

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE HEARING ON THE NOMINATIONS OF GENERALS CURTIS SCAPARROTTI AND LORI ROBINSON

APRIL 21, 2016

MCCAIN: Good morning. The Senate Armed Services Committee meets this morning to consider the nominations of General Curtis Scaparrotti to be commander of the U.S. European Command and Supreme Allied commander of Europe, and General Lori Robinson to be commander of U.S. Northern Command and commander of North American Aerospace Defense Command.

We congratulate both of you on your nominations. We thank you for your decades of distinguished service to our nation and for your willingness to serve once again.

Of course, we know today would not be possible without the support and sacrifice of your family and friends, some of whom are with us this morning.

As is our tradition, we hope you will take the opportunity to introduce your family joining in today.

General Scaparrotti, you seek to lead a command very different from the one your predecessor, General Breedlove inherited just three years ago.

When Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine and annexed Crimea, dismembering a sovereign nation in the heart of Europe for the first time in seven decades, General Breedlove led with clarity and purpose. He pushed EUCOM and NATO to adjust the scope, scale, and seriousness of the new strategic reality we face in Europe -- that will be the urgent and unfinished task left to you, General Scaparrotti, if confirmed.

Over the past two years, Vladimir Putin has been learning from bloody experience in Ukraine and Syria that military adventure pays, that diplomacy can be manipulated to serve his strategic ambitions and that the worst refugee crisis since World War II can be weaponized to divide the West and weaken its resolve.

The only deterrence that we seem to be establishing -- establishing is over ourselves. Indeed two years after Russia invaded Ukraine and annexed Crimea, the administration has still not provided Ukrainian forces for the legal assistance they need to defend themselves, and which the Congress has authorized for fear of quote, "Provoking Russia."

This fear of escalation only encourages the kind of aggressive dangerous behavior we saw last week, when Russian fighter jets conducted simulated attacks within 30 feet of a U.S. Navy destroyer in international water and performed dangerous maneuvers of 50 feet of a U.S. surveillance aircraft in international air space.

The European Reassurance Initiative is a positive step -- first step to re-establishing deterrence in Europe, but it's just that, a first step. Russia is building an advanced anti-access area denial network from Kaliningrad to Crimea to the eastern Mediterranean. Russian submarine activity in the North Atlantic and the Mediterranean is at the highest level since the Cold War.

Russia's military modernization and expanding operations demand a comprehensive review of U.S. force posture in Europe and the resources necessary to support it.

MCCAIN: But a strong response to Vladimir Putin's aggression can not come from America alone. With a revanchist Russia on it's doorstep and a flood of refugees pouring across its borders, NATO has to step up.

Our NATO allies not only need to reverse declining defense budgets, and honor their pledge to reach the two percent target within a decade, they must also invest in critical military capabilities that further alliance interoperability.

A strong NATO is in America's national security interest. Nowhere has that been clearer than in an Afghan. Our allies have sacrificed blood and treasure fighting alongside us for 15 years. Now the balance of our shared mission, and indeed the fate of Afghanistan, hangs in the balance. The president announced he intends to reduce U.S. forces in Afghanistan, from the current level of 9,800 to 5,500 by the end of the year.

Such a reduction will have profound consequences, especially the end of the U.S. train, advise and assist mission at all, but the highest -- at all, but the highest levels of the Afghan military.

This is at the same time ISIL is now on the battlefield, Al Qaida is resurgent and the Taliban is on the offensive. Just this week the Taliban conducted a suicide bombing in Kabul, that killed over 60 people and wounded more than 300, most of whom were civilians, including women and children.

The president has a decision to make. Maintain or increase the current level of U.S. troops, given conditions on the ground, or continue with a calendar-based withdrawal. The right answer is clear. But whatever his decision, the president needs to make it as soon as possible.

The uncertainty surrounding America's commitment to Afghanistan discourages our allies and encourages our enemies. NATO's Force Generation Conference is in June. And the NATO summit in Warsaw is in July. At stake is whether NATO forces will remain in western and northern Afghanistan, or whether those areas will be seated to the influence of Iran or criminal drug rings.

Have no doubt, NATO will follow America's lead on troops in Afghanistan. It's up to the president of the United States to show that leadership. General Robertson, the committee looks forward of hearing your assessment of the threats to the U.S. homeland that NORTHCOM is tasked (ph) to defend, especially the development of advanced missiles capable of carrying nuclear payloads by Russia, Iran and North Korea.

We'll be interested to hear your views on the importance of the U.S.-Mexico security relationship. Heroin, largely produced in Mexico, continues to ravage communities across our nation and demands a renewed effort to combat this scourge, both in our streets and at it's source. We must reckon with the fundamental truth, that the real driver of drug trafficking is demand for drugs here at home.

And while it is clear the Mexican government must do more within its borders, our government needs to finally get serious about border security. As former SOUTHCOM Commander General John Kelly recently testified about our southern border, and I quote, "The border is, if not wide open, then certainly open enough to get what the demand requires inside of the country."

While border security is ultimately the responsibility of the Department of Homeland Security, I'm deeply concerned about the lack of coordination between DOD and DHS along the border. During a recent visit that I made to Fort Huachuca army base in Sierra Vista, Arizona, I observed the army conducting training missions with its UAV fleet, despite these air crews flying along the U.S.-Mexico border, the training missions were not being coordinated with the Department of Homeland Security to surveil the border for drug trafficking activities.

This is unacceptable. Not only does military training benefit military readiness by providing realistic training in a real world, operationally relevant environment, it can also provide secondary benefit to DHS, counter drug and border security operations, by increasing situational awareness. DOD and DHS should be working to ensure training missions for UAV squadrons, ground sensor platoons, and other units are fully integrated.

General Robinson, I look forward to hearing your views on how NORTHCOM can contribute to enhancing interagency cooperation along our borders.

MCCAIN: Senator Reed?

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

I want to welcome the nominees and thank both of them for their extraordinary service to the nation and I recognize your families that served along with you. I've had the privilege of knowing Cindy Scaparrotti for many years.

Thank you, Cindy.

And General Robinson, your father, George, was a career force pilot. Thank you, sir. And your husband is a (inaudible) at Rhode Island, so you've got -- already got some momentum behind your nomination, so thank you.

The nominees before us today, as I've indicted, impressive records of service. General Scaparrotti is currently commander of the United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, United States forces career, previously served as director of the joint staff, Commander, international (inaudible) on and on, including command of the 82nd Airborne Division, so thank you, sir, for your distinguished service.

General Robinson has been commander now of the air component for the U.S. Pacific Command. He has been vice commander of air combat command, a and a list of other important assignments, so thank you.

General Scaparrotti, if confirmed, you'll be dual header as the Commander of U.S. European Command and NATO Supreme Allied Commander. You'll be asked to consider diverse array of challenges in the European security environment, including foreign fighter flows emanating from the conflicts in the Middle East and north Africa. The ongoing refugee crisis and its stabilizing effects (ph). And the specter of continued aggressive behavior in Russia, which the chairman has accurately and thoughtfully pointed out.

You will oversee a shift in U.S. efforts in Europe. In addition to the ongoing assurance efforts of our NATO allies and partners, we will be adding strategic investments to deter further Russian activities. The committee looks forward to hearing your views on these and other complex issues.

You'll also continue the important work EUCOM is doing with the Ukrainian government to identify military and security shortfalls and strengthen the Ukraine's capacity to defend itself. And the committee would benefit, again, from your views in this regard. And General Robertson, if confirmed, your responsibility as NORTHCOM Commander will comprise defending the homeland, which ultimately is the most important mission we have, including against us starts (ph) as crews and ballistic missiles, you'll have to support civilian authorities in this mission, not only in terms of potential conflict, but also natural disasters which effect the country.

And you will also have to maintain very close security cooperation ties with our neighbors, again, as the chairman pointed out, Mexico, in particular. And you will also be dual header as Commander of NORAD by national command with Canada which is a mission to provide aerospace warning, aerospace control and maritime warning at a time when the Arctic is becoming a rapidly -- another area of operational activities for the Russians and for ourselves and for many others.

So we look forward for hearing your views on all these issues. And thank you very much. Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN: As is -- custom of this committee, we need to ask some formal questions for the witnesses and just respond by "yes" or "no" if you choose to. In order to exercise its legislative and oversight responsibilities important to this committee and other appropriate committee of the Congress you're able to receive testimony briefings and other communications of information. Have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interests?

SCAPARROTTI: I have.

ROBINSON: Yes.

MCCAIN: Do you agree when asked to give your personal views, even if these views differ from the administration and power?

ROBINSON: Yes.

SCAPARROTTI: Yes.

MCCAIN: Have you assumed any duties or undertaken any actions which would appear to presume the outcome of the confirmation process?

ROBINSON: No.

SCAPARROTTI: No.

MCCAIN: Will you ensure your staff complies with deadlines established for request and communications, including questions for the record and hearings?

ROBINSON: Yes.

SCAPARROTTI: Yes, sir.

MCCAIN: Will you cooperate in providing witnesses and briefers in response to congressional request?

ROBINSON: Yes.

SCAPARROTTI: Yes.

MCCAIN: Will those witnesses be protected from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

ROBINSON: Yes.

SCAPARROTTI: Yes.

MCCAIN: Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify upon request before this committee?

ROBINSON: Yes.

SCAPARROTTI: Yes, I do.

MCCAIN: Do you agree to provide documents, including copies of electronic forms of communications, in a timely manner when requested by a duly constituted committee or to consult with a committee regarding the basis for any good-faith delay or denial in providing such documents?

ROBINSON: Yes.

SCAPARROTTI: Yes.

MCCAIN: General Robertson, we'll begin with you. Welcome.

ROBINSON: Thank you, sir. Good morning, Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed and distinguished members of the committee. I'm honored to meet with you today as the president's nominee to be Commander of United States Northern Command in North American Aerospace Defense Command. I'd like to thank President Obama for nominating me, as well as Secretary Carter and (inaudible) for the trust they've placed in me.

It is my privilege to be sitting next to my dear friend and colleague, Curt Scaparrotti, an incredible leader. It has been an honor to work with him in the Pacific these last 18 months.

I also wish to thank my good friend, Admiral Bill Gortney, for his outstanding leadership and 39 years of dedicated service to our nation. If confirmed, it would be a tremendous honor to build on his efforts in this extremely important position.

I would like to introduce my father, George Howard, from Jackson, New Hampshire, a 30-year Air Force veteran and RF-4 pilot. He also flew RF-1-1s in Vietnam. I've looked up to my father my entire life.

MCCAIN: I take it that his landings matched his number of take offs.

ROBINSON: Sir, he's here.

(LAUGHTER) I also -- my amazing sister, Carol. An incredible nurse, mother and wife. My full-of-energy niece Megan and her husband Bryan is here. Megan works here on the Hill.

