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IRAQ: THE U.S. RESPONSE

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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TERRORIST MARCH IN IRAQ: THE U.S. RESPONSE

WEDNESDAY, JULY 23, 2014

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:18 a.m., in room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Edward Royce (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Chairman ROYCE. This hearing will come to order. This morning we consider the U.S. response to the terrorist takeover in Iraq.

Nearly 6 months ago, the committee held a hearing. The title of that hearing was "Al-Qaeda's Resurgence in Iraq: A Threat to U.S. Interests." Then, the administration testified at that hearing that ISIS had begun to shift resources from Syria to Iraq in early 2013. That it had tripled its suicide attacks in that year and that it planned to challenge the Iraqi Government for control of western Iraq and Baghdad. That is what we heard 6 months ago.

The administration testified that it had become aware that ISIS had established armed camps, staging areas and training ground in Iraq's western desert in the summer of 2013, and that ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi had again threatened to attack the United States of America. The administration told us that ISIS must be, in their words, "constantly pressured, and their safe havens destroyed," and that its objective was "to ensure that ISIS can never again gain safe haven in western Iraq." However, what the administration did not say was that the Iraqi Government had been urgently requesting drone strikes against ISIS camps since August 2013. That there had been the opportunity to use drone strikes on those camps, both in eastern Syria before they came over the border and to use drone strikes as their units moved across the desert. And as you know, drones can hone in and can see what is going on on the ground, can see these units traverse from city to city. These repeated requests unfortunately were turned down. I added my voice for drone strikes as ISIS convoys raced across those deserts from city to city.

Since that last hearing, ISIS has done over those 6 months precisely what the administration predicted it would. It has taken over most of western Iraq. It has turned its sights on Baghdad and it may be preparing to launch attacks against the U.S. But again, no drone strikes against those columns. Never has a terrorist organization itself controlled such a large resource-rich safe haven as ISIS does today. Never has a terrorist organization possessed the

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heavy weaponry, the cash, the personnel that ISIS does today, which includes thousands of Western passport holders.

The Iraqi population is terrorized. They have suffered mass executions and harsh sharia law. Last week, the remaining members of the ancient Christian community in Mosul fled on foot in face of ISIS' demand that they convert or face death.

To be clear, ISIS' takeover has been aided by Prime Minister Maliki's malfeasance and incompetence. Maliki has disastrously failed to reconcile with key Sunni groups. Many, including myself and Ranking Member Engel, urged him to form an inclusive government—and this was quite some time ago and on several occasions—so that ISIS could not exploit legitimate Sunni grievances. Maliki has only proven himself to be a committed sectarian, certainly no statesman. It is time for Iraqis to move forward in forming a government that serves the interests of all Iraqis.

What started as a crisis in Syria has become a regional disaster with serious global implications, including credible threats of international terrorism, humanitarian disaster, and upward pressure on energy prices in a fragile global economy. Meanwhile, terrorist forces and the Iranian Government are gaining power at the expense of regional security and power at the expense of friendly governments.

Of course only Iraqis can control their future. Only they can make the decision to replace Maliki. And the performance of the battlefield of certain Iraqi units was abysmal. That is to be expected when you put your son in charge and sack the officer corps and replace them with cronies.

Americans have spent enough blood and treasure in Iraq, and that is exactly why the administration should have taken the opportunity to inflict decisive damage on ISIS from the air through drone strikes while its fighters were encamped in the desert months ago.

This morning we are joined by a senior State Department official who has been in Baghdad for several weeks, and an official from the Department of Defense involved in the current assessment of Iraqi security forces, to learn of the path forward in dealing with this national security emergency.

And I will now turn to our ranking member, Mr. Engel of New York, for any opening comments.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this important hearing about the latest developments in Iraq. In recent months, a path of violence and chaos has burned across the Middle East. The unrest has left thousands of dead in its wake and driven tens of thousands from their homes. A civil war in Syria has spilled across the border and now Iraq teeters on the brink.

Since December, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, ISIL or ISIS, has marched across Iraq with lethal efficiency. Fallujah, Ramadi and Mosul have fallen under their control. Hundreds of Iraqi soldiers have been killed or have laid down their weapons and the military equipment they left behind. Some even supplied by the United States is now in the hands of these fanatics.

The border between Iraq and Syria is gone, ISIS is advancing toward the Jordanian border, and ISIS' leaders have declared an Islamic caliphate, promising to rule with a brand of barbarism out

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of the darkest chapters in human history. ISIS is an existential threat to our allies in the region and it is a threat to the United States. We have seen this story before and we know how it ends.

When Russia withdrew from Afghanistan in the late 1980s that country was allowed to become a no man's land. Violent extremists found a safe haven in which to strengthen their ranks, train their recruits, and plan attacks on the United States and our allies. We cannot allow Iraq to follow the same path to become another safe haven from which another September 11th could be launched.

So how are we going to meet the challenge? In my mind, we need to use all the tools at our disposal because in the end there is no military solution to this problem. We need to see real political changes in Iraq, more inclusive policies, and a greater effort to avoid sectarian conflict. I have real doubts that Prime Minister Maliki can lead Iraq into this new era. In fact, Maliki must go and the sooner the better.

I have real concerns about Iran's support for the Iraqi regime. Even if the United States and Iran seem to share a mutual concern over ISIS, I don't see how Iranian and American goals can be aligned either in the short term or the long term. I don't think the U.S. should deal with Iran in this regard. We also need to bear in mind that this is not solely an Iraqi problem. While ISIS grew out of al-Qaeda in Iraq, ISIS grew in strength and numbers while fighting in Syria.

ISIS is a regional problem. This is a spillover from the Syrian civil war and fighting ISIS will require a regional solution. The right time to train and equip the moderate Syrian opposition was well over a year ago. That is when I introduced the Free Syria Act. It would have assisted moderate rebels to fight against both the Assad regime and the extremist elements of the opposition, like ISIS.

I am glad that a few weeks ago the administration announced its support for a $500 million training and equipment program for the moderate Syrian opposition. But we waited so long, and by now ISIS has gained so much territory and momentum they are far more difficult to stop than they were 1 year, 1½ years or 2 years ago.

I cannot help but wonder what would have happened if we had committed to empowering the moderate Syrian opposition last year. Would ISIS have grown as it did? Would the opposition have been able to apply enough pressure to Assad to compel him to a diplomatic transition? And by the way, we passed a bill of the House yesterday, unanimously, slapping sanctions on Hezbollah. Hezbollah has moved in as a puppet of Iran and they have moved into Syria on the side of Assad and have helped tip the balance in Assad's favor.

The hypotheticals and the what-ifs break my heart, because even if do the right thing now it will mean small consolation to the orphan child, the grieving mother or the family in a refugee camp in Syria. I supported the President's decision to send assessment teams to Iraq, but I am cautious about future action. We cannot end up in another sectarian quagmire in Iraq.

And so I am interested in learning about the administration's vision for how to meet this challenge. I am grateful to our witnesses

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for testifying today and for consulting with Congress about our next steps. We must be partners in moving forward as we determine what the U.S.'s role should be in Iraq and that Congress must play an important role.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you, Mr. Engel. We go now for a minute to Ms. Ros-Lehtinen of Florida, chairman of the Middle East and North Africa Subcommittee.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. Today's hearing is on the terrorist march in Iraq. This is not something new or something that caught us unaware. This will be the second time that this committee has had Mr. McGurk testify on the deteriorating situation in Iraq since February.

Sadly, it is clear that the situation went from worse to just about as bad as it can get, and I am interested in hearing how the administration has adjusted its policies since then. Because the three steps that he outlined for us last time—pressing the government to develop a holistic policy that would isolate the extremists; supporting the Iraqi security forces through accelerated military assistance and information and intelligence sharing; and mobilizing the Sunni population against ISIL have all failed to stop ISIL and the near collapse of Iraq.

ISIL continues to advance its cause of an Islamic State that runs from Baghdad to Lebanon, and where Christians especially are being targeted; either fleeing, forced to convert or be killed. We have been woefully inadequate in our response to this crisis. This committee has repeatedly called on the administration to do more, to get more engaged and to be decisive, because it has been paralyzed by inaction. The threat of ISIL is very real and imminent for Iraq and the region, and it won't go away by just wishing it away.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you. We now go to Mr. Ted Deutch of Florida, ranking member of the Middle East and North Africa Subcommittee.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Chairman Royce and Ranking Member Engel, for holding today's critical hearing, and to our witnesses for appearing today on behalf of the administration. Deputy Assistant Secretary McGurk, I know that you have just returned from several weeks in Iraq, and I hope that you will be able to provide us with an update on efforts to encourage political reconciliation.

The violence perpetrated by ISIL in its quest to establish an Islamic caliphate in Syria and Iraq is terrorizing these nations and according to the U.N., over 1,500 people were killed in the month of June in Iraq. And the news of this weekend's horrific persecution of Christians in Mosul adds another layer to this sectarian conflict.

With financial independence, ISIL answers to no one. Having been disavowed even by al-Qaeda, it is hard to imagine a terrorist organization being so vile that the vile al-Qaeda doesn't want to be associated with it. But as ISIL continues its march toward Baghdad, how confident are we that the Shiite stronghold can withstand repeated attacks? What are the regional players doing to influence the outcome of current events, and what are we doing to ensure the stability of our regional partners?

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I would also hope that you will address what more we can or should do to convince Prime Minister Maliki that ISIL can't be defeated without some sort of reconciliation process that reverses his attempts to marginalize Sunnis. Is he willing to do that? Will he ever be willing to do that and how does this proceed if he doesn't? And I will look forward to the testimony from both of you, and I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROYCE. We now go to Mr. Ted Deutch of Texas, chairman of the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade.

Mr. POE. Well, he is not the chairman yet, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROYCE. Ted Poe. Excuse me.

Mr. DEUTCH. I much prefer Florida also, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ISIL is blitzkrieging across the north of Iraq and it has its sights set on Baghdad. ISIL is made up of a bunch of bad outlaws, and in a hearing I held on this issue last week, our witnesses were unanimous in the belief that Prime Minister Maliki just cannot lead Iraq out of this crisis. He needs to go, the sooner the better. Also the Iranian influence needs to end in the Iraqi Government.

The United States should not strengthen Maliki's hand by providing unconditional military assistance. That is not the answer. I want to know what the administration's strategic plan is to prevent the rise of ISIL. What is the plan, if any? Mending badly damaged relations with the Saudis and the Jordanians would be a good place to start.

And finally, the MEK are still held hostage in Iraq. I want to know why we have so far failed to settle them in third countries including our own. While the U.S. has dithered, people in Liberty and Ashraf have been murdered. I yield back.

Chairman ROYCE. We will go to Brad Sherman from California, ranking member of the Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade Subcommittee.

Mr. SHERMAN. We see emerging from Beirut to Basra an infertile crescent where militias loyal to ethnic or religious groups are more powerful than governments, where there is warfare, and even when there is peace it is an unstable peace with militias in real control no matter what the map says about nation states. It is a three-way contest at least between the moderate Sunni, the Shiite alliance and extremist Sunni.

I believe that the Shiite alliance led by Iran is the greater threat to the United States. This does not mean that we should not seek to weaken ISIS. Maliki is not a good guy just because we installed him. His approach to governing is as responsible as any other factor for ISIS' emergence, and in the absence of ISIS pressure he would not have changed at all. Now we need a new Prime Miniser in Iraq. A distant second best would be some sort of radically changed Maliki platform.

Maliki allows his airspace to be used for planes flying to Syria from Iran carrying weapons and thugs. He has been increasingly dependent on Iran. We do not want to be his air force. We do not want to see ISIS expand. We have got a tough problem.

Chairman ROYCE. Indeed. We are joined this morning by the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Iraq and Iran, Mr. Brett McGurk,

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and the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, Ms. Elissa Slotkin.

Ms. SLOTKIN. It is Elissa Slotkin.

Chairman ROYCE. Elissa Slotkin.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Thank you.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you, Elissa.

Prior to his current assignment, Mr. McGurk served as a special advisor to the National Security Staff and a senior advisor to Ambassadors Ryan Crocker, Christopher Hill, and James Jeffrey in Baghdad. He also served as a lead negotiator and coordinator during bilateral talks with the Iraqi Government in 2008.

Since July 2013, Elissa Slotkin has been performing the duties of the Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. Previously, Ms. Slotkin worked at the State Department on Iraq policy and served on the National Security Council Staff as director of Iraq.

Without objection, the witnesses' full prepared statements will be made part of the record. Members will have 5 calendar days to submit statements or questions or any extraneous materials that they wish to put into the record. And Mr. McGurk, if you would please summarize your remarks, we will have you testify first.

STATEMENT OF MR. BRETT MCGURK, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR IRAQ AND IRAN, BUREAU OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. MCGURK. Thank you. Good morning, Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Engel, and members of this committee. I want to thank you for inviting me to discuss the situation in Iraq with a focus on the U.S. response since the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL, attacked Mosul nearly 7 weeks ago.

Let me first review the bidding on why this matters, as this committee well knows. ISIL is al-Qaeda. It may have changed its name, it may have broken with senior al-Qaeda leadership such as Ayman al-Zawahiri, but it is al-Qaeda in its doctrine, ambition, and increasingly, in its threat to U.S. interests. In fact, it is worse than al-Qaeda. Should there be any question about the intentions of this group, simply read what its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi says. And it is important to pay attention to what he says because we cannot risk underestimating the goals, capacity, and reach of this organization.

Baghdadi, in May 2011, eulogized the death of Osama bin Laden and promised a violent response. ISIL training camps in Syria are named after Osama bin Laden. In his audio statements, Baghdadi regularly issues veiled threats against the United States promising a direct confrontation. And in his feud with al-Zawahiri, Baghdadi clearly is seeking to lead the global jihad.

Additionally, ISIL is no longer simply a terrorist organization. It is now a full-blown army seeking to establish a self-governing state through the Tigris and Euphrates valley in what is now Syria and Iraq. It now controls much of eastern Syria. In January, in Iraq it moved into Anbar Province taking control of Fallujah, and, on June 10th, it moved on Mosul.

I arrived in Erbil, about 80 kilometers east of Mosul, on June 7th, and I will begin there. In meetings with local officials from

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Mosul and with Kurdish officials on June 7th, we received early indications that ISIL was moving in force from Syria into Iraq and staging forces in western Mosul. We immediately asked and received permission from Kurdish leaders to deploy peshmerga forces in the eastern side of the city, but the government of Baghdad did not share the same sense of urgency, and did not approve the deployments.

Iraqi military commanders promised to send nine brigades of force to Mosul in response to our warnings, and we stressed, however, that the forces would not arrive in time. On June 9th, the situation remained extremely tense, and we continued to urge the immediate deployment of additional security forces to protect against an ISIL attack from west to east.

In the early morning of June 10th, ISIL launched a complex suicide bomb attack across a strategic bridge and poured forces into the eastern part of the city. Iraqi resistance totally collapsed, which led to a panic and a snowballing effect southward through the Tigris valley and through the cities of Tikrit, Samarra and into Balad.

The result was catastrophic. Five Iraqi divisions nearly dissolved, and the approaches to Baghdad were immediately under threat. I flew to Baghdad first thing that morning with a focus on ensuring that our people were safe, and that the northern approaches to the city of Baghdad were bolstered. My written testimony sets forth in detail the critical elements of our immediate crisis response.

We first made certain that our people would be safe, including contractors working on bases outside of Baghdad who were evacuated with the help of the Iraqi air force. At the Embassy and the airport we rebalanced staff to manage the crisis, and brought in additional Department of Defense resources to ensure the security of our facilities.

In parallel, importantly, and at the President's direction, we worked to urgently to improve our intelligence picture throughout western and north central Iraq, surging surveillance flights from one per month to nearly 50 per day; establishing joint operations centers and deploying special operations forces to assess Iraqi units particularly around the capital of Baghdad. These intelligence and security initiatives were undertaken in parallel with regional diplomacy led by Secretary Kerry to better focus attention on this serious threat.

We finally sought to stabilize the Iraqi political process, recognizing that this attack took place at the most vulnerable moment in that process following national elections that were held on April 30th in which nearly 14 million Iraqis voted, but before the formation of a new government. This process of forming a new government remains extremely challenging but it now has some traction.

A new speaker of Parliament was chosen last week, overwhelmingly with the support of all major communities in Iraq, and Iraqis are now proceeding along the constitutional timeline to choose a new President and Prime Miniser. The current situation in Iraq remains extremely, extremely serious.

ISIL remains in control of Mosul and it is targeting all Iraqis—Sunni, Shia, Christian, Kurds, Turkmen, Yazidis, Shabaks and everybody who disagrees with its twisted vision of a 7th century ca-

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liphate. It is also joined in an unholy alliance with militant wing of the former Ba'ath Party known as the Naqshbandi network, and with some former insurgent groups such as the Islamic Army of Iraq.

Going forward, the Iraqis, with our support, must seek to split the latter groups from ISIL and isolate ISIL from other hardcore militant groups from the population. The platforms that we have established through the immediate crisis response are now providing additional information to inform the President and our national security team as we develop options to further protect our interests in Iraq.

Any future decisions in this regard will be made in full consultations with this committee and the Congress. Any efforts we are to take, moreover, must be in conjunction with Iraqi efforts to isolate ISIL from the population. This is because, while we have a very serious counterterrorism challenge in Iraq, Iraq has a very serious counterinsurgency challenge and the two are inextricably linked.

Based on my last 7 weeks on the ground in Iraq, there is now a clear recognition by Iraqis from all communities that substantial reforms must be undertaken and undertaken urgently. This will require the formation of a new government together with the restructuring of the security services.

The emerging consensus in Iraq, which we can fully support, is a functioning federalism consisting with Iraq's Constitution, adaptive to the new realities on the ground, and based on the following five principles. First, local citizens must be in the lead in securing local areas. Second, local citizens defending their communities, however, must be provided full state benefits and resources, perhaps modeled along the lines of a national guard type force structure to secure provincial areas, and areas in which ISIL is seeking to gain further footholds.

Third, the Iraqi army should focus on Federal functions such as protecting international borders and rarely deploy inside cities. It should however provide overwatch support for local forces where they confront ISIL, which is able to overmatch tribal forces in areas such as Ninewah and Anbar Province. Fourth, there must be close cooperation between local, regional, and national security services to gradually reduce operational space for ISIL, particularly in Ninewah Province.

And finally, the Federal Government, through its new Parliament and a new cabinet, which will be established, must work diligently on a package of reforms to address legitimate grievances from all communities, and ensure adequate resources to restructure security services. These five principles could begin to address many of the core grievances in the Sunni majority areas of Iraq while also, importantly, denying space for ISIL to operate and thereby protect the Shia majority and other vulnerable groups from ISIL attacks.

Restoring stability and degrading ISIL will require smart, integrated central or regional, and provincial approaches led by a new Iraqi Government with an appropriate level of support and assistance. I can report that Iraqi leaders from all communities have asked for this assistance in implementing such a program, and General Austin, commander of CENTCOM, will be in Iraq tomor-

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row to further assess the situation, and discuss concrete ways in which our assistance might be effective.

