U.S., Israel Operations Technology Working Group to help further the DOD efforts in that area. And my question for you is, if you could please speak to the strategic advantage that our relationship with Israel offers in a global environment where rapid innovation and the fielding of emerging technologies rapidly is absolutely key to our national security.

General Kurilla: Thank you, Senator. Israel is one of the world leaders in technology in terms of the innovation and how to take that to the areas of national security. I have been over there several times. I have seen how they are implementing that. I do find that the relationship that we have with them is already bearing fruits in terms of that.

I look at that in the counter U.S. field where I have been all the way down from Iron Dome, all the way up to the exoatmospheric Arrow 3. And it is the ability to understand their technology and be able to proliferate that as well.

Senator Peters: Right. General, at the end of this month, we will mark the eighth year of the war in Yemen. This conflict has been a humanitarian catastrophe for
hundreds of thousands of deaths, millions displaced, and
tens of millions Yemenis suffering from both famine and
disease.

The war has been exacerbated by the role of a proxy
conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran and has been the
people of Yemen who unfortunately have been the victims and
have suffered as a result of this geopolitical
strategizing. Congress has been active in ensuring that
U.S. support is not the cause for any innocent suffering in
Yemen.

A June 2022 GAO report regarding civilian impacts of
U.S. military support for the Saudi coalition provided
recommendations to the DOD on measures to help mitigate
civilian harm from our support.

So, my question for you, sir, is has the Department
developed and implemented guidance for reporting any
indications that U.S. made defense articles were used in
Yemen by Saudi Arabia or the UAE against anything other
than legitimate military targets?

General Kurilla: Senator, I am aware of that GAO
report. I have read it. I have seen it. And my
understanding right now is the Department is working
through any implementation instructions from it.

Senator Peters: Very good. General Langley, drug
trafficking and the cartels profiting from that trade are
without question a global threat. AFRICOM is certainly not
immune to these issues with West Africa in particular now
serving as a popular vector for cartels to move products
from Latin America to Europe.

The drug trade destabilizes lawful governments,
dermines public safety, and provides critical funding and
resources for other transnational criminal organizations.
So, my question for you, General, is what efforts is
AFRICOM making to strengthen the ability of local
governments to conduct counter-narcotics operations and to
attack this insidious trade?

General Langley: Senator, thanks for asking that
question, because that is of particular concern with our
partners. The Gulf of Guinea is like the wild, wild West
of illicit activity, especially the drug trade.

Two exercises that just happened in the past month.
Obangame Express, Obangame Express is where we -- it had a
number of countries that come together to focus on illicit
activity across the Gulf. And the drug trade is one of it.
Smuggling is another. And transiting citizens as well
across that region.

But it is inextricably linked to South America as
well. So, I work with General Richardson on that, and I
thank this Congress for legislation that gave us $200
million to address this issue. But building partnership
and capacity with African nations, especially in the Gulf of Guinea, addresses that issue as they build their maritime capacity. But that is also an opportunity for another ask.

Hershel Woody Williams and even the Coast Guard when they bring a cutter in, it makes a difference. This is naval diplomacy at its best. If we can get assignment to another ship, I wish I had another Hershey Woody Williams to cover the other side of Africa continent. But just naval activity and bolstering our partners' ability for their maritime expertise. To build upon that building capability is essential going forward. Thank you.

Senator Peters: Thank you, General. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Peters. And now, Senator Budd.

Senator Budd: Thank you, Chairman. Good morning, gentlemen. I want to thank you both for your leadership and your service, particularly your commands of units in North Carolina at Fort Bragg and Camp Lejeune. So, I recently returned from both of your overseas areas of responsibility.

A common complaint from our allies and our partners is that the foreign military sales process is overly complicated and slow. It is just downright bureaucratic.
So, in that vein, I have a series of questions.

And if you would, just if you would give me a simple yes or no to the answer, and then at the end hopefully we will have a little more time and I will give you some time to elaborate. So General Kurilla, is the current FMS process fast and flexible enough to meet our foreign partners' security needs in your respective AORs?

General Kurilla: In CENTCOM, no.

Senator Budd: General Langley.

