



Transcript Summary:

USNORTHCOM, USSOUTHCOM, AND USSTRATCOM Posture Hearing

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Senate Armed Services Committee Holds Hearing on Strategic-Northern-Southern Command Budget

Witnesses:

ADM Bill Gortney (CDR USNORTHCOM)
ADM Kirt Tidd (CDR USSOUTHCOM)
and ADM Cecil Haney (CDR USSTRATCOM)

MCCAIN:

Good morning.

The committee meets today to receive testimony on the posture of U.S. Northern Command, Southern Command and Strategic Command and inform its review of the defense authorization request for fiscal year 2017.

I'd like extend our appreciation to the witnesses for their many years of distinguished service, and to the men and women of our military who defend our nation every day.

Admiral Tidd, this is your first time testifying before the committee as the commander of U.S. Southern Command. After nearly two months in command, I look forward to your assessment of the challenges within your area of responsibility, as well as your strategy to confront them. It's clear you face a daunting array of security and governance challenges in the region. Yet, SOUTHCOM continues to suffer from persistent resource shortfalls that undermine efforts to confront these challenges.

I hope you will outline for the committee where you're being forced to accept the greatest risk as a result of these shortfalls. Of particular concern is the deteriorating situation in Central America, where feeble governance, endemic corruption and weak security institutions are allowing transnational criminal organizations to operate with impunity.

We, of course, must improve and adequately resource our drug interdiction strategy to combat these group, but we must also renew our efforts to combat the real driver of drug trafficking: the demand here at home. The demand for the drugs that these groups traffic -- heroin, methamphetamine and cocaine -- is too high and the profit is too great to dissuade these criminals from their illicit actions.

To be clear, the threat posed by these groups extends beyond the drugs they smuggle into our communities. The smuggling routes they control are also used to traffic weapons, bulk cash, and human beings. And as your predecessor General Kelly testified before this committee, terrorist organizations could seek to leverage these same smuggling routes to move operatives with intent to cause grave harm to our citizens or even bring weapons of mass destruction into the United States.

On a more positive note, I'm interested in your assessment of the ongoing talks in Colombia and how you believe the U.S. can best support our partners as they enter a new and likely more challenging era. Colombia, once on the cusp of becoming a failed state, has emerged from decades of conflict is a stark example of what sustained U.S. support and engagement can achieve.

It's vitally important that we continue to invest in our relationship during this critical period so as not to squander the extraordinary progress that has been achieved.

I'd like to take a moment to recognize the military servicemembers conducting detention operations at Guantanamo Bay. Too often in the course of debating the future of the detention facility, we lose sight of the remarkable men and women who serve honorably under extraordinarily difficult conditions.

Admiral, please convey our deepest appreciation for their service and the professionalism they display each and every day on behalf of our nation.

Admiral Gortney, I look to you for an update on the current state of U.S.-Mexican security cooperation and opportunities for our two nations to strengthen this vital partnership. While Mexico's efforts to combat transnational criminal organizations have resulted in notable successes by capturing or killing senior cartel leaders such as El Chapo, the security situation remains highly volatile and continues to directly impact the security of our southern border.

Heroin, largely produced in Mexico, continues to ravage communities all across the nation and demands a renewed effort to combat this scourge both in our (inaudible) and also at its source.

MCCAIN:

I also look forward to your assessment of the increasing threat posed to the homeland by the development of advanced missile capability -- of advanced missiles capable of carrying nuclear payloads by Russia, Iran and North Korea.

Admiral Haney, the strategic threats to the United States and its allies have increased exponentially in just the few short years since you've taken the helm of Strategic Command. While nuclear, cyber and counter-space threats generally have been on the rise, Secretary Carter's warning that, quote, "we're entering a new strategic era," has great implications for STRATCOM.

Return to great power competition noted by the secretary means that deterring Russia and China once again assumes primacy in your planning and operations. Whatever President Obama may have hoped for, the United States can no longer seek to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy or narrow the range of contingencies under which we would have to consider their use.

U.S. Strategic Command faces significant near and longer-term challenges. In about 15 to 20 years, U.S. nuclear submarines, ICBMs, air launched cruise missiles, heavy bombers and nuclear-capable tactical fighters will have to be withdrawn from operational service, having been extended well beyond their original service lives. Modernization programs are in place to replace these systems, but there's no slack left in the schedule.

Today's Congress supports fully the modernization of the U.S. nuclear deterrent. Any reduction in funding over the next decade, however, could delay the development of these replacement systems, increasing strategic risk at a time when Russia and other countries continue to modernize their nuclear capabilities.

Russia, then, is your near-term challenge. Russia's aggression in Ukraine and destabilizing actions in Syria take place under a nuclear shadow. Russia has threatened our NATO allies with nuclear strikes; is developing a new nuclear ground-launch cruise missile capable of ranging most of Europe; and has fired air- and sea-launched cruise missiles against targets in Syria, missiles that could be armed with nuclear warheads and flown against European and U.S. targets.

And so your task, Admiral Haney, is to ensure that Strategic Command is prepared to deter Russian nuclear provocations. This requires better intelligence about Russian nuclear capabilities and plans, a nuclear planning process tied to EUCOM and NATO operations, and a survivable well-exercised and ready nuclear force.

Finally, as this committee continues its review of the Goldwater- Nichols Act, we're interested to hear your views as to whether our defense enterprise is organized properly to perform the missions that cut across the functional and geographic boundaries we have drawn. We also welcome any ideas on reform we might consider to make our defense enterprise more effective, without minimizing the vital tasks that must be done.

I noted to the members of the committee that yesterday we had an all-Army panel, and today it's an all-Navy panel, a definite upgrade.

Senator Reed?

REED:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And may I point out that the meeting of the United States Naval Academy Alumni Association will take place immediately following the hearing in the anteroom

(LAUGHTER)

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to welcome our witnesses, particularly Admiral Tidd who is appearing before this committee for the first time. Thank you, sir, for your service.

And Admiral Gortney, this could be your last hearing before the committee. Thank you for your extraordinary service in so many different capacities.

Not only you, but your families have served with great distinction and great sacrifice. Obviously, the men and women in your commands have done so much.

And Admiral Haney, likewise to your family and to the men and women of your command.

And I'm pleased to see some senior noncommissioned officers here. Thank you for what you do to lead our forces.

Admiral Haney, your command has responsibility for the functions that are global in nature -- space and nuclear, to name a few -- but your first and foremost responsibility is to ensure that the nuclear triad can deter threats that are existential to our nation. This administration is committed to the modernization of all three legs of our triad.

Our current nuclear forces cost about four percent of our DOD budget, which is a relatively good bargain consider the threats they deter on a daily basis. But in the late 2020s, as the chairman has mentioned, when this modernization is at its peak, that figure will rise to about seven percent of the DOD budget.

While this is about half of what we spent at the height of the Cold War, it is still a considerable amount of money and I will want to hear your views on the importance of this modernization and how it can be done in the most cost-effective manner possible.

Admiral Gortney, your mission is to protect the homeland, to deter and defeat attacks on the United States, and to support civil authorities in mitigating the effects of potential attacks and natural disasters. While Admiral Haney is responsible for synchronizing global missiles defense, planning and operations support, you are responsible for the operation of our homeland ballistic missile defense system. We look

forward to hearing about the ongoing improvements to the ground-based missile defense system, particularly enhancement of sensors and discrimination capabilities.

In addition, NORTHCOM works closely with other federal agencies, the governors and the National Guard to collaborate on responding to natural and manmade disasters. It partners with Canada and Mexico to promote security across our borders. I look forward to hearing about your current efforts in these areas and how these would be impacted by the return of sequestration next year.

A number of the problems of NORTHCOM originate from the SOUTHCOM AOR. Drug traffickers and transnational criminal organizations are not bound by geographic borders and the violence and instability they engender have pushed individuals to flee, often seeking sanctuary on our shores. An obvious answer, then, is to address the problem at the root.

Of course, such efforts require a whole-of-government approach, incorporating the capabilities of interagency partners such as the State Department, FBI and the Drug Enforcement Agency. Consequently, any cuts made to their budgets have direct implications on the ability particularly of SOUTHCOM to carry out its mission.

SOUTHCOM is responsible for maintaining our security relationships in the region and the closest military-to-military relationship in the AOR is with Colombia, who with our sustained assistance has undergone a remarkable transformation. It is now equally important to ensure that the peaceful implementation phase of this transformation is as robustly supported as the kinetic operations.

Admiral Tidd, as you stated in your testimony, no where is our own security more inextricably intertwined to that of our neighbors, partners and friends than in Latin America and the Caribbean. I look forward to hearing your views on how we can best maintain our engagement in this important area of the world.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN:

I welcome the witnesses. And your complete statements will be made part of the record.

Admiral Haney?

HANEY:

Good morning, Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, and members of the committee. I'm honored to be here with you today and pleased to testify with Admiral Bill Gortney, commander, U.S. Northern Command, Admiral Kurt Tidd, commander, U.S. Southern Command.

I'm also honored to represent my team of sailors, soldiers, airmen and Marines and civilians who carry out the various missions assigned to U.S. Strategic Command. They are dedicated professionals who represent our most precious resource and deserve our unwavering support.

As a result of their efforts, our nation's strategic nuclear deterrent force remains safe, secure, effective and ready. And we are working hard to improve the resiliency and flexibility in space and cyberspace. It is critical, as you've stated, that we modernize our strategic nuclear deterrent capabilities that underpin our nation's security.

As you know, the current global security environment is more complex, dynamic and uncertain than possibly any time in our history, as adversaries and potential adversaries challenge our democratic

values and our security in so many ways. They are modernizing and expanding their nuclear capabilities, developing and testing counterspace and cyberspace technologies, and are advancing conventional and asymmetric weapons.

Future deterrence scenarios will likely include multiple adversaries operating across multiple domains and using anti-access, area denial, asymmetric warfare and escalate-to-deescalate tactics. These trends affect strategic stability.

Given all of this, the missions of U.S. Strategic Command remain important to our joint military forces, to our nation, and our allies and partners. Comprehensive strategic deterrence and assurance and escalation control is far more than just nuclear weapons and platforms. It includes a robust intelligence apparatus, space, cyberspace, conventional and missile defense capabilities, and comprehensive plans that link together organizations in a coherent manner.

Additionally, we engage daily in a broad range of activities across our other mission areas, including intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance, combating weapons of mass destruction, joint electronic warfare, and analysis and targeting.

These guide my command priorities. Achieving comprehensive strategic deterrence, assurance and escalation control requires a long-term approach to investing in capabilities and a multi- generational commitment to intellectual capital. The president's budget for fiscal year '17 strikes a responsible balance between national priorities, fiscal realities, and begins to reduce some of the risks we have accumulated because of deferred maintenance and sustainment.

This budget supports my mission requirements, but there is no margin to absorb new risk. Any cuts to that budget will hamper our ability to sustain and modernize our forces.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

MCCAIN:
(OFF-MIKE)

GORTNEY:

Chairman McCain, Senator Reed, distinguished members of the committee, it's an honor to be in front of you today with my long- time shipmates Admiral Cecil Haney and Admiral Kurt Tidd.