And finally, the love of my life, my husband David. A retired two star reservist, fighter pilot, Thunderbird pilot and a retired airline pilot. I can tell this committee without hesitation that without his constant love and support, I would not be sitting here before you today.

Today we face a rapidly evolving and growing threat environment, both in the number of those who wish to do us harm and the complexity of tools at their disposal. Our country faces many challenging threats from within and abroad, ranging from threats such as home grown violent extremist, cyber attack, trafficking of drugs and other illicit products by transnational criminal organizations. Two threats posed by nation states such as Russia, North Korea and Iran.

In my experiences, the Pacific Air Forces commander and the air component for Admiral Harris, I'm intimately aware of the tenuous situation on the peninsula and throughout the region and understand the potential threats posed to the security of our homeland.

Defense of the homeland is a sacred responsibility and the No. 1 mission of the Department of Defense. If confirmed, I will work passionately to uphold the faith that the American people have placed in these commands and ensure that we remain vigilant and postured to outpace any potential threat.

If confirmed, I will also continue to develop strong relationships with our homeland partners and we're - so that we're prepared to provide defense support to federal, state and local authorities as requested when the American people need it the most.

And if confirmed, I will further strengthen our outstanding friendship with Canada, as well as growing our partnerships with Mexico and the Bahamas. I'm deeply honored and humbled to have been nominated for this position.

If confirmed, I look forward to working this committee to address the many challenges we face to defend our homeland and to provide defense support to civil authorities. I look forward to providing the committee with my candid views on issues and challenges and pledge to provide you my best military advice. I seek to establish a trusted relationship with each member of this committee.

In closing, I would like to thank the members of this committee and your staff for the unyielding support you provide the men and women in uniform and civilian service who protect our nation. These patriots are motivated by duty, honor and call to service and deserve the very best our nation has to offer.

Thank you for supporting them and recognizing the invaluable role they play in safeguarding our nation and our way of life. Mr. Chairman, thank you again for the opportunity to be here and for the committee's consideration. I look forward to your questions. MCCAIN: Thank you, and welcome to your family.

ROBINSON: Thank you.

MCCAIN: General.

SCAPARROTTI: Chairman McCain, Senator Reed and other distinguished members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to appear here today and I also wanted to thank you for the support that you provided to our service members, our Department of Defense civilians and their families who selflessly serve in the defense of our great nation and in the defense in our way of life.

I would also like to thank the Secretary of Defense and president for their trust and confidence and for nominating me to be the next Commander of United States European Command and Supreme Allied Commander of (inaudible).

In particular, I would like to introduce and thank my wife, Cindy, who is here with me today. She has been by my side for 37 years and has been an essential part of my service. Cindy has supported me during multiple deployments, cared actively for our service members and our families and raised our children, Mike and Stephanie. Like so many other military families, they've given much so that we can serve.

I'd also like to extend my sincere thanks to the Republic of Korea and United Nations Command contributing states for their steadfast cooperation and support in confronting a serious global threat in North Korea. Without doubt, my experiences leading and working within this great alliance in the midst of a critical security concerns have prepared me for this next command, if confirmed.

Finally, I would be remiss not to acknowledge General Philip Breedlove's leadership as the president EUCOM commander in SACEUR. His excellent leadership has been critical in meeting the many challenges in NATO and Europe and posturing the force for the future.

SCAPARROTTI: America's closest allies reside in Europe and uphold our shared democratic values.

Additionally, trans-Atlantic trade with Europe constitutes over half of the world's GDP. If confirmed, I will work diligently to preserve the trans-Atlantic alliance in these vital American and allied interests.

This is a pivotal moment within the European Command area of responsibility, as it faces numerous threats and strategic challenges. First, a resurgent Russia is contesting for power increasingly aggressive behavior that challenges the international norms, often in violation of international law. Furthermore, terrorism poses an immediate threat as the world witnessed with the recent tragedies in Brussels, Paris and Ankara.

Third, the significant influx of migrants and refugees has resulted in economic, demographic and humanitarian crises that are testing the social fabric of Europe. And finally, Israel continues to confront threats from Iran and from extremists within and along its borders.

The common thread among these threats is the attempt to weaken our NATO alliance and our European partnerships. However, I'm confident that our unity will prevail. If confirmed, I will do all that I can to leverage the full spectrum of military, political and economic capabilities of our alliance to address these critical concerns. It if confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee, with Congress, with our civilian military leadership, and with our European allies to advance our national interest, defense the United States and ensure a free and prosperous Europe.

If confirmed, I commit to service members and DOD personnel in EUCOM that I will do that I can to ensure their readiness for the mission and to provide support that they and their families deserve.

I look forward to working with this committee and with Congress to realize this commitment. I'm honored to appear before this committee with General Robinson. We've been serving together in the Pacific for some time, and she is a great senior leader and friend who has supported me and our forces to maintain the security of the Republic of Korea.

I thank the committee again for the opportunity to appear today, and I look forward to your questions. MCCAIN: Thank you. General Robinson, Senator Shaheen and Senator Ayotte who are here today will talk to you more at length about this issue of the epidemic of manufactured heroin that is an emergency in their state and in other states that -- the incidents of drug-manufactured heroin drug overdoses is, in the view of some, an epidemic. And that means that -- obviously our border is the transit point for much of this manufactured heroin from Mexico.

I was stunned down at Fort Huachuca that we're flying UAVs, but we're not flying them along the border, we're not coordinating with the border patrol. It's insane.

So I hope that you will look at the whole situation of this border situation -- the whole challenge about this manufactured heroin that is coming across our border and killing Americans in larger numbers to the point where I believe the governor of New Hampshire said that it's an epidemic.

Is that -- that correct, Kelly?

AYOTTE: (OFF-MIKE)

MCCAIN: All right. So we have got to do a lot more on the border. And we all understand posse comitatus, and we're not seeking military action on the part of our armed services, but we -- there are so many ways that coordination can be implemented that is not being done today. I hope -- I'd like for you to send a written statement to the committee on what actions you think need to be taken to try to stem this epidemic, which is killing so many Americans.

OK?

ROBINSON: Senator, yes, sir. I will commit to you that I will do that. And I will also commit to you very early if confirmed that I will go down and look at the border, so I understand it and put my eyes on it, just as you have on several occasions, and I will send and you written statement.

MCCAIN: And I will -- I will be glad to escort you. General...

ROBINSON: I would be honored.

MCCAIN: General Scaparrotti, thank you for your great work in Korea. We're proud of what you've done, and we have every confidence in you -- in your new assignment. There is a NATO Force Generation Conference in June, NATO summit in Warsaw in July.

Shouldn't we make a decision as to what our troops' strength level should be before those two conferences?

SCAPARROTTI: Sir, I believe we should come to terms with that before we enter those conferences, and if confirmed, I'll do my best and do an immediate review and present my best military advice.

MCCAIN: In Afghanistan today, we -- I referred in my opening statement about this latest attack in Kabul. In your assessment, is the security situation getting better or worse now that we have ISIS, we have Al Qaida, and a declaration by the Taliban that the fighting season has begun?

SCAPARROTTI: Sir, from what I've seen from my vantage point, it appears to be getting worse.

If confirmed, I look forward to the opportunity to go back to Afghanistan and talk to General Nicholson, who is doing a review, as well, and provide my advice.

MCCAIN: I -- I thank you for that. So if we go down to 5,500 as is the present plan, will there be no coalition presence in Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif?

SCAPARROTTI: Chairman, I'm not sure about that plan at this point. But I know that at some point in time, that was a part of the plan and I think that the lack of our presence in those critical areas in the north and the west that provide assistance and training to both the Army Corps headquarters and the Afghan National Police are very important.

MCCAIN: Four of the most senior officers in our military, General Neller, Milley, Selva and Dunford testified Russia is the greatest threat to America.

Do you agree?

SCAPARROTTI: Chairman, I do agree.

MCCAIN: In a New York Times story this morning, "Russian Submarine Threat Mediterranean North Atlantic," are you concerned about sea lines of communications in the Atlantic and Suez?

SCAPARROTTI: Chairman, I am concerned.

MCCAIN: Russian fighters made passes inside of 50 feet. You heard my opening statement.

What should be our response to this gross violation of international law?

SCAPARROTTI: Chairman, I believe that from a military perspective, we should sail and fly wherever we are allowed to by international law, and we should be strong, clear and consistent in our message in that regard.

MCCAIN: This may sound a little tough, but should we make an announcement to the Russians that if they place the lives of our men and women on board Navy ships in danger, that we will take appropriate action?

SCAPARROTTI: Sir, I will that should be known, yes.

MCCAIN: I thank you. General Breedlove said in March that less than 10 percent of EUCOM'S intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance ISR requirements are being met.

If Russia is our greatest threat, does that make any sense?

SCAPARROTTI: Sir, the actual allocation of intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance assets is a complex one, compared to what's -- you know, looking at what is going on day to day.

But I would say that given the threat in Russia, it's obviously a very high priority. And if confirmed, I'll review that and request the appropriate assets.

MCCAIN: I thank you, General. These are very interesting and challenging times.

And it's the view of this member that you are obviously very well qualified, but I hope that in your present position, you will demand that decisions be made that enable you to carry out your mission, which is not the case in my view today.

Senator Reed.

REED: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And let me begin by seconding the point that the chairman made that the decision with respect to the force structure in Afghanistan should be made soon, not later, simply because there are operational considerations that will stretch over many months once that decision is made.

And based on my visit in January, it seems that a stronger force rather than a smaller force would be more appropriate. But that's a view I think that you and General Nicholson will consider and make a recommendation to the president.

The issue of Russia is obviously central, General Scaparrotti. And the Ukraine is an area of proxy conflict between the two. And my position is that we have to succeed there, because if we succeed there, it will be the most effective way to dissuade any further, we hope, aggression or designs on other free nations in the area.

Your assessment of the Ukraine right now, what we can do, what we should do, what we're not doing?

SCAPARROTTI: Well, Senator, as you know, we've provided both training and assistance and a defensive means to Ukraine at this part. We've supported also our allies in doing the same.

If confirmed, it will be, you know, my task to, one, review the situation there. But secondly, I believe that we should continue both assistance and aid in the kinds of assets that they need in order to defend their country, their sovereignty and their territorial integrity, and that we ought to continue building partnership capacity to help them do that on their own.

REED: I think one of the other aspects that you're going to confront -- there are so many, and the chairman touched on many of them -- is this evolving hybrid warfare, which is a combination of initial cyber activities from undisclosed or at least difficult to determine sources, together with irregular forces,

together with obviously conventional weaponry and over the horizon, certainly, traditional military forces.

