

United States Special Operations Command
and United States Cyber Command in review
of the Defense Authorization Request for
Fiscal Year 2022 and the Future Years
Defense Program

March 7, 2023

U.S. Senate - Committee on Armed Services

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jack Reed [D-RI] [presiding]
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Rick Scott [R-FL]
Tommy Tuberville [R-AL]
Markwayne Mullin [R-OK]
Ted Budd [R-NC]
Eric Schmitt [R-MO]

WITNESSES:

Honorable Christopher P. Maier -Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict

General Bryan P. Fenton - United States Special Operations Command

General Paul M. Nakasone -Commander United States Cyber Command/
Director, National Security Agency/ Chief, Central Security Service

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CHAIRMAN REED: I would like to call this hearing to order. Good morning. The committee meets today to receive an update on the readiness and posture of U.S. Special Operations Command and U.S. Cyber Command. Our witnesses are Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, Christopher Maier, Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, General Bryan Fenton, and Commander of U.S. Cyber Command and Director of the National Security Agency, General Paul Nakasone.

On behalf of the committee, I would ask our witness to convey our appreciation to the men and women you represent and their families for their service and professionalism. We live in a complex and dangerous global security environment. From Russia's aggression in Europe to **China's** malign influence in the **Indo-Pacific**, to persistent threats from Iran, North Korea, and violent extremist groups, prevailing in this environment will require the tailored and often clandestine capabilities that only our special operations and cyber forces can provide.

The United States has been reducing its footprint in conflict zones around the world. As such, the special operations community is at an inflection point, but is no less relevant to the future challenges we face. As the Defense Department's recently released Joint Concept for Competing makes clear, the object of our nation's adversaries is to win without fighting. The Concept warns that if we do not adapt to the realities of long-term competition, the United States risks ceding strategic influence, advantage, and leverage, while preparing for a war that never occurs.

The skills, knowledge, or perhaps most importantly, the relationships with foreign partners that our special operations forces have developed over the past

20 years of combat make them well-positioned to contribute significantly to the strategic competition. Assistant Secretary Maier and General Fenton, I look forward to an update regarding your efforts to focus and prepare our special operations forces for the challenges ahead.

In particular, I would ask that you discuss the capabilities we need to build an enduring advantage over our competitors, and what lessons can be drawn from the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. As part of this, I would like to know how you are shaping the force of the future through new recruiting and retention efforts, including building a culture of accountability.

A number of high-profile misconduct cases have reflected poorly on the special operations community and additional efforts to build upon SOCOM's 2020 Comprehensive Review of Culture and Ethics, seems necessary. I also want to hear how you are addressing the unique challenges faced by special operations family.

The Office of the ASD SO/LIC plays a critical role in the oversight of and advocacy for our special operations forces, as the service Secretary-like civilian for SOCOM. I believe more must be done to assure ASD SO/LIC is provided the necessary authority and resources, including manpower, to fulfill these responsibilities. I look forward to hearing more about the Department's efforts on this front.

Turning to Cyber Command, I would like to commend our cyber forces and the intelligence community for their performance over the past year in exposing Russia's activities and helping Ukraine defend itself against both kinetic and cyber-attacks. Intelligence officials are understandably cautious about revealing hardware insights on adversaries, but this current surge has proven highly effective in strengthening the international community's response and creating dilemmas for Vladimir Putin.

This is a great example of competing effectively in the information domain, and I hope we will get to make this kind of creative use of intelligence. Some of the tools in our toolbox, like the Section 702 authority from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA, are critical to our ability to counter our adversaries' malign activities.

The committee would appreciate your views on the importance of Section 702 of

FISA, which sunsets at the end of this year, and why we believe it is essential that we renew that authority. We would like also to know what guardrails are in place to give the public confidence that the authority is being used judiciously.

General Nakasone, you have been working to mature the cyber force in advance its capabilities to conduct offensive, offensive, and supporting intelligence operations. It is widely recognized that our cyber mission forces are struggling with shortfalls in personnel numbers. We know that addressing this issue is your highest priority.