First off, I'd like to thank you for the two-year budget relief to sequestration. Last year, I talked about sequestration being the biggest threat to national security. The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 is a much appreciated step in the right direction and we all look forward to a more permanent solution in the future.

I also appreciate the time many of you have spent with me over the past two weeks. And from our discussions, I believe our time is best spent if I quickly summarize the range of significant threats to the homeland. Because I agree with DNI Clapper when he told your committee last month, unpredictable instability has become the new normal.

And I look at threats to the homeland from those most dangerous to most likely. On the most dangerous, the nation-states, Russia, China, North Korea, where the peninsula is more unstable than it's ever been since the armistice; and of course, Iran.

Non-state actors -- Daesh, and in the future whatever adaptation Daesh will morph into; and then transnational organized crime who move product -- drugs, humans, weapons or anything that will make them a profit, exploiting the many seams between the nations in North, Central and South America; the seams between the many agencies of the governments of those nations; the seams created by the inadequate authorities, resources and training of many of those agencies in those nations.

And yes, the seams created by the geographic boundaries of our combatant command structure, seams for which Kurt Tidd and I are accountable to close, while we work the military-to-military effort or our nation's whole-of-government approach to the many shared challenges within North, Central and South America.

The number one priority of the department and NORAD and NORTHCOM is homeland defense. It's a no-fail mission and it's just as important today as when NORAD and NORTHCOM were established, with one single commander responsible for the defense of our homeland, through the many domains of air, space, maritime, land and cyber, although within cyber, our responsibility extends only as far as defending our own networks.

Today's evolving and resurgent threats are a function of the return to great power competition and the continuing global terrorist threat. And these threats create vulnerabilities best mitigated through an integrated and bi-national approach across the multiple domains which requires a fully integrated defense in the air, space, sea and land domains.

As a result, together NORAD and NORTHCOM have evolved well past our Cold War and 9/11 origins and are today inseparable. We defend the homelands in the air through NORAD, and the remaining domains through NORTHCOM, facing the traditional and nontraditional threats in our assigned battle space. And NORAD and NORTHCOM work seamlessly together in defense of our homeland.

We're focused on complete unity of command and unity of effort. We are two commands, but a single, fully integrated headquarters, organized and trained to face the diverse array of evolving threats to our nation's security.

Outside the traditional military threat, and again created by the return of great power competition, is the nontraditional threat to the homeland. To counter this threat, I'm a support team commander to the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice and the many law enforcement agencies engaged in this crucial fight.

Here, my primary concerns are home-grown violent extremists, who are self-radicalized and are in the receive-only mode, and not actively communicating back to Daesh. These extremists are targeting soft Department of Defense -- Department of Defense personnel and facilities and our own fellow citizens. And this is what occurred in Chattanooga on a DOD facility, and in San Bernardino against our nation's civilian population.

As the commander accountable for setting the force protection condition of DOD facilities in the continental United States, we at NORTHCOM work closely with the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps in order to balance the enduring nature of this threat with the services' ability to complete the many missions they have here in the homeland.

In closing, I want to mention our homeland partnerships that enable our success. We partner continuously with the numerous interagency components of the government. These include the National Guard, both airmen and soldiers; the intelligence community; law enforcement agencies; and our closest mission partner, the Department of Homeland Security.

Our mission partners maintain nearly 60 liaison officers in our headquarters, and these patriots are fully embedded in (inaudible) our intel organization. Building partnership capacity within the homeland is absolutely vital to our mission. At NORTHCOM, 70 percent of our major exercise -- and this is nearly 200 each year -- are focused on our mission partners as the primary target audience of the exercise programs. We call this state-of-security cooperation within the homeland.

And this is NORTHCOM supporting our mission partners and our mission partners supporting us, which is why we view these homeland partnerships as our center of gravity, as they are critical to the success across all of our assigned mission areas.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak and I welcome your questions.

MCCAIN:
(OFF-MIKE)

TIDD:
Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

I'm honored to represent the men and women of United States Southern Command and I'm very pleased to be here today with my very good friends and shipmates, Cecil Haney and Bill Gortney.

I'd like to thank the Congress and this committee especially for its longstanding support to our mission and to our partners in Central America, South America and the Caribbean. I'd like to focus my opening remarks very quickly on three Cs and three Gs. The Cs are connections, Colombia and Central America.

The first "C" of connections. Security in this hemisphere connects directly to other parts of the world. Smuggling networks run through South America directly into our homeland. Foreign terrorist fighters flow from the Caribbean to Syria and to Iraq. And as part of their global strategy, Russia attempts to discredit our reliability as a trustworthy partner here in our own region. These issues transcend artificial boundaries and they demand a transregional united response.

The second "C" is Colombia. As has already been recognized, this committee knows well Colombia's transformation has been remarkable. Once on the brink of failure, Colombia is now on the brink of peace. But the hardest work lies ahead: extending government influence into dangerous criminal-controlled territory, confronting the persistent threat of cocaine production and trafficking; and above all, securing a just peace that will end more than 50 years of conflict.

With the blood and treasure that they have already sacrificed, with all that they continue to do to export security across the region, the Colombian people have more than earned our sustained support.

The third "C" is Central America. As we recognized during the 2014 migrant crisis, what happens on the streets of San Salvador and Tegucigalpa has a direct impact on the streets of Tucson and Providence. Our Central American partners are doing all they can to win their countries back from vicious gangs and narco-traffickers, but they cannot do it alone. And because we remain the number one world's consumer of illicit drugs, we owe it to them to do our part.

Now, to the three Gs: global networks, global competitors and Guantanamo Bay.

Global networks are the biggest threat that we face in our region. No two networks are alike. Some are international criminal enterprises focused on transporting any illicit cargo for the right price. Others are small operations that smuggle desperate migrants. Still others support terrorist organizations through financing and through the spread of their violent extremist ideology.

No matter the motivation of these groups, though, all of them have a corrosive effect on the stability and the security of every country that they infect, including our own.

Global competitors. They also operate deliberately in the Western Hemisphere as part of their broader global strategies. The most concerning of them is Russia, which portrays the United States in our theater as unreliable and as withdrawing from this pivotal region.

And finally, Guantanamo Bay, where we conduct the most principled, humane detention operations anywhere in the world, and we will continue to do so until the very last detainee steps on an airplane and departs the island. I know this committee shares my enormous pride in the men and women who serve in this demanding, sensitive and often thankless mission with honor and with the utmost discipline, professionalism and integrity.

They are every bit as engaged in the war and every bit as deserving of our thanks and praise when they return home, just as their brothers and sisters who have returned home from Iraq and Afghanistan. And I thank very much your recognition of the hard work that they do.

Mr. Chairman, members, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I look forward to our continued discussions.

MCCAIN:

Thank you very much, Admiral Tidd.

Admiral Gortney, it's been described by many governors and law enforcement individuals in the Northeast and the Midwest that the drug overdose deaths of manufactured heroin is now, in the view of some governors, a quote, "epidemic." That is now being brought to my attention and many, many others, particularly those who represent these states.

How's it getting in?

GORTNEY:

It's coming through the traditional legal border crossings in very small quantities.

MCCAIN:

By individuals or vehicles, or both?

GORTNEY:

Both. Both, sir, by very small quantities because of the profit margin. I was just down at the San Diego-Tijuana border crossing -- an immense challenge separating the legal versus the illegal activity that comes across the border, and how the technology is that our Customs and Border Patrol and Immigration are using is being circumvented by a very adaptable -- a very adaptable enemy.

MCCAIN:

What do we need to do?

GORTNEY:

Well, two things, sir. We need to work on the technologies that allow us to detect this. We need to work at the root cause within Mexico in the case of the poppy production and the eradication of the poppies. And we work with SEDENA and SAMR (ph) on that in our mil-to-mil responsibilities, as well as working with our partners north of the border. We do that through JTF North, helping them improve their -- our mission partners improve their capability and capacity.

MCCAIN:

Should we expect more of the Mexican government?

GORTNEY:

I would think we would. Yes, sir, we do need to expect more of the Mexican government and all of the agencies within the Mexican government.

MCCAIN:

The manufactured heroin is much easier than cultivated heroin.

GORTNEY:

Yes, sir. Between heroin and methamphetamines, the precursors of methamphetamines are coming from China, factories in China. And we have to tackle all of the illicit drugs that are coming across the border, sir.

MCCAIN:

So, part of it, as you mentioned in your remarks, has got to do with the fundamentals of economics, and that's supply and demand. If there's a demand, there's going to be a supply.

GORTNEY:

That's absolutely correct, sir.

MCCAIN:

Admiral Tidd, you I think very correctly applauded the agreement in Colombia with the FARC. I think it is a testimony to the Colombia people and government, first of all, but it is a sign and a story that we should understand better. And that is, it's been a long-term investment by the United States of America of billions over time, because the heroin -- excuse me -- the cocaine was obviously a threat to the United States of America.

But now we are hearing that poppy cultivation -- or cocaine is -- is way up, Is that -- is that correct?

TIDD:

Yes, sir. That's correct. I think in the next set of figures that will come out, we're going to see a very significant increase in coca production.

MCCAIN:

So with the coca production up, that means there's going to be more coca coming into the -- cocaine coming into the United States.

TIDD:

What's what I would expect. Yes, sir.

MCCAIN:

That's where the market is. So what do we need to do there? Because obviously, it will lower the cost of cocaine. More people will find it affordable. What do we do there?

TIDD:

Sir, I think it's a multifaceted approach. First and foremost, we need to continue to stand steadfast with our Colombia friends. As you recognized, it is a relationship that extends over decades. We will need to work very closely with them.

With regard to the actual movement of cocaine, those transnational criminal networks that have moved the cocaine, we need to do everything that we can to apply pressure on them, to detect, to illuminate and then to disrupt them. That disruptive work will require the efforts of both all of our interagency partners as well as allied partners.

MCCAIN:

Admiral Gortney, what -- we all -- we know that Mr. Baghdadi, the head of ISIS, has -- is sending people out of ISIS in the wave of refugees that have left Syria and Iraq. What is the threat of some one individual or individuals coming across our southern border?

GORTNEY:

I think if someone can find a seam to enter into our country legally or illegally, they're going to exploit that particular seam. And that's why we work very closely with our mission partners to the south. While we look into the drugs, we look to the left and right to see within those seams if there's anything else that would be moving, in this case terrorists.

MCCAIN:

What more do we need to do in order to secure our southern border, and have we made progress in securing our southern border? Or is it basically the status quo?

GORTNEY:

I think the efforts have been effective but not nearly as effective as we would like them to be. We're working against a very adaptive enemy who will exploit the seams, and as we make an advance in one area, they're very quickly able to overcome that, and we're not able to stay out in front of that, their OODA Loop, so to speak. And that's where we need to -- that's where we need it. What are the...

MCCAIN:

So what do we need to do, and isn't it true that more and more of those who are being apprehended are what we call OTM, other than Mexican?