This model of a functioning federalism is achievable and is essential if we hope to deny space for ISIL within the borders of Iraq. I look forward to discussing more details in the answers of your questions, and once again I want to thank this committee for allowing me the opportunity to address you here today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. McGurk follows:]

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Statement for the Record:
Deputy Assistant Secretary Brett McGurk

House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing:
Terrorist March in Iraq: the U.S. Response

23 July 2014

Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Engel, and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to discuss the U.S. response to the crisis in Iraq. I just returned from Iraq after spending the past seven weeks in Baghdad and Erbil helping to manage our crisis response with Ambassador Beecroft and our diplomatic and military team on the ground, which is serving with courage and dedication. We were assisted by the tireless efforts of Secretary Kerry, including a visit to Iraq at a critical moment, and the entire national security team, including the daily attention of the President and Vice President.

My testimony today will provide a first-hand account of the U.S. response In Iraq to date, and the foundations we are building to protect U.S. interests over the months ahead.

I. The Fall of Mosul

I arrived in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Region, on June 7, three days before Mosul fell to militants led by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). We had been concerned about Mosul for the past year, as it had become the primary financial hub for ISIL, generating nearly $12 million per month in revenues through extortion and smuggling rackets. From all of our contacts in Mosul, including Iraqi security and local officials, the city by day would appear normal, but at night, ISIL controlled the streets.[1]

One of my first meetings in Erbil on the morning of June 8th was with the Governor of Ninewa province, Atheel Nujaifi. His news was alarming. Over the past 72 hours, he told me, hundreds of ISIL gun trucks, carrying fighters and heavy weapons, had crossed the Iraq-Syria border near the town of Rabiya, then passed north of Tal Afar, before staging on the outskirts of west Mosul. The Iraqi Army agreed to provide assistance to Mosul, but Iraqi commanders did not seem to appreciate the urgency of the situation, and stated that reinforcements might not arrive for a week.

We checked this information with sources in western Ninewa near the Syrian border crossings, and confirmed that ISIL appeared to be coming across in force. We also met immediately with Karim Sinjari, the Minister of Interior of the Kurdistan Regional

[1] For additional background on ISIL, its operations in Iraq, and the vital threat posed to U.S. interests, please refer to my February 5, 2014, testimony before this Committee, entitled, "Threat Posed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant" (http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA00/20140205/101716/HHRG-113-FA00-Wstate-McGurkB-20140205.pdf).

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Government (KRG), who confirmed with real-time information that neighborhoods in western Mosul were under immediate threat, as well as reports from the border regions about a steady stream of ISIL reinforcements crossing into Iraq from Syria. During this meeting, Minister Sinjari spoke to President Masoud Barzani and received authorization to deploy Kurdish Peshmerga units into eastern Mosul to help reinforce Iraqi forces and deter any ISIL advance east across the Tigris. He said the Peshmerga were ready to help, but under the constitution, first required authority from the Government of Iraq.

We sent an immediate and urgent message to Baghdad, including to the acting Minister of Defense, and directly to Prime Minister Maliki through his Chief of Staff. They responded that the situation was under control, and that nine Iraqi army brigades would soon be relocated to Mosul. We questioned that information, and encouraged Baghdad to request assistance from Peshmerga forces immediately, as the Peshmerga was able to reinforce the city rapidly, and there was precedent for their helping to protect Mosul, including many years ago against ISIL's earlier incarnation, al Qaida in Iraq (AQI). The Minister of Defense ultimately agreed, but the Prime Minister asked for a confirmation from Erbil that any deployed Peshmerga units would withdraw after army units arrived.

On June 9th, the situation remained static, and the Government in Iraq expressed confidence that Mosul was not under a serious threat. Throughout the day, however, Mosul's western-most neighborhoods began to fall to ISIL. Its fighters began attacking checkpoints and killing resisters, seeking to establish psychological dominance over Iraqi security units in the city. Together with the United Nations team in Baghdad, we worked to help establish a mechanism whereby Peshmerga units would be authorized to reinforce the eastern half of the city pending the arrival of Iraqi units from the south, and then withdraw after the situation stabilized. Baghdad asked to further review the proposal.

In the early morning hours of June 10, ISIL detonated a suicide truck bomb at a checkpoint across a strategic bridge and began to flow forces into the eastern side of the city. The next few hours would prove fateful. Iraqi units abandoned their posts, and ISIL swept through the city, seizing control of the provincial council building, the airport, and then, ultimately, Iraqi military bases. Nearly 500,000 – out of a total population of 2 million Iraqis – fled, seeking refuge in Kurdish-controlled areas. Around 3 a.m., we received distressed messages from Iraqi officials in Baghdad, requesting the Kurdish Peshmerga to move into Mosul as soon as possible. The Iraqi request came too late.

The fall of Iraq's second largest city to ISIL was combined with a social media campaign indicating that ISIL columns would soon be heading down the Tigris River Valley to Baghdad with no mercy for anyone who resisted. The result was a devastating collapse of the Iraqi Security Forces from Mosul to Tikrit. Nearly five Iraqi Army and Federal Police divisions (out of 18 total) would disintegrate over the next 48 hours. This snowballing effect immediately threatened Baghdad, with serious concern that Iraqi forces guarding its northern approaches might also collapse.

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Over the next three days, in meetings with our embassy team and videoconferences with President Obama and the National Security Council, we immediately prepared and executed our crisis response. We also worked closely with Iraqi officials to organize the defenses of Baghdad and restore some of the confidence that had been battered.

II. U.S. Response

Our response to the immediate crisis proceeded along three parallel tracks. First, and most importantly, we worked to ensure the security of our own personnel and facilities. Second, in parallel, we both relocated and surged U.S. diplomatic, intelligence, and military resources to develop strategic options for the President with real-time and accurate information. Third, we worked with Iraqi officials to strengthen their defenses of strategic locations, and set the political process on track, with a focus on forming a new government following national elections.

The key elements of this response plan included the following eight steps, which, taken as a whole, encompassed security, intelligence, political, and diplomatic measures:

1) Ensuring the Safety of U.S. Personnel and U.S. Citizens

Our first priority was ensuring the safety of U.S. personnel. This required relocating some personnel and adding additional security capabilities at the embassy compound and the airport. Additionally, there were a number of American contractors at Balad Air Base working on Foreign Military Sales (FMS) cases. Reports from near Balad, which later proved false, suggested the base faced an imminent ISIL attack. After the contractors encountered delays securing their own charter aircraft, the Iraqi Air Force helped evacuate nearly 500 U.S. citizens and third-country nationals on June 14 aboard Iraqi C-130 aircraft. All contractors left safely, and we are grateful to the Iraqi Government and its pilots, most of whom we trained, for their assistance during this crisis period, particularly given their own competing demands.[2]

At the same time, we took extraordinary measures to ensure the safety of our Baghdad-based personnel. The entire National Security Council team, from the President on down, focused intensively to deploy Department of Defense security assets from elsewhere in the region while the Country Team worked intensively with Washington to relocate some personnel to safer areas. Within 72 hours we brought significant defensive capacity into our facilities and rebalanced staff to help manage

[2] This cooperation is one of many examples of why it remains a vital interest for the United States to maintain our relationships with the Iraqi Security Forces, whether through our foreign military sales programs or training and advisory missions. The Iraqi Security Forces today face an existential threat, yet the quality of units varies widely from the highly proficient and professional to the incompetent and corrupt. The Iraqis recognize the serious work they must do to further professionalize the force, and they have asked for our assistance. It is in our interest to provide such assistance where we assess it can be effective, both to help confront the immediate crisis more effectively, and to build the long-term partnerships that are essential to maintaining strategic influence.

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the crisis. These early moves proved essential to ensuring that U.S. diplomats could continue to do their jobs and protect U.S. interests.

Today, even as the immediate crisis has passed, we are constantly reviewing our footprint to ensure the safety and security of our personnel and facilities.

2) Improving Intelligence Picture on ISIL

Another immediate need was to get a better intelligence picture. From Erbil, even before Mosul fell, I was in touch with General Austin who recognized the urgency of the situation and prepared to deploy additional intelligence assets. In the earliest days, however, when asked about the situation, we had to acknowledge that we were operating in a fog. Rumors of ISIL convoys approaching Baghdad could not be discounted and there were tense moments as we sought to separate rumor and propaganda from fact without immediate eyes-on-the-ground. Today, this fog has lifted – quite dramatically – thanks to immediate decisions taken by the President.

In response to these early developments, we dedicated a substantial amount of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets to fly over Iraq. These missions have enhanced our intelligence picture and provided critical information to Iraqi forces defending strategic locations, while at the same time helping to establish a foundation from which the President can assess the merit of additional measures.

3) Assessing the Capabilities of the Iraqi Security Forces

In the early hours of the crisis, we worked quickly to reverse the collapsing morale of Iraqi Security Forces, reconstitute key units, and ensure the units deployed around Baghdad could adequately defend the capital. Our sight picture was imprecise, and the prerequisite to concrete action was acquiring a first-hand, eyes-on accounting of the situation. In my meetings with Iraqi officials, they said they would welcome U.S. Special Operations Forces to assess Iraqi force capabilities.

The President authorized the deployment of six Special Operations Forces "assessment teams" to augment efforts that were previously underway through our Office of Security Cooperation. These teams have recently completed an initial, two-week assessment of Iraqi units in and around the greater Baghdad area, examining each unit's capabilities and potential for a closer U.S. partnership. This mission has already provided greater visibility into the situation on the ground, and will help the national security team calibrate additional and tailored measures.

The Department of Defense is currently reviewing this comprehensive assessment, which, as the President has said, is designed help determine "how we can best train, advise, and support Iraqi security forces going forward."

4) Establishing Joint Operations Centers in Baghdad and Erbil

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To harness an improving intelligence picture, we have stood up two combined Joint Operations Centers (JOCs) in Baghdad and Erbil. These JOCs help ensure a constant 24/7 flow of real-time intelligence information from across Iraq. We are now able to coordinate closely with Iraqi Security Forces, the Ministry of Defense, and the Baghdad Operations Center (BOC).

The Baghdad JOC is fully functional and has dramatically improved our ability to understand and assess the situation on the ground. I visited the JOC shortly before departing Baghdad last week, and it is an impressive operation, which began from scratch only six weeks ago. Most of our military personnel operating the facility have extensive experience and relationships inside Iraq. They report that their Iraqi counterparts have fully embraced our assistance and are asking for more, hoping that the United States will serve as their essential partner in the fight against ISIL.

The Government of Iraq has also made some welcome decisions in recent weeks to improve this bilateral coordination, including appointment of new commanders, many with longstanding ties and relationships with their U.S. military counterparts.

5) Positioning U.S. Military Assets in the Region

In the immediate wake of the crisis, the Department of Defense reinforced assets in the region to prepare for multiple contingencies, including the possibility of targeted and precise military action against targets associated with ISIL. On June 16, Secretary Hagel ordered the USS Mesa Verde, carrying a complement of MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft, into the Gulf. Its presence added to that of other U.S. naval ships in the Gulf – including the aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush, a cruiser, and three destroyers. These assets will provide our senior leaders with additional options in the event military action is deemed necessary to protect U.S. interests as the situation develops. They also complement the substantial defensive capabilities now on the ground to ensure the safety and security of our personnel and facilities.

6) Getting the Political Process on Track

ISIL attacked Mosul at a time of extreme political volatility. On April 30, two months before the crisis, Iraq conducted credible national elections, in which 62 percent of Iraq's eligible voters participated. This high turnout included Ninewa, where Mosul is the capital, with nearly 1.1 million voters turning out (54.4 percent), despite explicit ISIL threats to kill anyone who participates in the political process.

When ISIL moved in force into Mosul on June 10, the votes had been counted but not yet certified. The four-year parliament's term had ended, and a new parliament, with its 328 members chosen in the election, had yet to convene. The attack, thus, took place during a political vacuum, and purposefully so. ISIL clearly took a play from its earlier incarnation, AQI, which led the devastating Samarra mosque attack

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shortly after December 2005 elections, triggering years of sectarian conflict. Their long-stated aim has always been to spark a collapse of the political process.[3]

We worked immediately to ensure ISIL could not succeed in destroying the Iraqi political process. First, we urged Iraq's government to finalize the election results, which would set in place a series of timelines for forming a new government. This required judges who had fled Baghdad to return. They did so, and ratified the election, on June 16. The next day, Iraqi religious and political leaders from all major communities declared ISIL "an enemy of all Iraqis" and requested international assistance to combat the threat. Second, we worked with the UN to press Iraqi leaders to convene the parliament on time, no later than July 1, which it did. Third, we pressed all newly elected political blocs to choose their leaders for key posts, pursuant to the constitutional timeline for forming a new government.

This process now has some traction. On July 15, the parliament confirmed a new speaker, which is the first position to be named pursuant to the constitutional steps required to form a new government. The moderate Sunni leader, Salim al-Jabouri, received votes from all major political blocs and was confirmed overwhelmingly, together with two deputies. The next step is confirming a president, which may happen as early as this coming week. Once there is a president, there will be a fifteen-day deadline to charge a prime minister nominee to form a government.

It is not the job of the United States to choose Iraq's leaders. We neither want to, nor have the power to do so. Iraq has a parliamentary system, and the next prime minister of Iraq must secure a 165-seat majority to form a new government. We do have an obligation, however, pursuant to our Strategic Framework Agreement, to "support and strengthen Iraq's democracy." Thus, from the moment this crisis began, we have actively prodded the process forward, serving as a neutral broker, and encouraging all Iraqi leaders to form a new government with leaders who reflect a broad national consensus between component communities.

The administration has been engaged on this issue from the outset, including the visit from Secretary Kerry to Baghdad on June 23, and to Erbil on June 24. The Secretary and the Vice President have also made regular phone calls to Iraqi leaders and to our regional partners to discuss the emerging situation and to help broker compromises where necessary to advance the political process and keep the system on track.

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[3]The AQI attack on Samarra came at precisely the same moment in the political process as the 2014 ISIL move into Mosul: two months after national elections, after the expiration of full-term institutions, and before the selection of new leadership. The pace of signature AQI (now ISIL) attacks – measured by suicide and vehicle bombs – were also nearly identical in the months before the 2006 and 2010 elections, running at nearly 80 per month. In the 30 days prior to the April 2014 elections, ISIL launched over 50 suicide attacks inside Iraq with nearly all of the suicide bombers, according to our assessments and ISIL's own statements, foreign fighters who enter Iraq from Syria.

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As President Obama has made clear, the Iraqi people deserve a government that represents the legitimate interests of all Iraqis. We are cautiously hopeful that Iraq's newly elected leaders are on their way to forming such a government, and as they do, they will find a committed partner in the United States.

7) **Building Regional Coalescence Against ISIL**

At its root, ISIL is not strictly an Iraq problem. It is a regional and international problem. The Government of Iraq has requested international assistance, and it has stated clearly that it cannot manage this problem on its own, particularly with an open border and ISIL safe havens and staging areas in Syria. Accordingly, we have been regularly engaged with Iraq's neighbors and our key partners. The UN Security Council, European Union, Arab League, and NATO have strongly condemned ISIL's actions and expressed strong support for the people of Iraq.

Secretary Kerry's extensive trip to the region, capped by a quadrilateral meeting in Paris with the Foreign Ministers of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and UAE, and then a visit to Riyadh for a meeting with King Abdullah, led to a new commonality of effort against ISIL. Shortly after Secretary Kerry visited Riyadh, Saudi Arabia pledged $500 million to UN relief agencies managing the humanitarian response in Iraq. In parallel, we are working with all of our regional partners to close down foreign fighter networks that continue to send thousands of terrorists into Syria, many of whom make their way to Iraq, with up to 50 per-month becoming suicide bombers.

We are also mindful of Iran's influence in Iraq and have seen Iran and Russia work to fill a security vacuum in the early weeks of the crisis. These activities are part of our daily conversations with Iraqi political and military officials, and we are confident that most Iraqi leaders want to retain strategic independence, while also grappling desperately with the serious threats to the Iraqi capital and the Iraqi people.

8) **Coordinating Humanitarian Relief Efforts and Protecting Religious Minorities**

Finally, ISIL's advances have exacerbated a humanitarian crisis. The UN estimates that more than 1.2 million Iraqis have been displaced in fighting since ISIL moved into major cities in Anbar earlier this year. More than 300,000 Iraqis have fled to the Iraqi Kurdistan region since the fall of Mosul on June 10th. We have praised the efforts of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in dealing with the situation, and call on the KRG to continue these efforts, as well as the Government of Iraq to assist the KRG with additional resources.

As noted, numerous countries have come forward and donated to the UN's appeal for humanitarian assistance. In addition to Saudi Arabia, other contributors include Kuwait, Japan, New Zealand, and a number of others. The United States to date has contributed $13.8 million in humanitarian assistance in response to this crisis, and we are working closely with the UN team in Iraq to coordinate the response.

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We are also particularly concerned about the state of the Christian community in Iraq, including in Mosul where this ancient community is being expelled by ISIL on threat of execution. There are now reports of the community's full scale departure, which saddens us deeply. We have also seen reporting of ISIL blinding and killing 13 Yezidi men when they refused to convert to Islam and the kidnapping of two Chaldean nuns and three teenage orphans in Mosul. We denounce these brutal actions vigorously. These actions by ISIL in Mosul – killing Christians, burning churches, killing moderate Sunnis, destroying Islamic tombs – prove to the world the barbarity of their objectives and why they must be stopped before their roots deepen.

Over the past two weeks alone, I met with the Christian leadership in Iraq, including Chaldean Patriarch Louis Raphael Sako in Baghdad, and Archbishop Bashar Warda in Erbil. I am always impressed by the deep faith and resilience of these leaders. In Baghdad, Patriarch Sako, shortly before my visit, presided over a mass with nearly 500 worshipers from across the capital. Both leaders also expressed detailed concerns about the plight of Christians in northern Iraq, and we are working with them and KRG leaders to ensure new Christian enclaves are protected and secured.

Finally, we are deeply troubled by ISIL's treatment of women as we receive a steady stream of reporting regarding women being deprived of their basic rights and subjected to gross violations of their freedom.

III. Current Situation

It is now seven weeks since this crisis began. Mosul remains in the hands of ISIL. Its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, gave a sermon on July 4th, at one of Mosul's oldest mosques, an act made possible after ISIL executed its moderate Imam and thirteen other leading clerics in the city. The Iraq-Syria border, hundreds of miles between the Kurdish region and Jordan, is controlled on both sides by ISIL. Weapons and fighters now flow freely between Iraq and Syria, resupplying ISIL units fighting on both fronts. To say this situation is extremely serious would be an understatement. The situation is dire, and it presents a direct threat to all the Iraqi people, the region, and to U.S. interests.

Our immediate response, however, helped provide a barrier against further deterioration, and may offer a new foundation on which to begin fighting back. Since the first week of the crisis, the Iraqis – working closely with us – managed to absorb the shock, restore some morale, and began to push back, albeit with halting and uneven steps.