The military services must also ensure their personnel management provides qualified and trained personnel to your Command at the beginning of their tours, so both the personnel and the Command can take full advantage of the time of their assignment to your force. I would also note that the private sector has realized the immense value of our cyber operatives and offering them very high compensation to leave the military.

The services must adjust accordingly by providing a creative combination of incentives to compete for and retain these personnel. Finally, over the last decade, a recurring debate has been waged over whether to sustain the dual hat arrangement whereby the Commander of Cyber Command also serves as the Director of the NSA.

Recently, an independent panel established by the Director of National Intelligence and the Secretary of Defense and led by former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joe Dunford, concluded that the dual hat arrangement should be sustained. We would welcome your thoughts on this issue.

Thank you again to all witnesses for your service and appearance before us today. I look forward to your testimony. Now, let me recognize the Ranking Member, Senator Wicker.

SENATOR WICKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for that very fine and thorough statement. I very much appreciate that, and I want to thank our witnesses for being with us once again. The United States faces the most complex and daunting set of security challenges since the height of the Cold War, and our witnesses today are on the front lines of those challenges.

From the **Chinese** Communist Party's unprecedented military buildup, growing hegemonic ambitions, to Russia's brazen and unprovoked attack on Ukraine, our adversaries are testing American resolve. Our foremost adversary and competitor, the **Chinese** Communist Party, has stressed both SOCOM and CYBERCOM in ways we never imagined a decade ago. Last year, General Nakasone said **Chinese** advances in cyber operations are unlike anything he has seen before. He also noted the **People's Republic of China** is a more difficult adversary than the Soviet Union because they are much more tolerant of risk. So, this presents new challenges to our deterrence posture.

Although **Beijing** may be our foremost advisory, others are not far behind. The cyber capabilities of Russia, Iran, and North Korea have continued to surprise many. I would appreciate an update on DOD's work to implement a zero-trust architecture and provide defensive cyber tools across the Department and the industrial base.

I also look forward to discussing how collaborative cyber activities with our allies and partners such as hunt forward operations have helped to identify vulnerabilities, mitigate threats, and strengthen our network defenses. Military success in cyberspace depends on the readiness of our cyber mission forces. I hope to hear about how we can improve our cyber force readiness and accelerate development of cyber capabilities, particularly on the offensive side. General Fenton is no stranger to the determination of the People's Liberation Army.

Having served as Commander of our Special Operations Forces in the **Pacific**, and the Deputy Commander of **INDOPACOM**, his challenge is twofold, to build a force capable of enhancing our deterrence and warfighting in the **Western Pacific**, even as the threat environment facing our nation demands that SOCOM should remain fully engaged in the fight against violent Islamic terrorist groups across the world, from Africa to South Asia.

His Command's work is critical to our country's security and is often the first to respond to our nation's most pressing, unforeseen emergencies. In the 2022 National Defense Strategy. General Fenton's forces have been asked to assume significant risk.

I think this committee will want to ensure his Command is fully resourced to mitigate that risk to the degree possible, and I would also ask General Fenton and Mr. Maier whether their authorities and resources in the upcoming year are

sufficient for mission tasks. What is clear to me is that the role and importance of special operations forces is only increasing as the nature and complexity of threats facing our nation increase.

The resources we provide to Special Operations Command should reflect that reality. Our first job in this community is to provide the tools our military needs to deter, and if not successful there, to defeat these threats. There is no doubt that continued real growth in the defense budget top line above inflation remains essential to our national security. This requires action now, not later.

Our adversaries are not waiting, neither should we. This committee led the bipartisan charge to increase the defense budget in last year's cycle. Mr. Chairman, I frankly have little confidence that the Administration budget request this year will be sufficient. If it is not, this committee will again need to step up to ensure that our military has the resources it needs to defend the nation.

So, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to our witnesses. Look forward to hearing from you.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you very much, Senator Wicker. We will begin with Secretary Maier, please.

MR MAIER: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished members of this committee, thank you for providing the opportunity to testify on the global posture of our nation's Special Operations Forces, or SOF. I am honored to appear alongside General Fenton and General Nakasone. I could not ask for better teammates than General Fenton and Command Sergeant Major Shane Shorter in ensuring your SOF enterprise is prepared to address the threats facing the United States today and in meeting the challenges to come.