GORTNEY:

That's correct. There's -- as I look at it it's the -- it's the mass migration that are escaping the conditions within Central America, and the cartels are moving the people, and the other problem is the drugs. And the -- and the one that is the most concerning us is the heroin that is being produced and shipped out of Mexico and the methamphetamines. Moved by the same cartel.

MCCAIN:

So what do we need to do?

GORTNEY:

We need to tackle both. They both have different problem sets...

MCCAIN:

I mean, do we need more border patrol, do we need more towers, do we need more -- in other words, what more do we need to do to increase our border security?

GORTNEY:

The first thing for the people is improving the conditions within Central America, whole-of-government approach, working with the countries down there to improve the conditions so that people want to remain with...

MCCAIN:

And that's a long-term project.

GORTNEY:

Yes, sir.

MCCAIN:

What about the -- what about the short-term?

GORTNEY:

Sir, both of them demand long-term problems. This is a 30-year fight that we have to confront. When it comes to the drugs, it's working with our mission partners in those countries as well as Mexico, it's improving the technology...

MCCAIN:

What about security on the -- what about security on the border itself? Is it we need more technology, we need more towers, we need more border patrol? What do we need?

GORTNEY:

I would say that the -- having been on the Mexican- Guatemalan border and then the Arizona and the Mexican border, the threat is a function of the -- what we need is a -- is a combination of analyzing the threat, the terrain, the technology and the training of the people. And so efforts along all of those both with our people and then working with Mexico and with Guatemala and Belize is exactly in order against all of those.

MCCAIN:

Senator Reed.

REED:

Thank you, very much, Mr. Chairman. And let me begin with Admiral Haney. Admiral Haney, we are in the process of modernizing the triad for very obvious and compelling reasons. With respect to the air aspects, there is proposals for a new penetrating bomber, but that bomber also needs the ordinance to carry. And two items which you could comment upon are the replacement for our existing air launch cruise missile and also the B-6112 gravity bomb.

But a related issue would be timing and improvements on these delivery systems might in fact become along before they -- the new penetrating bomber, but they would be very, very useful on whatever platforms we're flying. I presume that, but you might confirm or refute.

HANEY:

Ranking Member Reed, the air leg associated with our triad of platforms is very important in terms of complex deterrence, that any adversary that would want to escalate their way out of a failed conflict would have to also deal with. And that's important in strategic stability.

So as you've indicated here, and I will articulate, very important that we move forward with a replacement bomber in that our B-52 fleet, the planes flying today, were off the assembly line in 1962. We'll still be flying that plane into the 2040s. Even our B-2 fleet is about 25 years old, so it's important that we're able to have that that capability, stealth platform to deliver both nuclear and conventional missions.

With regards to nuclear arsenals for that plane, in order to have both flexible deterrence as well as visible deterrent, it's important that we replace the air launch cruise missile. It was built in the '70s for a 10-year lifespan; well beyond that span today. And that's why it's very important that we replace it with a long-range standoff cruise missile program that's just now getting underway in part of the president's budget for '17. So we already have a cruise missile but it's well beyond its lifespan and we need to replace it.

We also have programs associated with the B-6112 nuclear bomb that replaces four variance of, again, aging bombs, and this helps us reduce our stockpile and have a more effective deterrence.

REED:

Just a follow-up question. As you develop this new air launch cruise missile, I presume -- and correct me if I'm wrong -- it could be launched from numerous platforms, even existing platforms. Is that correct?

HANEY:

Absolutely. B-52 for example which launches our air launch cruise missile doesn't have stealth characteristics, will use this new long-range standoff.

REED:

Thank you. Admiral Gortney, you have many responsibilities you -- as you indicated in your testimony and your response to the chairman. One issue, though, is missile defense, national missile defense. Can you give us sort of an update on the long-range discrimination radar, how's it going? And also generally our posture when it comes to missile defense.

GORTNEY:

We're on track with long-range discriminating radar and the necessary investments to keep our ballistic missile defense architecture to make it the very best we can and to improve it. We want to thank the members of Congress for those investments. So we're in good shape there, sir. We're on path to have 44 interceptors in the ground by the end of '17, 40 in the -- in the great state of Alaska and four in California.

Also, we thank you for the investments to help us get on the correct side of the cost curve, because right now, we're on the -- we're on the wrong side of the cost curve both in theater ballistic missile defense and intercontinental ballistic missile defense against rogue nations. And so Admiral Jim Syring at MDA and I asked for those investments in the research and development to help us get on the correct side of the cost curve, and they're in -- they're in the budget, and we thank you for that.

GORTNEY:

And those that pay out will be coming to you and asking you to put those into production, once we understand what they do. I'm confident in the capability that we have today.

REED:

Just a follow up question. This is always a subject of counts (ph) and evaluation and re-evaluation, but at this juncture your view on the need for East Coast array of missiles -- that need is not evident at this moment?

GORTNEY (?):

I don't see it, sir. If the threat manifested itself from Iran today I have the ability to engage it today. So if I had one dollar to invest I'd put it to where we could engage in those capabilities that get us on the correct side of the cost curve, and those capabilities will work both for theater ballistic missile defense, for our servicemembers and their families overseas, as well as ballistic missile defense for here in the homeland.

REED:

Sir, my turn has run out, but, Admiral Tidd, I want to commend your efforts and also your testimony today. One of the chief issues I think emerges from your testimony is the need to build capacity in our allies in the region, that we can't by far do it alone. And that is a multi-agency effort, much as SOUTHCOM plays a very critical role, because for many in Latin America and South America you still (ph) represent not just the Department of Defense but the United States in your command.

A quick comment because my time is expired.

TIDD:

Yes sir. Thanks very much.

The Department of Defense is able to play a useful role is we have a regional and a sub-regional look. The actual activities occur on a country by country basis but we're able to look across the entire region and I think provide a very useful service to our inter-agency partners.

REED:

Thank you, sir.

MCCAIN:

(OFF-MIKE)

INHOFE:

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

In this morning's Air Force Times, Admiral Haney, I noticed -- it caught my eye because Senator Rounds and I were just on Diego Garcia, that the Air Force is deploying three B-2s there.

You're quoted in the article making this announcement in this morning's Air Force Times. Any comment you want to make about that deployment of those three B-2s in Diego Garcia?

HANEY:

Senator Inhofe, I would not describe it as a deployment. We take our...

INHOFE:

That's how it was described in the article though.

HANEY:

I didn't get interviewed by the Air Force Times, so I would say they probably mixed some of my earlier statements. We actually send out our bombers -- B-52A, B-2s, number one where we're invited to participate in exercises with our allies and partners, and we do that throughout the globe. So we do specific operations as well.

INHOFE:

That's good.

There's area where I have sensed there's a disagreement between our military intelligence on the one side and the State Department on the other side, having to do with the Open Skies Treaty. Russia has reportedly announced its intent to submit plans for aero-surveillance flights which I understand are permitted under the Open Skies Treaty, over the United States using advanced digital cameras.

Several in the -- I think Clapper (ph) made some comments and certainly Lieutenant General Vincent Stewart, Director of Defense Intelligence Agency, were concerned about this because of the advanced technology that's out there. To quote him, he says, "The things that you can see, the amount of data that you can collect, the things you can do with post-processing allows Russia in my opinion to get incredible, foundational intelligence on critical infrastructure basis towards (ph) all of our facilities."

So he was critical of this. What is your thinking about this? Where do you fall down on this?

HANEY:

Senator Inhofe, I think as with all things we have to take a balanced approach but we have to look at this very carefully. Clearly we in fact here recently did an Open Skies Treaty mission over Russia, with one of the 32 other signers of the Treaty. So it's a mechanism by which we are able to have transparent mechanisms with our allies and other partners in that group, while at the same time we have to be careful as we look through the technology advances using digital media versus film. Sustaining film is problematic today, so this has got to be in balance.

Clearly I'm concerned about any Russian ability to gain intelligence on our critical infrastructure.

INHOFE:

When we were going over Russia, were we using the advanced digital equipment?

HANEY:

We were not, because we haven't gotten that far yet. They're ahead of us.

INHOFE:

All right. When Senator Reed was talking about all three legs you were concentrating on the air legs of the triad, the Admiral Winnefeld recently made the statement, I'll quote him, he said, "Any remaining margin we have for investing in our nuclear deterrent has been steadily whittled away as we've pushed investment in this further and further into the future."

Do you think, Admiral Haney, that Russia is actively modernizing their nuclear weapons delivery system? Are they ahead of us? If so, is this a concern?

HANEY:

Russia's modernization program and their nuclear deterrent force is of concern. (inaudible) When you look at what they've been modernizing didn't just start. They've been doing this quite frankly for some time with a lot of crescendo of activity over the last decade and a half.

INHOFE:

Yes, we've been talking about it for a long period of time, that we have not been keeping up in our program as many people think we should. A lot of us, when we are back in our own states, we hear things that are going on and some things that really catch the attention of the American people.

I brought up these two issues, because these are two that do make a difference and that people are aware of and there are concerns out there.

Thank you.

MCCAIN:

Senator Nelson?

NELSON:

Thank you Mr. Chairman. Admiral Tidd, welcome to Florida. Welcome to Miami.

TIDD:

Sir, it's a delightful place to live.

NELSON:

In your three "C"s and three "G"s, you talked about this efficient network that moves things from south to north. Not only drugs, human trafficking, all kinds of contraband. Do you have enough resources to do that in the President's budget?

TIDD:

Sir, the simple fact of the matter is we do not. I do not have the ships, I do not have the aircraft, to be able to execute the detection-monitoring mission to the level that has been established for us to achieve.

NELSON:

This is a unique role, where the Navy, in the Caribbean, and the Pacific coordinate with the law enforcement arm of the Coast Guard. They need assistance, too, don't they?

TIDD:

Sir, I would agree completely. It is very much a team sport. The activities that are orchestrated by our Joint Interagency Task Force South in Key West, Florida, involve the efforts of all of the federal law enforcement agencies as well as the Departments of Defense, Coast Guard, plays a very significant role.

NELSON:

We have seen some lessening of the violence and the drug lords in Honduras, that used to be the number one murder capital in the world. Just this past weekend I met on several occasions with the President of Costa Rica. They seem to be fairly stabilized, but we're getting more drugs coming into stable places in the past, such as Panama.

That being the Panama Canal, an expanded Canal, what do you think is the threat there?

TIDD:

Senator, the adversary that we're dealing with is very flexible, very agile, and it's like squeezing a balloon. When we squeeze in one place if we are not able to apply pressure across the entire breadth of the network they will adapt and move to the area that they think they can get in.

So as we have had some success working with our Honduran partners, as they have been able to get out and apply greater pressure, in areas that previously had been denied to them, we're seeing the drug traffickers are moving the landing points for where the drugs are coming ashore in Central America to different countries.

NELSON:

Couldn't we get a lot more support from Mexico where all these drugs basically other than the ones that are going the water route to Puerto Rico, some to Haiti, couldn't we get a lot more support from Mexico since they come there and they go across the border?

TIDD:

Senator, I would defer that specific question to...