On the security front, an immediate focus was restoring control of portions of Highway One, which runs parallel to the Tigris River from Baghdad to Mosul. Iraqi forces during the third week of the crisis managed to clear the highway from Baghdad to Samarra, ensuring a steady resupply for the historic shrine city. During the fourth week of the

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crisis, they cleared most of the highway from Samarra to Tikrit, although sophisticated IED emplacements, ISIL snipers, and repeated suicide attacks have halted progress.[4]

These operations remain extremely challenging, and we have differed with the Iraqis on some of their tactical objectives, such as moving into the city of Tikrit, which did not seem militarily essential given the need to focus on supply routes. They have, however, gradually allowed the Iraqis to move out of a defensive crouch and pressure the ISIL networks north of Baghdad, which had been poised to advance further to the south towards the capital. We are also urging the Iraqis to immediately focus security efforts to the west, where tribes continue to hold out against ISIL near Haditha, blunting what had been a rapid ISIL advance following the fall of al Qaim, on the Syria border, on June 21.

The tribal situation in western and north-central Iraq remains fluid. Many tribes are now actively fighting ISIL – but lack the resources to do so effectively. According to our regular contacts in these areas ISIL is able to over-match any lightly armed tribal force. The complete withdrawal of the Iraqi army from these areas, together with the lack of coverage by Iraqi aviation in the border regions, provides ISIL free rein to move manpower and heavy weapons to areas where tribes resist.

The result has been many longstanding enemies of ISIL and its earlier incarnation AQI – such as Albu Mahal tribe in western Anbar; Shammar in western Ninewa; Obeidi south of Kirkuk; and Jabbouri in central Salah ad-Din – risk making accommodations to ISIL due primarily to the reality of battlefield dynamics. These tribes may have issues with the central government, but that alone is not why ISIL infiltrated their areas. In al Qaim, for example, the Albu Mahal resisted ISIL for months, before the town ultimately fell after waves of attacks from across the Syrian border weakened Iraqi defense forces.

A tangible example of this dynamic is the Sunni town of Zowiya, near Tikrit in north-central Iraq. The residents there, a mix of Jabbouri and other tribes, resisted ISIL and would not accept their presence in the town. The result, as reported in the media and confirmed by our own contacts, was an ISIL military assault to kill all the residents of the village, starting with an hour-long artillery barrage. ISIL fighters then swept into the village, forcing surviving residents to flee, and sending the message to surrounding areas that any tribal resistance to their movement would be futile – and crushed.

As a result, absent some military pressure on ISIL, we are unlikely to see a broad-based tribal uprising against the movement, as happened between 2007 and 2008. This tribal uprising was enabled by U.S. military forces, which applied consistent and relentless

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[4] During this period of crisis, Iraqi forces have increasingly relied on volunteers from southern Iraq to hold stretches of the highway cleared by security forces. Many of these volunteers have affiliations with Shi'a militia groups, and in the earliest weeks of the crisis, they operated in the open for the first time in years. Since then, Grand Ayatollah Sistani has stated clearly that any volunteers should only join established state security services, and emphasized that militias or individual gunmen should not be accepted on the streets. The United States will continue to encourage Iraqi leaders to establish legal and practical mechanisms to incorporate volunteers, including tribal fighters, into the state security structures, where they can be trained to protect the population consistent with the rule of law.

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pressure on then-AQI leadership networks, staging areas, and supply routes. While the Iraqis will never match this level of pressure, we must help enable their forces to better deny safe haven to ISIL within Iraqi territory. The Iraqis must also focus on training and equipping locally grown units to secure local areas. As the President said in his June 19 statement on the situation in Iraq, "the best and most effective response to a threat like ISIL will ultimately involve partnerships where local forces, like Iraqis, take the lead."

The Iraqis recognize this principle, as well, and they have undertaken a reassessment of how their security forces are structured and might be reconstituted. Based on our most recent meetings with Iraqi security commanders, this effort will proceed in three phases. First, the Iraqis have begun to recall soldiers from dissolved units for re-training at two sites north of Baghdad. They report that nearly 10,000 have answered this call. Second, they are recruiting from existing units and from new volunteers for elite counter-terrorism forces, similar to those we train through our Office of Security Cooperation. Third, they are looking to dramatically restructure their security services, with units recruited locally to secure local areas, while the national army provides over-watch support.

Such a program may take many months to demonstrate results, and years to provide a lasting foundation for sustainable security. It will also be linked to the process of forming a new government, requiring a full national commitment and national resource base to ensure effective execution. It remains in our interest, together with such a national commitment from a new government, to provide appropriate assistance and help this process unfold in a manner that can eliminate space for ISIL over the long-term.

IV. Emerging Way Forward – a Functioning Federalism

The crisis response described above, together with Iraqi efforts over the past month, contain the elements of a longer-term strategy to deny space for ISIL. Any such strategy, to be effective, must be deliberate, long-term, and multi-faceted. In my discussions with Iraqi leaders from all communities over the past six weeks, there is an emerging political-military approach that might begin to address the root causes of the current crisis.

First, it is important to focus at the outset on why this matters. The situation we confront is not simply about stabilizing Iraq, though that alone is an important interest. Rather, it is about ensuring that a movement with ambitions and capabilities greater than the al Qaida that we knew over the past decade does not grow permanent roots in the heart of the Middle East. Flush with thousands of foreign fighters and suicide bombers, ISIL in Syria and Iraq increasingly represents a serious threat to U.S. interests.

Indeed, ISIL's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, seeks to follow in the footsteps of Osama Bin Laden as the leader of a global jihad, but with further reach – from his own terrorist state in the heart of the Middle East. After Osama Bin Laden was killed in May 2011, Baghdadi eulogized his death and promised "violent retaliation." His audio messages routinely contain thinly veiled threats against the United States, and he has promised in a "message to the Americans" that "we will be in direct confrontation." The ISIL suicide

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bombers – still averaging 30 to 50 per month – are increasingly western passport holders. Days ago, ISIL boasted that an Australian and a German blew themselves up in Baghdad, and it is a matter of time before these suicide bombers are directed elsewhere.

To combat this threat, we must proceed along three tracks. First, ISIL must be starved of resources, manpower, and foreign fighters. This requires working with our partners around the globe and especially with Turkey to seal the Syrian border from ISIL recruits. Second, the safe havens and training camps in Syria must be isolated and disrupted, preferably by the moderate opposition, enabled by U.S. training. Third, Iraqis must be enabled to control their sovereign space and reconstitute their western border with Syria, through capacity development, tribal engagement, and targeted military pressure.

This third element is essential, and achievable. It will require commitments from Iraq and support from the United States. Our perspectives may not always be the same, but our efforts must be mutually reinforcing. This is because, while ISIL presents a serious counter-terrorism challenge to the United States, the Government of Iraq also faces a serious counter-insurgency challenge, and the two are inextricably linked. Our combined focus must be on isolating ISIL from the broader population and empowering tribes and other local actors to effectively combat it. This will require a combination of political and security measures, based on the principle of a "functioning federalism" as defined in the Iraqi constitution – but never fully and effectively implemented.

In our view, a functioning federalism would empower local populations to secure their own areas with the full resources of the state in terms of benefits, salaries, and equipment. The national army, under this concept, would focus on securing international borders and providing over-watch support where necessary to combat hardened terrorist networks. Other critical reforms, such as an amnesty for those detained without trial, amendments to the criminal procedure laws, and addressing other legitimate grievances from the Iraqi people including those related to de-Ba'athification, will also be necessary elements to strengthen and empower local actors to stand and fight ISIL.[5]

While these concepts remain embryonic, and ultimately will require a new government to flesh out and develop, the five core principles can be summarized as follows:

1. Local citizens must be in the lead in securing local areas;

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[5] There are three fighting groups in the Sunni areas of Iraq. To be effective, any political-military initiative must focus on each of them. First, and most prominently, is ISIL. While there is no political solution to ISIL, political initiatives can help isolate ISIL from other associated groups. The second group is Jaysh al-Tariqa al-Naqshabandi (JRTN). JRTN is a militant wing of the former Ba'ath Party, now led by Saddam's former Vice President, Izzat al-Douri. While the most militant core of JRTN will remain non-responsive to political initiatives, such initiatives can help minimize that core and degrade the network. The third group includes national insurgent movements, such as the Islamic Army, with some associated tribes. These groups mostly want local security control, and rarely launch offensive operations outside of their local areas. For them, there is a political solution, and through some of the reforms discussed above, these groups can probably be harnessed to protect local areas from ISIL infiltration over time.

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2. Local citizens defending their communities must be provided state benefits and resources (modeled along the lines of a National Guard type force structure);

3. The Iraqi Army will rarely deploy inside cities, but will remain outside in an over-watch posture and to carry out federal functions (such as protecting borders);

4. There must be close cooperation between local, regional (KRG), and national security services to gradually reduce operational space for ISIL;

5. The federal government must work diligently on a package of reforms that can address legitimate grievances and deny any pretext for ISIL activities.

These five principles can begin to address many of the core grievances in the Sunni-majority areas of Iraq, while also, importantly, denying space for ISIL to operate and thereby protect the Shi'a majority and other groups from ISIL attacks. Cooperation will be essential. The Government of Iraq from the center cannot restore stability in many areas that ISIL now controls, nor can local actors do so – without support and national-level resources – given ISIL's demonstrated capacity. Restoring stability and degrading ISIL will require a smart, integrated (central-regional-provincial) approach, led by a new Iraqi government with an appropriate level of U.S. support and assistance.

Conclusion

The situation in Iraq remains extremely serious. While our immediate crisis response may have blunted the initial security crisis, ISIL represents a growing threat to U.S. interests in the region, local populations, and the homeland. Countering this threat will require close coordination between the administration and the Congress, and between the U.S. and our regional partners. I look forward to working closely with this Committee to ensure that we are doing all we can to address this vital national security challenge.

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Chairman ROYCE. Thank you.
Elissa?

STATEMENT OF MS. ELISSA SLOTKIN, PERFORMING THE DUTIES OF THE PRINCIPLE DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Ms. SLOTKIN. Thank you. Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Engel, distinguished members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to come and talk about the Department of Defense role particularly. I won't cover too much ground other than to just foot stomp the point that Brett has made.

The U.S. really does have a vital national security interest in ensuring that Iraq or any other country does not become a safe haven for terrorists who could threaten the U.S. homeland, U.S. citizens, U.S. interests abroad, partners or allies. As the President has said, ISIL's advance across Iraqi territory in recent weeks and particularly its ability to continue to establish a safe haven in the region poses a threat to U.S. interests and to the greater Middle East.

And we do not restrict that view just to the specific geographic boundaries that are on the map. Just to go over the things that the Department of Defense is doing, the situation on the ground as Brett described is extremely complex and fluid. We are therefore taking a very responsible, deliberate and flexible approach to the crisis. But I do want to be clear, there will not be an exclusively military solution to the threat posed by ISIL. Iraqis must do the heavy lifting. In the meantime, the Department of Defense remains postured should the President decide to use military force as part of a broader strategy.

Our immediate goals as announced on June 19th, are 1) to protect U.S. people and property in Iraq; 2) to gain a better understanding of how we might train, advise and assist the Iraqi security forces should we decide to do so; and number 3) to expand our understanding particularly via intelligence of ISIL.

All three are critical to any future U.S. strategy vis-à-vis Iraq, and to that end we have done the following things. One, as Brett mentioned we have added forces to protect our people. The safety of U.S. citizens and personnel throughout Iraq is our highest priority. The Department of Defense is meeting all the requests that have come in from the Department of State for security, extra security for our Embassy and at the airport.

As described in our War Powers Notifications we have sent a Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team—we call that a FAST team, a crisis response element—and additional military assets and personnel to reinforce security at the diplomatic facilities. The Secretary of Defense also ordered the amphibious transport ship, USS Mesa Verde, into the Arabian Gulf. Its presence adds to the other naval ships that are there including the U.S. aircraft carrier, USS George HW Bush, and provides the President additional options to protect American citizens and interests in Iraq should he choose to use them, as Brett mentioned, ISR, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance assets.

So as part of our ramping up effort we have significantly surged ISR capabilities into Iraq, as Brett mentioned, over 50 sorties a day compared to one a month in previous months. At the request of the

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Government of Iraq, we have ramped it up as well as our information sharing initiatives with the Iraqis. These sorties over Iraq provide us a much better understanding of ISIL operations and disposition and allow us to help the ISF counter ISIL.

We are now capable of around-the-clock coverage of Iraq and have been focusing particularly on ISIL controlled activities—territory, excuse me—as well as in and around Baghdad. U.S. assessment teams and joint operation centers, as you know we have put in nearly 300 additional U.S. military advisors who have gone in specifically to assess and evaluate how we might better train, advise and assist the Iraqi security forces.

These are small teams of special forces members who are working to evaluate the Iraqi security forces particularly in and around Baghdad. They are armed for self defense but they do not have an offensive mission. The two joint operation centers as Brett also mentioned, one in Baghdad and one in northern Iraq in Erbil, have been established to help coordinate and support efforts on the ground, give us a better picture of what is happening.

One quick word about the assessments. I know that is of interest. Secretary Hagel and Chairman Dempsey received the draft assessment from CENTCOM last week. Department leaders are taking a deliberate approach in reviewing this pretty lengthy assessment. These assessments will inform recommendations to the President. Meanwhile, additional assessing work goes on in and around Baghdad with respect to the developing situation on the ground.

In closing, I just want to reiterate again that we believe that we have a vital security interest in ensuring that Iraq does not become a permanent safe haven for terrorists who could threaten the U.S. homeland. Look forward to your questions to that end.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Slotkin follows:]

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Statement for the Record
Ms. Elissa Slotkin
Performing the Duties of the Principal Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Policy

House Foreign Affairs Committee
United States Support to Iraq
July 23, 2014

Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Engel, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Administration's response to the current security situation in Iraq. My remarks today will focus on two areas:

1) An overview of our national security interests in Iraq; and
2) A review of President Obama's current policy towards Iraq.

U.S. National Security Interests

The U.S. has a vital national interest in ensuring that Iraq, or any other country, does not become a destabilized safe haven for terrorists who could threaten our homeland or U.S. interests and citizens abroad. As the President has said, ISIL's advance across Iraqi territory in recent weeks, and particularly its ability to continue to establish a safe haven in the region, poses a threat to both U.S. interests and the Middle East. In considering the ISIL threat, we don't restrict our view of the threat to specific geographic boundaries.

Current U.S. Efforts in Iraq

Despite this complex and fluid situation, we are taking a responsible, deliberate, and flexible approach to this crisis. I want to be clear that there is no exclusively military solution to the threats posed by ISIL in Iraq. However, DoD remains postured should the President decide to use military force as part of a broader strategy. Our immediate goals, as announced on June 19, are to (1) protect our people and property in Iraq; (2) gain a better understanding of how we might best train, advise, and support the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) capabilities should we decide to support the ISF going forward; and (3) expand our understanding—particularly via intelligence—of ISIL. All three are critical to any future U.S. strategy vis-à-vis Iraq. To that end we have done the following four things:

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Added Forces to Protect our People:

First, we have added forces to protect U.S. personnel in Iraq. The safety of U.S. citizens and personnel in Baghdad and throughout Iraq is our highest priority. The Department of Defense is meeting all requests from the Department of State for security support to U.S. Embassy Baghdad. As described in the War Powers notifications we transmitted to Congress on June 16 and 26, DoD has sent a Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team (FAST), a Crisis Response Element (CRE), and additional military assets and personnel to reinforce security at our diplomatic facilities in Baghdad and the Baghdad International Airport.

Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel also ordered the amphibious transport ship USS MESA VERDE into the Arabian Gulf. Its presence in the Gulf adds to that of other U.S. naval ships—including the aircraft carrier USS GEORGE HW BUSH—and provides the President additional options to protect American citizens and interests in Iraq, should he choose to use them.

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR)

Second, as part of this effort, we have surged intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities in Iraq. At the request of the Government of Iraq, we surged ISR over Iraq after the fall of Mosul and also increased information-sharing initiatives. These ISR sorties provide us a better understanding of ISIL operations and disposition and allow us to help the ISF counter ISIL. We are now capable of around-the-clock coverage over Iraq and have been focusing our efforts on ISIL-controlled territory as well as Baghdad.

U.S. Assessment Teams and Joint Operations Centers (JOCs)

Third, we continue to assess the capabilities of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). On June 19, the President announced additional measures—including the deployment of up to 300 additional U.S. military advisors to evaluate how we might best train, advise, and support the ISF. These small teams of special forces are working to evaluate the Iraqi Security Forces in and around Baghdad. They are armed for self-defense—but do not have an offensive mission.

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And fourth, following the President's direction, two Joint Operation Centers (JOCs), one in Baghdad and one in Northern Iraq, have been established to help support our efforts on the ground.

The initial assessment mission is not unlike many others that DoD performs around the world. We currently maintain special operators in more than 70 countries, in Africa, the Americas, and Asia. Furthermore, since the U.S. troop drawdown in December 2011, a small presence of military personnel has been located at the Embassy in Baghdad, consistent with the 2008 Strategic Framework Agreement.

Secretary Hagel and Chairman Dempsey received the draft assessment of the ISF last week from Central Command. Department leaders are undertaking a deliberate and rigorous review of the assessment, which will inform recommendations to the President. Meanwhile, additional assessment work continues with respect to the developing situation on the ground.

In closing, I want to reiterate that there is no exclusively military solution to the threats posed by ISIL. However, we do have a vital security interest in ensuring that Iraq, nor any other country, becomes a safe haven for terrorists who could threaten our homeland or U.S. interests and

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Chairman ROYCE. Well, I thank both of our witnesses. Before going to questions, I would like to welcome our newest member who is here today with us and that is Congressman Curt Clawson representing the 9th (sic) district of Florida. While he is the newest member of the House, he is not new to international issues as demonstrated by his fluency in four languages and the time he has resided in six countries abroad.

His previous work as CEO of a global manufacturing company and his broad understanding of different cultures will be an asset, we believe, in the committee's work to promote freedom and U.S. interests around the world. And I would also note that his appointment brings our committee delegation from the state of Florida to seven members, second only to the eight members hailing from the great state of California.

In terms of questioning, if we could start now with Mr. McGurk. As I mentioned in my remarks, you testified before the committee in February, and you told us of ISIS' plan to take control of western Iraq and to challenge the Iraqi's Government control of Baghdad. And you reported that it was the administration's objective to prevent ISIS from ever having a sanctuary in western Iraq again.

There were countless other warning signs, and I know that you as Deputy Assistant Secretary and others in the U.S. Government were sounding the alarm. And your testimony was absolutely correct. We did see this coming, and that makes it even more troubling that the administration didn't do what was necessary to prevent ISIS from taking over such a large swath of Iraq. And specifically, the Iraqis asked multiple times for drone air strikes against clearly identifiable ISIS targets in the desert.

Someone in our Embassy brought this up as well. The agitation was for strikes on terror camps, and we know the administration rejected those requests. Now no one likes Maliki, but given this ISIS threat and given the administration's stated goal of preventing an ISIS sanctuary in western Iraq, why didn't we support at least in this limited way attacks that would have done damage to these columns or to the encampments?