I presume that as you enter your responsibilities you're going to be able to, or begin to retool, if you will, NATO to be not only capable, but superior in this hybrid warfare.

SCAPARROTTI: Yes, Senator, I will. I think it's an important area, one that we're obviously challenged in today, not only in Ukraine, but throughout really the four flanks basically within Europe and also globally.

REED: Thank you.

And General Robinson, again, you have many responsibilities. One is you are responsible for the operations on the ground-based mid- course defense -- our national missile defense effort. Admiral Syring was testifying recently before the Appropriations Committee very, very thoughtfully about the need to fly before you buy; to test these vehicles, not simply to just put them up and hope they work.

Also to invest in additional capabilities to discern targets and the concentration being, at least initially, on the west coast. Is that something that you would support?

ROBINSON: Yes, Senator, I would support his priorities.

REED: Thank you very much.

The other issue, too, and it goes to so much of what you do, is the coordination with other federal agencies, particularly the (inaudible) security. And one of the issues we all face will be this trying to unwind sequestration. But the effects I would presume on your mission would be very difficult, it not only DOD, but DHS was not released from the binds and bounds of sequestration. Is that correct?

ROBINSON: Sir, obviously, I appreciate the committee's bipartisan act in having us be able to have a consistent budget. The effects of sequestration would be, if it came back, especially on the department for readiness and across the board, would be concerning. REED: One other of your responsibilities, since your dual hat is as NORAD commander, is the advance warning and the readiness to protect ourselves from any type of missile, either high-altitude or increasingly low-altitude. Can you give us any preliminary sort of notion of your sense of NORAD's activities and what you intend to do to ensure that they can protect us?

ROBINSON: Sir, as we defend with our Canadian partners to the north, I would go and continue to understand, if confirmed, where they are and what technologies and things we're thinking to the future, so that we can ensure both air and maritime warning to defend the homeland.

REED: Thank you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN: Senator Ernst?

ERNST: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

And thanks to both of you for being here today as well. And I want to thank your families for joining you and being supportive. And we appreciate your achievements as well. So thank you for joining us today.

General Scaparrotti, I am glad to see an enhanced effort with ERI in the president's budget request. As I do believe Russia is one of the greatest existential threats to our nation. But I am concerned that rotating an armored brigade combat team through Europe instead of permanently stationing one there fails to show our optimum level of commitment to our allies and to Russia as well.

And furthermore, as you know, the National Commission on the Future of the Army has suggested and made the recommendation that we include a forward armored BCT in Europe. And I would like to know from you if you believe that rotating an armored brigade combat team through Europe is the right level of commitment? Or do you believe that we should have one permanently stationed there? What are your thoughts on that, sir?

SCAPARROTTI: Senator, I understand the services' challenges in terms of in light of today's resources to provide a permanently stationed brigade at this time. But I personally believe a permanently stationed armored brigade in Europe would be best.

ERNST: OK. We have heard some differing opinions on that, but I appreciate that.

And also, we did speak yesterday, and thank you for coming by the office. I do appreciate it. In our meeting, I stated that I am concerned that Putin and the Assad regime has been weaponizing the migrants coming out of Syria. And they're being used to destabilize the European Union.

And we have heard those comments from General Breedlove as well. And I admire him. I think he's onto something there. And I am concerned that Turkey could do more to help stop the flow of refugees to Europe. And as you know, over the past couple of years, it's been pretty easy for terrorists to negotiate - they have lines of communication through Turkey, who is a NATO partner -- to plan and conduct attacks in Europe, as well as in Iraq and Syria.

So, I'd like your take on if you think Turkey is doing enough to stem that flow and cut those lines of communication to refugees and terrorists into Europe. And can Turkey do more? And if so, what do you believe they should be doing?

SCAPARROTTI: Senator, Turkey, as you stated, is an important ally, a NATO member that sits on the southeastern flank, really, I think at the nexus of the challenges you talked about. You have an aggressive Russia that they've -- they've encountered the escalation personally; counterterrorism; the ISIL threat; Syria; and the refugee challenge that you talked about.

It's important that they work hard to secure their borders; that they take part in the security operations that are ongoing to reduce the refugee flow. And if confirmed, I will obviously make it one of my priorities to understand their challenges and what we can do to better help them in that regard.

ERNST: OK. Thank you, General.

And I have been told that if the Pentagon named Operation Atlantic Resolve as an actual named operation, it could potentially enhance and make more effective the support and capabilities provided

to EUCOM. And if you are confirmed, then can you commit to me that you will look into whether or not naming Operation Atlantic Resolve as an actual named operation through the joint staff for -- would allow EUCOM to more effectively reassure our allies and deter Russian aggression in the near and long term?

SCAPARROTTI: Yes, Senator, I can commit to that.

ERNST: And can you also commit to me that if confirmed you will provide feedback to us whether or not the National Guard State Partnership Program, another one of my favorite programs, could be expanded to more nations in the EUCOM AOR to enhance our mil-to-mil cooperation and partnership between the U.S. and our European allies?

SCAPARROTTI: Yes, Senator, I'm a great supporter of the National Guard program, and I will report back to you on that.

ERNST: OK. Thank you very much.

And finally, General Scaparrotti, do you think Russia's use of hybrid tactics is making our life more challenging, especially through NATO? Just very briefly. I'm running out of time.

SCAPARROTTI: Yes, Senator, it is. They purposely keep it below the threshold that we would normally consider conflict.

ERNST: OK. Absolutely. Thank you, General. Thank you, General Robinson.

MCCAIN: Senator Shaheen?

SHAHEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you to both of you for your service, and congratulations on your nominations.

And General Robinson, I want to congratulate you this morning, too, for being named to Time's 100 most influential people in the world, actually. And we are very proud of you in New Hampshire for your nomination, for being named to Time's list. But mostly because you're a graduate of the University of New Hampshire. So, congratulations.

And General Scaparrotti, having had a chance to meet you in Afghanistan, I am not at all surprised to see that you have achieved what you have, and very much appreciate that you are taking over at EUCOM at a very challenging time for Europe.

General Robinson, I want to begin with you. What do you think are the greatest threats that are facing the homeland right now?

ROBINSON: Ma'am, as we talked -- as General Scaparrotti said, Russia is the greatest threat facing the homeland. But if you look inside -- inside the United States, the concern becomes with home-grown violent extremists.

So, those would be things that, if confirmed, that I would continue to track closely.

SHAHEEN: Thank you.

Senator McCain talked about the challenge from the heroin epidemic that we're facing in New Hampshire. I had a chance to visit the southern border last year. And talking to CBP agents about drugs coming across the southern border. They said those drugs are going up Interstate 35 to the middle of the country, and Interstate 95 to New England.

And can you -- I very much appreciate your agreeing to look at that firsthand and to make a written report to us. But can you talk about some of the things that NORTHCOM can do to address that heroin epidemic?

ROBINSON: Yes, ma'am. The epidemic is absolutely heart-wrenching. And if confirmed, I know that NORTHCOM will support federal agencies to provide military unique capabilities to support that drug problem.

And as the chairman mentioned, you know, to take a look and see what's -- with Huachuca and the UAVs, and can we partner there and look at that. So those would be a couple of things that early on that I would be looking at if confirmed.

SHAHEEN: Thank you.

General Scaparrotti, I just wanted to make sure I understood what you, how you responded to Senator Ernst. You said that you do believe it would be preferable to permanently station troops in eastern Europe. Did I understand that correctly?

SCAPARROTTI: Senator, if confirmed, I have got to look at the services situation. I understand -- you know, I request -- if confirmed, I would request a (inaudible) brigade and they (ph) determine how that's provided. But I think if I had the option of that or a rotational brigade, I would prefer a permanently stationed brigade.

SHAHEEN: I've had a chance to visit with officials from the Baltics and from eastern Europe a number of times over the last year. And clearly they are very anxious to see a very strong United States and NATO presence on the eastern border.

So, can you talk a little bit about why you think a permanent brigade would be preferable to what we're currently considering with respect to rotating troops in and out? SCAPARROTTI: Yes, senator. I think a permanent brigade -- and I'm assuming in Europe that we have the facilities that we could readily station those care for families, et cetera.

But a permanent brigade gives you a brigade that establishes relationships with the supporting elements of all forces from the United States as well as more permanent relationship and lasting relationship with all of our allies that they work with day to day.

And that can be done over time, better than a rotational force can potentially do it. It also developments relationships and operating procedures with all of those allies and with the forces that are in Europe.

So primarily, it's one that gives you a little more substance, a little more strength in relationship building. And obviously, a trained brigade with really less turbulence in terms that you can establish that they are assuming families are with them.

SHAHEEN: Thanks. I appreciate that. My time is almost over, but as both Senators McCain and Reed have pointed out, and as you know very well in some of your testimony, this is a very challenging time in Europe. They have a number of threats from Russia to the migration crisis. Can you talk about what else EUCOM can do to help reassure the Europeans and help work with them to encourage stability there?

SCAPARROTTI: Senator, I think that EUCOM is under Phil Breedlove, is on the right track. And you know, he's emphasized a very close relationships (sic), collaboration, developing better information and intelligence sharing, a close partnership with our allies where we assist each other in building capacity, building in interoperability.

And the exercise that force is in training. Finally, he's begun the proper planning that will reflect the change in the environment there that's taken place in the last two years. And I think if confirmed, I'll continue all of those things.

SHAHEEN: Thank you very much.

MCCAIN: Senator Wicker.

WICKER: General Scaparrotti, you know, in an interview this month, Secretary General Stoltenberg, the NATO secretary general, said that NATO has to be ready to deploy forces and to intervene again if needed. Do you agree with that statement? And how likely is it going to be necessary for NATO forces to intervene? And what is your assessment of the capability of NATO forces to do so?

SCAPARROTTI: Well, I think, first of all, that the senator -- that -- the purpose of the alliance is to provide a collective defense within Europe. And to do that today, it has to be able -- it has to be agile in its movement of forces.

So, I agree that it has to be able to deploy forces throughout Europe. Both the to -- what is commonly seen today is the threat on the eastern flag with Russia, but also where necessary to assist the allies and threats in the southern border to include terrorist threats, et cetera.

I think NATO is in a position today where we have capability, but obviously since the Oil Summit, the purpose has been to develop those capabilities cause we realize there has to be change in order to meet the new environment that we see in Europe today.

WICKER: And we're not completely ready to meet that new environment as a NATO alliance, are we?

SCAPARROTTI: No sir, we're not.

WICKER: Let me also ask you. Just, Secretary General Stoltenberg said this with regard to Afghanistan. He said we have been able to prevent that Afghanistan becomes a safe haven for international terrorists. Do you agree with that?