NELSON:

I know, it's not in your AOR, but what do you think?

TIDD:

What I think is that we continue to work very closely with the militaries of all of the countries of Central America, and I know that NORTHCOM works closely with the Mexican military to improve their capability and capacity to get this problem -- our ability to share information effectively plays a significant role.

NELSON:

At least we got El Chapo. So that was a step in the right direction. Tell me about Haiti. They've got this interim government. Is it working until they can declare a president?

TIDD:

Sir I think that the situation in Haiti -- every morning that we wake up and watch to make sure that they have not had significant crises occurred there -- they're going to have their hands full for a long time to come.

The role played by the U.N. Peacekeeping Operation MINUSTAH has been absolutely critical in sustaining that stability that is there. We've got some key partners in the nation, most notably Brazil, that has been a real backbone of that MINUSTAH operation. We would hope that countries like that would continue to make those contributions.

NELSON:

Basically, bottom line, until they improve in their economic depravity, it's gonna be a nation whose government is always subject to a lot of corruption.

Admiral Gortney, what do you think about Mexico and helping us out?

GORTNEY:

I think they're in a 30-year fight. Going after immense challenges, the number one problem is corruption, if you look at the root cause that you've got to solve first, and this is Admiral Soberon's (ph) words, not mine, is to go after the corruption within the country.

We need to assist him across our whole government approach in this 30-year fight. They're great mission partners, Zapeda and Soberon (ph) are great mission partners. But they have an immense challenge and we do everything we can to assist them with that.

NELSON:

Isn't it interesting that you can rely on that elite unit at the federal level, but you get anywhere below that, it's just - you can't even say anything about intel, otherwise it gets to the drug lords.

GORTNEY:

Yes sir. You mentioned the recapture of El Chapo and those Mexican Marines were trained by U.S. Marines.

NELSON:

That's very good, and with that I'll say Mr. Chairman, the Marines are standing tall.
(OFF-MIKE)

FISCHER:

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Admiral Gortney, our adversaries are continuing to invest in developing advanced long range cruise missiles, and that can hold the United States at risk. I think we have a really thin defense against those. Can you talk a little bit about the JLENS Program, and what role this plays in defending the United States against a cruise missile attack?

GORTNEY:

Yes ma'am. The three types of missiles we worry about, the third one is the cruise missile attack. The Russians are employing these cruise missiles in Syria today, both from bombers, ships and submarines, when there's no operational or tactical requirement in the battlefield to do it.

They're messaging us that they have this capability and those missiles can have either a conventional or a nuclear tipped warhead. In order to defeat this threat, I've been defending since I was a Lieutenant J.G. and have shot over 1,300 of them. If you want to defeat this threat you have to be able to detect it. In order to do that you need an array, a radar that is above the horizon. That can come in many forms. It can be the AWACS, it could be the E-2 Hawkeye for the Navy, or it can be JLENS.

What it does for us here in the National Capital Region is we're executing our test, putting this array up, and it fills a gap, at the classified level I can't say in this forum, it fills a capability gap that I do not have today.

So we look forward to restarting the JLENS Program after the very unfortunate mishap that we had. We understand what happened, we put in place the mitigation efforts and we look forward to completing it because, should it bear out, it fills a gap that I do not have today against this particular threat.

FISCHER:

Thank you sir. And Admiral Haney, last week General Rand, who commands Global Strike Command, he testified that the Huey Helicopter is providing security for our ICBM field that cannot meet

the emergency response requirements. Can you talk about the current capability gap that we have and the need that we see to replace those helicopters?

HANEY:

Senator Fischer, General Rand's comments were spot on the mark. These current helicopters, these Huey H-1s don't have the lift capability, speed capability, to meet the requirements that have been approved, validated through a number of studies as well as Mighty Garden (ph) exercises and what have you.

They don't have the lift to get the amount of security forces to the scene. When you look at these missile fields, they're vast and cover large areas as you well know, so in order to meet those kinds of requirements we need a new helicopter.

FISCHER:

Would you say that need is urgent?

HANEY:

I would definitely say the need is urgent.

FISCHER:

Thank you Admiral. Thank you Mr. Chairman. I have to run to preside (ph).

MANCHIN:

Thank you Mr. Chairman. Thank you all for your service and for being here today. I think Admiral Tidd, if I could, you were talking about the drugs (ph) and this and that, so if you were going to rate, I've just heard a couple of statistics, how the drugs are getting here most predominantly, by air, sea, over ground or through tunnels?

TIDD:

I would defer to Admiral Gortney as to how they actually get across the U.S. border into the United States, but as they go through the SOUTHCOM region they go by air and by sea.

MANCHIN:

OK.

GORTNEY:

And then overland in Central America.

MANCHIN:

How do they get into the United States border? Across it?

GORTNEY:

All mechanisms, sir. Everything that we talked about, that Admiral Tidd talked about, through the tunnels ...

MANCHIN:

I had heard - I had not heard that tunnels were so prevalent. I heard that tunnels are probably one of the most pervasive ways that this stuff was getting in and we're not doing a whole lot about it the tunnels.

GORTNEY:

Well, sir, I've been in one of the tunnels. I've looked at the tunnel detection capability that Custom and Border Patrol use, the technology that they've applied to that, and then crawled through the tunnels

with them. It's a - once again, it's a very adaptive enemy, that goes out there and if they can find a mechanism in order to ...

MANCHIN:

Are we destroying the tunnels?

GORTNEY:

Yes sir, we are. Those that we find as they detect them, they then work the law enforcement piece on each side to find out where the exit and entry piece is, what is the network that is controlling that entry and exit piece and after that, working both sides of the borders on it. Once they understand that they'll go ahead and destroy and fill in the tunnel.

MANCHIN:

Do you think a wall is needed?

GORTNEY:

Sir, a wall will not solve the immense problems that go out there. You need all of the technology ...

MANCHIN:

I know, would it help - I'm just saying, because people believe, you know, there's a lot of rhetoric about a wall these days in the news. But sincerely, do you believe that it could help, or would help more? Or not having a wall?

GORTNEY:

I have flown the border between what we call our middle border on the Arizona side and I've seen the technology that is applied there, be it sensors, be it fencing, every type of fencing that happens to be out there because the terrain demands different types of fencing for it. And we need to put in place all of that technology across our border as we try and work with our mission partners south of the border as well as cut back significantly the demand signal here in our country.

MANCHIN:

If I could follow up with you again, Admiral, yesterday Lieutenant General Thomas submitted in written testimony that ISIS- inspired lone actors pose the most direct and immediate threat to the U.S. homeland, as we saw in San Bernardino and Dallas. There are many folks in my state of West Virginia that have a lot of concerns that our government, when our government considers accepting refugees from overseas, they're more concerned about are we doing the proper vetting process.

I would ask, should we accept Syrian refugees into this country at this time, and are we able to do the proper vetting since we have such little facts about those people coming?

GORTNEY:

Homeland Security has a very robust vetting process for everybody that comes into this country, particularly focused on the Syrian refugee challenge that's coming this way. I have confidence in the program but no program is perfect, sir. When I look at people that are trying to come to do nefarious activity in our country the ones that I'm most concerned are those that enter the country legally, under a legal means.

Because then they have freedom of maneuver to operate within the United States. Those that try and enter illegally have hooks that we may have opportunities to pick up and if they're maneuvering inside they have - do not have the freedom to maneuver inside the country.

So it is the vetting process, a very robust vetting process that Homeland Security has that is absolutely critical.

MANCHIN:

Would you recommend that we do not reduce that vetting process whatsoever?

GORTNEY:

No I would not.

MANCHIN:

Admiral Haney, if I could ask you - in recent days we have once again seen North Korea threaten to conduct a pre-emptive nuclear strike and reduce Seoul into a sea of fire and ashes. I know we always hear that rhetoric any time we partner with South Korea as we're doing right now to conduct military exercises, but it seems to be a lot stronger this time, seems to be growing stronger every year.

Do you feel there's a linkage to North Korea's rhetoric and their more aggressive missile test?

HANEY:

I won't, Senator, try to rationale North Korean behavior, and Kim Jong Un's behavior. I will state that the nuclear test, the fourth test they just did here and the space launch they just did, further enhance their understanding and knowledge associated with this. North Korea's made many claims. Militarization of nuclear warheads, they paraded around their KN-08 (ph) intercontinental ballistic missile. I think we have to take these problems seriously because it's clear to me they're working hard ...

MANCHIN:

They're more aggressive than you've seen them in the past?

HANEY:

Absolutely.

MANCHIN:

Thank you. Thank all of you.

MCCAIN:

Admiral, let me just follow up. Your greatest concern is people coming to this country legally as opposed to coming across our border. Is that a correct ...

GORTNEY:

Yes sir, because it's their ability of freedom of maneuver to operate within our country. Any time that someone comes through illegally we have a better opportunity to detect them and pick them up and if they're in the country, just as the San Bernardino attack showed out, the woman involved entered the country legally. And we did not have the sensors, the ability to detect what she wanted to do.

So you've got to tackle both of them as we go forward. If you look at the Paris attacks, they entered the E.U. legally, they operated - they had freedom of maneuver to operate within the E.U. on the Continent because of the policies that they have in the E.U. operated and planned the attack in a country that did not have the authorities that Paris did and then freely moved into France to conduct the attack.

So disabling this freedom of maneuver, I think, is absolutely critical which goes back to the vetting policy that was asked before, sir.

MCCAIN:

Senator Cotton?

COTTON:

Thank you. Admiral Tidd, I want to talk about the potential for migrant flows in the United States from Latin America, as we saw during the migrant crisis in the summer of 2014. Obviously there are push factors involved, given the crime, the violence, in say Central America. But there are always pull factors involved as well.

This is one reason why President Obama stated in 2014 that parents in Central America shouldn't send their children to the United States through coyotes or human traffickers. Similarly, you see in Europe, after Chancellor Merkel said that Germany would take all migrants and refugees, or a significant increase in the flows not just from places like Syria and Iraq but from many other countries in Africa and Asia.

Therefore I'm very troubled by what I heard last night in the Democratic debate. It's easy to write off political debates as theater, but we're the world's superpower. There's only six people right now who are likely to be our next President of the United States, our next Commander in Chief, and last night the two candidates on the Democratic side said, essentially, that they would never send any children back to a country of origin if they make it to the United States.

What kind of message did that send to families in Central America and South America about the risk they're willing to undertake to send their children to the United States through human traffickers and coyotes?

TIDD:

Senator, one of the most effective things the Department of Homeland Security was able to do to begin to curtail that movement of children coming into the country back in 2014 was to try to change the messages that were being communicated via social media back to family members that it's safe, it's easy to come in, you won't be incarcerated. They put a hard push to communicate that if you come across the border you will be held until you can be processed for return back home.

So I think all the steps that can be taken to deal with those pull factors would be critical.

COTTON:

I agree. I don't think it's an especially moral policy. What Chancellor Merkel has proposed in Europe, or what we heard last night. We're essentially saying to people who are poor and oftentimes in countries racked by violence, that if you can survive, you can stay here.