Mr. MCGURK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me try to correct the record on a few things. And again I thank you for the opportunity to testify before the committee in February, and I think what I described was when we really started to see this problem emerge over the course of last summer.

And the first principle and the President's policy is that we want to enable local actors to be able to secure their sovereign space as best we can. That was also the desire of the Iraqi Government. The Iraqi Government wanted to act on its own with our assistance in enabling functions. We worked through the summer and fall through our own surveillance, and also by showing the Iraqis how they could use their capability to be able to target some of these sites.

They have a platform called a King Air which does persistent intelligence. They have a platform called a Caravan Aircraft which can fire Hellfire missiles. And we were able, with our information, to be able to kind of jerry-rig those systems in a way that they were quite effective, and they were effective against those camps.

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The formal request from the Iraqis for direct U.S. air support did not come in a formal way until May, and it came on a visit with General Austin. And I was there with General Austin during that visit, and then a subsequent phone call between the Prime Minister and the Vice President. And since that time obviously we have been looking at various options.

But the first principle was to enable the Iraqis to deny safe havens and camps and sanctuaries within their sovereign space. They, of course, faced a significant problem across the Syrian border, which was increasingly in control of ISIS as of over the last 3 months of last year, and the border increasingly became under threat.

But the first principle was to enable the Iraqis. That was something the Iraqis also wanted and that was through the Hellfire missiles, through the Caravan Aircrafts, and through the persistent ISR. But the formal request for direct U.S. air support came in May.

Chairman ROYCE. Well, let me just say that we already have experience in Afghanistan with the fact that when you are dealing with suicide bombers or people who want to martyr themselves in the attack, the one thing on the ground, for example, the Afghans are looking for our air support.

Traditionally, secular militaries run away in the face of people trying to lose their own life in an attack and they call in air support. It has been a problem. I mean I have talked to the Italians about this. What do they want? What did they ask for? Drones above that could give air support for their troops in Afghanistan.

So when you have got a situation like this, yes, you have got Hellfire missiles but the Iraqis were trying to fire these from retrofitted Cessna airplanes. In an environment like that when you see this coming and you know that air support, psychologically, for infantry on the ground in this kind of an environment has been such an issue in Afghanistan when you are up against jihadists, why wouldn't we?

It wasn't just that the request was coming from the Iraqi Government. As I say, some in the Embassy pushed for this. Certainly I raised this a number of times. I am just trying to figure out why, when you can monitor something with the eyes of a drone that can go in and actually see below it that you have in the jeep the flag of al-Qaeda waving and a column moving across the desert, why that asset wouldn't be deployed as these troops are coming out of Syria, or why you wouldn't take the encampment and come in and take out that encampment.

I understand that this request went all the way up in the administration and was turned down, and I am trying to get to the bottom of why.

Mr. MCGURK. Again I want to just answer from my own personal recollection, as first, the camps, the Iraqis were very effective against the camps with the Hellfires, particularly over the latter course of 2013. ISIL kind of poured out of the camps, particularly when they started to be hit, and moved into the cities.

Chairman ROYCE. But again this is with a retrofitted Cessna airplane, at least this is what I understand from the Iraqis that they were trying to deal with in order to express that. Can you imagine

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how effective it would have been with something, a platform that could really deliver something more than a Hellfire?

Mr. MCGURK. I also just want to correct the record. When the request did come in May, the formal request for direct air support, that request never went up, and has been denied. In fact, it is still under active consideration. There has never been a denial.

Chairman ROYCE. That is like saying—if I could interrupt you. Because I remember Eliot Engel making the point 3 years ago about support for the Free Syrian Army when there were no foreign fighters in Syria and him laying out the argument that foreign fighters were going to come in the absence if we didn't support the Free Syrian Army. That is like saying, well, that is still under active consideration.

Well, yes, but after 3 years of not effectively getting engaged in a major way, the clock begins to run out and things happen on the ground, and that is what has happened with ISIS. We have watched it come into a vacuum over a 3-year period, establish itself on the border with Iraq, no action being taken against that encampment, no effective support to the Free Syrian Army to do something about it, then we watched it go from city to city across Iraq without it being hit from the air with drones, despite the requests that I know were being made. This is the reason for, at least my part, concern about lack of action here.

Mr. MCGURK. I was just, on Thursday of last week before flying back, I was in our new Joint Operations Center which we set up in Baghdad. And I can say that the information we have now on these networks is night and day from where it was in May when the request from the Iraqis first came in. Therefore the options that are being developed for the President will be much more concrete and specific than anything we could have had before, and there is a significant risk, Mr. Chairman, of taking any military action without that level of granularity.

So clearly, when the request came in May, we were not able to do anything immediately in any event yet we now have a much better picture which will inform eventual decisions from the President, and any decisions in that regard which would be made or might be made or considered would be in the full consultation with this committee and the Congress.

Chairman ROYCE. Right. But ISIS now has the treasury of the Central Bank in Mosul. So they have at their disposal probably $½ billion.

Mr. MCGURK. They are very good at propaganda. They put out that they got $400 million in the first week or so. We don't think that is particularly true, but they are a self-sustaining organization and they are flush with resources, cash and equipment, no question.

Chairman ROYCE. I am out of time. I will go to Mr. Engel.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And Brett and Elissa, thank you for your testimony and for your good work. I want to talk a little bit about the division in Iraq or keeping Iraq whole. On the one hand when you look at some of these borders in the Middle East they were all done by the colonialists, and I have often felt that why should we be obligated to maintain those borders? Iraq is not a real state. It is was slapped together. You

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have got the Kurds, you have got the Shia and the Sunni who really don't want to be part of each other, and so particularly the Kurds who have autonomy now, practically have their own nation and probably will proclaim it very shortly.

So my sympathies would be to say to the Kurds, well, why should we suck you back into Iraq? You have the right to your own nation. And frankly, nobody has ever explained to me why the Palestinians are entitled to self-determination but some other Kurds are not. I don't think that is fair, quite frankly.

On the other hand, we are told that if the Kurds break off there is practically no way that you could stop the radicals from dominating what is left of Iraq and that the Kurds provide some sort of a counterbalance to prevent the radicals from gaining control. I would like to hear from both of you what your views are on keeping Iraq intact or not.

Mr. MCGURK. Let me address that briefly and I can turn to my colleague Elissa. As I described in the testimony of a functioning federalism concept, it is a concept that is under the Iraqi Constitution and that would recognize a very substantial devolution of powers. There is a recognition in Iraq that, from the center out, you are never going to fully control all of these areas, and particularly given the capacity of ISIL, and there is also recognition that locals alone and tribal forces alone cannot defeat ISIL. They need the support and resources of the central state.

So, therefore, a functioning federalism concept which is under the Constitution is really the model that is an emerging consensus within Iraq. The Kurdish region now shares about a 1,000 kilometer border with what is effectively ISIS. We are in active conversations with the Kurds and the Kurdish regional government to make sure that they are able to manage that problem.

They also face a very serious strategic, geostrategic environment given just the geography of the region, but believe me, we are in a very active conversation with the Kurdistan region about their future in Iraq. But significantly, it is important to recall that on April 30th, 14 million Iraqis voted in a national election. That included about a 60-percent turnout in Ninawa Province, a 50-percent turnout in Anbar Province.

There is a 328-member Parliament which has just convened. Today was the first session with the new Speaker of Parliament, a very moderate, pragmatic Sunni leader, an emerging Sunni leader who secured the support of all political blocks. And today in the Parliament, again its first session, they all stood together, all groups, to denounce the very horrific tragedy inflicted by ISIL against Christians in Mosul. The country, overall, the people do not want to divide into three different countries, or three different states. There is no easy solution for that. When you game it out, actually, the consequences are quite serious.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. McGurk, it is my feeling—correct me if I am wrong—that the Kurds, consensus among the Kurds is that they want to separate from Iraq.

Mr. MCGURK. Yes, the Kurds, there are a lot of Kurds that say to me, I think at the heart of every Kurd it wants an independent state. There is no question, and I think we have to recognize that. We also have to recognize that the Kurds are among our very clos-

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est friends in the region. We have to have a very close, close partnership with the Kurds, and we do.

But there is also a pragmatic element given the realities, given the economic realities, and other things in which we want to work very closely with the Kurds on their future. And I think the future within the constitutional structure, the Kurds right now, for example, are choosing their nominee to be the next President of Iraq, and we hope to have that sorted out over the coming days, but again within the constitutional framework.

And we have had conversations with Masoud Barzani and others just over the last week when I was in Erbil, and then Sulaymaniyah with the leadership of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan about their future, about how we can work with them on their future, and about a future within the constitutional framework. And at least in the near term I think that is the best way to go.

Mr. ENGEL. I just don't feel that it is fair to hold the Kurds hostage. Because we have unfortunately screwed up things in Iraq and everything is falling to pieces, we are essentially saying to the Kurds, you know what, you have to be the glue that keeps Iraq together and therefore we are going to deny you your aspirations. I am not sure that is quite fair.

Ms. Slotkin?

Ms. SLOTKIN. So I will just speak to it from the security aspects. Given the ISIL threat, the strongest single blunt to that threat would be a strong, capable Federal Government in Iraq that is actually able to exert control and influence to push back on that threat. And while, I guess, it is sort of, there has long been this idea that Iraq can split into three pieces, I just sort of ask the question: Who is in charge of that western and north central part of Iraq in that model?

So while I think, as Brett described, there certainly are lots of folks in the Kurdish regions who have aspirations of independence, think about what that means in that neighborhood and territory that they are left in if you don't have a strong, capable government in Baghdad that is able to blunt these ISIL threats.

They have got Syria, they have got the situation on their southern border right there. They have got Iran on the other side. That is a tough neighborhood. So from a security point of view, the single best blunt, frankly, to both ISIL and to a strong, dominant Iranian influence in Iraq is a strong, capable Federal Government based in Baghdad.

Mr. ENGEL. Well, I was going to ask you about Iran, but I see my time is up. Let me just very quickly say that I hope that the United States does not think that it can be lulled into some kind of partnership with Iran in Iraq. There are some people who feel that because our interests may come together, converge, that maybe we should partner with Iran. I couldn't disagree more.

I think that Iran is major, the lead supporter of terrorism in the world. I think we look at what is happening now with Israel in Gaza and all the weapons of Hamas, which is a terrorist organization provided by Iran, and I just think it would be a tragic error if we somehow thought Iran was a viable partner in Iraq.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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Chairman ROYCE. Thank you. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. In your excellent opening statement, Mr. Chairman, you had said about Mr. McGurk that in February you said that we must ensure that ISIL can't gain safe haven in western Iraq and that you were confident that Iraq will deny them this. We all know how that turned out just a few months later and ISIL took over most of western Iraq.

How could your assessment have been so far off? How did Iraq lose this territory? Why didn't we respond to their calls for help? Your testimony from February shows that there was some serious disconnect within the administration on the reality of the threat in Iraq, or we have just been completely failing in addressing it. You stated that the U.S. began to accelerate some of our foreign military assistance programs and information sharing to get a better intelligence picture of Iraq.

Last month Secretary Kerry said nobody expected ISIL to capture Mosul. Even if our foreign military assistance had not quite kicked in yet, shouldn't our information and intelligence gathering efforts have been able to get a better assessment, a more accurate assessment of Samarra and Mosul? And it has been widely reported that while taking control of Mosul, ISIL seized rather large quantities of U.S. supplied foreign military assistance and made off with nearly $½ billion from the local banks in addition to tanks and Humvees that were taken. U.S. officials were quick to deny the claims of ISIL that they captured advanced weaponry such as Black Hawk helicopters.

Did they capture any Caravan Aircraft with advanced weapon platforms and did they take any other advanced weaponry like MANPADS? U.S. military equipment and hundreds of millions of dollars aren't the only items that ISIL has seized. The Iraqi Government confirmed that ISIL took uranium from Mosul University. What is the status of that uranium? What could ISIL use that for?

And on the Christian community, we have seen that the ancient Christian community in Iraq is under siege by these Islamist militants. Once a vibrant and sizable community, now over 1 million Christians have been forced to flee their homes and communities or be killed. Their homes are being marked by ISIL and they are being given an ultimatum to flee, to convert or to be murdered.

In February, Mr. McGurk, you said you were trying to make sure that the Christian community had the resources to protect itself and that we had actually made progress. It is clear that we haven't made any progress. We cannot protect them. So what are we doing now to help protect the few remaining Christians and their religious sites and artifacts?

And as Ranking Member Engel had pointed out, are we on any level, directly or indirectly, coordinating with Iran or Syria over our Iraq policy, or ISIL, and does the administration believe that Maliki must go? Yes or no? Thank you, sir, and gentle lady.

Mr. MCGURK. Let me try to address some of these in order. First, the discussion we had, the very good discussion we had in February was focused on Anbar Province, and I will just bring you up to speed on where we are in Anbar Province. At the time, Fallujah was in control of ISIL. Fallujah is still in control of ISIL. I made

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clear then that our advice to the Iraqis was not to move into Fallujah, it was to set a cordon. And that cordon remains in place although it is fairly loose.

Second, we wanted them to hold the provincial capital of Ramadi. So far they are still holding the provincial capital of Ramadi. What has changed significantly in Anbar is a very sophisticated attack that happened late last month on Al-Qaim, the strategic border crossing in Anbar, which again proves that ISIL is really an army. It is a militarily capable force. It was a multiple day assault.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. And to your written testimony, ISIL also generates $12 million a month through illicit business in Mosul. That is a lot of money for terrorists. Quite an economic entity.

Mr. MCGURK. They are a self-sustaining organization. And what we had seen in Mosul for some time was a bit of a modus vivendi in which they were in control of the city at night but they were not openly in control. And that was why the assault into Mosul last month did catch everybody off guard.

We saw some indications of it coming. As I said, we had sources on the ground who told us about 3 days before that they were seeing indications of it coming. But we did not envision the assault nor the collapse of security forces up there. I will say I have had a number of conversations with the——

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I am out of time. I apologize. I threw a lot of questions at you so that you could give me some written responses. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize. I am out of time.

Chairman ROYCE. We will go to Albio Sires, the ranking member on the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for our witnesses to have been here. Ms. Slotkin, I have been here since 2006, and I have come to hate the word "assess and train." We seem to be assessing and training Iraqi soldiers, assessing the situation in Iraq, and I think the situation is worse than ever after spending billions of dollars. We train an army, they fire a shot at them, they run for the hills. Where did we go wrong with these people? We put all this money into training them and they can't even defend a section of their own country? I just, it is mind boggling to me.

Now we have this situation where we have ISIS moving in all sorts of direction. I am concerned that in Jordan, for example, we have about 2 million refugees, and if we have a situation where they destabilize Jordan, the whole area it is just a mess. What did we do with all that money that we put to train all these people? Where are these trained people that—and I have been here since 2006 so it is not just this administration. I am talking from 2006 on.

Can you just, or Mr. McGurk, can you also assist me in understanding this?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Yes, so let me address the issue of the training. I think anyone who has watched the news or been a part of our efforts in Iraq was disappointed by what we saw in Mosul. And I think the biggest thing that we looked at and we were surprised by was the dissolving of, frankly, four Iraqi divisions up and around that area and some areas where they did not fight, in contrast to western Iraq where they were putting up a serious fight.

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And rather than a lack of capability, I think what we believe is that they just lacked either the will or the direction to fight. So either they, as Brett described there was a snowballing effect and they out of fear stripped off their uniforms and turned, or they waited for direction from Baghdad that did not come and therefore departed.

We don't believe they lacked a basic capability. It is that at the end of the day they did not have the will or direction to fight in that part of the area. That is critical for any future plans we decide to pursue in Iraq. We have to understand whether the partner in Iraq that we would be working with has the will, the direction, the capacity to fight, and that is why we have folks on the ground right now trying to figure that out. But I mean it is not that it is not frustrating. It, of course, is.

Mr. SIRES. Well, we spend billions of dollars on a group of people that are not willing to fight.

Ms. SLOTKIN. I don't think we can say that about all the Iraqi security forces. We see them attempting to take offensive action in Iraq as recently as this week. So it is not a blanket statement you can make. As Brett said, in western Iraq there is still areas that are——

Mr. SIRES. But there were four divisions though.

Ms. SLOTKIN. There were four divisions. That is correct.

Mr. SIRES. Mr. McGurk?

Mr. MCGURK. Let me just add a couple points. First, the leadership and the command in Mosul of these units have all been fired. We immediately were in conversations with Iraqi leaders, security and political leaders, in the wake of Mosul and recommended a wholesale change in the command. New commanders have been appointed. Those are commanders we know very well, they are also quite effective.

Iraqis, just in the past month in terms of fighting units, they have suffered almost 1,000 killed in action, and they are holding a line, and they are beginning to conduct some very rudimentary offensive operations to clear some highways. I will not underestimate the extreme challenge here, but what we saw in Mosul was not indicative of the force as a whole.

We are finding that the units, many of them are balanced. There is about an average—I was just on the phone with our folks out there today. The composition of the force is about 55 percent Shia, about 23 percent Sunni, by and large, and what we have found is that within the units themselves there is no fracturing among sectarian lines within the units themselves.

Now, there are very incompetent and incapable units with very poor leadership, there is no question we found those. But we have also found extremely capable, extremely proficient and extremely dedicated units, and it is in our interest, I believe, to invest in those units. We should not write off what happened in Mosul and write off the entire security force overall, because that would not be either an accurate response to the overall situation and picture we are seeing nor, I think, would that be in our long term interest.

Mr. SIRES. Can you talk a little bit about the direction they are going maybe toward Jordan and what are we doing to offset that?

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Ms. SLOTKIN. So obviously, particularly the news a couple of weeks ago about ISIL taking ground near the Jordanian border was we all look at that very closely particularly the Jordanians. I think what is important to remember is the Jordanians are a very solid, capable force that is laser focused on this issue.

They have moved troops to the border in order to reinforce their side of the border, and then the United States has a robust relationship with Jordan that is only strengthened, frankly, in the wake of everything that has gone on in Syria. So there is quite a significant amount of interaction on a daily basis with the Jordanians, but we obviously watch that with keen interest.

Mr. SIRES. I am sorry I have run out of time. But I wanted to ask you about Camp Liberty, but I ran out of time. Chairman, thank you very much.

Chairman ROYCE. We will let the witness respond to your question there.

Mr. SIRES. Can you talk about a little bit about Iran using this situation to attack Camp Liberty?

Mr. MCGURK. Very briefly, we are watching Camp Liberty extremely closely. It remains our goal to get all of the members and residents of Camp Liberty out of Iraq. We are working that extremely hard. We have some leads with other countries and third countries. We also are going to do all that we can to make sure that they remain safe.

And I can assure you that in all my conversations with Iraqi leaders, even in the midst of this very urgent crisis I raised the issue of Camp Liberty in making sure that the residents there remain safe.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you for your courtesy, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROYCE. Certainly. We go now to Mr. Chris Smith of New Jersey, chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for calling this very important hearing, and welcome to our two distinguished witnesses. Let me ask you if I could, some experts argue that 10,000, at least 10,000 U.S. counterterrorism forces should have remained in Iraq but the President and Maliki both chose otherwise. In retrospect, did that contribute in any way to ISIL's emergence and the current situation on the ground as it exists today?