General Langley: AFRICOM, no.

Senator Budd: Does the transfer of U.S. defense products build our partners' capacity to provide for their own defense and respond to threats? General.

General Kurilla: Yes, Senator.

General Langley: Yes, Senator.

Senator Budd: Given the success of Western arms against Russian equipment in Ukraine, is there an increased interest in U.S. defense products in your AOR?

General Kurilla: There is a very strong interest in U.S. products.

General Langley: Very strong in Africa as well, Senator.

Senator Budd: Thank you. Thank you. Is China increasing arms exports to any countries in your AOR?

General Kurilla.
General Kurilla: Yes, Senator.

Senator Budd: General Langley.

General Langley: Senator, it is kind of flatline right now.

Senator Budd: But they have been before.

General Langley: They have been before in the past.

Senator Budd: Thanks. Is the United States still the security partner of choice in your AORs?

General Kurilla: It is, Senator.

General Langley: Absolutely, Senator. It is in Africa.

Senator Budd: Is the United States at risk of losing that security partner of choice status to either China or Russia?

General Kurilla: China is making inroads. I do not assess Russia is.

General Langley: It is a risk, Senator.

Senator Budd: So, if you -- elaborate that, if you could each explain how FMS challenges are impacting strategic competition with China and Russia in your AORs. If you would elaborate on that, please.

General Kurilla: Sure, Senator. So, in the in the CENTCOM AOR, with the number of attacks that we see in there, our partners have real security needs, and so they want to have the equipment they need fast.
What China is able to do is come in very quickly, open up their catalog, let them pick from anything in it, very quickly to deliver it. There is no end user agreement. But what they don't do is they don't follow up with it and they don't have the training, the expertise, the sustainment, the upgrades.

And what we do find with our partners is when they buy Chinese equipment, a vast majority of it becomes non-mission capable. A year or so after they have that equipment and we do see a complaint from that. They want to buy U.S. equipment, but sometimes it is the timeline to get it that is a hindrance.

Senator Budd: And the process --

General Kurilla: The process is what takes the time to do it. And there are I know that the Department of Defense has a Tiger team to look specifically at what the Department of Defense can do to increase it. So, there is four levers, Department of Defense, State, Congress, and industry. And I know the Department of Defense is looking at their lever.

Senator Budd: Thank you. General Langley.

General Langley: Senator, I have characterized in my assessment since taking command that West Africa is at a tipping point. And what I mean is how these extremist groups, whether we are talking about ISIS, West Africa, or
even JNIM or Boko Haram, they are all at the door, especially at the Gulf of Guinea states.

As I have done my travels, and I was in Ghana, they said, we don't want your boots on the ground, but we would like your equipment. All we need, in Ghana all we need to affect quad initiative, which is a coalition of willing of states of Togo, Benin, and Cote d'Ivoire, but they want equipment.

Before they go across the line of departure, they need equipment. They want U.S. equipment but they know how long it takes. So, there they are considering because these affiliates are at their back door, they need something now.

They want to come with us, Senator, but the process is too slow, and they need to be able to affect a viable offense to help Cote d'Ivoire -- excuse me, to affect Burkina Faso save their own country.

So, we are showing a good -- what we would like to see, partner led, U.S. enabled. But we need to step up the U.S. enabled at this point.

Senator Budd: You know, that matches conversations with our allies recently. Can you please discuss how your requirements for Special Operations Forces has grown, and what cuts to SOF in strength would have on your operations?

General Kurilla: Senator, I rely very heavily on our Special Operations Forces in the CENTCOM AOR. They are
doing tremendous work. And any cuts to in the CENTCOM region would affect me significantly.

General Langley: It would take the heart out of our efforts, both in the East and the West with our Special Operations Forces of AFRICOM.

Senator Budd: Thank you both. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Budd.

Senator King, please.

Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Langley, we have been having a lot of discussion today about China's activities in Africa. Is there any buyer's remorse? China has sort of scaled back on Belt and Road to some extent, and some of the debt issues are now coming to the fore. Are there countries in Africa starting to rethink some of those commitments? Buyer's remorse is probably the best term.