TIDD:

The critical work that you identified to try to change the push factors out of those countries -- the long term sustained work that's being done by Department of State, by USAID, to try to provide economic opportunities so that those people will find that it is economically a much better decision to remain home and in the work that's being done to try to improve security within those countries so that it's not a -- it's a life or death decision to remain home. That's the key to the long term solution.

COTTON:

I agree on the long term solution the work that you and all the men and women of SOUTHCOM do and have done for many years are critical to build that kind of capacity in the countries that send the most migrants here. But I also think that statements by American leaders that essentially create a full employment opportunity for human traffickers are very damaging, not just for our country but for the young children that might be sent here.

I'd like to stay in your (AO) and turn to Guantanamo Bay. I led a delegation of the freshmen on this committee and the Intelligence Committee last year to see Guantanamo Bay. We were very impressed by the operation. We were even more impressed by the men and women you have serving there.

Could you explain to us a little bit about the stressful and sometimes dangerous working conditions they face handling these depraved terrorists?

TIDD:

Senator, thanks for the opportunity. In the short two months that I've been in this position I've visited Guantanamo Bay twice to see for myself, to be able to assess exactly the high degree of professionalism and discipline that the men and women execute that mission.

As you observed, it is very difficult, very challenging, oftentimes under enormous pressure from both the expectations from outside and also the actions of the detainees there. There have been in the last twelve months a hundred assaults committed by the detainees on our guard force, assaults in the form of splashing, scratching, pushing, shoving -- those sorts of activities, and threats of worse if they had the ability to do that. The fact that our men and women never respond in a negative way, that they continue to remain very professional, I think is testimony to the fact that they're supremely well-trained, they are exceptionally well-qualified for the mission that we ask them to do and all of the American people can be very proud of the job that they have done and continue to do.

COTTON:

Thank you. My time is expired.

BLUMENTHAL:

Thanks Mr. Chairman. Admiral Haney, you note in your testimony, and I'm quoting, "We (capitalizing) our sea-based strategic deterrent remains your top priority." Considering the gap that we're facing in submarine capabilities, do you think that we ought to consider building three submarines a year, two Virginia class and one Ohio replacement?

HANEY:

Senator Blumenthal, I am supportive as you. (inaudible) I am too and I appreciate your support. The building and the capability that we need to have in terms of the Ohio replacement SSBN is a top priority. As I mentioned also, though, having conventional capability across our joint military forces is also important. We've got to get that balance right.

I've not given you an acquisition strategy on the number per year and what have you there, I will say we need to have a -- I depend upon a strong submarine in all their capabilities but in particular to have that strategic survivable capability underwater is very important to our nation as a whole.

BLUMENTHAL:

I didn't ask you to commit to doing it, but to consider doing it, which I think is really important and privately I think that the Navy has been receptive to this idea of two Virginia class submarines a year plus the ORP at least for some period of time.

HANEY:

I can say I'd like to see five per year, but we have to do things in reason, so from the spirit of what we need as a country as a whole, we've got to get that balance right and we do know as I think you're implying, correctly so, that the submarine force does bring significant value to our nation.

BLUMENTHAL:

Admiral Tidd, some of the reports that we've had indicate that we can actually see illicit substances -- opioids, heroin -- transported across waters, even across borders, but we lack the equipment and manpower to intercept and interdict and stop them. Is that true?

TIDD:

Senator, it is. First what I'd like to do is thank the exceptional efforts of the Congress to provide additional resources as they came available for us to be able to increase the resources that we do have. We've been able to apply those resources very quickly in some new ways and to be able to take advantage of some nontraditional capabilities to increase our ability to see the movement and things that are going on -- it still only gives us glimpses. We're not able to maintain a persistent view of activities going on in the theater.

As you rightly point out our ability to interdict is extremely limited. The number of surface ships largely provided by the U.S. Coast Guard, but the U.S. Navy also provides some limited capability as well, but even that -- it's not enough for us to be able to deal with the -- what we're able to see.

We try to mitigate that by increasing the capability of our partner nations, and the development that we've been able to do in their intercept capability and interdiction capability has made a significant improvement. As it stands right now about half of the interdictions that occur occur with the help of partner nations.

BLUMENTHAL:

My time is limited but let me just emphasize how important I think the American people believe it is to interdict and intercept the flow of these illicit substances. Clearly the demand side needs to be addressed, and in fact we are seeking to do so through the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, which is only a step in the right direction, because it lacks the resources to provide the kind of treatment, services and even law enforcement support that we need to do. The demand side is important but equally so the work that you're doing is absolutely critical. And I recognize that the dedicated men and women under your command are working as hard and long as they can, with the limited resources they have.

And so I'm hopeful that we can get from you a more specific list of resources, whether it's equipment, ships, aircraft, that you think are necessary. And I'm not asking you to provide it now, but I would for the record ask that you provide it to the committee.

Thank you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And thank you all for your dedicated service to our nation.

MCCAIN:

(OFF-MIKE)

AYOTTE:

Thank you, Chairman.

I want to thank all of you for your service and leadership for our country.

Admiral Gortney, in the 2016 NDAA, I was able to include a very -- a bipartisan effort that was focused in asking the secretary of defense to carry out research, development, testing and evaluation activities with Israel on anti-tunnel capabilities to detect, map and neutralize Hamas and Hezbollah terrorist tunnels that, of course, are used for those tunnels to come up and commit attacks in Israel.

But we also know that this is a very important issue not only in protection of our friend and ally Israel, but also on our southern border, because we know that tunnels on our southern border can be used to smuggle drugs like heroin and Fentanyl, which are devastating my state, into the United States. And they also presumably could be used by other bad actors, including terrorists.

So Admiral Gortney, has there been collaboration with Israel on terror tunnels that has benefited NORTHCOM's and the Joint Task Force North's efforts to develop technology to detect, map and neutralize drug smuggling tunnels on our southern border?

GORTNEY:

Absolutely, ma'am. It's very, very helpful for us. You know, we don't have a monopoly on good ideas in our country. And when we can partner with our partners overseas that have a similar challenge, it's very, very -- it's been very, very beneficial, both for us and for our partners in Customs and Border Patrol.

AYOTTE:

Excellent. I'm glad to hear it and I look forward to continuing to focus on those efforts.

How much of this is an issue? As we look at -- in New Hampshire, we had a record number of drug overdose deaths this year from heroin and Fentanyl -- 420. It's been devastating. In fact, right now on the Senate floor, we have the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act which is focused obviously on the prevention, the treatment and support for our first responders so that they can help bring people back from drug overdoses.

But thinking about the interdiction piece, what's happening over our southern border on this issue? And this is something I've raised also with Secretary Johnson. Can you give us an update on your interdiction efforts?

GORTNEY:

Yes, ma'am. Our interdiction efforts, we work both sides of our middle border. And north of our border, we do the Department of Defense support with our missions partners through JTF North. You know, just last year it was a \$10.7 million program that we were given for JTF North, and they assisted in taking \$436 million of drugs off the street with our mission partners.

We use the services in order to do that. In a 30-day period over one stretch of territory that Custom and Border Patrol was asking us to take a look at, they were able to interdict one pound of marijuana and only one trafficker. We put a United States Marine Corps ground sensor platoon who were in their training in order to deploy, and in the same 30 -- in another 30-day period over that same terrain, they were able to pull up 1,200 pounds of marijuana and 75 traffickers.

So, being able to assist with them is absolutely critical for that.

AYOTTE:

What are you seeing on heroin and Fentanyl?

GORTNEY:

Heroin and Fentanyl are coming through our normal passages -- the legal entry control points across our border. Heroin predominantly through the San Diego passage -- San Diego passage. Very, very small shipments, which is very, very difficult for our partners to be able to detect with the technology that they have today.

AYOTTE:

What more could we do to assist you to give you some more technological tools or personnel to try to address this? Because what's happening in New Hampshire and across the country is the price of heroin and Fentanyl, of course, has gone down dramatically, and you've got people...

GORTNEY:

\$10 a pop in any...
(CROSSTALK)

AYOTTE:

Yeah, and so they're going from prescription drugs, unfortunately, to heroin and people are dying.

GORTNEY:

That's correct. Everywhere, ma'am. We have to tackle this from both sides of the problem -- where our mission partners, what mission -- what do our mission partners need in the capabilities to detect; improvements with all of our whole-of-government approach, with Mexico and Central and South America. And I'm responsible for the Mexican piece, of the mil-to-mil piece.

And then we have to work on the demand signal. And Senator Donnelly, with your anti-opioid bill that goes to the floor today, absolutely critical.

You know, we look at this, the three of us look at this through not only military officers that are asked to defend the nation, and what we can do in order to do that, but we look at it as fathers and grandfathers as well. We have to go after the demand signal while we work the interdiction piece.

AYOTTE:

Let me just thank Senator Donnelly, because this is something that he's been a great leader on and we've worked together, and appreciate his efforts on this and focus on it, and others on this panel who have been working on it.

I also wanted to ask, Admiral Gortney, in your prepared statement, you said that you assess that Iran may be able to deploy an operational ICBM by 2020 if the regime chooses to. Well, we know in the last several days, first of all, we had a ballistic missile test in October, one in November. In the last two days, we've had several ballistic missile tests from Iran.

So can you give us the details on that assessment -- obviously, they're testing this capacity -- where they stand on this development?

GORTNEY:

Yes, none of their tests violate any of the agreements that are out there, but I think it's indicative of where their minds are. I don't see a change in their behavior. If they had the capability today, I have the ability to engage it today. And we watch very closely, and we thank the committee and all of Congress for the investments that allow us to be able to outpace that particular threat.

Reading their intentions, I don't see a change from the Iranians' behavior.

AYOTTE:

In other words, bad behavior.

GORTNEY:

Yes, ma'am.

AYOTTE:

Thank you.

MCCAIN:

(OFF-MIKE)

DONNELLY:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I would like to thank Senator Ayotte. She's been a great partner in this effort to try to stop the flow of heroin. I know what a challenge it's been in New Hampshire and in my state. And we both worked in a real bipartisan way to try to get this done. She's been a great partner.

The chairman mentioned at the beginning about the fact that this is an epidemic. I just want to tell you a little town in my state, Connerville, Indiana. And it's -- it's, you know, a little southeast of Indy. And we've lost young person after young person after young person; older people, too, to heroin deaths -- \$6 per is what is taken in terms of each time they use heroin, it's six bucks.

And the extraordinary talent we're losing; the extraordinary family damage it causes. It takes your breath away, as all of you know. And -- and in some of the saddest cases, they are vets. They're our family in the military who this has happened to. And so, we know we have a demand problem. And we're trying to get our hands around that and get it fixed.

But as you look at this, how much is getting through? You know, whether it's the heroin or the Fentanyl or whatever, that you look and you go, of the percentage coming through, how much are we stopping?

GORTNEY:

I don't have the percentages in front of me.

DONNELLY:

I'm not looking for an exact number.

GORTNEY:

Yes, and I'm hesitant of using the percentage of our confiscation as a metric of success because of the increase. You know, if you're measuring from two years ago or that, I just don't think it's a very good metric that we can either hang our hat on, that we would -- that we would not want to hang our hat on.