Secondly, Secretary McGurk, you said that a formal request for assistance was received in May. And my question would be whether any informal requests through other avenues including from the Iraqi Ambassador to the U.S. made before that and how do you define formal request? I mean if certain individuals are asking for help, what modality needs to be employed in order to say that they have actually asked?

Thirdly, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as we all know, was in United States' custody and was released. When he was released he told the American guards who were from New York, so that is perhaps what he meant or could have had the double meaning of we will come get you 9/11-like, he said, "I will see you in New York." We know that he now as emerged as the leader of ISIL, or ISIS, and obviously has posed an enormous threat to life and liberty of Iraqis, to Christians, and perhaps even to the United States.

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And my question is, especially in light of what has happened with Guantanamo, where as a result of the 2012 intelligence legislation it was required for the administration to tell us how many of those who were released from Gitmo went back into battle—and the report suggested that of the 614 that were released, 104 were confirmed to go back into the battle against Americans and our allies. Seventy-four probably went back but they couldn't confirm it, for a total of 178 which is a huge number of potential American and allies' death to service members, and we had them in custody.

So the question there with regards to Bakr al-Baghdadi, did we in any way see this coming? Why was he released to be allowed to go and re-form or to form ISIS and to do the terrible things they are doing today?

Mr. MCGURK. Let me, first, on the formal, I am not playing with words on formal or informal request. The conversation, I can just, it kind of goes like this. You will sometimes hear from an Iraqi official they want direct U.S. air strikes. You then talk about this is what that would mean, access to your air space, et cetera, and then it is like, well, wait, let us find a way for us to do this on our own. And so that is why we worked with the Caravans and the Hellfires. The formal request very clearly—access to air space, direct U.S. air support—came in May. Very clear and unequivocal, that came in May.

I do not have information on the release of Baghdadi, but I can obviously get back to you on that. And again, in terms of 2011, I can just speak to my own experience on this. I was out of government. I came into the process extremely late. We had a legal requirement that SOFA would have to go through the entire Iraqi Parliament, and I can report from my own experience that none of the political blocks in the Parliament were going to support that request given our own requirements, so therefore it was just not possible for us to stay.

The rise of AQI, as I think I testified in my last hearing here, it really regenerated in Syria and on the battlefields and battlegrounds of Syria. And so that is where we saw the massive regeneration, the massive influx in foreign fighters, and then we started to see it come back into Iraq over the course of last spring and summer. So that was really what led to the regeneration of al-Qaeda in Iraq which we now know as ISIL.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Secretary, if I could ask you—and I appreciate that and if you could get back on al-Baghdadi I would appreciate that. The Iraqi requests started coming in in August 2013 for assistance. Is that true?

Mr. MCGURK. Yes, for enhanced assistance in terms of sharing information, in terms of enabling some of their units, yes.

Mr. SMITH. Did we respond to it in an affirmative way?

Mr. MCGURK. We responded immediately. We set up intelligence fusion sharing centers. We helped with the Hellfire missiles precision strikes. We helped them in terms of training forces on the ground, the special operations——

Mr. SMITH. Because I am almost out of time, are there items or requests that went unfulfilled?

Mr. MCGURK. Again other than this most recent request in May, in fact, in January we got a list of requirements and things that

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they wanted. We have fulfilled every single piece of that list. And I can answer in writing a very detailed response.

Mr. SMITH. If you could, I would appreciate that very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROYCE. Mr. Ted Deutch of Florida, subcommittee ranking member of Middle East and North Africa.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to talk about our regional partners and it is a really simple question. We talked a lot about Jordan and the threats that Jordan faces, and, Ms. Slotkin, you spoke about that. And Chairman Ros-Lehtinen and I were there recently and we appreciate that.

I would like to move beyond Jordan and talk about our regional partners in the Gulf and the question is really simple. Who is concerned, what are they doing about it, and who may be concerned but is not helping and perhaps may even be making things more difficult?

Mr. MCGURK. I will let Elissa handle some of this. I can just say the conversation has shifted, I think, over the last 18 months from—there used to be a conversation when you would talk about this rise of very extreme, virulent al-Qaeda type groups that in a second war, we will be able to take care of those groups once Assad is gone.

I think the conversation now is that, obviously, these things would have to be done in parallel. There is a really renewed focus on ISIL. Secretary Kerry, when he was in Iraq last month, immediately then went to Paris and held a meeting with the Foreign Ministers of Jordan, UAE and Saudi Arabia, and then went on to Riyadh. And we found a really new emphasis, a new coalescence in terms of views of how we have to go about this very serious threat of ISIL.

ISIL took a town in Anbar Province called Rutba, which has an open highway. It is a very small town. They don't have a large presence there, but it has an open highway to Saudi Arabia, and that is obviously a very significant development. So the Saudis are very focused on this as are the Emiratis, and certainly, certainly as are the Jordanians, and we work with them every single day on it.

And the cooperation we have had in terms of Iraq, in trying to think about how to squeeze ISIL, squeeze its resources, its manpower, is at a new level now than it was, I think, even 6 to 8 weeks ago.

Elissa?

Ms. SLOTKIN. So I will just add to that that the folks that we have added, the Department of Defense have added into Iraq, have come from the CENTCOM region and we are in regular consultation with all of the Gulf countries, particularly those who host our troops. Kuwait, Qatar, UAE, and of course Saudi Arabia, I have seen, have pledged significant amounts of humanitarian aid for the situation in Iraq. So I do think people are aware of it.

And I think the thing that is critical going forward on all of these questions is that we are going to need a regional approach to this problem. There is no way—the ISIL threat, it is like air in a balloon. If you squeeze one part all of the air goes to the other side, you squeeze that one. So we will need all of the partners in the re-

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gion who are, like anyone, concerned about this issue to play a role in countering this threat.

Mr. DEUTCH. Can I just follow up? If I understood you correctly, and just to characterize your comments, the Emiratis and the Saudis are very concerned and are doing something about it to be helpful. The Qataris are aware of it. Can we talk a little more particularly, frankly, in light of—and Ms. Slotkin, I will direct this to you—in light of a very large arms deal that was announced with much fanfare, tell me what more the Qataris are doing besides being aware of ISIL?

Ms. SLOTKIN. So I know that Secretary Kerry has had a significant amount of phone conversations with all of the Gulf allies on how to get more engaged. I don't think other than remaining in close contact with them that there is anything that anyone is doing right now because we are still trying to get a handle on the threat and what to do about it in a coordinated way.

Mr. DEUTCH. Are there any funds coming from Qatar or any of the other countries to support ISIL or any of the other groups in the region?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Yes, I have been asked this question a couple times. To our knowledge right now, and again the intelligence community is assessing that no states, regional states are sponsoring ISIL now.

Mr. DEUTCH. That is not what I asked. Right.

Ms. SLOTKIN. I can't speak in this forum to groups within these countries, but the states themselves are not supporting ISIL.

Mr. DEUTCH. I appreciate that.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you. We go to Mr. Dana Rohrabacher of California, chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much. Maliki hasn't done a good job, has he? He hasn't done a good job, has he? He has made things worse, hasn't he?

Mr. MCGURK. We have serious concerns about the effectiveness of the Government of Iraq. I would just add, we had an election on April 30th, and they are now establishing a new government. So that is where the process stands now, and whether or not the Prime Minister can achieve a third term is something that remains in question.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. So we have not, however, officially suggested that he leave, or have we unofficially suggested to him that it might be time for him to visit some of his money in Dubai?

Mr. MCGURK. Let me also just back up in fairness to the Government of Iraq. They also face a tremendously difficult situation. The 30 days before they had an election in Iraq there were 53 suicide bombers in Iraq blowing up mosques, marketplaces, parades, fairgrounds, playgrounds. Any country facing that level of violence, and that is all from ISIL, is going to face extreme difficulty because ISIL is trying to tear apart the political fabric of the country. So all the leaders are struggling with this extremely difficult situation.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I will accept that we cannot just blame Maliki himself, but he has not provided the leadership that would be necessary to overcome what could be inherent problems with

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having a country called Iraq made up of that territory and those peoples that now compose that territory. That territory was devised and put together by European imperialists who decided that would be what the country of Iraq would look like.

Let me just say that as far as I am concerned, the United States should not be having to limit itself and limit what solutions we can possibly have based on what the British Empire determined 100 years ago. And it all flows back to those people. So with that said, I would hope that we would be open to situations like having a actual Kurdistan exist, maybe a Balochistan as well. There used to be a country named Balochistan, and the British decided to cut that in two and split that up.

And the Kurds have always deserved to have their own national identity, and until we do I happen to believe that no kind of leadership that we could put into place in Iraq is going to be successful. Maybe it is too much, even if Maliki was the best it might not be enough because that may be an ungovernable creation that our British friends gave us as a present when they exited as world leader.

One other issue that I would like to mention. When you said that we are watching very closely what is going on with the MEK and Camp Liberty, it is not enough. It is not enough. The last time we were watching very closely, and hundreds of those people have been murdered. We are talking over the years where we watched and the Iraqi army went in and murdered those people.

And we are looking for someone to take them. Why aren't we deciding to take them? They are vulnerable. They are people who we have had to deal with. Is it our Government that we will, are we just—and I know I have a resolution, Mr. Chairman, suggesting that we take these people in. They are going to be murdered otherwise, so why are we just watching? Why aren't we moving beyond that and moving them out?

Mr. MCGURK. We are working, as our senior advisor for MEK Resettlement, Jonathan Weiner, is working, he is actually on a flight tonight on this issue, working to find again more third country settlement options. One particular lead, we are hoping that a country that has already taken a significant number will take more and perhaps a substantial amount more. So we are working these leads very aggressively and I am happy to follow up with you with a more detailed briefing on where that stands.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay. I would be very appreciative if you could follow up on those details with me. But also let me, Mr. Chairman, just for the record again state it would be better, these people have relied on us. We made a deal with them. They have provided us some very important intelligence information and activities over the years.

If other countries will not permit them to come in, it might be in our moral interest as well as our interest of having other people trust us in the future just to take them into the United States as refugees. And if there is any group of people in the world that are at risk and are refugees it would be these folks in Camp Liberty. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you, Mr. Rohrabacher. We go now to Mr. David Cicilline of Rhode Island.

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Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to begin by welcoming a colleague from across the pond. Ian Austin is a Member of Parliament from Great Britain who is here today. Welcome. He is part of a program shadowing Members of Congress, and we welcome you.

Thank you to the witnesses for your testimony. And I want to say first that I think, like most Americans I am very concerned about the unfolding situation in Iraq. And the rapid events of ISIS is incredibly disturbing, particularly following the loss of more than 4,000 American lives during Operation Iraqi Freedom. However, I think we must also remain mindful, not only of the sacrifices of our brave men and women in uniform and the sacrifices they have made in Iraq, but the dangers that surround any further military involvement.

It was reported recently that a classified military assessment of Iraqi security forces showed deep infiltration by Sunni extremist informants and that Shiite forces remain dependent on Shiite militias trained in Iran. And this poses, I believe, a very significant risk to U.S. military personnel advising Iraqi security forces.

The situation in Iraq is a problem that requires a political solution, and in June, Secretary of State John Kerry said that the formation of a new government in Iraq that is inclusive of all parties and stakeholders is an essential prerequisite to offensive military action by the United States. Secretary Kerry said that it would be an act of great irresponsibility to order offensive action without a stable government.

So I have, really, two questions in light of that context and in light of your testimony. First, to you, Mr. Secretary. You spoke about this functioning federalism which, I think, has some very significant appeal. And my question, really, is what is your assessment of the capacity of the Iraqis to proceed with that sort of model, the willingness to proceed particularly since it involves the devolution of power, and what are the first, kind of key first steps that we should be looking for or we should be supporting for that to go forward?

And then secondly, would you comment on the humanitarian situation in Iraq? We are hearing reports of deliberate targeting of women and girls in Iraq, horrific sanitary conditions, and more than a 1.2 million Iraqis being displaced. Are international organizations or the Iraqi Government working effectively to mitigate these conditions? And if you could talk about kind of what the current humanitarian situation is.

Mr. MCGURK. I am happy to. First, let me address the humanitarian situation, and also it gets to Congressman Deutch's question on the Saudis because I forgot to mention one thing.

In the wake of Secretary Kerry's trip to Riyadh, the Saudis put $500 million into the U.N. organizations that are managing the humanitarian response in Iraq. And we work very closely with those organizations, and that contribution was both welcome and essential. So it is a point of how we have some coalescence in the region, and that was very critical. The humanitarian situation remains quite serious, and I can get you all the statistics and everything we are doing because I don't want to take too much of your question time.

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In terms of the willingness of a functioning federalism, it is all within the Iraqi Constitution, and it is pretty much spelled out. So I think there is a growing recognition that a model like this is both appealing because it conforms with the new realities on the ground.

As I said, local actors, tribal actors, are not going to be able to defeat ISIL on their own. I have examples of that in my testimony where, just over the last 6 weeks, some tribes have risen up to fight ISIL, and ISIL has responded with tremendous and brutal force. They are killing Sunnis wherever they go where Sunnis disagree with them.

In Mosul, when Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi gave a speech at one of the oldest mosques in Mosul, that was made possible because ISIL killed all the moderate clerics who were in that mosque before ISIL moved in. So there is a recognition from the local side that they need support to grow their own security forces. They want to be in control of their areas.

And there is a recognition from the center that the army cannot be reconstituted to take control in these areas, so you have to have a cooperative federalism model. It is also something that we can fully support, and I think help enable. The Iraqis are trying now, working to reconstitute the units that dissolved in June, and are now training about 10,000 of those soldiers who either fled from their posts or, significantly, one-third of those soldiers were on their R&Rs during that time, and most of them have come back.

The Iraqis are working to retrain them, to put them through a 3- to 4-week training program, again something that we can help with. But everybody recognizes you cannot then reconstitute the structure on a structure you had pre-Mosul. It has to be smarter and more adaptive to realities, and because it is within the constitutional framework, there can be a fairly broad consensus for that model.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman ROYCE. We go now to Mr. Steve Chabot of Ohio, chairman of the Asia and the Pacific Subcommittee.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for holding this very important hearing and we appreciate our panelists being here today. There is, quite frankly, a great deal of skepticism in how this administration is overseeing the unraveling of Iraq. Really, I think, from the start I think we are all aware that the President was anxious, desperate to reduce our involvement in Iraq. He had made promises about doing just that and I think there was a kind of a scramble for the door there from the very start.

I have been to Iraq a number of times. I chaired the Middle East Subcommittee in the previous Congress. And I think we have known, I mean it was always the plan, it was always assumed that we were going to have a military, a U.S. military presence there following the war and it was for a number of reasons, principally to secure the gains that had been made at such a high cost of American blood and treasure.

And of course we know that there was a failure to reach an agreement on the status of our forces. Afterwards there was a lot of debate on how much of an effort was actually made in securing

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that agreement. But whatever the case is there was a failure to secure it and virtually all U.S. troops were pulled out.

Many of us, some who are no longer in Congress, some who are still here, some on this committee, some not, many of us predicted not exactly what would happen but pretty much what would happen, and the unraveling and the chaos and the tumultuous situation that we see in Iraq now was predicted by so many people.

My first question would be, what difference would a U.S. military presence there have made? And how much confidence can we have in the very administration that made that decision to pull all U.S. troops out who is now making the decisions to salvage what is left of Iraq at this time?

Mr. McGurk? Or Ms. Slotkin?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sure, I will take a first jab at it. I do think it is important again to review the history, and both Brett and I worked on the original 2008 SOFA with Iraq which did say that by the end of 2011 that we would be out of Iraq. So that timetable was set back in 2008. And I know there was quite a bit of discussion and debate about what should happen at the time in 2011 about a follow-on agreement, but I really do think the point that Brett made is critical.

The Iraqi leaders could not get it through their Parliament. Unlike what we have in Afghanistan today, we had Iraqi leaders at that time saying, I don't think it is necessary. We don't want you in. And they weren't inviting us in. They are a sovereign country. So we made the decision to cease negotiations because we didn't have will on the other side. That is a critical factor.

Mr. CHABOT. It is certainly a factor. But the United States is a pretty substantial country on the globe, and we had a lot of involvement there and our officials were meeting with their officials and there were relationships, and yes, they certainly had to agree with it. But the effort that was made and ultimately the decision to pull all the troops out, I mean it is mind-boggling to think looking back where we are now and how different things probably would have looked had we done something different.

I have only got 1 minute left so let me shift gears to one other thing. With what is happening with the Christians especially, I know there is persecution going on with lots of other people besides Christians, but this convert or die mentality that is now in action wherever ISIL is in control is something that, I mean you think almost 2,000 years ago in the Roman persecutions these were decisions that people made back then and in the modern world that people are faced with those kinds of decisions.

So I would just urge the administration to work with any resources we have available to us to push back on that with every fiber that we have as a nation. And if you want to comment on that I would welcome it.

Mr. MCGURK. I would just say, Congressman, I agree with you 100 percent. Just last week I saw Bishop Warda in Erbil and also I saw the Chaldean Patriarch in Baghdad discussing this very question. The Christian enclaves in northern Iraq, they are looking for some resources to provide local security, control. They are now in areas controlled by the Kurds.

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We have discussed this with the Kurdish regional government, about how we can incorporate individuals from these areas to provide security in their local areas, such as a police force just to provide security on the streets, and that is something we are discussing. But this has the attention of the United Nations Security Council, it has the attention of the entire world.

As I said, the entire Iraqi Parliament today, again its first real session, they have had have stood all in solidarity with the Christians in Iraq. This is something that both reveals the true nature of who ISIL is. It is not a tribal uprising reflecting legitimate grievances. It is a vicious terrorist organization with a 7th century ideology that nobody accepts, and it has to be uprooted and defeated.

But I agree with you 100 percent, your comments, and I will also follow up with you more and specifically on the Christian question.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, my time has expired.

Chairman ROYCE. We go now to Mr. Brad Sherman, ranking member of the Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade Subcommittee. Brad Sherman of California.

Mr. SHERMAN. When we conquered Germany and Japan after World War II, we were not embarrassed to by occupying those countries. We stayed as long as we needed to stay. We wrote the Constitution for Japan, and we very slowly turned over power to the right people. In Afghanistan, and especially in Iraq, we were embarrassed to be there, defensive as to whether we were somehow imperialists. And we were so anxious to turn over the government that we got Maliki and Karzai, neither of which would sign a Status of Forces Agreement with us just to illustrate one of their many faults.

Ms. Slotkin, the New York Times reported on the front page that the Iraqi security forces are so deeply infiltrated by either Sunni extremist informants or Shiite personnel backed by Iran that any American assigned to advise Baghdad's forces could face a risk to their safety. Is that accurate?

Ms. SLOTKIN. So I just want to caution that the report is draft classified and that represents a leak of information, from someone who seems to know something about it but not clearly to have read the full report.