SCAPARROTTI: Senator, I believe that we have changed the conditions in Afghanistan, but I also believe we have much work to do to realize our objective of a stable democratic Afghanistan that is no longer a safe haven.

WICKER: He said we've been able to build a National Unity Government. Do you agree with that?

SCAPARROTTI: Senator, there is a National Unity Government. I believe personally there is much work to do there as well.

He said we've been able to build an Afghan national army and security forces of 350,000 soldiers and personnel.

SCAPARROTTI: Yes senator, 350,000 have taken part in the establish of that army and I'm proud of the services and the service that I've had in Afghanistan with Afghan Security Forces.

WICKER: And he said we've enabled them to take over the security in Afghanistan themselves. To what extent do you agree with that statement and is that another area where's there work to be done?

SCAPARROTTI: Senator, they are responsible for the security of their nation now. There is much work to do, particularly when it comes to enabling C2 and logistics. And it's important that we continue that assistance to develop that capability.

WICKER: So what your testimony is that these accomplishments have in fact taken place, but there are still concerns and still real work to be done to solidify them?

SCAPARROTTI: That's correct, sir.

WICKER: And Chairman McCain and Senator Reed have touched on this in their statements and questions. But do we risk losing these accomplishments by a further drawdown in American troops in Afghanistan? SCAPARROTTI: Sir, I believe strongly in the conditions that have to be met in order to meet a drawdown. So I believe in conditions being the driver, not time.

WICKER: And so are you prepared to say whether those conditions have been met? In other words, I'm echoing, I think, what our chairman and ranking member have said,. Does it make any sense with so much invested and so many accomplishments, does it make any sense for to us risk that by drawing down troops?

SCAPARROTTI: Senator, given my experience there, all of the sacrifices that we've made to realize our objective, so I think that we need to keep those objectives in mind and work hard to achieve them. And any drawdown should be set on conditions to achieve our end states.

WICKER: Well, we want to work with on you that and it just seems to me that we risk tossing away hard-fought and hard-won gains. So thank you very much. I look forward to your service.

MCCAIN: Senator Donnelly.

DONNELLY: Thank you Mr. Chairman and I want to thank both of the witnesses and your families for all your sacrifice. General Robinson, I want to recommend to you a book to read in your new job. And it's called "Dream Land."

And it's about the heroin epidemic that is not only sweeping our country, but in particular, this focuses a lot on Ohio and my home state of Indiana is right next door. And I just want to tell you always story. We have a small county in southern Indiana, Scott county, and a small town there, Austin, 4,200 people.

DONNELLY: In a town of 4,200 people, you had 190 HIV cases that came from dirty needles that were passed around while using prescription drugs.

And this epidemic has basically hollowed out and destroyed all of these families. And it spreads -- it goes -- it starts with the prescription drugs and then it goes to the heroin, the Black tar heroin that comes across from Mexico. And this book, "Dreamland" helps to describe how destructive it is of these towns and of these families.

We have a small -- my hometown, we lost a 20-year-old and a 19- year-old young man just from one of these parties. Going to be a freshman at I.U., going to be a freshman at Ball State. And it happens in town after town all across New Hampshire, all across Cape Cod, people think of it as a vacation place. Cape Cod has a heroin epidemic. And it's coming up from Mexico. And we desperately need you to be the point person in stopping this effort.

ROBINSON: Senator, thank you for that advice. I commit to you that I will read "Dreamland," independent of being confirmed.

DONNELLY: It is heartbreaking.

ROBINSON: Yes, sir, it's heart wrenching. As Senator Shaheen mentioned, you know, the epidemic that is happening in New Hampshire and my state of residence.

DONNELLY: Yeah.

ROBINSON: I commit to you that I will do everything that -- to understand it and to work with DHS to do just what you've asked.

DONNELLY: We see more than auto crashes now, more than car crashes, automobile related deaths, heroin and prescription drug related deaths have rocketed past that.

So we lose young person after young person. When I go to high school graduations and speak to them, I basically spend half my time begging them to keep an eye out for one another, because there is so much Black tar heroin coming across from Mexico.

ROBINSON: Senator, and I agree with you, too, not only the heart wrenching deaths, but what it -- as you mentioned, what it does to families. So yes, sir. DONNELLY: Thank you. And General Scaparrotti, it was a privilege to be with you in Korea and you did such an extraordinary job there.

The one thing -- you talked about Afghanistan and the number 5,500 has been mentioned by the chairman. The last thing I'd like to see, and I know you would, too, is all the efforts for so many years just

kind of be thrown away because of a number, as opposed to what conditions require. And I know you said it would be conditions based.

We want to be sure you give us your absolutely 100 percent unvarnished opinion of what actually needs to be done there as you take a look at it.

SCAPARROTTI: Senator, I absolutely commit that if confirmed, I will do just that.

DONNELLY: Thank you very much. As we look to what just happened with the Russians recently, you know, doing a barrel roll over one of our ships there, or over one of our planes there, is there a point where this has happened time, after time, after time where we tell them in advance enough, the next time, it doesn't end well for you?

SCAPARROTTI: Senator, I think it's important that we're, as I said, strong, clear and consistent with them. And we should engage them and make clear what is acceptable operations of both of our forces in close proximity. And I think once we make that known, then we have to enforce it.

DONNELLY: General Robinson, what is your assessment as you take a look of the ballistic missile threat to our country posed by North Korea and Iran, and obviously you are going to be significantly involved in providing answers for that and in making sure we're safe?

ROBINSON: Yes, sir. The North Korean threat is real. For -- to -- right now, it's a medium range, but they are trying very hard to be able to hit the homeland, and Iran continues to evolve its capability.

And if confirmed, that will be a threat that I will continue to monitor very, very closely.

DONNELLY: Thank you both very, very much for your service.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN: (OFF-MIKE)

AYOTTE: Thank you, Chairman. I want to thank both of you for your distinguished service to the country.

And I have to say, General Robinson, I echo Senator Shaheen's comments. We are so very proud of you in New Hampshire as a UNH grad and obviously, as your stated residency of New Hampshire.

I want to thank your family as well, and I want to thank -- certainly thank the Colonel, Colonel Howard for his service as well, as a great resident of the state of New Hampshire.

I wanted to ask you, in the meeting that we had in my office, one of the issues we talked about with your responsibility for the southern border is as a commander of NORTHCOM is this idea of tunnels. In fact this morning, as I'm looking at the news, we discovered that there are reports that U.S. authorities discovered a half-mile tunnel under the border with Mexico into San Diego used to smuggle drugs.

And as we think about this heroin and also fentanyl issue, which is a very deadly synthetic drug that is really killing people this New Hampshire.

I got an amendment in that focuses on cooperation with the Israelis because they have the tunnel issue with Hamas and Hezbollah. And Admiral Gortney had said that was a very helpful, cooperative effort.

So I would like to ask you, as you go to the southern border, will you look at this tunnel issue, too, and how we can develop better technologies to ensure that we're looking at not only how they're transporting the heroin and fentanyl over in traditional ways but also building these tunnels?

ROBINSON: Yes, Senator, I will do that. I saw the article and it did remind me of the conversation, and the conversation that we had about Israel and the technologies and -- that they had. And as we discussed yesterday, when understood that, it piqued my interest.

So, two things, I will go down and look, understand the tunnels, see what they look like, understand the technologies that we have, and then understand the things that Israel is also teaching us.

And in terms of the fentanyl issue, the synthetic that is almost 50 times more powerful this things that Israel is also teaching us.

AYOTTE: Terrific. And in terms of this fentanyl issue, this is -- the synthetic, basically analgesic that is almost 50 times more powerful than heroin. And it's also being manufactured in Mexico, and if you look at, New Hampshire had last year 430 drug deaths, actually 160 of them are attributed to fentanyl.

So in your role this addressing not only the border, but in dealing with Mexico, what I'd like to also have you focus on is talking to the Mexican government and obviously, in these military-to- military relationships of how we can have them step up more on this interdiction issue.

ROBINSON: Yes ma'am. Early on, I do want to meet with my military counterparts (inaudible), understand what they are, and provide an assessment, as I mentioned to the chairman, back to the committee of where I understand they are, and what we need do together more to support them.

AYOTTE: Terrific.

ROBINSON: Yes, ma'am. AYOTTE: Thank you. General Scaparrotti, I want to thank you for your distinguished service in Afghanistan. And I would like to ask you, if confirmed for this important position, one of your roles not only serving as European commander, you will also serve as the supreme allied commander of Europe.

And recently we met with the NATO secretary general, the committee did, and one of the issues he raised is that he believed that NATO countries and NATO as a whole should be more involved in the train, advise and assist mission in Iraq to defeat ISIS.

And do you agree with the secretary general that we should seek to get NATO more involved in the train, advise and assist mission? Obviously we all have a part in defeating ISIS, given the threats that this group presents to not only the United States of America, but Europe with the recent attacks there?

SCAPARROTTI: If confirmed, I will obviously discuss that with the secretary general. It's a matter of policy within NATO. But I -- to give my personal opinion, I think that we have very strong and capable allies, and the more allies that we have assisting us in Iraq and other places around the globe, where we have the same challenges is important, and we should pursue that.

AYOTTE: Terrific, thank you. And in terms of the Russian threat, one of the issues, there was a recent article of -- I think yesterday, that talked about Russian attack submarines, that I believe the chairman briefly touched on, that are prowling the coastline of Scandinavia, Scotland and the Mediterranean Sea and the North Atlantic.

I wanted to ask you about the importance of our attack submarine fleet in terms of having the capacity with this Russian threat, but also, obviously we know that the Chinese are another issue in the South Pacific. But yet our requirements for attack submarines, we're not keeping up with pace of what we see the Russians doing.

How important of an asset is this in terms of combating the Russians in what they're doing right now?

SCAPARROTTI: Senator, I believe that it's critical.

We presently have dominance undersea. And I don't believe we should pace it, we should maintain that dominance. And it's critical to our security.

AYOTTE: Great. I want to thank you both for your leadership and distinguished service, and especially your families as well.

We appreciate it.

(UNKNOWN): Senator Hirono?

HIRONO: Thank you very much.

I echo the sentiments of the members of this committee in thanking you, General Scaparrotti and General Robinson, for your service to our country and of course that of your families. And of course General Robinson, it's good to see you. Thank you for your years of services in Hawaii and leading the Pacific Air Forces and of course we're very proud of you as being one of the 100 most influential people in the world.

General Robinson, in response to a question, you noted that one of the biggest concerns that you have is with homegrown violent extremists. What would be -- if confirmed, what would be the kind of steps -- or the steps that you would take to protect our country against homegrown violent extremists?

ROBINSON: One of the things...

HIRONO: (inaudible) share with you.