We have to do more. We have to do more throughout Central Mexico and Central and South America with those mission partners, our whole- of-government approach with that; with the eradication effort, which, you know, currently 570 hecta-meters -- hecta-acres, the Mexican SEDENA, the navy has eradicated just in poppies last year.

But it's still not enough. And so, once again as Admiral Tidd talked about, the balloon. And when we think about the balloon, the pressure to stop the interdictions, we also have to -- also have to work the demand piece on top of it.

DONNELLY:

Do we have intelligence services who are working this to try to find out, you know, as we talked, Admiral, about this group and that group and that group, do we have intelligence agencies that are working to try to find out when this is going out, where it's going out, and to try to help with that effort?

GORTNEY:

Absolutely, sir. And we're working and passing that information with our mission partners, as well as developing their capability to determine that on their own.

DONNELLY:

Well, if you could both put together in effect, almost -- I don't know if this is the right term -- a wish list, saying, look, if we had this, we could stop this much more; if we had this, we could prevent this portion. If you could provide that to us, I'd be very, very grateful.

GORTNEY:

We'll take for a task, sir.

DONNELLY:

Thank you.

Admiral Haney, when you look at hypersonics, there's a wealth of open source reporting on efforts by Russia and particularly China to develop hypersonic weapons that could pose a serious challenge to our missile defenses.

Within DOD, our most advanced hypersonic effort is CPGS. And I was wondering what your thoughts are on the value of CPGS to STRATCOM and the nation.

HANEY:

I feel that the conventional prompt global strike is a very important program.

DONNELLY:

I apologize. I use military speak.

(LAUGHTER)

HANEY:

It's also a very important approach that we have to continue to pursue, one, to understand that technology. But as you've stated, since other nations are also pursuing it, our ability to counter it is also very important.

DONNELLY:

Admiral Gortney, I want to get your perspective on our missile defense priorities this year. You know, I work with Senator Sessions and a number of our wonderful colleagues here in regards to this area. We have a strong commitment to the success of our GMD system.

And I was wondering if you could let me know if our current GMD architecture with interceptors in Alaska and California provide cover for the entire continental United States, including the east coast, against the threat.

GORTNEY:

Yes, sir. I am able to deal with rogue nations from any direction at this particular time with what we have. And we appreciate the investments in making that which we've got as best as we've got, the improvement in sensors. And again, like we've talked, the -- the necessary R&D investments to get us on the correct side of the cost curve and continue to outpace the threat.

DONNELLY:

Well, I want to thank all of you for your service. As I mentioned, we have a lot of threats overseas, but every week there are stories about young men and women who are dying from heroin, from opioids. Our EMTs are overwhelmed and using Narcon to try to bring people back in anti-overdose situations.

And so we not only want to protect our country from our enemies overseas, but to keep our people safe. And you're right on the front line, and we appreciate your hard work on this, and -- and don't ever think for a minute that we don't realize what a challenge it is, and that you don't have our full support.

Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN:

(OFF-MIKE)

SULLIVAN

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I wanted to thank you, gentlemen, for your service. I also wanted to follow up on the line of questioning that Senator Donnelly was just talking about, in terms of missile defense.

And he and Senator Sessions -- actually everybody on this committee's been a real strong supporter of that, and having both the two COCOM commanders in front of us who are tasked with that, I'd like to dig into some details.

Admiral Haney and Admiral Gortney, can North Korea range any part of the United States right now, in terms of their missile capability? And that's either the mainland or Alaska or Hawaii or any American territories in the Pacific.

GORTNEY:

Sir, as the commander accountable of holding the trigger to defend the nation against that particular threat, I assess that they have the -- that they have the ability to put an ICBM in space and range the continental United States and Canada.

SULLIVAN

So clearly, then, Hawaii and Alaska are in range?

GORTNEY:

Absolutely, yes, sir.

SULLIVAN

And do we anticipate that will -- will have a -- you say ICBM, but -- nuclear-capability ICBM, now? Or soon?

GORTNEY:

Yes, sir. I -- I assess, as the commander there, that it's the prudent decision on my part to assume that he has the capability to nuclearize -- miniaturize the nuclear -- miniaturize a nuclear weapon and put it on an ICBM, and I have the...

SULLIVAN
Today?

GORTNEY:
... today.

SULLIVAN
In range of the continental United States?

GORTNEY:
In -- in range all of the states of the United States and Canada, and we have the ability to engage that threat. Intel community gives it a very low probability of success, but I don't -- do not believe the American people want to base my readiness assessment on a low probability.

SULLIVAN
I think you're very correct on that. How about Iran -- same question?

GORTNEY:
Iran, we do not assess they have the ability to do it today. Should they have the ability to do it today, I have the ability to engage in today.

SULLIVAN
And when you think they'll have the ability?

GORTNEY:
It's a decision on their part, sir, and it's -- it's a decision if -- if they want to nuclearize, whether they want to develop -- complete the development of an ICBM, and then the reentry vehicle. And so we track very carefully all three of those pieces.

SULLIVAN
Do you think they're cooperating with North Korea on some of this, right now, to -- to...

GORTNEY:
Absolutely. Absolutely.

SULLIVAN
So you anticipate that that threat will continue to grow, and probably they'll be able to reach Hawaii, Alaska, the East Coast, continental U.S. within five years?

GORTNEY:
Well...

SULLIVAN
If they continue on their current path?

GORTNEY:
We -- we look at it in -- in one, two and three -- a decision to nuclearize, a decision to put it on a warhead, and a decision to be able to actually put the reentry vehicle all together.

When they make that decision, it's a one-two-three decision on their part, and we -- and we look very closely -- we have the intel community looking very closely at each one of those pieces.

SULLIVAN

So I've been supportive of the Department of Defense -- Obama administration's missile defense budget, and you probably saw this committee's been very supportive of that. I've lately heard concerns that maybe in this year's budget there's not enough.

Can you -- either of -- Admiral Haney or Admiral Gortney, can you talk about what you think, in terms of -- given these threats, which are quite significant, the role of Fort Greely, the role of our GBIs -- do we think we have enough right now?

And importantly, do we have enough, particularly, on the radar and ground-based interceptor element right now, but do we have enough to deal with the threat that certainly seems to be increasing?

So does 41 do it, or should we anticipate having more? Because it doesn't look like the Iranians or North Koreans are gonna be standing down their missile capability anytime soon.

GORTNEY:

It'll be 44 interceptors by the end of '17 -- 44 in Fort Greely, in the great state of Alaska, and the sense -- necessary sensors are going all in place at Alaska because of the strategic importance of Alaska.

It's not gonna be enough, because it's not gonna be able to outpace the threat in the -- the number of raid (ph) counts -- the number that can be shot at us as we project...

SULLIVAN

Right.

GORTNEY:

... into the future, which is why the investments that you all have supported in our research and development are so important, to get us on the correct side of the cost curve.

Because on our current path, using the current technologies and a -- one interceptor versus one warhead in midcourse is a -- is a failing proposition...

SULLIVAN

Yeah.

GORTNEY:

... because they can produce more than we can ever possibly afford to put in the ground.

SULLIVAN

So do we -- do you anticipate, in 5 to 10 years, as the threat grows, as the rogue nation missile capability increases, as the number of missiles they have increases, as their ability to nuclearize payloads - miniaturize the nuclear payloads increases, are we gonna need more ground-based interceptors to keep up with that threat?

GORTNEY:

We're gonna need more capability to engage the threat throughout its flight -- keep them on the ground, kill them on the rails, kill them in boost phase, and then get more warheads in space in midcourse.

We have to be able to engage it, right now, throughout the flight of the profile, not just in midcourse with one rocket against a very -- one very expensive rocket against another rocket.

SULLIVAN

And in your professional military opinion, do we have enough -- is the current budget on these issues, given the threat, which, you've just laid out, is quite significant -- including North Korea being

able to hit the continental United States -- does the current budget, in your professional military opinion, have enough resources dedicated to missile defense to keep us safe now and, importantly, to keep up with this growing threat?

GORTNEY:

Working very closely with Admiral Syring, who's in charge of developing this at the Missile Defense Agency, last year's budget, we think, was -- was adequate for us to improve what we have and invest in those technologies and see if those technologies will bear out to get us on the correct side of the cost curve and engage throughout the flight of these missiles.

SULLIVAN

This year's budget?

GORTNEY:

This year's budget, yes, sir. But should -- should those technologies come forward, the budget's not enough to put those capabilities into production and to deliver those capabilities.

So once we prove, say, the laser technology (inaudible) or multi-object kill vehicle technology that -- that's out there -- should those technologies bear out, and they are very, very promising, then we're gonna be needing an increase in the budget to put those capabilities in place.

SULLIVAN

Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REED:

On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator King.

KING:

Thanks, Senator Reed.

We've been talking a lot -- I think the fact that you -- practically every -- every senator's asked questions about drugs is an indication of how serious this problem is in all of our states.

And we've talked about the border, we talked about maritime asset ships, intelligence -- but these drugs -- you mention Colombia, Mexico -- are grown in great big fields. What effort is being made with these other countries to -- to put a stop to that?

I mean, if somebody in Iowa was growing 100 acres of poppies and turning it into heroin, I think we'd -- we'd do something about it. Is there any effort made, in terms of our relationship with these so-called partner countries, to control the the production of this -- of this stuff?

Admiral Tidd?

TIDD:

I'll start on that one. Senator, yes. Columbia has made some very significant efforts. I think you're - you're familiar with their aerial eradication program...

(CROSSTALK)

KING:

But haven't they backed off that recently?

TIDD:

That -- that is correct, and as they have negotiated a -- the peace accord, one of the conditions of that peace accord included stopping the aerial eradication program and now going in for manual eradication.

One of the challenges with manual eradication -- they have to be able to put their military forces into and control the territory that right now has been denied territory to them.

So that's gonna be one of the reasons they're gonna be facing some very stiff fights even as the peace accord, if signed, comes into effect -- because they're -- they -- they will be going up against narcotraffickers who control that land, as well as the actual growers -- the peasants themselves.

This is their source of livelihood, and they are going to -- to be giving up that source of livelihood. So it'll be a -- a tough fight.

KING:

It'll be a (ph) source of livelihood, but it's a source of death up here.

TIDD:

Absolutely.

KING:

And I don't understand calling somebody an ally who's -- and having them produce these death-dealing substances. Same question about Mexico, Admiral Gortney.

GORTNEY (?):

Yes, sir. The -- in the crop eradication, just SEDENA alone -- their navy and marine corps -- about 270,000 hecta- acres (sic) and 500 of -- of marijuana and 570,000 hecta-acres (sic) of -- of poppy. And it's not -- it's not nearly enough.

As a result, they've just purchased more helicopters -- a little bit cheaper than...

KING:

They, being the Mexicans?

GORTNEY (?):

... Mexican SEDENA and SEMAR -- to -- to increase that poppy eradication effort, as well as the other internal security challenges that -- that they're confronting as they're working their way against the cartels.