Mr. SHERMAN. Put aside the exact phraseology. How dangerous, and we are in a known classified situation here, how dangerous is it for American service personnel to be advising Iraqi units?

Ms. SLOTKIN. That is exactly what we went over there to try and assess. Those are draft, they are classified, and I am not able to get into the details right now.

Mr. SHERMAN. Okay.

Ms. SLOTKIN. It was a threat when we were there, and with 170,000 troops the insider threat is always a threat and we would have to either work to mitigate it or not work with units if we thought it was an overwhelming threat.

Mr. SHERMAN. There is this idea that we should bomb ISIS. How important is it that we have reliable ground spotters to make sure we are bombing the right folks and not bombing civilians? Can we run a bombing campaign without anybody we trust on the ground?

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Ms. SLOTKIN. I mean the United States does not indiscriminately bomb targets. We have a rigorous procedure that involves having verification of the targets we are trying——

Mr. SHERMAN. Do we need humans on the ground for that procedure to work effectively?

Ms. SLOTKIN. It is significantly better if we have reliable folks on the ground to give us verifiable information.

Mr. SHERMAN. And the Iraqis. First, do the Iraqis have the technical expertise to be those spotters? Do they have good people that can tell us where to bomb and what to bomb?

Ms. SLOTKIN. There are some very capable Iraqi units that would be capable of doing that.

Mr. SHERMAN. And then if the New York Times is correct, however, they may deliberately give us the wrong coordinates because it may meet the political needs of either the Sunni extremists or the Shiite extremists that we bomb civilians. So we don't know unless we know both the technical competence and the political objectives whether we can rely on those spotters.

Mr. McGurk, does Maliki have to go?

Mr. MCGURK. Again there is an ongoing process to form a new government. Maliki's party won about 91 seats. You would have to have 165 seats to form a government, and it remains to be seen whether or not that can happen. I would also add that, were we to take a position on such a thing, it would obviously not be either in our interests, or it would dramatically effect the process.

This is a uniquely, uniquely Iraqi process with Iraqi political dynamics, and the outcome will reflect that process. The new Speaker of the Parliament, for example, is someone that nobody would have picked to be the Speaker of the Parliament. He kind of came out of nowhere, built the coalition, did the politicking and built a very broad coalition among Sunni, Shia, Kurds and everybody, and won an overwhelming vote——

Mr. SHERMAN. Has Maliki announced positions that would seriously entice Sunnis and Kurds to believe that they would get a fair shake under a third term for Maliki? Has he publicly announced a platform that has serious appeals, makes serious concessions to those other two communities?

Mr. MCGURK. He has a platform that has all of those principles in it. It is just difficult after 8 years, and given the kind of, a lot of the bad blood that has developed, and the mistrust that which makes it very difficult. But a lot of his platform——

Mr. SHERMAN. So he has got some great vague platitudes in his platform that nobody believes. I yield back.

Chairman ROYCE. We go now to Mr. Jeff Duncan of South Carolina.

Mr. DUNCAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks for this very informative hearing. Mr. McGurk, in your written testimony you commented about the state of U.S. intelligence. In advance of the fall of Mosul and this most recent ISIS offensive, you said "In the earliest days we had to acknowledge that we were operating in a fog." You also say that intelligence collection after the fact has improved.

But I am troubled by the fact that we were operating in the fog in the first place. Because in February, you testified here and you

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told us exactly what ISIS wanted to do. Take control of western Iraq, challenge the Iraqi Government for control of Baghdad and foment the sectarian conflict. For most of the past year, ISIS has already been in control of about half of Mosul. There were plenty of other clear signs that ISIS was a rising threat, really, over the past year, 1½ years, 2 years. We have had eyes watching what was going on in Syria and surely watching the Iraqi and Jordanian borders.

So knowing all this and knowing all that we did of what you testified in February, why weren't we doing more to collect intelligence all along? Please help us understand what led to the decision not to have robust intelligence collection efforts against this terrorist group.

Mr. MCGURK. Well, as I did testify, we began to move assets into the theater. What my testimony is speaking to is the immediate crisis response. And in the immediate days after Mosul, it was fog and rumor and friction and chance as you get into in these circumstances. And what I was trying to get at in the testimony is that it was very difficult for us to know specifically what was happening.

And it was very difficult for us to know the extent of ISIL's advance southward, down the Tigris River Valley, which is why, in a meeting with the President in the earliest hours of this crisis, the decision was made immediately to significantly surge U.S. air assets over the skies of Iraq. Again, to go from one a month to 50 a day including manned aircraft, and that was something that the Iraqis also welcomed.

In response to an earlier question, I just want to say the Iraqis, despite whatever may have happened in 2011, since this crisis, we have been embraced. Our presence has been embraced from top to bottom and they are actively seeking our assistance. To have U.S. military assets in the skies of Iraq is something that was extremely controversial even as late as last fall.

Right now they welcome us there. They want us there. And it is a very different situation than it was, even when I was here testifying in February, in terms of the Iraqi appetite for our direct support.

Mr. DUNCAN. And here is the thing. Folks in South Carolina and folks I talk to all over the country are concerned of what is going on in Iraq because we lost so many men and women there. Not only lost in the loss of lives, but lost in their ability to be productive citizens and being, whether it is PTSD or whether it is an actual physical injury, why did we lose those men and women and turn around and lose control over an area?

And we can watch and tell the heat signature, the plume, what rocket launcher it came from and where it shot down a plane in Ukraine, but we spent a lot of money, a lot of effort in Iraq and yet we are blind? We are in a fog? I just find that hard to believe, especially with so much going on in the region. With what was going on in Syria and what ISIS and ISIL were doing, huge columns of vehicles headed toward Mosul? How did we miss that?

And so that is a rhetorical question I don't expect you to answer, but I think it is important. I think Americans are going, how did

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we miss this and why did we spend so much money and loss of life in Iraq to see what is going on now? Why can't we do more?

And I noticed in your statement that you said we have set up the JOC in Baghdad and Erbil. And I am glad we have, I just wonder why it wasn't set up sooner. You said, I think, 6 weeks ago it was set up. This thing has been going on for awhile, so why didn't we work with the Iraqis to try to thwart that?

I am concerned about our friends in the Kurdish region. I am concerned that they are going to get surrounded. We didn't lose a single American life in the Kurdish region during the Iraq war, not a single American, because they are friendly. So I want to ask this about the Kurdish region. What is the administration's position on Kurdish oil exports and what actions are we advising American energy companies that might be operating with the KRG to take?

Mr. MCGURK. Our position on energy exports from Iraq is very clear. We support getting as much oil out of Iraq as possible and on to international markets, from north to south, and we also support doing that in a way that reinforces the overall stability of all Iraqi regions.

We have an obligation to say, when people ask, that there is legal risk for taking oil without an agreement. We worked very hard to broker an agreement and actually had an agreement on the table that was a very good one as early as 4 months ago that would have gotten all of the oil out of the Kurdish north flowing and on to international markets, and also had revenues coming from the south to the KRG.

That agreement didn't succeed for a number of reasons, and one of which is that we are in the middle of a high political season in Iraq. It was an election season. You had an election on April 30th and now you are working to form a new government. I remain confident that in the process of forming a new government we can work with all sides to have a solution to this very important issue.

The budget that is being debated in the Parliament right now in Baghdad is about $120 billion budget. There is about $17 billion there for the Kurdistan region, and we want to make sure those resources get to Kurdistan. We have been very clear that the decision the Prime Minister made to cut off salary payments to the Kurdish north because of its oil dispute is completely unacceptable, and should be reversed. We have made that very clear. And so again, we are working very closely with our Kurdish partners in the north, and also with the government in Baghdad to find a solution to this issue. And through the process of forming a government we have real opportunity to do so.

Mr. DUNCAN. My time is expired. I thank Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROYCE. Will the gentleman yield for minute? Because I wanted to follow up on a specific statement. What I want to follow up on was the comments you made about having eyes in the air and the difficulty of that.

Now in August 2013 that is when a request was made originally by the Government in Iraq for assistance. In March 2014 they actually delivered an official letter to the White House asking for help. It is certainly true that originally they wanted armed drones to do this work, but that was a negotiating position and they swiftly fell back to the position of, okay, you won't give them or sell them to

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us, then can you use them in order to hit these jihadist units? And all of this incurs long before June when Mosul falls, right?

So I just wanted to put that in context, unless there is something I don't understand, Mr. McGurk. But that is from the entreaties or the discussions that I have had, that was my understanding of this, we were trying to get these drone strikes on these units even before they came over the border in order to give some kind of cover for the infantry on the ground.

Mr. MCGURK. Again, the sequence was helping the Iraqis with their Hellfire strikes with the information and the fusion cells we set up, and then moving—the request for our direct support came in May. And I think as Elissa has spoken to, our ability to do anything effectively requires a much more granular picture on the ground. Frankly, we have that picture now. We did not have that picture as early as March.

Chairman ROYCE. Well, as expressed, we don't understand why you wouldn't. Because you have also got signals intelligence, you have got human intelligence. And frankly, you had a green light there for eyes in the air once they delivered a letter to the White House of an official request in March 2014. So this doesn't add up, but I will go to Dr. Ami Bera of California.

Mr. BERA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I want to thank the witnesses. I think it is disingenuous for us to lay what is happening in Iraq as a failure here in America or as a failure of any particular administration here in America. I think our troops did everything within their power to give Iraq a chance and we shed blood. We spent billions of dollars to give Iraq a chance.

One of my staff members is an Iraq war veteran, a wounded warrior, Matt Ceccato, and just chatting with him, as veterans all around this country are saddened by what they are seeing in Iraq, because they did lose their colleagues. They did lose many men and women, as we all did, in Iraq. But we gave them a chance. We really did. It is also tragic to see what is happening to some of the civilians that served side by side with our troops supporting our efforts in Iraq and the danger that they live under.

So we really do have to do everything that we can to try to ensure their safety and serve their visas as we can. But this isn't a failure of an American administration. This is a failure of Iraqi administration. And I think everyone in this body would be consistent, but this is a failure of the al-Maliki administration. There were Sunni tribal leaders that fought side by side with us in the surge that were made promises that were broken by al-Maliki, systematically dismantling some of Iraq's own defense forces in a way that we saw what happened in Mosul, and they fell apart.

Now I think, Ms. Slotkin, in your own statement you said there is no military solution in Iraq. You indicated that the Iraqi people must do the heavy lifting on their own. Can you expand on that and tell us what you think that heavy lifting would be?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Well, I think Brett's spoken to some of the ideas that are currently being batted about in Baghdad to sort of get toward that political solution. I mean the point that I would make as we look toward any potential decisions the President makes for future action is we couldn't solve the Iraqi political problems for them when we had 170,000 troops. We couldn't have solved them

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if we had kept in 10,000 troops in 2011, and we are not going to be able to solve them through our military support today regardless of what we decide to do.

The Iraqis have to get at the underlying political differences in their system. ISIL is extremely capable, extremely dangerous, but they are getting tacit support from the Sunnis on the ground in these areas. And it is critical that the central government solve those problems so that those Sunnis turn away from ISIL and toward their government.

Mr. BERA. And Mr. McGurk, would, in your assessment, if a new Iraqi Government was a more inclusive government that gave equal say to the Kurds and the Sunnis and gave them a voice, do you sense that some of our former allies and some of these tribal leaders would take a different view on ISIL?

Mr. MCGURK. Yes, but I think we have to be very clear that ISIL is a military force, and so we have seen tribes try to take it on, and they failed. We trained about 1,000 Fallujans in 3 months of training, with the Iraqis in 3 months of training. And in their first engagement, trying to move into the northern reaches of Fallujah a couple months ago, they lost. That is because ISIL is a highly effective, sophisticated military organization. It is far better than the al-Qaeda in Iraq that we fought. And in order for the awakening really to get moving in those days, it took a lot of effort on our part to degrade that network, which then allowed the awakening and the tribal network to really rise up and fight it.

So I think it has to be taken in parallel. There will have to be some military pressure against ISIL. At the same time, there has to be a new government with political accommodations made to isolate ISIL from the population. But they have to run in parallel to be effective.

Mr. BERA. So if we are thinking this through strategically, if a new government forms in Iraq that is much more inclusive, the Sunnis within Iraq become much more open to not supporting ISIL, our allies in the region, potentially, from the Sunni side can also provide some support as well as looking at ways to cut off the funding and support of ISIL. Would that be a logical thought through scenario?

Mr. MCGURK. Yes. And I would just add, I don't think Sunnis support ISIL. And there was an election on April 30th in which ISIL said anyone who votes, we are going to kill you, they were very clear about that, and in Ninawa Province alone we had almost a record turnout, a 1.1 million people, all Sunnis, voting for new leaders.

But ISIL threatens, they intimidate, they rule by brute force, and so that is one reason why they need to be confronted and isolated. But yes, that is a sequence. First, we have to continue to find ways to pressure ISIL, but a new government providing a new platform, and also with new regional engagement. And we will hope very much that when there is a new government, and there will be, that the regional capitals fully embrace that government, so we can really make some inroads in regional integration, which has not made many inroads over the last couple of years.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN [presiding]. Thank you very much, Dr. Bera.

Mr. Kinzinger?

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Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to point out I am a veteran of Iraq. I spent a lot of time in Balad and it is sad to see this gone now.

I will be honest with you all. I think with this, I mean everybody is kind of not saying it, but what it seems like is the administration is just paralyzed. They just don't know what to do. There is this fear of getting involved in Iraq again and getting sucked into Iraq with this reality that the worst case scenario in the Middle East is playing out right before our eyes and, frankly, this administration bears some responsibility for that.

I would also like to remind folks that in America we threw out the Articles of Confederation. We had Articles of Confederation, we threw them out and drew up our Constitution. Political solutions are not something that we can put in the microwave and expect to happen in a very short amount of time. This takes time.

And what we are seeing right now with the encroachment and the growth of ISIS or ISIL, whatever you want to call it, is the worst case scenario and therefore we have to have a political solution before we do anything. I would much rather see a flawed Iraqi state in which we could then work a political solution than to see ISIS in a capitulated Iraqi state.

Mr. McGurk, the chairman touched on this. Does a March 2014 request exist to the White House for what could be included as air strikes?

Mr. MCGURK. I will check on all the correspondence we have had.

Mr. KINZINGER. I mean you would know if a March 2014 letter was hand delivered to the White House requesting assistance for the Iraqi Government, right?

Mr. MCGURK. I have a letter from May. I have a letter from May in which there is a very clear and specific request. I think a lot of correspondence before then again was not——

Mr. KINZINGER. So you don't know of this existing, so you can get back to me if it exists, in fact, if there is a March 2014——

Mr. MCGURK. I will get back to you and go chapter and verse with all of the correspondence we have had with the Iraqis on this question.

Mr. KINZINGER. Okay. And then another question, we talk about how we didn't have the intelligence picture. And as somebody that flew ISR it is fairly easy to get that quickly. We should have had an intelligence picture from when the Iraqi Government was asking us for assistance in August. That should have been the time at which we said let us get this granular picture. But now we have it.

So we have the official request in May. We have a granular picture now. What is the hold up? And I think what the answer is is not so much that we are still waiting for a political solution. Again I think it is this idea that the administration simply is paralyzed and doesn't know what to do. Meanwhile, that vacuum is being filled by Iran and by Russia providing equipment to the Iraqi Government at a time when we are sitting around saying, well, I can't believe they are taking this assistance. But they are fighting for the survival of their very way of life.

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So this is time where we have to say, look, we are the United States of America with a very robust military capability, surely we can have the intelligence if we decided that May was the time we were going to start looking at this, surely in 3 months we could have figured out a picture and begun to get engaged at that point.

I also want to talk about the issue of Hellfire missiles. A Hellfire missile has a warhead of 20 or 18 pounds depending on what kind of a missile it is and what its target is. These Cessnas that have been retrofitted in Iraq, I don't know how many they can carry but I guess it is not that many. An Apache helicopter carries, I think, 16 of these Hellfire missiles.

The idea of an Apache helicopter, one, taking out an entire camp of ISIS or ISIL is unrealistic with 16 of these Hellfire missiles. So the idea of a Cessna with one, maybe two, Hellfire missiles being the thing that destroys these camps in Syria and in Iraq is crazy. I think we need a robust air strike campaign on behalf of the United States.

When our troops on the ground get engaged in combat we are very good. The Marines and Army are very good at fighting off the enemy. But the first thing they do is call for robust air support to help them win that engagement. This idea that the Iraqi military melted away or that the Iraqi military can take back ground with a Hellfire missile is unrealistic when our own troops, who are very well trained and who have a great background and know how to fight wars, call on A–10s, F–16s, B–52s, B–1s to come in and do close air support in order to retake ground.

So I just am saying that I am renewing the call to the administration for massive manned military air strikes to push back this very, very bad cancer that is encroaching on the Middle East and also to target those in Syria, to understand that the Syrians are a very good fighting force and ISIS is getting their training in Syria and then spilling it out to the rest of the place.

So I do appreciate you all's service to your country. I appreciate you being here. I know it is a tough time, but with that I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Kinzinger.

Ms. Frankel of Florida.

Ms. FRANKEL. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the panel for being here. I think two or three questions. First, could you explain what makes the ISIL terrorists such a greater threat than the other terrorists that we hear about all the time? And what is the most immediate threat to the United States and to our allies?

Second, I have heard a lot of questions which I think are appropriate as to what did we know, what could we have done maybe to have avoided the threat of ISIL in Iraq and in Syria.

My question is how far back should we go? Could you give me your opinion of the war in Iraq, the invasion of 2003, and how that relates to the rise of ISIL? Because I think there are many of us in this country who think that was an act of malfeasance by our country, by our President at the time who is not the current President, and by this Congress, to send our country to war in Iraq.

So I would like you, if you could answer those two questions, and if you have time to explain to me the difference between what might be some people say is paralysis versus first doing no harm?

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Ms. SLOTKIN. Sure. So I can speak to the terrorist threat and why ISIL is particularly different, why we are paying such close attention to it. I think it is the territory they now hold; the self-financing that they are capable of; not getting donations and living off of donations, but the self-financing, self-sustainment; the span of control; the capability of some of their fighters, they are very, very experienced and war-tested.

And then the number of Western passport holders that we know have traveled to Syria and are engaged with both ISIL and other groups there, the ISILs stated intent—we are coming for you, Barack Obama, rhetorically—and then what we know to be active plotting in Europe.

So all those things in combination make them, I think, probably, it is safe to say, one of the most capable and the best funded group in the region right now, and that is what makes it such a particular concern.

Mr. MCGURK. I can talk a little bit about the history, although the questions you ask are really questions I think historians will sort out. But ISIL is a group that we know, it is al-Qaeda in Iraq. Its first leader was Zarqawi. Zarqawi was in Iraq before the war. Zarqawi was kind of the leader who really focused on this effort to spark sectarian conflict.

If you go back to their writings at the time, in 2004, it might have looked preposterous at the time, but his plan has always been—and I testified to this in some detail in my hearing here in February—to establish a state in Iraq and Syria. That has always been his focus.