General Langley: Senator, great question. And in I traverse for that, for any indicators of that, and I low and behold I saw a story this morning out of Kenya. They have taken to the streets of how China has been taking advantage of them in the deals that they strike. Now, there are other indicators across the continent, other stories of debt trap diplomacy that --

Senator King: They call it debt colonialism.
General Langley: Oh, yes, absolutely, Senator.

Senator King: So, let me follow up if that is the case, and it appears that it is, does this create an opening for us to be more active in infrastructure projects, support for development in these countries, that we can come in and show that it can be done in a much more efficient and skilled way.

General Langley: Absolutely, Senator. That we do have -- that we see that as an opportunity. As we call it, a consolidated strategic opportunity, and we need to match it up with key strategic activities.

And whereas we can use a whole of Government approach, we can use Prosper Africa, Digital Africa, and get these programs off the ground and going. I know that I have met with, you know, Assistant Secretary Molly Phee last week and also, I was over at USAID, and they we have a plan of action collectively, whole of Government to be able to put it in motion.

Senator King: You use the term whole of Government, and I think the private sector also has to be included in this in terms of development of resources. You used a phrase earlier that I noted about the Chinese efforts to monopolize and get a hold of these rare earths and minerals. Forward thinking by the PRC.

We haven't been doing that forward thinking. We have
allowed them to take control of, for example, lithium, an essential element for EV batteries. 87 percent of the process to lithium that goes into EV batteries in this country comes from China. And we haven't been doing that forward thinking.

I am suggesting that that is something we should start to think about and it should be a combination of Government action, but also the private sector. We don't do everything by the Government here.

General Langley: Senator, that is correct. We don't tell the good news story enough, and that is why I provided -- well, this, the blue chart here. But on legislation passed affect us such as Prosper Africa is also a message to our private industry to invest in Africa. That is what I talk about when I talk to the country teams as they are heavily recruiting back in the U.S. for investment in the African nations and states.

Senator King: Thank you. General Kurilla, King Abdullah was here about a month ago and he said the this was the most dangerous moment in Israeli-Palestinian relations that he would seen in decades. Give me your analysis of the status of that. It seems like it is a very heightened sense of danger in terms of open conflict.

General Kurilla: Senator, I agree with the statement of King Abdullah on that, and we watch this very closely.
We think the conditions are there, the tinder and the kindling is there, and we don't know what it could take for what spark to be able to start a larger conflict in the West Bank.

Senator King: Let me just ask a sort of parenthetical question. Often, we get the question about Iran's nuclear capacity. In your -- do you have a military analysis of what a strike, an air strike, a significant substantial airstrike on Iran's nuclear capacity would actually -- what would be the impact of that on their ability to move toward a nuclear weapon?

General Kurilla: I do, Senator, but I best believe that would be in a classified setting.

Senator King: Okay. Thank you. One other question in your AOR about stability, and that is Pakistan, a nuclear armed country. They have had a lot of political issues lately. An assessment of the stability and long-term prospects for stability in Pakistan.

General Kurilla: So, they have a, you know, idea what the military relationship there. I have a great relationship with the Chief of the Army Staff, General Munir. I think the concerns right now in Pakistan are their budget, their financial situation, the current political situation, and the counterterrorism situation as they see the three key Taliban, Pakistani, the TTP, the
attacks are significantly increasing with the end of a
cease fire there.

Senator King: Are you confident of their nuclear
security procedures?

General Kurilla: I am confident of their nuclear
security procedures.

Senator King: Thank you. That may be the first good
news we have heard today. Thank you, General. Thank you,
gentlemen.

Chairman Reed: I thank you, Senator King. Senator
Schmitt, please.

Senator Schmitt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you
all for being here. Appreciate it. I want to follow up a
little bit on the question that Senator Scott asked. I
think part of our challenge right now is, you know, as the
newest or one of the newest members of this committee, it
has become very clear to me that China is an immediate
threat, long term threat, intermediate threat.

How are you going to characterize it, China is --
should be a very important focus of ours. And so, one of
their tools, obviously, that they deploy around the globe
is the debt trap. And I would like for both of you if you
could help us communicate back home to the folks who are
wondering what are the most pressing needs of the country,
what is the most concerning thing from a national security
perspective, how that affects what you guys do, and what
are some of the most egregious examples that you have seen
in your roles.