KING:

Changing the subject, Admiral Gortney, you're -- have jurisdiction over the Arctic, or at least a significant part of it. The administration proposed this year -- and I support the proposal -- for the beginning -- a down payment, if you will, on a new icebreaker.

That's good. The problem is that icebreaker will really replace what we have -- it doesn't increase our capacity. Isn't it true that we really need more icebreaker capacity as the Arctic begins to open up for trade and -- and development and transport?

GORTNEY:

Well, speaking for my closest mission partner -- other maritime partner, which is United States Coast Guard, I would agree with them, that they -- they do need more icebreaker -- more capacity and capability out there.

KING:

Yeah. I -- I don't wanna look the gift horse in the mouth -- we gotta get this new one started. But it's -- it's really -- that really is replacing the -- the Polar Star, not -- not giving us any -- any new capacity. OK.

Admiral Haney, deterrence has been a strategic basis of our nuclear strategy since 1945 or thereabouts. But deterrence rests on a theory of a semblance of rationality on the other side. Does

deterrence work with North Korea? Are they concerned about the possibility of being obliterated if they attack?

HANEY:

Senator King, I -- I think -- I can't tell you exactly what Kim Jong-Un, the leader of North Korea, thinks today, this very minute. But he has to know that he faces a very credible response across our joint military forces if he decides to do the unthinkable.

KING:

So the -- the -- the deterrence -- the -- the fact that that -- there would be a -- assured destruction is a -- is a fact that's known in North Korea?

HANEY:

Again, I have not had an opportunity to talk to the leaders of North Korea, but I am convinced they look at our whole joint military force, that's why we see reactions to some of our exercises and what have you.

So I think they have a keen appreciation to the fact of what we bring as a complete force, not just the nuclear capability I lead.

KING:

As I say, it would behoove us to let there be no misunderstanding. And of course, the other side of this question is deterrence against non-state actors which is even more of a difficult from a theoretical point of view, particularly people who don't care about dying. And where do you -- where do you strike back, where do you -- where is the retaliation. I think that's a -- that's a second level of theoretical problem with the theory of deterrence as applied to current threats that we face.

HANEY:

And Senator, as you have articulated, deterrence is complex and it requires a deep understanding of the adversary, an understanding of what feeds the adversary and consequently has to be tailored for each specific adversary. And that requires a lot of critical thinking and is -- and overall comprehensive approaches in multiple domains as we see adversaries, including violent extremist organizations, use cyberspace, for example, in order to recruit and in order to finance their mechanisms.

Those kind of things have to become more costly for them to pursue and it is still, I would argue, that deterrence is complex but the fundamentals still apply.

KING:

Thank you. I'm out of time. For the record, could Admiral Gortney and Admiral Tidd give us something in writing on why we should not join NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM, and if there's a Goldwaters- Nichols II. Not now because I am out of time, but perhaps a written statement because I know that's a question that's going to come up before the committee.

GORTNEY:

Yes sir. Be happy to do that.

TIDD:

Yes sir.

REED:

On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator Ernst.

ERNST:

Thank you, Senator Reed. And I'm disappointed that our chairman stepped out. We have some wonderful Naval officers here in front of us today. Thank you so much. But Senator Reed, I would have you notice that the senior enlisted advisor to Admiral Tidd is an Army Command Sergeant Major from Iowa. Thank you so much for being with us today, Sergeant Major. And thank you gentlemen for your great service to our nation.

Admiral Tidd, we had a wonderful conversation the other day, and we did talk during our conversation about SOUTHCOM's limited active-duty capabilities due to the prioritization from DOD and in other areas of operation, but I am very proud of the job that our citizen-soldiers do in that area. Our National Guard has done a lot of work in the SOUTHCOM AOR to support U.S. security and to build our partner capabilities in Central and South America.

So whether, as we discussed, it's serving with honor and integrity at Guantanamo Bay or working to end the flow of narcotics into the country or partnering through state partnership programs with many of our allies, our Guard has been vital to SOUTHCOM and to our regional security. So sir, if you could please describe some of the ongoing efforts by the Guard in SOUTHCOM, please.

TIDD:

Absolutely, Senator. And I think it goes without saying we would not be able to execute the lion's share of our missions in the absence of contributions by the National Guard, whether in the form of units rotating through Guantanamo Bay, as has been so effectively accomplished, to state partnership programs that provide a sustained continuity of contact with countries over the years, building their partner capacity, enabling them to do the sorts of jobs and also going to the Army's recently established regionally aligned force prospect that the lion's share of the regionally aligned force to the SOUTHCOM region comes out of the National Guard. So it is -- it's absolutely critical to our ability to execute our mission.

ERNST:

OK, thank you. I appreciate it so much. And we also briefly discussed the activities of Russia, Iran and China in Central and South America. So could you just tell us in this open forum what activities you've seen in that area? That came as a surprise to me.

TIDD:

Thank you, Senator. The -- as we look at the transregional nature of our activities, if you are interested in what Russia is engaged in, you don't just look at the -- at Eastern Europe. If you're interested in what China's engaged in, you don't just look at the South China Sea. Iran, same story. You don't just look at the Middle East.

Russia, which arguably has virtually no strategic interests of note in the southern region is engaged in a direct competition to displace the United States for influence within the region. They are going back in and redeveloping the historical contacts that they had with a number of countries throughout the region, developing weapons sales at extremely low rates, at low costs. And what gives us great concern is they are engaging in a concerted effort to convince partners that the United States is not a reliable ally, that we are withdrawing from the region.

And so essentially any steps that plays into that narrative, that makes it look like the United States does not provide the forces or is shrinking down the presence of the -- of the United States or consolidating, to get at slightly at Senator King's point that consolidating combat commanders simply plays into that false narrative that the United States is not interested in the region.

China, it's largely an economic competition. They're looking for markets and resources. And Iran is a -- is essentially establishing cultural centers and other sorts of activities, but we think at a -- at a higher level of classification we can talk to some of the other activities they're engaged in.

ERNST:

But bottom line up front, you do believe this is something we need to keep an eye on.

TIDD:

They -- if you are concerned about those countries on a global scale, you cannot afford not to be watching what they are engaged in in the SOUTHCOM region.

ERNST:

Thank you very much. Thank you, gentlemen. I'll yield back my time.

REED:

(OFF-MIKE)

HEINRICH

Thank you, Chairman. Admiral Gortney, we've dramatically increased resources for border patrol in recent years, and we need to continue that push. I think the chairman pressed you hard on that issue. But we've often neglected the equally critical role that our Customs and Border Protection officers play in protecting the overall integrity of that border. And your comments really got to that when you mentioned the incredible problem of manufactured heroin in small quantities that are actually moving through our ports of entry.

Should we be resourcing those ports of entry as seriously as we resource the border overall? And for some of our colleagues who don't come from border states, it's just important to remember that we have border patrol agents, the guys in the green uniforms, who are out there all along the border from east to west, and then we have these officers whose job it is to sit at the ports of entry and make sure that we stop any illegal activity, being it moving narcotics, cash, other contraband back and forth across that border.

GORTNEY:

Yes sir, we need to invest for all of them. When I was at the port of entry there in San Diego, I was extremely impressed with the dedication of the patriots that are doing a very, very difficult task. Their motivation, their training, their professionalism, confronting an immense challenge, and anything we can do to increase their capacity and their capability this nation needs to invest in.

HEINRICH

Thank you for your comments on that. And I want to follow up with Admiral Tidd and go back to 2014, when your predecessor, General Kelly, said that he was able to see 75 percent of the cocaine trafficking heading towards the United States, but that they had to, quote, "simply sit and watch it go by," unquote, because of the lack of resources.

Now I know some of that has changed, but we should all find this unacceptable, especially considering that the drug cartels are making on order of \$85 billion a year in annual profits, which is literally what is fueling the violence, the corruption in Central America and driving the refugee crisis that we see.

So Admiral Tidd, how many interdiction assets do you have at your disposal, and what are your requirements?

TIDD:

On a given day, on average, we tend to have between five and six surface ships, those are largely Coast Guard cutters, one to two U.S. Navy platforms. The established requirement in order to interdict at the established target level of 40 percent is up to 21 surface platforms. So it is -- it's a question resources and allocation of resources and priorities across all of the threats the country faces -- is I don't question that. I understand it, I was involved in it, but it is simply a matter of resources.

HEINRICH

And I want to thank you for your work on this front. I asked that question specifically to shine a light on how wide a gap there is between how we have resourced your men and women to do that work and where we would like that to be, which is why I asked you specifically what the requirement is. We're nowhere close. We've gotten better, we need to keep a focus on that and not let that slip.

Let me ask you, too. What percentage of your ISR requirements are being met today?

TIDD:

Overall, approximately 11 percent of the requirement.

HEINRICH

I think that it's a pretty sobering number for all of us as well, Mr. Chair. My time is almost done. I want to switch to Admiral Haney and just ask you a broad question about why you believe the combination of LRSO and LRS B is so important. And my hope is you can also explain the strategic importance of nuclear modernization efforts and the tools that they will provide to combatant commanders like yourself.

HANEY:

Well, to your first the question, it is very important for our nation to have the adequate strategic deterrence and assurance mechanisms, the methodologies and capabilities. From the air leg of our triad, it's very important that our platforms are appropriately armed in order to be credible, and that includes the B-52 aircraft, B- 2s which we will be flying both of those for some time to come as well as the long-range strike bomber stealth aircraft.

Even while we have stealth aircraft, it's important that we have standoff capability. As we watch our adversaries work to have better anti-access area denial kinds of capabilities, we must have standoff in order to manage strategic stability as we should. As a result, I see the long-range strike -- long-range standoff option being critical to all of those platforms all, all three of them.

HEINRICH

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

MCCAIN:

(OFF-MIKE)

TILLIS:

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Gentlemen, I apologize for not being in the hearing. I've got a competing Judiciary hearing I've got to run for a vote.

So Admiral Haney and Admiral Gortney, thank you for being here.

Admiral Tidd, I want to focus a little bit more on your command and a couple of things.

One, I think the 11 percent coverage for a very critical area of the region is important. And I'd like for you to talk -- I know a lot of times we talk about SOUTHCOM and we talk about the work we're doing in Colombia and down in Latin America, drug interdiction.

But you and I have had discussions. One thing I'd like for you to expand on, and it relates to a question that Senator Ernst asked. And it maybe even focused a little bit on Iran's activity and Hezbollah and a number of other things that we're seeing there that are potentially systematically over time going to change the -- the environment in your sphere of influence.

Can you talk a little bit about that?

TIDD:

With -- specifically with regard to Iran, there has been a -- a longstanding presence of Hezbollah, one of the principal surrogates of Iran, in the region. Their activities have largely been involved in

logistics support, providing funds back to Lebanon to Hezbollah itself. But it also is available as a potential to conduct other -- other activities.

It's a -- it's a force in being, obviously, and they watch very closely what -- we watch very closely what they are doing, where they are.