And he said we are going to do it three ways. We are going to attack the Shia majority in Iraq consistently, we are going to attack their marketplaces, their mosques, their playgrounds until they respond. And then he says we will unite the Sunni ranks behind us. That has always been his strategy. He also will attack any Sunni, tribal sheik, cleric, anyone who disagrees with him. That is very clear in his doctrine.

And also he will attack Kurds, to tear open that very narrow fabric which exists in the disputed territories in northern Iraq. That was his stated strategy in 2004, it is now the strategy of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. So we know this organization. We fought against it. We know what their ideology is. What is particularly scary about it now is that it basically effectively controls the state, and it has ambitions to take the mantle of the global jihad away from al-Qaeda central and Ayman al-Zawahiri. So that is why it is a significant threat, and that is why we are here.

And we thank you again for the time to testify about the situation today. And that is why we look forward to consulting with you to get a handle on it over the weeks and months ahead.

Ms. FRANKEL. I am not sure if you answered my question about the war in Iraq.

Mr. MCGURK. I have to say, Congresswoman, I will let the historians sort out what happened over the last 12 years.

Ms. FRANKEL. Madam Chair, I waive the rest of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Frankel.

Mr. Cook of California.

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Mr. COOK. Thank you, Madam Chair. Once again, Ms. Slotkin, I apologize. I am usually the one that asks the question about the role of Qatar and you give me the same answer. And I understand what is going on. But I did, I am very, very concerned about Maliki and his credibility which to me is absolutely zero.

We have got the folks that are representing Camp Liberty, Ashraf, and what has happened in the past and you cannot overlook that. But what scares me even more was ISIL, ISIS, and the fact that they went in there and they defeated four divisions. In the history of the United States Marine Corps, the Marine Corps, the U.S., has never had four divisions in one place at one time. They had six in World War II. They had three on Iwo Jima.

Since 1775, an organization like that has never, and you had four divisions? And you have a group that had pickup trucks, AK–47s, and what have you? It just shows that in terms of at least from a military person, the total lack of credibility in the Maliki government, and obviously they don't have any trust in the military in the functioning or lack of functioning of federalism.

So I am very, very pessimistic of the future in terms of reconstructing the military, particularly when Maliki and whoever is in there, if they are going to continue to go to the Iranians for the Revolutionary Guards, the Quds force, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And with Hellfire missiles falling in the wrong hands, I am just very, very nervous about this whole thing.

It has been touched on a little bit, but I think from the United States that once again we have to recognize the changing geopolitical situation. It has already been discussed about Jordan and I think you are absolutely right. If we are not ready to defend Jordan or be there for them, I think we are going to be in serious trouble. I am a strong, strong supporter of Kurdistan. We have to recognize that and the point has been made about not one person, military person was killed in Kurdistan.

The other one I want you to—and I have been bloviating, but I want to get your take on Turkey on how in the past they might have been an influence because they surround this area. And Turkey lately, and obviously Turkey is a big, big player where they are also a member of NATO, and the fact that some of their behavior with the Muslim Brotherhood is very, very scary. Could you address that please?

Mr. MCGURK. Turkey remains a close partner of ours. And yesterday, in fact, at the State Department, we had almost an all-day dialogue with a very senior delegation from Turkey about a whole host of issues including ISIL. We recognize broadly that in order to really squeeze ISIL, I mean when we focused on al-Qaeda and Iraq back in the 2007–2008 time frame we called it an Anaconda strategy to squeeze their finances, their foreign fighters, everything.

And it is really three prongs. First, you have to shut off the infiltration networks, and Turkey plays a big part of that. But Turkey will remind you that a lot of the source countries in which global jihadist fighters are coming into Turkey and then entering in Syria also have to do their part. We have to stop these people before they get on the airplanes, and then stop them if they do make it into Turkey, before they get into Syria. That is critical.

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Secondly, denying them a safe haven in Syria. And that is why we are focused again on training the moderate opposition, and finding a way to control space to ISIL and Syria, and then helping Iraqis control their sovereign space in Iraq. That is extremely difficult, but that is the three-pronged approach that we have to try to take against this.

And the conversations yesterday with the Turks, led by our Deputy Secretary Bill Burns and their Under Secretary Feridun Sinirlioglu, were focused upon that, and I think we have a fairly common understanding of the way forward with the Turks on this.

Ms. SLOTKIN. I don't think I have much more to add other than I think they have been living with the threat emanating from Syria for a long time. They are extremely focused on it. They are extremely focused on what is happening in Iraq, and as a NATO ally we are talking with them every day. So I feel confident we know what they are focused on.

Mr. COOK. Okay. I plan to beat the clock, if you could just comment again on the Quds Force, the Revolutionary Guard and their influence right now and whether they have replaced the American military completely.

Mr. MCGURK. We remain the partner of choice for the Iraqis. I think there is no question about that. They have $11 billion into the Federal Reserve and our FMS account, including about $193 million just last week. Again, I was there during this crisis and there was a major vacuum, and Iran has stepped up in some ways to fill the vacuum in ways that we made very clear to the Iraqis were not particularly helpful.

Mr. COOK. Okay, thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much.

Mr. COOK. I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Appreciate it.

Mr. Connolly of Virginia.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Madam Chairman. And welcome to our panel. I have to say that in listening to many of your answers I hear a lot of aspirations and I share them too, but I am not quite sure whether they are realistically achievable any more. For example, Ms. Slotkin, you made a pretty forceful statement in response to one of my colleagues' questions that there is no substitute for a strong central government located in Baghdad.

Well, Ms. Slotkin, we have been there for 12 years. We have poured $1 trillion into the country. We have lost precious men and women in fighting there. What, pray tell, do we, how does one achieve this strong, central, effective, functional government in Baghdad?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I think this is what the Iraqis are grappling with right now. And as they form their government they will have some fundamental questions that they have to answer about the future of their state. Brett has talked about some of the ideas that are on the table.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I know. But I guess my question carried with it the inference that maybe we need to reassess. The Vice President of the United States wrote an op-ed piece before he became Vice President, with Leslie Gelb, roundly dismissed at the time, in which he said, frankly, what ought to happen in Iraq, what is like-

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ly to happen as well is the sort of segmentation of Iraq into three autonomous zones, a Sunni zone, dominated zone, a Shia dominated zone and a Kurdish dominated zone.

Well, looking at the map today that may be looked upon in retrospect as a more prescient view than was accepted at the time. Maybe we have to give up on the idea, after 12 years of trying, on a strong, central, functional government that holds sway over the whole country based in Baghdad.

Ms. SLOTKIN. I can't speak to the retrospective piece, but I can speak to what it would mean right now if somehow we decided to give up on a strong government in Baghdad, centered in Baghdad, who is in charge in the Sunni dominated area? Some very, very scary people. And so while I think the idea may be interesting on paper, I just think in reality, based on who is in charge in these large swaths of the country right now, it is a much less favorable option than having a strong government in Baghdad.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Of course, I take your point. I mean the question is whether we should continue to pour blood and treasure into that hope. At what point do we recognize that we are going to have to at least modify that hope because it is not going to happen? Or not going to happen anytime soon, realistically. Because if we continue to pursue a policy however noble and desirable that is not realistic and is going to get us in a lot of pain and difficulty, that is not a good foreign policy.

Mr. McGurk?

Mr. MCGURK. If I could just make one point, Congressman, I think what I laid out in my opening testimony is a way forward that is focused upon the hard realities on the ground that we face now, that is within the fabric of the Iraqi Constitution, that can harness their very significant national resources to empower local communities in order to deny space to these terrorist groups. And that is a model on which recognizes the principle of devolution of authority and federalism, which is embedded in the Iraqi Constitution.

Were Iraq to wish to develop more regions such as the region that exists in the Kurdish region, there is a process for doing that through the Iraqi Constitution.

Mr. CONNOLLY. But Mr. McGurk, again I agree with you that that ought to be how it works. But the Maliki government has significantly alienated huge swaths of its own country and in the process has opened the door for receptivity to ISIS. That is one of the reasons they have had so little difficulty in addition to the collapse of the four divisions which we helped train and equip.

But they have lost a huge amount of political goodwill, if they ever had it, amongst their own countrymen, and how do you restore that in a time frame that stabilizes the situation and can forcefully push back ISIS?

Mr. MCGURK. Well, one way to deal with that was over, we had to make sure the election happened, and happened on time. That is something that we focused very hard on over the last 8 to 10 months. The election did happen. It was a credible election. Again 14 million Iraqis turned out to vote.

The Iraqis are now forming their government on their constitutional timeline. They chose a speaker. That kicked off a timeline

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for 30 days to choose a President. Once there is a President there is a 15-day clock to name a Prime Minister, and then 30 days to form a cabinet. And we will get through, the Iraqis will get through this process along their timeline, and they will come out of it with a new government.

And again we remain hopeful that that government will reflect a fairly broad consensus among the principal groups. Right now the presidency, for example, is a choice. The Kurds are coming up with their nominee for the presidency, and we hope to have that done soon, and then that will kick off the timeline to choose the Prime Miniser. That happened to be in this political vacuum period in which they have to form a new government, but once they have a new government it will begin a process of a very genuine dialogue about these very important issues you face, and I hope that with this committee we can be a part of that dialogue and inform them as best we can.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Madam Chairman, my time is up. I just hope that the State Department and the Pentagon both hear bipartisan skepticism. Goodwill, hope you are right, but the skepticism being expressed in this committee today is very bipartisan.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Connolly. And now we turn to Mr. Perry of Pennsylvania.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. McGurk, in violation of U.S. and U.N. Security Council sanctions, what material support is the Maliki government receiving from Iran currently that you know of?

Mr. MCGURK. The question of sanctions under those provisions is something we are looking at very closely because it is a very complicated question, actually.

Mr. PERRY. All right, then just tell me what kind of material support you know of and then we will try to figure it out from there.

Mr. MCGURK. Well, it is another question I think I would like to maybe follow up with you in a closed session and we can discuss it in some detail.

Mr. PERRY. All right.

Ms. Slotkin, do you know?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sir, I really do think in a closed session we can much more specifically answer your question.

Mr. PERRY. All right, I get your point. Well, knowing that Iran is supporting the insurgency in Yemen, is the Yemen model as sponsored in some sort by the President, is that realistic or viable for Iraq? Isn't it fairly complicated, knowing that Iran is essentially an adversary, an enemy of the United States that we are barely working with on a treaty regarding their nuclear program which many Americans, myself included, disagree with?

I mean what position do we put ourselves in and how can we trust the Maliki government to move forward knowing they are complicit and relying on Iran, and can we expect the folks in Camp Ashraf to receive better treatment knowing that they are collaborating, the government is collaborating with Iran than they are now?

Ms. SLOTKIN. So I would say, I want to make sure I understand your question about the Yemen model and whether, it seems like

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you are implying that the Iraqi Government is completely under the sway of the Iranians.

Mr. PERRY. No, I don't think it is completely under the sway. I think that considering the Yemen model as viable in Iraq is myopic and irresponsible, and knowing that we are working at cross purposes even mentioning that is, kind of indicates cluelessness at the point of the administration, in my estimation. I just want to get your feeling on it.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Again I am sorry. I am not sure I am completely understanding your question. If the question is could the Yemen model work in Iraq, if that is what you are asking——

Mr. PERRY. Is it viable? Could it work? Yes, it could work if we had different people in Iraq in power and a different circumstance, in my opinion. But that is not the circumstance. So is it viable now? Do you see the Yemen model as viable now in Iraq?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I think, if I understand what you mean by Yemen model, meaning working very closely with the central government——

Mr. PERRY. Yes.

Ms. SLOTKIN [continuing]. On a program, I think that first of all, right now we are working with the Iraqis on the ground. We have people there that need, our own people that need security, and we rely on the Iraqis to provide part of that security in Baghdad.

Mr. PERRY. We understand that.

Ms. SLOTKIN. I think what we are trying to figure out is the answer to that question.

Mr. PERRY. Okay.

Ms. SLOTKIN. By sending folks out and understanding the Iraqi security forces and whether they are viable.

Mr. PERRY. Seems a little irresponsible to come out with those kind of statements when you are trying to understand the circumstance. But moving on.

So Japan and Germany, essentially defeated by coalition forces including the United States, probably didn't want us to stay if they would have had their choice. And I wasn't around then and I suspect you weren't either. But let me ask you this. What responsibility does the administration have, understanding they disagreed with our actions, the United States Government's actions in Iraq, and I am respecting that, but what responsibility do they have to secure the gains of the previous or any administration? Do they have any? It is an opinion question for you.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Do the Iraqis have a——

Mr. PERRY. No, our. What is our administration?

Ms. SLOTKIN. What is our responsibility? I mean——

Mr. PERRY. Do we have any?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I mean we have invested incredible amounts of blood and treasure.

Mr. PERRY. Right, right.

Ms. SLOTKIN. I mean my husband is an Army officer. We met in Iraq. It is an extreme, as a country we have invested so significantly in that country. So of course we are invested in making sure that it continues as a viable state and doesn't become a breeding ground for terrorists.

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Mr. PERRY. So having spent time there as I did, do you believe circumstances on the ground would be different had we maintained a SOFA? And using the excuse, and I see it as an excuse that the government couldn't get itself together enough to get support for it, we get that. They didn't want us there. Well, that is a big surprise. Didn't we have some responsibility to make sure it happened? I mean the President has got a pen and a phone. If he would have said we are staying, what are you going to do about it, what things would be different? Do you think things would be different now if we would have stayed in some fashion, providing some security, providing some intelligence, providing some oversight of a fledgling government in a very difficult circumstance that we earned a victory for and literally almost installed piece by piece?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I think that things may have been different, but I don't know that we wouldn't be in a similar situation to where we are today based on the fact that we still lack political accommodation at the heart of it in Baghdad.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Perry.

And we turn to Mr. Weber of Texas.

Mr. WEBER. Thank you. Mr. McGurk, you said, "Our objective is to ensure that ISIL can never again gain safe haven in western Iraq." In your opinion, has ISIL, ISIS, whatever we want to call them, today operated with lightning speed?

Mr. MCGURK. It depends on how you characterize lightning speed, Congressman. But——

Mr. WEBER. In your opinion, would you characterize that as lightning speed?

Mr. MCGURK. Their advance through Mosul, I think, even caught them off guard, frankly.

Mr. WEBER. So Baghdadi could have taught Hitler something about blitzkreig, wouldn't you agree?

Mr. MCGURK. I am not sure quite how to answer that question but——

Mr. WEBER. Okay.

Mr. MCGURK [continuing]. ISIL has proven to be a very effective, capable——

Mr. WEBER. Do you remember how Ted Deutch asked you today, how confident are you the Shiites can withstand repeated attacks? In your exchange with him, do you remember that question?

Mr. MCGURK. I believe so, yes.

Mr. WEBER. Okay. Here is my question for you. How confident are you that Camp Liberty can withstand more attacks?

Mr. MCGURK. Again, I want to mention I visited Camp Liberty a number of times.

Mr. WEBER. Have you ever stayed there?

Mr. MCGURK. Well, I have not stayed overnight there, but I have stayed, and I have lived in trailers under repeated rocket attacks, so I do know what that feels like, and I have discussed that with them.

Mr. WEBER. Do you think they will all be killed before or after Baghdad falls?

Mr. MCGURK. Again Congressman, I think that is a bit of a hyperbolic question, so all I can say is that they are——

Mr. WEBER. But you don't think it is a real threat?

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Mr. MCGURK. They are located on the airport facility. They are located very near where our people are located and watched very closely.

Mr. WEBER. You don't think it is a real possibility?

Mr. MCGURK. Again, I am happy to come address the specific security apparatus we have at the airport during——

Mr. WEBER. Okay, well, do we just write them off?

Mr. MCGURK. Certainly we don't write them off. It takes a substantial amount of our time and energy every day focusing on the question of the MEK, and we have a senior advisor at the State Department who does this full time.

Mr. WEBER. In your remarks earlier you said, let me tell you why this matters, one of the statements you made. Does Camp Liberty matter?

Mr. MCGURK. Yes, of course it matters. And that is why, again, we have a senior official at the State Department dedicated to this issue full time reporting to the Secretary, and he will be on a plane tonight to——

Mr. WEBER. Does it seem odd to you that we have got some, in the current calamity on the border, this crisis on the border we have got some 60,000-plus crossing our southern border and getting "refugee status" or asylum over here, but we can't get the same thing for Camp Liberty? Does that seem odd? Is that ironic?

Mr. MCGURK. As I think, Congressman, the administration has made a decision to bring in up to 100——

Mr. WEBER. Oh, they have made a decision all right.

Mr. MCGURK [continuing]. Up to 100 residents of Camp Liberty into the United States, and we believe that is a significant decision which also should enable other countries to do the same.

Mr. WEBER. Do you see all the yellow jackets behind you? Have you seen those? Okay. Do you think that is an important issue for them?

Mr. MCGURK. Again, it is a very important issue to us.

Mr. WEBER. Well, the actions don't seem to follow up that idea. You and I talked back on the February 5th hearing about T-walls and they began to be put in place for a short time and then seemed like they ended pretty quickly thereafter.

I would say not only is it an important issue for those who are here to support some action on the administration's part to help Camp Liberty, but obviously it is also important for Camp Liberty, and I think the administration has let them down. Somehow we need to make that a priority. What is the answer for those Camp Liberty residents? How do we make this a priority before it gets so bad that there is no hope for them? What is the answer to that?

Mr. MCGURK. We are determined to do everything we can to get them out of Iraq. Their safety will depend on their getting out of Iraq. And that is why we have to find third countries to take them. We have made the decision to take in 100.

Mr. WEBER. Should we encourage them to go over to Mexico and come up through the southern border?

Mr. MCGURK. Again, if the Mexicans were willing to take a number of residents we would certainly support that decision, as we would any other country around the world. That is why we literally have a senior adviser who is focused on this question. He is on an

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airplane tonight. He has gone to countries throughout Europe, Scandinavia, East Asia, everywhere, and we are making some progress.

But we need to keep at it, and we need the support from the international community. That is why we have put $1 million into a new U.N. trust fund, so even countries that might not have the resources are able, and able to take these people in and bring them to safety.

Mr. WEBER. Ms. Slotkin, I have 30 seconds left. What do we need to do?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sir, we are trying to figure that out right now.

Mr. WEBER. You are trying to figure that out? How long have they been over there?

Ms. SLOTKIN. They have been over there since mid to late June. And I believe it is important to have a prudent, thoughtful, responsible approach before we just jump in. As someone who has worked——

Mr. WEBER. It is not going to be very prudent if they all get killed before we do something now is it?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Sir, I think that it is critical that we have a thoughtful regional approach to this problem before we jump in.

Mr. WEBER. Well, I hope you will encourage the administration to get real thoughtful real fast.

Madam Chair, I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Weber.

And pleased to yield to our new member of our committee, Mr. Clawson of Florida.

Mr. CLAWSON. Those from Camp Liberty, thank you for coming. You have made your point with the newest congressperson here. The two of you, thank you for coming, and thank you for your service to our country. And I am sure that this is not an easy moment for you, and it is never easy to be the point of the spear in this kind of situation, so I respect you for coming and speaking straight and ask you to speak straight to me too.