General Kurilla: So, Senator, thank you. What I see
again is the penetration economically where they go in and
they provide infrastructure with the financing that goes
with it, and I can use an example in one country where they
went in, they provided infrastructure, and it was almost
like a balloon mortgage payment.

In the peak of the COVID crisis overseas, at the worst
point of their economy in this one country, they came and
they demanded their payment and it absolutely crushed that
country to do that. And it caused them to see the way that
China does in terms of their debt trap.

And there are several other examples also in the
Central Asian states as well. It is important to
understand, though, what China is doing. They are doing it
for their own benefit, not for the other's benefits.

General Langley: Senator, the same thing has taken
place on the continent of Africa as well. Whether in the
vein of death trap diplomacy -- here is the difference that
makes us a partner of choice. We go off aid first,
financing last.

China does financing first. And that financing is --
puts at a disadvantage of those that are asking for the
funds. Very few times will they actually do any type of aid. So that is the assurance action that it causes our partner countries on the African continent to side with us.

There is a number of initial deals struck in a memorandum of agreement in the Belt and Road Initiative across 40 countries across the continent of Africa. That is very compelling. It hasn't matured yet to actually show the negative effects. But in aggregate, we do communicate cautionary tales from signing such agreements.

Senator Schmitt: 18 months ago, Israel was integrated into CENTCOM, and I just wanted to find out how that has gone. What your -- is there, you know, fully integrated into that theater. How you view that?

General Kurilla: It is going exceptionally well and we view it as a net positive, Senator.

Senator Schmitt: Okay, that is great. I guess finally, because I have got about a minute and a half here, we talked about the debt trap, but I think that, you know, the building of the islands in the South China Sea being fully weaponized with the spy balloon that traversed over the, you know, Alaska and the Continental United States, it has certainly raised awareness, I think, at a point now that we have not seen before.

I think and these are terrible things that have happened. But I think the American people now recognize
the threat that China poses to the United States. And not just I think, you know, obviously economically, some of the theft from an intellectual property perspective has been well documented for a while.

But clearly, as they try to project that strength into the Indo-Pacific and the South China Sea, and those islands are fully weaponized. Beyond the debt trap that you, you know, illuminated, what are a couple of other examples that you see that maybe most people don't know about, that certainly raises a lot of concerns and the alarm bells are going off about how serious China is about global domination.

General Langley: Senator, I will focus just on them trying to change the international order, trying to change the international system. That is very compelling, and how they engage with African nations on the continent, and how they vote in the UN General Assembly. That is an indication that they cannot gain a strategic advantage unless it is along their norms, what they consider their norms.

Then the economic piece is very compelling of how they are trying to corner the market on what we call some of the rare earth minerals or even resources that are on the continent of Africa, and how they are trying to strike bad deals with these countries, extracting these resources
without the benefit of the African nations. That is a cautionary tale that needs to be told.

General Kurilla: Senator, we see 19 of 21 countries in the CENTCOM AOR have signed Belt and Road Initiative agreements with China. That is for China's benefit. We have also seen 20 of 21 countries have Huawei contracts in them. They are building smart cities and a lot of this is for Chinese advantage.

Senator Schmitt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Schmitt. Senator Blumenthal, please.

Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for your extraordinary service to our nation. I want to focus on the Wagner Group, which I think is kind of the elephant in both of your rooms, so to speak.

I am a strong supporter of designating the Wagner Group as a foreign terrorist organization, which will have a constructive impact, I would think, in both of your commands. General Langley, if I remember correctly in your testimony, you talk about the price of the Wagner Group in Africa as being, "the failure of government institutions, the withdrawal of stalwart security allies, the extraction of mineral wealth, and long-term resource concessions and debt that chip away at Africans' future."

In Ukraine, as we well know, the Wagner Group poses a
very severe and immediate threat, not only in Bakhmut but
throughout the country. It is probably one of Putin's most
effective fighting forces right now, a mercenary, murderous
organization.