The -- what makes it particularly noteworthy is there are not large implantations within Central and South America of Muslim communities. They tend to be -- to be very small. And so this interest on the part of Iran is in developing partnerships, relationships in order to escape the diplomatic isolation that they've found themselves in over the last decade -- couple of decades.

The -- the greater concern that we're beginning to see now is on the part of Islamist extremist groups. There is now a general recognition throughout the region. In meeting with senior security chiefs from across the Caribbean in particular, but also Central American countries, they recognize the risk of radicalization -- self- radicalization occurring within their countries.

There have already been a number of fighters that have gone over to -- to Iraq and Syria to fight. We have seen indications there have been a number of them that have been killed. I think we all saw the video of the 14-year-old from Trinidad and Tobago that was videotaped engaged in a act of terrorism, executing a Syrian combatant.

So, that is there and the countries are worried about the return flow of those foreign fighters coming back.

TILLIS:

Thank you. And I don't want you to comment because it relates to policy, but, you know, you could make a logical argument that as Iran's economy improves, as money returns back to Iran as a result of the Iran agreement that I opposed, that we could even see more shifting of resources that could accelerate the pace of what they're doing in your area of responsibility.

I think we need to make sure that we're paying attention to it. It's not one that you normally think about when you talk about -- think about the Iran threat.

I want to in my remaining time have you talk about Guantanamo Bay, and not with respect to the detainees. But there's also discussions out there about, you know, maybe we don't need Guantanamo Bay or a presence there at all. Could you give me some sense of what you think the strategic significance of that land mass is with respect to your area of responsibility and our ability to respond in that part of the world?

TIDD:

Senator, the first time I visited Guantanamo Bay was in 1979. We have a significant strategic interest at the Naval Station Guantanamo Bay that will continue long past whenever detention operations end. It is a critical point to support Coast Guard operations and the detection and monitoring mission across the Caribbean basin.

It is absolutely critical to supporting any sort of a migrant crisis that might occur. And in fact, as I know you're aware, there is a very small MILCON request in to do some basic level construction. If we were to have a migrant crisis, we would need to be able to rapidly build up the facilities to deal with up to 10,000 migrants in a 72-hour period, and as many as 45,000 beyond that.

Without that MILCON, right now, we are completely incapable of meeting that timeline should we have to do it. We would need that to be able to have a fighting chance of being able to do it, so that we would not have -- bring that large number of migrants into the United States. So it's -- it is a small down payment that we think is probably a prudent investment to be able to do that.

Guantanamo Bay will remain critical long past the detention operations.

TILLIS:

I think that we just need to underscore that. If you talk about our ability to complete missions, the humanitarian missions alone, in addition to other potential uses, that it would be irresponsible for us to consider any dialogue around not having that continue to be an important asset for us in that part of the country.

Gentlemen, thank you all for your time. I will, because my colleague here almost never misses a hearing, to talk about the 425. I will say that I still share his opinion that that's a very important capability that we have in Alaska. I'm glad that General Milley seems to have taken that position, and I look forward to us coming to the resolution that I think my colleague from Alaska hopes we get to.

Thank you all.

Thank you, Senator.

REED:

Thank you.

On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator Hirono.

HIRONO:

Last but not least.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I thank all of you for your testimony and being here today.

You've been asked a lot of questions, particularly Admiral Gortney, on our missile defense system. And so I'm probably going to want to chat with you further, or perhaps for the record, on whether or not we are in terms of our need to increase our capability to stop the missiles throughout the flight of the missile, whether we're putting our resources in the right proportions with regard to stopping these missiles.

So that, I just wanted to mention that to you as a followup later.

Admiral Haney, cyber has become a significant part of the DOD establishment. And the Army and the Air Force have laid out requirements and started establishing cyber protection teams and units around the country, with many of them in the National Guard units.

I wanted to ask: How is this process working? And what is your forecast for when future units will be established to meet these requirements? And I note that in Hawaii, we have everything that is going on in the Asia-Pacific region, and we're the home of PACOM, NSA Hawaii, much of our defense infrastructure in the Pacific. So I would certainly like to have you keep Hawaii in mind as you move forward with these cyber protection units.

Can you talk a little bit about how things are going?

HANEY:

Senator Hirono, the -- this initiative of using Guard units to also augment our active duty units I think is critical for our future. This was a start. Clearly, the National Guard gets a vote in terms of how we continue to progress in this regard.

HANEY:

As you know, the threats to our nation and our international community of nations is pretty high regarding how actors, both non-state and state actors, are applying (inaudible) in terms of working against us in the cyber domain critical to our critical infrastructure, critical to how we fight as a military and what have you.

So quite frankly, we continue to grow. I'm proud of the cyber protection teams I as the combatant commander have gotten to work with, and I know as I've talked to other combatant commands, including the two to my left, we appreciate the work that they are able to do. We're still growing these teams. We don't have them all at the right level yet. So more to follow.

HIRONO:

And of course, once you develop the teams, we must be ever flexible because they -- what happens in the cyber arena is constantly changing. So in terms of the timeframe for these future units, at least be put in place, what is your timeframe? Are we talking about two more years?

HANEY:

I'd have to take that question for the record, Senator. I don't have that. I know there's work going, we've just gotten started. And in terms of how we will continue to build for the future, more to follow.

HIRONO:

Thank you very much. Admiral Tidd, regional epidemics like the Zika virus are concerning and threatening the well-being of our citizens. And one case of the Zika virus was reported this year so far in Hawaii, and four were also reported in 2015 and 2014. Can you describe the role that SOUTHCOM has in dealing with epidemics such as these?

TIDD:

Yes, Senator. The -- as a result of the initial Ebola outbreak, a large interagency network was put together, and SOUTHCOM was a key participant in that. And that was re-energized with the outbreak of Zika that we're saying. We remain postured to be able to respond to requests for assistance from our partner nations in SOUTHCOM. We have put out specific guidance to the men and women, part of our command who are operating down in that region.

Those -- the policies that affect them, the protective measures are largely exactly the same protective measures that have been in place to protect them from exposure to dengue fever, to the chikungunya and other mosquito borne illnesses. And so we continue to emphasize that.

To date, we've had only two of our military personnel, two males, who have been diagnosed and confirmed to have had Zika. They've recovered and returned to duty. We've had one family member, a pregnant female family member, who has taken advantage of a -- of a policy to return to the United States. The family had been scheduled to return already, and it was a slightly accelerated return on her part. But we're working with the countries, primarily in training in the mosquito eradication programs. Their militaries obviously are very heavily engaged in those activities, and so that's where we stand right now.

We have a Navy medical unit down in Peru that has been doing a lot of work in the experimental development of vaccines and that type of work and also in the -- in the detection.

HIRONO:

Thank you very much. And especially for places such as Hawaii with so much tourist traffic from areas that have had these outbreaks, it is really important. So thank you very much for your efforts.

TIDD:

Thank you, Senator.

HIRONO:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REED:

On behalf of Chairman McCain, Senator Graham, please.

GRAHAM:

Thank you all, Admiral; I can say that to everybody. The Navy is doing well with these commands. Have any of you served in Iraq or Afghanistan? Admiral Gortney and Admiral Tidd. While there, did you serve with American Muslims in uniform?

GORTNEY:

Yes sir. I did.

TIDD:

Yes sir.

GRAHAM:

What is your view of the service of those who are Muslim in the U.S. military?

GORTNEY:

They're patriots who serve their nation.

TIDD:

Concur.

GRAHAM:

Do you agree that we're in a war between radical Islam and the world at large?

GORTNEY:

Yes sir, and it's a generational war.

GRAHAM:

And the biggest victims of radical Islam are people within the faith who will not bend to their will? Other Muslims?

GORTNEY:

I'd have to say they're a threat to both inside and outside the faith.

GRAHAM:

But when you add up the numbers of people killed, there's more Muslims than anybody else.

GORTNEY:

That's correct.

GRAHAM:

Do you believe it's in our national security interests to help those in the faith who would fight back against radical Islam?

GORTNEY:

Yes sir, I would.

TIDD:

Yes sir.

GRAHAM:

Thank you. So I just want to be on the record here that to those 3,500 plus or minus American Muslims serving in uniform, I appreciate your service, that of your family and I respect your faith.

Admiral Gortney, in the next decade, if nothing changes in North Korea and potentially Iran, are we going to face more threats from a missile launch against the United States by a rogue nation or less?

GORTNEY:

A greater threat, sir.

GRAHAM:

OK. If we go back to sequestration, do we compromise your ability to deal with that threat?

GORTNEY:

I believe it would, sir.

GRAHAM:

Admiral Tidd, over the next decade, do you see more instability in the region in Southern Command or less?

TIDD:

I see no less. I see no less.

GRAHAM:

OK. How many ships are you supposed to have?

TIDD:

Senator, if I were to accomplish the goal of 40 percent interdiction, I would require 21 ships.

GRAHAM:

How many do you have?

TIDD:

On average about six to seven.

GRAHAM:

So to get to where you need to go, you need more ships.

TIDD:

Correct.

GRAHAM:

How many Navy ships do you have available to you?

TIDD:

On average, one to two.

GRAHAM:

And the rest are Coast Guard.

TIDD:

They are. Yes sir.

GRAHAM:

So in Southern Command, the United States Navy is able to generate two ships?

TIDD:

In -- because of the demand for surface platforms in other theaters that are a higher priority, yes sir. That's correct.

GRAHAM:

So if we sent you more ships, it wouldn't be a waste of money would it?

TIDD:

Senator, it would come at the expense of other higher priority theaters.

GRAHAM:

But if we had a larger budget, it would make sense to build more Navy ships at least from your command's point of view?

TIDD:

Sir, I would never turn down additional ships.

GRAHAM:

And when you say you need 17 -- what number did you say?

TIDD:

Twenty one.

GRAHAM:

Twenty one. I'm sure somebody just didn't make that up, that was...

TIDD:

No sir. There is a fairly lengthy study that went into derive that requirement.

GRAHAM:

And that 40 percent interdiction is drugs and other contraband coming to the country?

TIDD:

That's correct.

GRAHAM:

So if we got a drug problem here we're not been much to stop it because we're certainly underresourcing you, would you agree with that?

TIDD:

I would.

GRAHAM:

So it's one thing to build a wall, which makes sense to me, but it also seems like we should build up the Navy to interdict the flow of drugs and other contraband into our country. So if we go back to sequestration, the chance of you getting more ships goes down, not up. Is that correct?

TIDD:

Senator, we're still suffering from the hangover from the last sequestration. Ships that had delayed maintenance, aircraft that had delayed maintenance. Those ships are not available now to be able to operate in our theater. Any future sequestration would be catastrophic.

GRAHAM:

Admiral Haney, in your -- in your lane, what's the effect of going back to sequestration from your point of view?

HANEY:

My point of view, going back to sequestration would be crippling in that it would put significant risk of these programs that we need for our joint military force as a whole and particularly these long-term programs that are associated with my mission space.

GRAHAM:

Thank you all for your service.

REED:

Thank you, Senator Graham. On behalf of Chairman McCain, thank you, gentlemen, for your testimony and for your service. And the hearing is adjourned.