ROBINSON: Yes, ma'am. One of the things that is incredibly important in that is sharing of intelligence across all the agencies. So it would be important to understand that intelligence to share and support DHS and federal law enforcement agencies as we watch that. It's a very difficult threat to find and pay attention to.

HIRONO: So any other steps that you would take to...

ROBINSON: No, ma'am, that's -- if confirmed, that would be one of the things. It is one of my focus areas as I look back into the southwest border and the defense of the homeland, that's one of the things that I'm -- if confirmed -- will start looking, what are some other things that NORTHCOM -- northern command -- can do in support of all the interagency and the whole of government approach.

HIRONO: And I think that -- that -- when you're dealing in this area, the state and local law enforcement communities as well as the larger communities have to be brought in.

ROBINSON: Yes, ma'am, in supporting them. Yes, ma'am.

HIRONO: I would want to continue to work with you on addressing those issues.

ROBINSON: Yes, ma'am.

HIRONO: General Scaparrotti, the capabilities of the European Phased Adaptive Approach, or EPAA, deepen our missile defense partnerships and assurances with NATO. What do you assess are the benefits of the EPAA and how does it project strength to our allies? And of course, our strength to our adversaries?

SCAPARROTTI: Well Senator, you know, we have globally, but particularly in Europe, a serious threat from ballistic missiles. The phased adaptive approach is very supportive of the defense of not only our citizens and bases in Europe, but also of our allies and partners in Europe.

I think it's critical and I think it's an important contribution then to our allies' defense systems and we should work for a layered inter-operable defense of Europe and I believe it's the appropriate step to get that done.

HIRONO: Thank you. For General Robinson, Admiral Gortney mentioned in our last NORTHCOM hearing that China is in the process of operationalizing its first viable class of ballistic missile submarines. You were asked some questions really into what Russia is doing, but China is moving in this direction.

He testified that if successful, they would be China's first sea-based strategic nuclear deterrent. And in previous hearings, the submarine capabilities of our country have been highlighted as one of our country's most valuable assets.

What are the implications of a successful employment of this class of ballistic missile submarines by China and for what you can talk about in this setting, how would this affect our capabilities, especially in the Asia-Pacific region?

ROBINSON: Yes, ma'am. China continues to evolve other capabilities and they continue to be able to range further and further. So the more that they can range, then the more that it becomes a threat to the homeland both Hawaii, Guam and then if capable, further here to the homeland.

HIRONO: Do we need more submarines?

ROBINSON: Ma'am, they are our asymmetric advantage -- and they are an asymmetric advantage in the Pacific as we speak.

HIRONO: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN: Senator Graham.

GRAHAM: Thank you. Thank both of you. General Scaparrotti, some (inaudible) say in America that we need to get out NATO or limit our participation. What's your response?

(UNKNOWN): Turn your mike on, Senator Graham.

GRAHAM: It's on. Must not be (inaudible) down here.

SCAPARROTTI: Senator, I think you asked that some have said that either we need more participation or payment into NATO. Is that...

GRAHAM That we need to get out of NATO. That it's obsolete.

SCAPARROTTI: Senator, I personally believe that NATO is critical to our interests and in our defense.

GRAHAM: In 30 seconds, why?

SCAPARROTTI: Because we have very close ties, they're our longest allies and we have 50 percent of the GDP that goes through there. One of our most important markets.

GRAHAM: OK. You agree that other countries should contribute more to NATO's overall budget?

SCAPARROTTI: Yes, I do. They should meet the commitments.

GRAHAM: Did you believe that Russia is trying to basically fracture Europe?

SCAPARROTTI: I do.

GRAHAM: Do you believe that Putin would love nothing more than the United States to withdraw from NATO?

SCAPARROTTI: Yes, sir.

GRAHAM: Do you believe that everybody in the Baltics that would be a very dark day for them if America withdrew from NATO?

SCAPARROTTI: Yes, sir.

GRAHAM: So Putin would be the biggest beneficiary of a breakup of NATO under the current construct?

SCAPARROTTI: Yes, sir, I believe Putin deliberately is trying to...

GRAHAM: Do you think ISIL would benefit from the breakup of NATO?

SCAPARROTTI: Yes, sir.

GRAHAM: Do you think the Taliban would benefit from the breakup of NATO?

SCAPARROTTI: Yes, sir.

GRAHAM: All right. If the president goes down to 5500 U.S. forces in Afghanistan, do you believe NATO countries will respond in kind by reducing their commitment?

SCAPARROTTI: Sir, I think given my experience there, that they most likely follow our lead.

GRAHAM: Have you known of one country to get to our right when it comes to Afghanistan?

SCAPARROTTI: No, sir.

GRAHAM: So do you agree with me that any withdrawal in Afghanistan should be conditions based?

SCAPARROTTI: I do, sir.

GRAHAM: So I just want to say for the record, to the president, you ignored sound military advice when it came to Iraq to keep it to residual force. The rest is history. You turned down the advice of your entire national security team to help the free Syrian army when it would have mattered in Syria.

You drew a red line against Assad. You did not follow up when Gadhafi was taken down by his people along with NATO's help. Please don't repeat these mistakes by reducing our forces in Afghanistan because you will get the same result, probably worse. That's just my editorial comment.

In terms of budgets, if we go back into sequestration mode, General, what would it mean to our presence in Europe?

SCAPARROTTI: Sir, it would have an immediate impact on the forces that we have there today and I believe it would potentially put at risk the forces that we plan to rotate today to reinforce our posture. And certainly it would impact the readiness of our remaining forces to come to Europe if deterrence should fail.

GRAHAM: Would it be an encouraging sign to Russia that we're less committed to Europe?

SCAPARROTTI: It would, sir.

GRAHAM: General Robinson, what would sequestration do to your ability to defend the nation's homeland?

ROBINSON: Sir, it would definitely affect the readiness of the force and our ability to invest in capabilities to defend the homeland.

GRAHAM: Can you give me some examples of what we would lose in terms of capabilities?

ROBINSON: Depending upon where we are with sensor development or hit to kill development, those would be two capabilities. GRAHAM: Is the threat to the homeland declining or increasing?

ROBINSON: Sir, the threat to the homeland is increasing.

GRAHAM: Is the threat to our partners in Europe and our interests in Europe declining or good increasing, General Scaparrotti?

SCAPARROTTI: It's increasing, sir.

GRAHAM: Can you think of a worse time for the American Congress to cut the military's budget to historic lows, given your time in service?

SCAPARROTTI: No, sir. This is the most challenging time I've seen. And we need to reinforce our capabilities.

GRAHAM: Do you agree with that, General Robinson?

ROBINSON: I do, sir.

GRAHAM: Thank you. Thank you both for your service.

MCCAIN: Senator King.

KING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A meteoric rise.

(LAUGHTER)

GRAHAM: Get right to it.

KING: I just want to associate myself with the comments of Senator Graham and the chairman and several others. Particularly as you go to this NATO meeting this summer that's going to be so important in Europe, it would be a grave mistake in my view to not maintain a level of force in Afghanistan that is necessary to support the Afghan security forces.

And the problem is this decision has to be made reasonably soon because we're not going to go from 9800 to 5500 in a couple of days at the end of the year. The process has to start this summer and I think it would be a mistake, particularly given that the Taliban essentially served notice on us in the last few days that they don't view this struggle as over by any manner or means.

KING: So I hope that as you work with the NATO allies the message will come back from them and to the -- to the president that we need to maintain a significant force and a significant -- with the authorities necessary to adequately support our NATO allies and the Afghan security forces.

Secondly, I just want to associate myself with comments that were made about the border and the drug epidemic. Since this meeting started, six people have died in the United States of drug overdoses, just since we sat down here an hour and five minutes ago. And that is a definite threat to the homeland.

And to the extent -- we don't want to militarize the border, but to the extent we can coordinate better, utilize the resources that you will have general, and your capabilities to work with our civilian authorities, that is I think, a very high priority.

General Scaparrotti, one of the things that is concerning me about Europe is that what we're seeing in Ukraine is a new kind of hybrid war. With indigenous people, some Russian troops, no - necessarily identifications. We're not talking about armies and tanks coming across the border in a conventional way.

Do we -- are we developing a strategy and a doctrine for dealing with what is essentially a new kind of war? Because my concern is that what we're seeing is a practice for something similar, for example, in the Baltics.

SCAPARROTTI: Yes, senator, I know that just from personal experience that EUCOM, SOCOM, as well as the other COCOMS have gathered and we're studying, you know, hybrid warfare. It presents a problem because it's actually intended to be below the level that we would normally consider conflict, so it challenges the norms that we have been used to.

KING: What is an act of war?

SCAPARROTTI: That's correct.

KING: Same question.

SCAPARROTTI: It challenges those norms. And it challenges the authorities that our forces have in order to react. So we are working on how best to handle this: the authorities, the doctrine that we need in order to -- and the capabilities in order to deal with this type of conflict. KING: Let me ask a question of both of you. The chairman recently mentioned to me -- the chairman of the joint chiefs recently mentioned that he would like to see an update to Goldwater-Nichols to account for the real time needed for the COCOMs to be in communication with the president in the case of an emergency.

We've been talking a lot about Goldwater-Nichols throughout this year in preparation for our National Defense Act coming up. What is your thought about the relationship of the COCOMs to the chain of command, to the presidency. How -- what do you see as -- either one or both of you -- as potential improvements to the Goldwater-Nichols organizational structure?

General? I guess general, it applies to both of you.

General Scaparrotti.

SCAPARROTTI: Senator, I'd like to first say that Goldwater- Nichols has produced the officer that I am today and the magnificent military that we have today as well, that works well as a joint force and is very capable.

However, I do believe that given the change in our strategic environment, particularly in the last three or four years, that it is time to do a review. With reference to your specific question, I don't know that there is a need for the change.

I report to the second of defense and if confirmed, I'll report to the secretary of defense and the president. But I think what we need in this environment is we also -- and I think what General Dunford was suggesting, is we need ability to have agility in our decision making and the deployment of assets.

Very few of these challenges today are limited to one COCOM. They're multiregional, multifunctional, multidomain and they challenge our structure that we have today and our ability to be as agile -- as our challenges or our adversaries are.

KING: So we have to be sure that our organizational structure allows that agility?

SCAPARROTTI: And the authorities, as well.

KING: General Robinson, your comment.

ROBINSON: Sir, I agree with General Scaparrotti 100 percent. It is a great time to look at it. The Act is 30 years old and the strategic landscape has changed. And it -- the most important part out of all of this is the agility and the ability to work with each other.

KING: My time is up, but I hope you will supply your thoughts, perhaps in writing after the hearing, because this is a varied (ph) topic of very active consideration by the committee. And having people of your experience and wisdom would be very helpful to us. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN: Senator Inhofe.