To use your words, Mr. McGurk, there is some hard realities here, right, and I cannot overestimate those realities. People are dying and these are people that don't deserve to die. And we have been there for awhile. It feels like a perilous situation to me as our enemies consolidate friends, allies, and territory which will certainly someday threaten our friends—Israel—and maybe even us, if I am getting the drift of what is going on here as the newcomer.

And then in that backdrop it feels like we have bet on a team that is divided, right, maybe artificial, artificially put together, and a coach that we and you as an administration don't have full confidence in. That sounds like a bad situation for us to be in. As I hear the talk today, it also feels that this lack of leadership therefore causes a deterioration in safety, and where there is a deterioration in safety there is even a deterioration in culture. People losing lives in their own culture feels like a bad situation and it threatens us in the longer term, if I am capturing correctly what is going on here. So in that vacuum of chaos, you all are making decisions that will affect us eventually and people on the ground immediately.

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For my constituents, I think what would be good would be two things. Number one, each of you give me a very brief summary for those that aren't experts, that don't know all the missiles, that don't know all the things involved here. What is your summary way forward? Where is the administration taking us? I don't want to get into partisan bickering, I just want to understand where we are going and where we will be 6 months from now.

And then secondly, I would like to understand what can this committee can do to help save lives and protect people? I am not interested in assigning blame. I think, Mr. McGurk, you said it best. History will sort that out. I think it is more helpful if you tell us where we are going, and if we like that path how we can help to get us there. In laymen's terms so I can understand it and therefore take it to my constituents. I know this question is a little different than most, but does it make sense to you two?

Mr. MCGURK. Yes, Congressman, I thank you for the very thoughtful question, and again, I think explaining this to your constituents is critical about why this matters. And a lot of the history on Iraq, I think it can have a clouded view upon why this really continues to matter to the United States.

Mr. CLAWSON. But I want you to look forward with me.

Mr. MCGURK. So let me just say three things. First, when this crisis began, as I stated in my written testimony, we immediately had to get a very precise, very accurate eyes-on picture on the ground. And I just want to speak from my own firsthand experience.

President Obama immediately ordering a surge of intelligence assets, moving an aircraft carrier into the Gulf, ordering special forces to go on the ground to get an eyes-on picture. That was all done—there has been a lot of talk about the 2011 SOFA. That was all done under another permanent agreement we have with the Iraqi Government called a Strategic Framework Agreement. That is a permanent framework agreement which allows us to assist the Iraqis in ways that protect our interests. That is number one. We could get a clear picture of what is happening on the ground. We are getting that now, and it will become clearer over the days ahead, particularly through the assessment that is being undertaken by the military.

Second, we had to get the political process on track. Iraq just had an election. Fourteen million Iraqis turned out to vote, almost a 62-percent turnout. A higher turnout than most elections all around the world. That showed the democratic aspirations of the Iraqi people. We can't let them down. They want to see a new government formed, a new Parliament has just convened in Iraq with 328 members. They are now working to form a new government. We have to be behind them as they do that, and encourage them to do so. And as soon as that new government is stood up, and it will be stood up, we need to embrace it and give it every chance to succeed under our Strategic Framework Agreement because it is in both their interests and ours, and it is also in the interest of all that we have sacrificed in Iraq.

So that in a nutshell, we have to get a better picture on the ground, better eyes on to know exactly what is happening and we are doing that. Secondly, we have to get the political process on

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track which reflects not just the political elites but the aspirations of 14 million Iraqis who voted. And once that government is stood up we need to embrace it, and give it every chance to succeed.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much.

Mr. CLAWSON. So in summary, we wait until the new government is formed and then give that government full support?

Mr. MCGURK. We are not waiting. We have people on the ground now doing significant things under the Strategic Framework Agreement, which exists with the future Iraqi Government and the current one and the one before that.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much.

Mr. MCGURK. So we have people on the ground now doing——

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. And now we will turn to Mr. Marino of Pennsylvania, and after that Mr. Collins of Georgia.

Mr. MARINO. Thank you, Chairman. Good afternoon, the two of you. Thank you for being here. Unfortunately, and I don't mean to be facetious, but you two have drawn the short stick to be here and put up with us. And as I tell individuals that come and testify, you should be accommodated for that in your reviews. It is a tough group here.

But I think we all have one intention in mind, it is just a different way that we seem to want to go about it. The issues, there is no question, complex is not enough of a word to explain what is going on over there. And I understand that the two of you have been over in Iraq and so you know firsthand what things are like. I visited there twice, short periods of time.

Ms. Slotkin, Mr. McGurk, you can respond to this if you would like to, several moments ago you stated that there would be no difference if troops were left in Iraq, 10,000, just pick a number, but troops left there would have no impact on what is taking place in Iraq now to repel ISIL. Did I understand that correctly?

Ms. SLOTKIN. So let me clarify because this just came up a couple of minutes ago as well. So it is not that there would be no difference. I don't know exactly how it would have been, but I know that it wouldn't have forced the Iraqis into a political solution that only they can make.

Mr. MARINO. None of us know how it would have been, but I am glad you clarified the political statement.

Ms. SLOTKIN. It is the political piece and that is critical.

Mr. MARINO. Yes, it is critical. But I somewhat disagree with that assessment because I have read and studied this extensively, probably not nearly as up to date as the two of you are, but I have been reading military reports, listening to experts from generals to commanders to tacticians, et cetera, and they disagree with that assessment.

If there would have been troops left there—and make no mistake about it, a lot of this is Maliki's fault. But I was reading an article in The New Yorker that said if troops would have been left there, first of all, it would have had an impact on Maliki that they probably could have clipped his wings on preventing him from doing what he should have done and didn't do, but it also would have an impact on ISIL as well.

So could you please tell me what the difference is now since President Obama has sent some troops over there now? If not leav-

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ing troops there would really not have made a difference, what is the intent then behind sending troops now? Would that not make a difference? Do you understand my question?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I believe so.

Mr. MARINO. All right, thank you.

Ms. SLOTKIN. First, I just want to clarify that we have sent in an additional, it is up to 775 troops.

Mr. MARINO. Right.

Ms. SLOTKIN. 475 of that total are for the security of our people and our facilities.

Mr. MARINO. The Embassy, the airport, et cetera.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Exactly. The other 300 are there to assess and answer those very questions, right. And I think the important thing that has changed since even just a year ago is the threat from ISIL that that poses to us, to our allies, to our partners, and the importance that puts on pushing back on them.

So I think if your question is what more could we do, we should have left troops and now we are considering putting them back in, we are trying to figure out whether additional folks on the ground would help in that fight.

Mr. MARINO. And I am ambivalent on this as well because I don't want to see another American come home in a body bag. I have been on the ramp and saw the ceremonies where two people were sent back to my state and it is something that I do not want to experience again. But we did have the civil war under control by the time the troops left Iraq. Do you agree with that assessment?

Ms. SLOTKIN. I agree that the sectarian violence that had been raging in Iraq at the height of the war was significantly diminished, significantly, by the time that we departed.

Mr. MARINO. Mr. McGurk, do you have any comments on my questions?

Mr. MCGURK. I just want to say, first, it is a tremendous honor to be before this committee all the time. The breadth of this committee, and the veterans, and everything else, it is a tremendous honor to be here and to discuss this with you.

Mr. MARINO. Thank you.

Mr. MCGURK. And I think again, 2011, we just, the requirements to get something through the Iraqi Parliament was not possible, but we still had the Strategic Framework Agreement. And where we are now is that we have been fully embraced to do training, to do advising, to do all sorts of things, and what we are undertaking at the direction of the President is a very careful review of what we can do to be most effective. So I think, hopefully, in our future conversation, we will have more a concrete way forward on terms of what we have decided will be the most effective because that is the conversation that is ongoing now internally.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much.

Mr. MARINO. I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Marino.

And Mr. Collins of Georgia is recognized.

Mr. COLLINS. Thank you, Madam Chair, I appreciate it. And looking back, I am not going to do that especially with my experience, but I will just say this in reference to my friend from Pennsylvania. I have been there when they were put in body bags, and

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I am appalled at the fact that we did so little in the SOFA agreement and do not accept the political answer that politically we couldn't have got it through. Because also there was a political issue here at home in which the President had made a promise to get out.

And so there was political aspects on both sides, so let us not kid each other at least in this committee that we are doing that. So I will be honest about that and I won't go back. But I want to go forward and look at this, because that is very much of a concern for me for the price that, madam, you shared, maybe your own husband in being over there. We spent a lot of blood and treasure, and to leave it like it is now is very, very concerning for those of us who were there.

Going forward is a concern for me and one other part is the March, in Iraq. Iran has used its close relationship, frankly, with Iraq and it was growing toward the end anyway to use airspace to fly weapons to Hezbollah and other partners in their fight in Syria. The U.S. has time and time again asked Iraq to stop allowing Iran to use their airspace. What is the most recent activity the Obama administration has taken to have Iraq cease these flights?

Mr. MCGURK. Congressman, we continue to discuss that issue in some detail with the Iraqis. It is a very complicated question because it is unclear in terms of what is on specific flights, and the Iraqis aren't going to completely shut down their airspace. It is an ongoing conversation. Again it is a conversation that contains some sensitive information, which I would be happy to follow up with you in a different setting.

Mr. COLLINS. And I agree, and there is a lot of conversation that might not be needed to have here in an open forum such as this. But I will also say there is a lot of things we are dealing with the Iranians on right now that there could be some issues that we could use and pressure points and other sides that I am very concerned about their continued involvement in this basically messed up soup of Syria.

I want to move though to the AUMF. I want to move to the President's 775 men, which 475 of course are there for additional Embassy security and advisors to the Iraqi army. Under what authority is the President deploying this force?

Ms. SLOTKIN. So as part of our, the 775 in total were notified in the three War Powers Notifications that came over to the Hill.

Mr. COLLINS. All right. Using in, so Article II still adheres to the War Powers Resolution. They have been there for roughly 30 days at this point. After we are at the 60-day mark, which authorizing force will the President use? Is he going to try and use Iraqi AUMF or is he going to try to use the GWOT AUMF? Which one is going to, because I mean which one are we looking to use? Catch one of you.

Mr. MCGURK. I will just say, Congressman, exactly what the President said, that any future decisions regarding our military posture in Iraq will be done in very close consultation with the Congress. And obviously one of those issues to be discussed will be the specific legal authorizations through which the administration determines the President has that authority.

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Mr. COLLINS. Okay, so at this point in time though the question would had to have come up that we are about 30 days away from using this. So the question would have had to at least be we have thought about this, which, are you going to come back and ask for a new authorization? Are you just going, this at some point in time has to be asked, and basically just saying, well, we will think about in 30 days, frankly, is not satisfactory to me.

Mr. MCGURK. Again, Congressman, there is an number of legal authorities through which the President is able to deploy military force around the world. The specifics in this case are something that will be determined both within the administration, and also in very close consultation——

Mr. COLLINS. Well, let us discuss the Iraq AUMF for just a second. If he intends to use the Iraq AUMF, at what point does the Iraq AUMF without congressional repeal or at some time in not using it, when is it after this, this administration chose to withdraw in 2011, the authorization is still valid, or are we just going to keep it for ad infinitum or are you going to go to the GWOT? I think there needs to be, this is an honest question that needs to be discussed. How long are we going to have that on the table?

Mr. MCGURK. It is also an issue, it is a legal issue which I would defer to the lawyers in the administration to provide specific answers.

Mr. COLLINS. Well, I am sure they are not going to beat down our door to come talk about it at this point, so that is why you are here unfortunately for that. And like I said, this is just concerning. I mean again I believe we left with no real strategy. We are now having to deal with it. And for those of us who did deal with it on the ground are very frustrated about it.

And one last thing before, again I appreciate you coming up to the Hill. We are just going to have a difference of opinion. I know you are limited by what you can or cannot say, which is understandable but not satisfactory. But to the Camp Liberty supporters in Iraq, look, I want to tell you each, the State Department and any other agent, the United States needs to continue to employ all necessary means to protect those there. It is our obligation, it is our right.

And frankly, studying it forever is not the option. That needs to stop. The next time I hope someone comes to this committee they are actually saying, here is what we are doing not that we are looking at it. Because that is very disingenuous in a lot of ways because we have been looking at it for a long time now.

But with that I think there is a lot of big questions here, Madam Chair, that are left, especially concerning use of force. And I would like to have a healthy discussion about that and not just a, well, we will get to it later because there is a lot of legal options. I am an attorney as well, so yes, there is a lot of legal options here, but we need to decide what are we going to do it under and not just make it up on the fly because we are not sure what to do.

Madam Chairman, I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Collins. Thank you, Mr. Engel. Thank you for the panelists and the audience and the media. With that our committee is adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 12:54 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

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APPENDIX

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

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FULL COMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

Edward R. Royce (R-CA), Chairman

July 23, 2014

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at http://www.ForeignAffairs.house.gov):

DATE: Wednesday, July 23, 2014

TIME: 10:00 a.m.

SUBJECT: Terrorist March in Iraq: The U.S. Response

WITNESSES: Mr. Brett McGurk
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Iraq and Iran
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Ms. Elissa Slotkin
Performing the Duties of the Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
U.S. Department of Defense

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202-225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general, including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices, may be directed to the Committee.

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COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MINUTES OF FULL COMMITTEE HEARING

Day *Wednesday* **Date** *07/23/14* **Room** *2172*

Starting Time *10:18 p.m.* **Ending Time** *12:54 p.m.*

Recesses *0* (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

Edward R. Royce, Chairman
Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session [✓]
Executive (closed) Session [ ]
Televised [✓]

Electronically Recorded (taped) [✓]
Stenographic Record [✓]

TITLE OF HEARING:

Terrorist March in Iraq: The U.S. Response

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

See Attendance Sheet.

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

None.

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes [✓] **No** [ ]
(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

Rep. Connolly

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED *12:54 p.m.*

Edward Burrier, Deputy Staff Director

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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

FULL COMMITTEE HEARING

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Statement for the Record
Submitted by the Honorable Gerald Connolly

Last week, the Subcommittees on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade (TNT) conducted a joint hearing titled "The Rise of ISIL: Iraq and Beyond." Having examined the origins of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), it is appropriate that we are now evaluating the U.S response and our options going forward. However, I am afraid that if one thing has been made clear by this Committee's study of the situation in Iraq, it is that the United States faces no good options in Iraq.

And those today who place blame for Iraq's current crisis at President Obama's doorstep conveniently ignore the facts on the ground and their own complicity in support of the 2003 invasion that was ill conceived, lacked any Plan B, and failed to reconstruct a post-Saddam nation.

To understand the origins of the current crisis, we must first consider the landscape that proved fertile ground for the instability and chaos we are witnessing today. In other words, our necessary context is the legacy of the 2003 Iraq War. This context is instructive for how brutal terrorists groups proliferated in Iraq and why our options for addressing this growing source of regional instability are limited. Further, the failure of the Iraqi government to govern responsibly and resist Iranian campaigns to foment sectarian strife has deprived the U.S. of a reliable partner in the effort to bring stability to Iraq.

The lineage of ISIL, the terrorist organization wreaking havoc in the Iraqi countryside and some urban areas, can be traced to Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), a vicious organization founded in the wake of the destruction of the Iraq War and headed by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The organization was infamous for indiscriminate attacks on civilians, beheadings, and kidnappings. It was out of AQI that the Islamic State of Iraq, later to be known as ISIL, was formed by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The radical movement has since spread to Syria and most recently launched several sweeping offensives in Iraq that have moved from Mosul to Tikrit, Tel Afar, Baqubah, and Haditha.

It is an offensive that ISIL conducted earlier this year that provides insight into the difficult choice that faces the U.S. in deciding the course of action in Iraq. In January 2014, ISIL forces gained control of the city of Fallujah, the site of building-to-building combat in 2004 that resulted in more than 100 fallen American soldiers and over 1,000 casualties. Despite the significant sacrifice made by American forces in 2004, the decision whether or not to return to Iraq in 2014 to regain control of the hard-won city was not a clear one and one that this Committee wrestled with in a February 2014 hearing titled, "Al-Qaeda's Resurgence in Iraq: A Threat to U.S. Interests."

The American people are understandably wary of another intervention in Iraq. The President announced on June 26 that the U.S. would send up to 300 military advisors to Iraq, and just last week the Pentagon received a report from personnel on the ground that concluded that American troops serving as advisers in Iraq would be at risk due to the infiltration of the Iraqi army by Sunni extremists and Iran-backed militia. A recent poll conducted by Politico found that only 19 percent of respondents believe we should become more involved in Iraq. After 9 years of a deeply unpopular war and 4,486 American soldiers killed, there is a very limited appetite among the American public to commit additional soldiers and resources to the crisis we are witnessing in Iraq. That is true whether you think the U.S. should intervene or not.

Further hindering the ability of the U.S. to intervene and take effective action in Iraq is the government led by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. After Prime Minister Maliki refused to grant U.S. troops legal immunity and the subsequent departure of U.S. forces in 2011, Maliki purged the government and military of effective leaders

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along sectarian lines that favored fealty over competence. This was at the urging of the Islamic Republic, and, not surprisingly, this bred resentment among disaffected Sunni populations. According to a Pentagon statement earlier this month, "we know that there are some Iranian operatives -- Quds Force operatives -- inside Iraq that are training and advising some Iraqi security forces, but more critically, Shia militia. And we also know that Iran has flowed in some supplies, arms and ammunition, and even some aircraft for Iraq's armed forces." The Pentagon has further stated that it respects Iraq's right to seek assistance from regional partners, but it has reiterated that assistance efforts should not inflame sectarian tensions. An Iraqi government that cannot reach out to moderate minority populations, much as U.S. forces did to turn the tide in Iraq, will prove to be a counterproductive partner.

Just last week, the Council of Representatives of Iraq took its first step towards establishing a new government. Sunni lawmaker Salim al-Jubouri was elected speaker of the parliament with 194 votes in the 328-seat body. The Council will have 30 days to elect a president who will ask the leader of the largest voting bloc to form a government. At that time, the most contentious issue of forming a new government, naming a prime minister, must be resolved. We must watch our counterparts in Iraq closely for overtures of cooperation before we even consider engaging in yet another fatally flawed collaboration.

Between an Iraqi government in flux, sectarian violence, brutal terrorist organizations, and troubling foreign influences, the U.S. is simply without a clear course of action in Iraq. I hope our witnesses from the Administration can begin to outline a coherent strategy going forward in Iraq that respects the American public's distaste for yet another foreign military entanglement.

[NOTE: Material submitted for the record by the Honorable Dana Rohrabacher, a Representative in Congress from the State of California, entitled "Iraq Threat Assessment," is not reprinted here but is available in committee records.]

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IRAQ: THE U.S. RESPONSE

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

JULY 23, 2014

Serial No. 113–190

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IRAQ: THE U.S. RESPONSE

HEARING

BEFORE THE

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

JULY 23, 2014

Serial No. 113–190

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