The argument that I have heard against it is that
designating Wagner as a foreign terrorist organization
complicates our interests in Africa because governments
doing business with the Wagner group could suffer sanctions
as a result of that business.

I think that is totally a bogus argument. I see no
valid reason not to designate Wagner as foreign terrorist
organization. Please give me your views. General Langley,
and then General Kurilla.

General Langley: Thank you, Senator, for asking that
question because I do need to message some of the
atrocities going on with the Wagner Group, not only in the
Central Africa Republic, but also in Mali since this past
summer. And they have been reported on by the UN
multinational force there of the atrocities and egregious
actions that are taken on the public. This is very
serious.

The Wagner Group, even though we know that to Yevgeny
Prigozhin, everything is about power and profit, but they
are inextricably linked to the Russian Federation. So, the
further they are on -- the more they are on the continent,
preying upon fragile governance will be a problem and destabilizing across the African continent.

Senator Blumenthal: So, would you feel they should be designated as a foreign terrorist organization?

General Langley: Well, Senator, I will just -- I will say this, collectively --

Senator Blumenthal: They are foreign terrorist organization, are they not?

General Langley: Senator, I think that is -- if we have a policy representative, you know, I will stay out of that. And I would like to just focus on what we need as AFRICOM to be able to do this, and we do it in the information space. But across all other -- the rest of the whole of Government, we do have pressurizing things. And I can take that into, if you -- or let me bring this up in closed session.

Senator Blumenthal: Of course. Let me ask you both. Maybe I can ask General Kurilla first. Israel is going through domestic unrest, protests. I have been visited by a number of members of the Israeli military on a number of occasions, some personally, who feel that this unrest is impacting their readiness. Do you have any views on that topic?

General Kurilla: So, I talked to the Israeli chief of defense often. I talked to him yesterday morning. What we
talk about is he is trying to ensure that his military stays out of the political conversation.

Senator Blumenthal: Do you think that the recent proposals for changes in their judicial system is in any way undermining their readiness or preparedness?

General Kurilla: I think as you look at the Israeli system, they have reserve units and that is where we are seeing some of this manifest itself. But I do not want to make a statement really on the judicial system without knowing all the facts of what they are doing.

Senator Blumenthal: Let me ask to follow up, I think it was Senator Mullin who was asking you about our Afghan at risk allies. I have been a leading advocate of the Afghan Adjustment Act. I have played a part in trying to extract the translators, guards, security personnel.

My own son served there in the Marine Corps. Actually, was able to get his translator out of Afghanistan. But there are thousands still at risk with targets on their backs. Having served there repeatedly with great distinction, are we doing enough to get them out?

General Kurilla: I think we have a moral obligation to get those out. Again, we think the number is, you know, I would defer to the State Department the exact number. The State Department works the aspect of getting them out.
Once they come to us in Camp As Sayliyah, we provide the in-processing, security, and basic life support for them.

Senator Blumenthal: I agree totally. We have that moral obligation. Veterans groups agree steadfastly and passionately about it. And I am hoping that not only we will pass the Afghan Adjustment Act, but also take greater measures to enable them to escape the persecution, torture, and death that many of them are at risk.

General Kurilla: I do applaud our veterans groups that are doing -- taking that action on as well.

Senator Blumenthal: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.

Senator Ernst, please.

Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And gentleman, thank you very much for your service and your leadership. General Kurilla, just a few quick questions.

Some of this has been covered briefly by a number of other Senators, but we do have the great powers that are out there, very -- putting a lot of pressure on us in Asia and in Europe. We also have competing priorities here at home. We have got a financial crisis. We have got Southern border issues.

And then the very sobering of fiscal outlook right now. So, we are entering into an era where being able to
support defense with everything we have got has really
slowed down significantly. The belt is tightening and you
have heard concerns today.

So, I know that the NDS has directed the Department to
right size your forward military presence in your AOR. And
of course, doing that, accepting prudent risk as necessary.
So how has CENTCOM improved the economy of force in your
theater?