INHOFE: Thank you Mr. Chairman. The questions I was going to ask were pretty much asked by Senator Graham. And I would just ask you, General Scaparrotti, in your memory, in your history and your service, have you ever seen a time when this country is more threatened than they are today?

SCAPARROTTI: No, sir, I haven't.

INHOFE: General Robinson, I -- first of all, all you have to do is repeat the performance that you gave us in TAKOR (ph), and you're going to do a great job in this new position. I want to mention a few things here just to make sure. Since I wasn't here until just now in this committee. I was in another committee, to make sure they're in the record.

First of all, due to proliferation of technology, the number of countries possessing ballistic missile capability continues to increase with the weapons becoming more complex, with counter measures, greater range and accuracy.

`General Mann testified last week, quote, "Nearly 30 countries possess missile capability, with approximately 50 different variants of ballistic missiles. And currently, 13 new, intermediate range and eight intercontinental ballistic missile ranges variants under .

Since signing the Iran deal, which was a disaster, Iran has conducted at least three sets of tests on nuclear capability. Ballistic missiles, the latest test had quote, "Israel should be wiped off the Earth," unquote, inscribed, and had a range of up to 1250 miles.

General Votel, CENTCOM commander, testified last month that Iran has been more aggression since the Nuclear Deal. I think we all understand that. And on 9 February, James Clapper assessed, quote, "that North Korea has already taken initial steps toward fielding the KN-08 road-mobile ICBM."

Let me ask you, General Robinson, we talked about this before. Number one, do you think there should be a restructuring because of some confusion as to who is in charge of Homeland Security, do you think that changes should be made?

ROBINSON: Sir, I know if confirmed as the commander of NORTHCOM, that I work closely with the interagency, the Department of Homeland Defense (sic), Homeland Security. If confirmed that would be something that...

INHOFE: So you would be in constant contact with them?

ROBINSON: Yes sir. Yes sir. There is constant coordination.

INHOFE: OK. In light of everything that I said about the threat that is out there and the comment by General Scaparrotti, are you confident in the intelligence that we're getting on North Korea's and Iran's capability? Ballistic missile capability?

ROBINSON: Sir, given my recent experience and time that I've spent in the Pacific and focused on North Korea, I'm confident and comfortable with the intelligence that we're getting.

Sir, I would have to come back to you about Iran because I have not been focused there to give you an accurate answer, if confirmed.

INHOFE: Yes, well, I've never been all that confident. It's kind of a scary thing when we know all these things that I mentioned, the statement's I've made, that's reality. That is today.

General Scaparrotti, let me ask you a question, I've been concerned for some time about the capabilities. A lot of our friends who historically always been at our side, are now kind of in a position with Russia due to the fact that they control the Russia and Iran -- between the two of them -- control the capabilities, the energy capabilities that we have in this country.

Now, we have passed the lifting the ban and unfortunately the ban was lifted at a time when the price of natural gas was down so low, it didn't have the results that we anticipated and we hoped would be there.

But what is your thinking right now about the capability that we're going to have? How is this going to -- this lifting this ban -- going to help us in some of these areas that we'd like to be working with us as opposed to Russia?

SCAPARROTTI: Well, senator, we've talked about the hybrid warfare that Russia practices. They use all the instruments of power to influence our allies and particularly the use of energy. And it's to our benefit, I believe, to assist our allies in any way that we can, to relieve them of that dependence as much as possible on Russia and that ability of Russia to use that as a form of coercion.

INHOFE: And you -- do you believe that we should do everything we can? I think you just said this in a different way, I assume, that to correct the situation, to be able to allow them to get their energy from us, that this is a great national security benefit we would have when that happens?

SCAPARROTTI: Senator, I haven't delved into this in -- as, you know, a policy issue, but to me, it is reasonable that if we could provide energy to me, it would both assist them and us in our security.

INHOFE: I appreciate it. Thank you.

MCCAIN: Senator Kaine?

KAINE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thanks to the witnesses.

Many of my questions have been answered, but sort of one topic for each of you.

General Scaparrotti, Senator Ernst asked you a question about Turkey and border control. I kind of want to get into a little bit of a different question. They are an important NATO ally, but I'd like you to talk about the complexities of dealing with Turkey, given the internal politics of Turkey, especially concerns about the Kurds.

The Kurds have been wonderful partners for the U.S. in the anti- ISIL mission in Iraq, obviously. And Kurdistan in Iraq has traditionally had a pretty good relationship with Turkey. But we've also been -- found strong partners in the Kurds in northern Syria, and that has created significant tensions with Turkey. We can't abandon a strong anti-ISIL partner that has been very, very valiant, as the Kurds in northern Syria have been.

But by the same token, we need to manage the relationship with Turkey so that they will step up on border control and help us in the anti-ISIL fight. How do you see your role in EUCOM in trying to work with the Turkish relationship so that we can keep up the anti-ISIL fight, keep our partnership with the Kurds alive, and yet manage that important relationship with our NATO ally?

SCAPARROTTI: Senator, I think you outlined the challenges there very well. They're a very important ally. If confirmed, obviously I'll build a close relationship with their military leadership and with my intent, their civilian leadership as well. You know, they -- they look at counterterrorism and they look at the PKK as the threat. We talk counterterrorism and primarily we think about ISIL.

So, I mean, it's those dynamics that both of us have to realize our interests and then find areas that commonly we can work together. And I think in Turkey's case, there's areas where we can support them and encourage them to help us in the overall effort within the southeast flank of NATO.

KAINE: General Robinson, you talked about agility and the ability to work together, in response to Senator King's question on Goldwater-Nichols. I'm really interested in the seam between NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM. We talked about this a little bit in some of the other questions about drug trafficking, et cetera. There is some of that that originates in Mexico, but much of it originates in South America, transits through the northern triangle countries, and through Mexico.

And whether it's drug trafficking or human trafficking or the migrant flows that are driven by violence in Central America, that border between Mexico and the countries to the south is really important.

Talk a little bit about the kind of working relationship that you would hope to form with Admiral Tidd on that border between NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM.

ROBINSON: Sir, that's an incredibly important border. The more that we can push everything down towards that border, Guatemala and Belize, the less people will migrate across our southern border between us and Mexico. Kurt Tidd and I are very good friends. And if confirmed, I know that he and I will dialogue on a very regular basis to work together to ensure that seam is -- is as seamless as possible.

It is incredibly important that we do that. And that we work together to support the Mexican military in their efforts with that southern border.

KAINE: Great. Thank you very much.

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

MCCAIN: Senator Tillis?

TILLIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This has been a great confirmation hearing. And I appreciate both of you all's service.

And General Robinson, your service of 34 years -- I know you're a resident of New Hampshire. I'm not rushing you to retire, but when you do, I hope you'll consider North Carolina at least as a winter home. I lived in New Hampshire. I guarantee you, the winter's are better.

But one quick question for you. The -- I want to go back. I -- I sometimes think that we lose sight of the fact of the number of victims that have been victims of narco-terrorism. So we're talking about the opioid epidemic today, but we have to recognize that hundreds of thousands of people have lost their lives because of the activities that are flowing between SOUTHCOM and NORTHCOM.

So I'm not going to go back and cover the landscape again, except to say it would be very helpful for us to shed light on it. If you were to equate this to what we're dealing with in the Middle East, we have a lot of specific targets that we could go after that we simply don't have the resources to go after. We know a lot of times where they're starting, where they're ending, and we simply do not have the resources to interdict as many as we could. First, do you agree with that? And what kinds of things can we do to really step up our game there? Not at the expense of other important priorities, but this is a critical priority. This is killing more Americans than just about any other terrorist activity going on today.

ROBINSON: Sir, if confirmed, as I've -- I think it's incredibly important for me to understand the border. I think it's incredibly important for me to walk the landscape. And -- and also if confirmed, very early on, too, as I work that, is to work with agencies and interagency to understand the problems that you're just talking about.

I know interdiction is important and I know getting after the networks is important. And so where is the interagency? Where is DHS? Where are law enforcement agencies trying to get after that? For me to understand that, and then if confirmed, to be able to support their activities.

TILLIS: That's great. And within the area of your purview, I'm glad that you recognize that working with the Mexican military and recognizing that much of the pressure on the northern border of Mexico can be relieved by taking care of the challenge on the southern border of Mexico, and that can only come with good partner cooperation. So I -- I appreciate your commitment to looking at that. It's a very -- to me, it's one of the most pressing things we need to do in this hemisphere.

General Scaparrotti, you mentioned earlier about stepping up our partner relationships with Europe. And can you give me just a brief synopsis of the state of our partnerships in terms of our mil-to-mil relationship? In terms of their countries' specific efforts to budget and fund the things that we need to do to make it very clear to Russia this will not end well if they continue their aggression?

And then thirdly, just the general messaging within the region. Are the words that the countries are conveying to their people and to the region consistent with what you think our objectives should be in that area?

SCAPARROTTI: Well, Senator, first with respect to our partnerships, we've got very strong allies in Europe. I've served with many of them. And as you know, they've provided about a third of the force in Afghanistan, and suffered 1,000 casualties right along- side of us. So, I think that's an indication of just how good they can be and the -- and what we share.

I do believe that as a part of the alliance and as partners, we should meet our commitments and provide our fair share of the defense, because we -- we do -- we are...

(CROSSTALK)

TILLIS: Do you feel like we have work to do there? SCAPARROTTI: We do have work to do there. As I understand it, there's -- out of the alliance of 28, there's five that have two percent or more of the GDP. And there's nine that have increased their spending. As you know from the Wales summit, and looking forward to the Warsaw summit, you know, that commitment is one of the things that we're focused on.

In terms of the -- the communication, I feel confident to say that those that are on the eastern flank are communicating very seriously about the need for strength in defense in light of Russia.

TILLIS: Probably because of the imminent threat.

SCAPARROTTI: Because of the proximity. I think that's true with the remainder of our allies as well. However, you know, to the south, you've got a different, but just as important a threat. And I think one of the important things, if confirmed, that I need to do is recognize all of our threats and help our allies to be unified.

TILLIS: Thank you.

And in closing, I want to associate myself with Senator Graham's comments, and also just make the point, because people watch these hearings and take a lot from them. I don't think that there's any

serious discussion among any member of Congress that would suggest that anyone thinks that withdrawal from NATO makes sense.

And the rhetoric in the political circles now should not be confused with anything that we would seriously consider. I find that unimaginable.

Thank you all. I look forward to supporting your confirmation.

MCCAIN: (inaudible) pointed out to us in a meeting that 9/11 was an attack on the United States of America, not a European country. And they joined, and over 1,000 of the young men and women that have come from those countries have been killed in action.

When we talk about how much money that they haven't spent, and we should keep the pressure on, I don't think we should forget that over 1,000 of their young -- I think all young men -- have given their lives because of an action that was taken against the United States of America.