I start with thanking Congress, and especially this committee, for your enduring support of the men and women of SOF. I am particularly grateful for your assistance in building the organization I lead, Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, or SO/LIC, with dedicated and gifted public servants.

Sitting before this committee last year, I testified we were at an inflection point in SOF's transformation to focus more on the pacing challenge of **China** and the acute threat posed by Russia, while maintaining enduring capabilities to

counter violent extremist organizations, address Iran's destabilizing behavior, and conduct no fail crisis response around the globe.

Today, in updating you on this progress and the work that remains I will highlight three areas, SOF's ongoing transition in support of the National Defense Strategy, the development of SO/LIC, and our continued emphasis on empowering and supporting our people.

First, we are transforming the SOF enterprise to achieve the goals of the NDS. While SOF's role in counterterrorism is widely understood and appreciated, my team and I work daily to ensure the value proposition of SOF in integrated deterrence and campaigning against strategic competitors is accounted for and incorporated into the Department's processes.

As it has been in every major military challenge this nation has confronted since World War II, your SOF will play an essential role. To start the deep relationship SOF has forged with allies and partners over the last two decades, often through shared challenges and sacrifice, has produced an international SOF enterprise that provides us unique, firsthand understanding of a global operating environment.

It also has enhanced the resilience of our allies and partners to resist aggression. Second, drawing on the resilience – second, drawing on those relationships and our ability to reach some of the most difficult locations on the globe, your SOF formations provide unique access and placement that creates options for our nation's leaders, and SOF as adept at creating dilemmas for our adversaries. Here, I would highlight the many years of our investment in transforming the Ukrainian forces into highly capable force that is consistently outperforming Russia on the battlefield today. Representing the value that SOF brings to the Joint Force is one of my primary responsibilities, and we continue to make progress institutionalizing SO/LIC's role as Congress has directed.

Through my role providing civilian leadership for the organized train and equip of SOF, we have established over the last year in the Department a series of recurring processes and delivered key outcomes for the SOF enterprise. For example, the Special Operations Policy Oversight Council, which I chair, provides a senior level forum to address SOF unique challenges across the Department.

We also have made progress on important initiatives to deter our adversaries and fill warfighting gaps, especially on irregular warfare and information operations. I am also proud that SO/LIC played a central role in the Department's landmark Civilian Harm and Mitigation Response Action Plan. Finally, I would emphasize the first SOF truth remains truer today than ever, humans are more important than hardware. None of our efforts are possible without our most important resource, our people. With the strong support of Congress, we continue to evolve the Preservation of the Force and Family, or POTFF Program, to address SOF unique challenges and to optimize physical, psychological, social, spiritual, and now cognitive performance.

We also continue to prioritize a diverse, capable force by removing barriers to participation and advancement of SOF, an operational imperative if we are to succeed in an ever more complex geopolitical environment. Recent publicized challenges remind us that we must continue to evaluate our approach to force employment, accountability, and most importantly, present and engaged leadership. A healthy SOF culture that reflects our nation's values is essential to readiness and core to ensuring we remain the most lethal SOF enterprise the world has ever known. Investing in our people is a cornerstone of ensuring your SOF are ready to take on our nation's toughest challenges, because it is not a question of if, but when the call will come.

So, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of this committee, I thank you again for your partnership and support, and for this opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your questions.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. General Fenton, please.

GENERAL FENTON: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and –

CHAIRMAN REED: Could you bring that closer, General, the microphone as close as possible?

GENERAL FENTON: Thank you. How is this, Chairman? Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to testify alongside the honorable Chris Maier and General Paul Nakasone, and I am equally honored to be here on behalf of the dedicated men and women of U.S. Special Operations Command. Joining me today is Command Sergeant Major

Shane Shorter, USSOCOM's Senior Enlisted Leader. Command Sergeant Major Shorter is representative of the incredible USSOCOM team, particularly our noncommissioned officer corps.