General Kurilla: So, thank you, Senator. CENTCOM is
85 percent smaller than at the peak in 2008. That was in
the midst of two conflicts. After the withdrawal from
Afghanistan, even in 2022, we reduced by 15 percent, post-
Afghanistan withdrawal.

What we require in CENTCOM is a sustainable and
sufficient force structure to be able to accomplish the
missions we have been given. Again, I go back to if there
is one place that can derail the NDS, it could come out of
CENTCOM with a flash point.

Senator Ernst: Yes, I absolutely agree with that. I
know the President, during the Afghanistan withdrawal, told
us that if we withdrew from Afghanistan, there would be a
windfall of resources to prioritize China. So, what
resources did this action free up in our budget, and then
how did DOD reinvest those?

General Kurilla: I really, Senator, would defer to
OMB and the Department of Defense on any cost savings. But I believe those resources were then moved to against the higher priority of INDOPACOM and EUCOM.

Senator Ernst: Okay. Thank you. And I would be willing to bet there weren't as many cost savings maybe as we would have thought. But you -- different topic, but you have heard a lot of discussion about the Abraham Accords today.

I also am a co-chair with Senator Rosen on the Abraham Accords caucus. And I am very proud that our legislation on air and missile defense cooperation did get passed last year in the NDAA, and it does help our partners with their security burden.

So, you have talked a little bit about this, but when you are implementing this or trying to implement this integration framework, what challenges are you running into now that we might be able to iron out without legislation, and is there an area where we might need legislation?

General Kurilla: I can tell you where we are right now. We are making progress. We are going towards a shared air picture between a group of countries. And the challenge we have, though, is if there is Chinese equipment that we cannot integrate.

And so, whether that is a radar or whether that is an actual air defense system, we can't let that touch our
network based on the -- on what we know about the Chinese equipment. And so, it just is not compatible with it either. So that is the one challenge that we have to be able to do that.

And so, I am not sure what legislation -- the legislation that could help us potentially is how do we get FMS faster so they don't have to choose to buy a Chinese system.

Senator Ernst: Excellent. And this has been a discussion as well about FMS and whether it should be the jurisdiction of Armed Services or another committee here in the United States Senate. And that is something for us to iron out. So, you don't necessarily need additional authorities for implementation then, that you are aware of?

General Kurilla: I believe I have all the authority they need right now, ma'am.

Senator Ernst: Okay. I would just encourage our partners in that region to buy American. And maybe that is the message that we need to send.

General Kurilla: I would be happy if they just bought Western.

Senator Ernst: Western -- well, compatible --

General Kurilla: It would be great with all of our systems.

Senator Ernst: No, excellent point. Excellent point,
1 General. I do want to thank you for your tireless efforts
to build partnerships in the region. I was recently on a
CODEL where we visited Israel, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,
and the UAE. And I heard over and over again your name
mentioned specifically, and we described that or we have
described that in the past as leadership by walking around.

And you did state earlier that you spend 50 percent of
your time in the AOR, and I know that that is greatly
appreciated by our partners. So, thank you for doing that.
Truly appreciate your leadership. Presence is power.

And General Langley, I know that you are out there and
engaged as well. I do have a question I will submit for
the record for you. It deals with a 127 ECHO program,
which I think is incredibly important in your region to
maintaining stability.

So, thank you, gentlemen, very much. My time has
expired. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator. Let me note that
the vote has begun and recognize Senator Sullivan.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you for your service, testimony today.

Very much appreciate it. And your team members behind you.

I know how much they put into these kind of hearings.

General Langley, I want to begin by also mentioning,
we probably are getting the picture, we had a number of
Senate CODELs to the region recently. I think that is actually important. I was part of the CODEL with Senator Rosen and seven U.S. Senators to the Abraham Accords countries.

Started in Morocco. Really impressive ally, one of our longest standing allies anywhere in the world. I don't know to what specificity you can provide thoughts, and maybe this is kind of even against your own interests, but it did occur to me that I think it is time to have AFRICOM headquarters in Africa, somewhere. Morocco, I think they would be a great candidate. What do you think about that?

General Langley: Senator, this has come up numerous times in the past.

Senator Sullivan: I know, and it has been blocked by some members of the committee. And they are always like, well, we don't know where to put it, so let's keep it in Germany. That is not a good answer, right?