Senator Manchin?

MANCHIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank both of you for your service and for being here today.

I want to follow up, General Scaparrotti, on Senator Kaine, because I've been concerned also with the Kurds, our support of the Kurds. I know the Iraqi Kurds and now the northern Syrian Kurds seem to be valiant fighters. We don't seem to be second-guessing are they going to turn on us, use our weapons, give our weapons to somebody else. We've not had that concern. That's the only group that I know that we haven't had that concern with.

MANCHIN: But with the concern that we have of the Turks, how they're looking at our relationship. Are we not giving the support to the Kurds that we could even more?

And basically, do the Iraqi Kurds, are they still satisfied with the one state solution and having everything come through Baghdad? Or are they still what we understood was very frustrated with that?

SCAPARROTTI: Senator, I don't know the answer to that particular part of your question, the last part about their satisfaction. If I could take that for the record.

MANCHIN: You could take that for the record. Just to find out where we stand there. I mean, they've been very cooperative and very -- but I -- you only take so much.

If they're not getting the support. And basically, if they rely on the dysfunction of Baghdad right now, getting the goods that they need and the arms that they need to help us defend the terrorists.

I think it would be a shame not for us to make sure they get it directly.

SCAPARROTTI: To the first part of your question, I agree they've been one of the best combatants we allied with in our fight in ISIL and in Syria. If confirmed, I'll work closely with the combatant command, CENTCOM and SOCOM in support of that.

MANCHIN: General Robinson, I was recently -- well, a year ago, down in Argentina. And at that time I think that -- the president was Cristina Kirchner and she's been replaced now by President Mauricio Macri who I understand is more pro-western, pro-U.S. than she.

And we were having trouble with a lot of meth, a lot of drugs coming from Argentina. Our officials were complaining that they got no cooperation. Do you know -- has that been strengthened? Has new President Macri made a commitment to help us fight this drug trade?

ROBINSON: Sir, I don't know the answer to that question right at the moment. But I will commit to you is my relationship with Kurt Kid, as we work together from SOUTHCOM and NORTHCOM. If confirmed, to watch that and again, to push things down as far as we can on the southern border.

If you can get that. You can't go any further south than Argentina. But if you could get that information it would be very helpful. Because our people are very frustrated. We're getting no help at all and they were just letting it come through.

ROBINSON: Yes, sir.

MANCHIN: General Scaparrotti, back on Senator Kaine -- had asked you about NATO. I think the frustration -- I think all of us agree that NATO, we should all be a part of NATO. The bottom line in frustration is that we know the sacrifices they have made and they have come to the aid in defending the United States, but they still haven't made a commitment.

The two percent of their GDP. But there is no quid quo pro. There's No penalty for that. Do you believe there's a way we could hold them more accountable if they are not coming up to the two percent?

SCAPARROTTI: Well, sir, I think that's a question, you know, for the alliance and the North Atlantic Council to wrestle with. Obviously, if confirmed, I'll have the ability to give the best military advice to the secretary general and the council. And I -- as I said, I do believe that within the alliance the commitments that we make are very important for the strength of the alliance.

MANCHIN: General Robinson, on the ballistic missile defense, and most importantly with Canada, I understand they're going to engage again, be involved in the missile defense?

ROBINSON: Sir, from what I read, they're in the process of talking about what they're going to do with that. If confirmed early on, I will engage with my Canadian counterparts and my Canadian chain of command and see where they're going.

MANCHIN: If they do join our efforts, would that reduce our missile defense responsibilities to the north or would they only be reinforcing our current defenses? How would that play towards what we're doing right now?

ROBINSON: Sir, I don't have that right now, but if confirmed, that's something I will look into early on.

MANCHIN: OK. I had one more I think real quick for general -- Russia, the whole thing I think Senator Donnelly talked to you about the Russia fly over. With our ships -- were we in the right to shoot down if we desired to do so with their aggression?

SCAPARROTTI: Sir, not knowing the complete circumstances, I really can't answer that this morning.

MANCHIN: So as far as the justification that we could of taken action -- I know Turkey's taken action on Russia before and I think Russia understands that Turkey would continue to take action. And I think there's a concern that we won't and they were wanting to see how far we could go.

And I'm not advocating that we should have shot the plane down. But I understood that Secretary Kerry described it as a reckless, provocative and dangerous act. And he was not wrong in saying the U.S. ship would have been justified to shoot down the Russian plane.

SCAPARROTTI: Yes, sir. I just don't have the detailed information to make that call. But I would say it's absolutely reckless and unjustified and it's very dangerous. When you've got, you know, our operations going on as well as was...

MANCHIN: Do you see Russia pushing the envelope? Is Russia basically just pushing the envelope and the limits of confrontation to test the western resolve or the United States resolve?

SCAPARROTTI: I think they're pushing the envelope in terms of our resolve. They're pushing the envelope in terms of international norms and international law purposefully.

MANCHIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN: (OFF-MIKE)

SULLIVAN: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Let me follow up on that line of questioning. General Scaparrotti, do you think we need to establish, announce and implement more robust ROE's, particularly with regard to our Navy?

This isn't the first time that it seems the ROE's were very weak. Obviously, we had Navy sailors taken hostage by Iranian -- in the Gulf. What do we need to do here to bolster this and send a message that we're going to act more forcefully?

SCAPARROTTI: Well, sir, I think that, you know -- and I'm not sure the ROE that our forces are operating under at this present time. I mean, the exact rules of engagement. But, if you look at our rules of engagement generally, the joint staff rules of engagement. They always have the right of self-defense and to act in self-defense.

So, I'm confident that they knew that. And if it was a security concern that our commanders know they have that right and they can take that step. I think more what I would say to you is that they have to have the guidance of the chain of command in order to know, understand and fully have confidence that they can take steps in specific scenarios.

SULLIVAN: Well, if confirmed, will you take a look at that issue, the issue of our ROE's that are leading to some of these kind of aggressive behaviors, both in the Baltic sea and the Gulf?

SCAPARROTTI: Yes, sir.

SULLIVAN: Let me turn to another area. Both of you have enormous areas of responsibility in terms of geographic scope. One place where you actually overlap is the Arctic. And as you know, we've had discussions much more growing strategic importance in terms of shipping lanes, in terms of resources and in terms of Russian military buildup.

Snap exercises, that we saw tens of thousands of Russian forces twice last year. One of the concerns I have and I just passed out something, I wrote. It's reflected in the chart, is the -- in order to address some of the challenges we have COCOM operational seams in the Arctic where NORTHCOM is the advocate for the Arctic area.

EUCOM contains the main threat to the Arctic region. PACOM controls most of the forces. So, I'd like to ask, just a -- one hypothetical. You know, we talk a lot about FUNOPS. And, hypothetically, if Russia decided to deny access to vital U.S. international shipping in the Arctic region which is growing tremendously, which combatant commander would respond to that threat?

SCAPARROTTI: Well, sir, this gets at the issue that we talked about earlier, about most of our threats today are across the boundaries of COCOMs, if it were U.S.-EUCOM's are, I would take the lead and the others would primarily be in support of that.

SULLIVAN: But if it were shipping, like, right there in the Bering Strait, which is very close to your area, but not really in your area.

It's kind of in your area General Robinson, but not really. This goes to the seams issues. You know, in the NDAA last year, we actually had an amendment that addressed this and had the secretary of defense to focus on the operational seams with regard to putting together an Arctic strategy.

If confirmed, working with Admiral Harris and PACOM, will you focus on trying to address this COCOM operational seam that certainly can be worked through, but seems to be a challenge?

ROBINSON: Sir, if confirmed I commit to you that I will focus on the Arctic. I will -- it's a complex place. It's becoming much more congested. And I will focus on understanding comprehensively what that is, along with Admiral Harris, and come back to you and talk about what should we do.

SULLIVAN: All right.

General Scaparrotti.

SCAPARROTTI: Yes, sir. I agree. I will.

SULLIVAN: And in the NDAA last year, it focused on the secretary of defense because of these issues and the growing threat, being required to develop an Arctic strategy and new operational plans that reflect the new situation in the Arctic. If confirmed, will you work with OSD to make sure that those requirements from the Congress are fulfilled?

ROBINSON: Yes, sir, I commit to you to come back and talk to you what I learn.

SCAPARROTTI: Yes, sir I will.

SULLIVAN: Let me talk just very quickly on the European reassurance initiative. You know, General Scaparrotti, as we've talked about that. I think a lot of us are very supportive of that. But, you know, a lot of the focus, as you mentioned, is in the east.

Given what we've just talked about here, do you believe that that ERI should have a focus? It's not just east, but certainly in the north where some of our allies and friends have very significant concerns about Russian threats and aggression?

SCAPARROTTI: Yes, sir. I think that the ERI needs to look at the entire threat. And the entire threat, as well as it needs to be joint in nature. There are other areas that we need to look at, as I -- if confirmed -- I will look at as I move forward.

SULLIVAN: Thank you. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN: (OFF-MIKE)

COTTON: Thank you. Congratulations to you both on your nominations and General Robinson, to your Landmark nomination. I hope it will see speedy confirmation of your both. General Scaparrotti, I want to return to a question a few of the senators have addressed about Russian aircraft flying by, first, our ships and then one of our aircraft in northern Europe.

I know that you're not aware of all the circumstances to specify a response. But does activity like that call for some kind of a response?

SCAPARROTTI: Yes, sir, it does. It endangers our crew members, our ships. And it does require a response of some type.

COTTON: Is that because with no response it emboldens Putin's Russia to probe even further?

SCAPARROTTI: I think they need to understand what's acceptable. We're flying and sailing in international waters in the Baltic, for instance. And we have every right to do so.

COTTON: Need that response be symmetrical must we fly by one of their ships or one of their aircrafts? Or could it be asymmetrical? For instance, dabble in showing up on the border of Ukraine and Russia.

SCAPARROTTI: I would just say that as we look at what options we should keep everything on the table.

COTTON: And that -- whatever the response may be, even if it's not a public response, Vladimir Putin needs to understand it is a response?

SCAPARROTTI: Correct. Yes.

COTTON: I want to turn to a topic we've discussed previously in your current role in Korea, cluster munitions and the coming ban on cluster munitions that have a dud rate below 1 percent. What is your understanding of how many cluster munitions in the inventory today failed to comply with that date's policy?

SCAPARROTTI: Sir, I couldn't answer that accurately. I would just tell you that my experience with the munitions that I have in Korea that I would lose just about all of my clustering munitions for use that I have stockpiled today.

COTTON: What is the Department of Defense's current policy or plan to address this problem?

SCAPARROTTI: Today, there are studies ongoing and some assets available that in the future with programs of purchase that could begin to replace those. Some of those munitions don't have the same lethality as those that we had today, particularly against armor. And presently for those that are not envisioned, that are actually assets, we know that we could -- munitions we know we could build -- we don't have a plan that replaces them in the numbers that we need, and I would say that's true in Korea because I'm very aware of what our requirements are.

COTTON: Is one of those possible solutions airbursting traditional so-called dumb bombs and using them as area targets?

SCAPARROTTI: That's an option.

COTTON: And is it -- would that be an option that lacks the kind of lethality against armor and artillery to which you... SCAPARROTTI: If you were to use -- if you were to use unitary munitions to replace a cluster munition, you'd have to fire three to five munitions in place of one. And so just logistically it creates a problem as well. We need to develop effective cluster munitions that meet the law and my recommendation would be that in the interim we've retained the cluster munitions that we have today.

COTTON: Are you aware of any U.S. produced solution to this problem?

SCAPARROTTI: I'd like to take that for the record. I'm aware of some solutions we're working -- when you say it's U.S. produced, I'm not exactly sure, you know, who is working on those products I'm aware of. It's probably best that we just -- I take that so I can also answer it in a classified form as well.

COTTON: Thank you. This, obviously, of most famous concern on the border between North Korea and South Korea. Given Russia's recent probing, throughout eastern Europe and the Middle East, how important is this issue for you in the new job after confirmation?

SCAPARROTTI: It's very important. I would point out that Russia has used cluster munitions in the Ukraine themselves. With great effect.

COTTON: I thought so. Vladimir Putin and many other analysts in Russia often cite historical grievances for their activity in places like the Ukraine and to bolster themselves domestically.

They cite three in particular. The collapse of the Warsaw Pact, the collapse and disintegration of the Soviet Union and then NATO expansion into those historically Russian-dominated territories. Do you think that that's a fair account for what's happened in the post- Cold War era?

SCAPARROTTI: Well, sir, if I'm following you I would just say I think it's clear that Putin, I believe, I can't say it's clear, I believe that Putin's view is -- is that Russia is being constrained by the international norms. International norms established by the West and predominately the U.S.

And it's from that view that he has, I think, set out deliberately to challenge those norms, to disrupt our international order, globally, wherever he has that opportunity.

COTTON: Given that countries like Poland and Latvia and Lithuania and Estonia have all chosen freely to join NATO, do you think there's any truth to his claims that these are lands that are traditionally oriented towards the East?

SCAPARROTTI: Well, he certainly claims that. But, as you know, we believe and many of these countries desire to be a sovereign nation and make their own choices the type of government they have. That's what we've traditionally supported as a part of our values and we're in support of today.

COTTON: And a final claim he makes about NATO expansion is that this is an aggressive action towards Russia and could threaten their territorial integrity and sovereignty. Has NATO been investing lately in large scale rearmaments of the kind that would launch a massive land invasion of Russia?

SCAPARROTTI: No, sir. And as you know, NATO, for nearly 20 years reached out to Russia with the idea that they could become a part of the security that NATO provides to all of Europe as a partner. And they've refused that hand at this point.

COTTON: And to look at the claim from the other direction, has Russia been investing in massive defensive build ups, say, building paint ditches on its border with NATO or moving in other kinds of massive defensive weaponry to forestall this supposed NATO invasion of Russia?

SCAPARROTTI: Their modernization of their forces is significant. It's developing incredible capability that we've seen on display with their first out of area deployment into Syria, for instance, and the weapons systems they deployed there. And then finally, if you look at the area access or denial, those areas A2/AD that they've established. I think there's ample evidence of that.

COTTON: And I think based on the historical record as well as their own investments, it suggests to me that Vladimir Putin's narrative about the West is maybe another classic Russian campaign of (inaudible). Thank you.

MCCAIN: General Breedlove said that he anticipated further Russian military -- (inaudible) Russian military activity in Ukraine. Do you agree with that assessment?

SCAPARROTTI: Sir, the indications that I've seen, I believe that's true.

MCCAIN: So do you believe that we should be providing defensive weapons to Ukraine?

SCAPARROTTI: Sir, I believe that we should provide the weaponry that we believe they need to defend their sovereignty and that they're capable of using.

MCCAIN: Do you think their -- need and could use Javelin?

SCAPARROTTI: Sir, I think that there's a requirement for an anti-tank weapon, like Javelin, in their situation.

MCCAIN: Thank you. General, I hope that you will give some urgency to the issue that you and I discussed earlier and that is concerning the troop strength numbers. All these things take planning, they take execution. And now we're looking at a couple of months from now. So, I hope you'll make that a very high priority.

General Robinson I'm glad you're going to go down to the border. You'll find that this time of year it starts getting very warm there. And you'll also find it's very hard on the personnel sometimes to sit in a vehicle on the border next to a fence in 115 degree heat. That efficiency declines rather rapidly.

And that's why we have to emphasize technology. I hope that at your first opportunity you'll go see Secretary Johnson and so that we can better coordinate our activities on the border with Secretary Johnson. The answer to this -- both whether it be the epidemic of manufactured heroin, or whether it be people or whether it be the possibility of a terrorist, which increases coming across our southern border --can only be defeated by technology.

We need to have the ability to detect those tunnels. The Israelis, I understand, have that capability. And capability exists. We're not going to stop the tunnels. And they are myriad, believe me, over the years.

Just by observing, we have to have the kind of technology which exists. I also believe that it's very important that we understand that a lot of this manufactured heroin is coming across our ports of entry, not necessarily by the traditional ways because small amounts can be concealed.

And again, that is technology. So we have -- with the rise of ISIS, we have an additional now, threat on our southern border. And that's is the threat of terrorists coming across. And so your involvement, with full respect to posse comitatus, is dramatically increased.

So, I hope you'll understand here, we have the threat of terrorism and we also have a flood of manufactured heroin and we also have a flood of children who come from the three central American countries and also put enormous strains on our capabilities on the border. One program that I -- another amongst others I hope you'll look at, is that guard units from states all over America have come to Arizona to train unarmed but providing manpower and capabilities that are much needed.

So I would say, obviously, you need to go to the border. But I would like to see close coordination between you and the secretary of Homeland Security, so that we can use the best talents that we have.

Have no doubt that this is a crisis in the Northeast and Midwest, the drugs alone. Not to mention the threat of terrorists coming across our border. If those threats are true and I believe they are, then your involvement is greater than it has been in the past.

MCCAIN: Senator King, did you want to -- Senator Blumenthal.

BLUMENTHAL: Thank you. Thank you, Senator McCain.

I want to emphasize how important Senator McCain's comments are to all of us who are engaged actively in our states in this war against an epidemic.

It's a public health hurricane that is sweeping our country and affecting the quality of people who are available to you, our military, doing your job very actively and responsibly in recruiting new men and women to join your forces.

This public health hurricane is undermining the recruiting effort insofar as it diminishes the quality of people who are available to fight in our military. Tearing apart families. Causing heart ache, I think you used that word, General Richardson.

BLUMENTHAL: And I released last week a call to action with 23 specific recommendations, focusing on health care, on law enforcement, on over-prescribing of pain killers on a variety of areas where I think the nation needs to do more and do it better.

And in my public comments, I've talked about the interdiction challenge. And it's not within the ability of states to do, but it has to be part of our national mission. Every bit as vital to our national defense as any of the other missions you have. So I just want to second what my colleagues have said. I'm not the first. But I want to emphasize the point that Senator McCain has just made so eloquently.

I want to go to another topic that you have also been asked about.

General Scaparrotti, I'm very concerned about our submarine undersea warfare capability force. I know you're very much aware of it. You've been asked about it. The continued building of our Virginia class at the rate of two a year at some point, will collide financially with the Ohio Replacement Program.

In my view, we need to continue building those two Virginia class submarines every year. The New York Times story that's been mentioned to you in the course of this morning is only the latest evidence of the increased emphasis of our adversaries on undersea warfare capabilities.

Not just the Russians, but the Chinese. I think in the course of that Article I of the comments from the -- one of our military leaders was that we were back to, in a sense, the cold war competition undersea. I would like to know your views and General Richardson, if you want to comment, you're welcome to -- on whether this program continuing our building of two Virginia class submarines every year with the Ohio Replacement are important, in fact, vital to our national defense?

SCAPARROTTI: Yes, senator. I defer the numbers et cetera to the services responsible for that. But I can say personally that I think that we have dominance undersea today. That it is our asymmetric advantage and that it's very important that we continue to maintain that advantage. Particularly in light of the challenges you noted. And I think both of those improvements to our submarine classes are necessary.

ROBERTSON: Sir, I would just echo what General Scaparrotti said. I know that -- and I've heard it said from that very place, from others, General Robinson, and I know that you share the view strongly that we should have an asymmetric superiority in this area. But I think the specifics are very important.

It's not enough to just generalize about it. And I hope that when you say you'll defer, you bring both of you, a life long expertise and experience to these views that I think are very, very important for our civilian leaders.

ROBERTSON: Sir I probably then misspoken and said I agree with what General Scaparrotti said. I apologize if I said I defer.

BLUMENTHAL: No, I think he said he deferred. And I guess what I'm asking very bluntly, is that you not defer. And I know that's also more easily said than done. But I have such respect for both of your views, that I hope our civilian leaders hear them.

And I hope that you will emphasize that this asymmetric advantage in undersea warfare is vital to our future. So I think I've talked enough and I defer to you, General Robinson and general...

SCAPARROTTI: Sir, if I could be clear, what I meant by that was it's really a service decision. But I assure you that if confirmed, I will be clear in my advice and needs to the CNO with respect to those programs. And particularly, after I have a close look, if confirmed, as the EUCOM commander and my needs there.

BLUMENTHAL: Right. I appreciate your views, and thank you very much.

Thank you for your service to our nation.

KING: Very briefly, General Scaparrotti talking about the undersea capability and the increase in Russian submarine activity. I was in Iceland last fall and was really struck by what a strategic place -- it's one of the most strategic places on Earth as you know.

Keflavik, as you know, we're now putting P-8s back in there. I hope that might be an area that you will be an active consideration of further reinvigoration of that capability -- subject, of course, to the working with the people of Iceland. But it sits right astride the Greenland-Iceland-U.K. gap.

And it's a -- as I say, I can't imagine a more strategic place. And I hope we can focus some attention there. The facility is amazing. And I think it would be one that would be -- we would do well to do some concentrating on.

SCAPARROTTI: Senator, I agree with your concern, and I agree with the importance of the location and our capabilities in that gap that you described.

KING: Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN: Look forward to moving your nominations through the United States Senate.

This hearing is adjourned.

SCAPARROTTI: Thank you, Chairman.

ROBINSON: Thank you, Chairman.

END