Come on, we don't know where to put fricking CENTCOM's forward headquarters, but we chose Qatar. So, like, real countries make real tough decisions. What do you think we should do? I don't think that is a good answer, which is too tough. Too many good countries, so let's keep it in Germany. What do you think?

General Langley: Senator, I see the -- I see some utility being on the continent, but at this time, just with
our processes of getting down to visit to numerous
countries has been beneficial. As far as how we are laid
out now, I think we are right sized. Because when we are
in Europe, there is other partners there in proximity that
we can plan --

Senator Sullivan: What about like a CENTCOM is
headquartered in Tampa and has a forward headquarters in
Qatar. What about a forward headquarters for AFRICOM
somewhere in --

General Langley: Senator, I can talk about that in
closed session because we do have something established --

Senator Sullivan: Okay. Let me, both of you keep
talking and the military loves the phrase, whole of
Government, all instruments power. We have been talking
about critical minerals, which is really important and a
big part of the discussion.

How much sense does it make for the United States to
shut down our critical mineral production capacity, as a
Department of Interior has done in Alaska, and then you
guys come here and say, boy, oh boy, we sure got to work on
critical matters.

Do you think that is smart, like we have not you guys,
but other agencies literally shutting down -- There is
something called the Amber Mining District in Alaska, one
of the resource rich, critical mineral areas of the world.
We had an environmental impact statement, EIA, seven years, $10 million, ready to go.

And then the Department of Interior came in and reversed that and said, hey, America, Alaska, start all over. We will keep getting critical minerals from China. Were you guys informed of that? Were you informed of that interior making that idiotic national security decision?

General Langley: No, sir.

Senator Sullivan: Do you think it makes sense for us to look at areas of critical mineral capacity in America and say, ah, we are not going to do that because lower 48 environmental groups don't like it. You would think that makes sense from a national security perspective to shut down our critical mineral production when this whole hearing has been about critical minerals? Does that make sense? General, in your personal opinion?

General Langley: Senator, I am just here to pass a cautionary tale about China and their illicit activities on the continent of trying to corner the critical --

Senator Sullivan: But if we can help uncorner it by producing our own, doesn't that make sense?

General Langley: Senator, I don't have a position on that.

Senator Sullivan: Come on, General, you do have a position. You just don't want to say it. What is your
personal opinion on that? Does it make sense to produce
more critical minerals in America if we have them?

General Langley: Senator, we can discuss that in that
closed session about essentials for --

Senator Sullivan: This is the problem, you talk all
instruments of power, whole of Government, and we don't do
it. And again, that is not you, but it is Biden, it is the
Administration. It is national security suicide, and we do
it every damn day. We have shut down resource development
in our own country. It is idiotic.

That is the right answer, by the way. Real quick,
General Kurilla, you mentioned Iran taking, you know, shots
at our troops. Are we retaliating against them? I think
one of the lessons we learned, you know, when they were
providing very sophisticated IEDs to kill and wound
thousands of Americans in the 2005, 2006, 2007 timeframe,
that that was a bad signal to let them just kill our
people, the best and brightest in America.

I am sure you lost soldiers to the Quds Force, IEDs.
And until we killed Soleimani, which I think was a really
important message, we weren't retaliating. So, I hope
either covertly or overtly, when these guys are trying to
kill Americans, which they are pretty good at and they do a
lot, that we are sending messages like, all right, you want
to try and kill Americans, game on.
What are we doing to retaliate against these guys?

General Kurilla: Senator, I am prepared to retaliate overtly, but also not all responses are overt.

Senator Sullivan: Okay. But can you assure this committee that we are not just letting them try to attack Americans? You have already mentioned that they are -- without some form of retaliation.

General Kurilla: Senator, we have all the capability to be able to retaliate. But not all retaliations are overt.

Senator Sullivan: Good. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Sullivan. And thank you, gentlemen, for your testimony. We have a vote on, so I would encourage all my colleagues to vote, and we will reconvene within about 15 minutes in SVC-217 for the closed session of this hearing. I will now adjourn the open session. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 11:47 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]