Our noncommissioned officers are the backbone of our military and a decisive advantage within your special operations community, and they make us the envy of every military around the world. We are thankful for the leadership and support of this Congress, particularly this committee, a committee with the legacies of Senators Nunn and Cohen, who had the vision and determination to establish USSOCOM almost 36 years ago.

Thank you for your decades of steadfast support ever since. Your special operations forces remain a national advantage, as we enter a decisive era, an era where the strategic competitors such as the People's Republic of **China** and Russia seek to reshape the rules based international order, and in response, your special operations forces strengthen and sustain deterrence globally as part of the Department of Defense's approach to integrated deterrence.

With SOF's World War II origins and DNA rooted in decades of experience in strategic competition, now drawing upon are 20 plus years of hard-won combat credibility and coalition experience, your SOF provide creative, tailorable, and asymmetric options for our nation, while creating dilemmas for our competitors.

And as part of the broader joint force, we campaign every day to deter and prevent aggression, counter coercion, close warfighting gaps, and tackle shared challenges alongside allies and partners, all in support of accelerating the Department of Defense's strategic momentum towards our NDS objectives.

Yet your SOF also remain vigilant in protecting our homeland and U.S. interests from the persistent threats posed by global terrorist networks. In doing so, your SOF work tirelessly alongside a trusted network of allies and partners, U.S. interagency counterparts, and our Joint Force teammates to disrupt VEOs wherever they may be. And while we campaign for integrated deterrence and counter violent extremists, your SOF capability to respond to crisis represent a critical strategic edge and advantage for our nation. Agile, tailored, modernized, and capable, they enable us to undertake sensitive, high-risk missions, crucial to safeguarding and rescuing our citizens, and protecting vital national interests.

Foundational to all these efforts remains our longstanding collaborative

partnership with ASD SO/LIC Chris Maier and his team. The oversight, policy guidance, and advocacy within the Department provided by AS SO/LIC are essential for the modernization, readiness, and well-being of our SOF units and their families.

And together, we are committed to placing people as our number one priority, and we are preparing for the future by investing in them and by leveraging our nation's diverse talent to solve diverse challenges. And to those listening today who are considering service to our nation know the profound sense of calling and purpose that those of us serving in uniform share.

We know that a deeply rewarding journey lies ahead for those who choose to join. You will be part of an incredible team of men and women tackling the toughest challenges for our nation. Just yesterday, I had the privilege of hearing from Colonel retired Parris Davis, our nation's most recent Medal of Honor recipient, and a Green Beret.

At yesterday's ceremony to induct him into the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes, he summed up his military service and time with a Green Beret in three words, purpose, opportunity, and pride. And as we speak here today, more than 5,000 service members are USSOCOM are deployed, and they share his sense of purpose and pride. And they are defending our nation and standing shoulder to shoulder with allies and partners in over 80 countries to make our world a safer place. The courage and commitment of our special operations community, our military inspires the CSM and me daily, and we are immensely proud to serve with them. I look forward to your questions.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you very much, General Fenton. General Nakasone, please.

GENERAL NAKASONE: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to testify beside Assistant Secretary Christopher Maier and General Bryan Fenton.

Joining me today is Command Sergeant Major Sheryl Lyon, the U.S. Cyber Command and National Security Agency Senior Enlisted Leader. We are honored to represent the military and civilian members of U.S. Cyber Command. In the contested cyberspace domain, U.S. Cyber Command acts against foreign adversaries that threaten our nation through malicious cyber

activity and enables action by our Federal, private, and allied partners.

For instance, a combined U.S. Cyber Command NSA Election Security Group countered malicious cyber actors and oversaw measures to enable the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI, among other domestic partners, to defend the recent midterm elections.

The 2022 election cycle proceeded from primaries to certifications without significant impacts due in part to our effort. Going forward, success for U.S. Cyber Command will be measured by how effectively foreign adversarial actors are prevented from achieving their strategic objectives.

Last year saw significant maturation for U.S. Cyber Command but our work is not done. In 2023, we must continue to focus on our people, our partners, and our ability to deliver a decisive advantage. We must improve readiness, bolster our resilience, and maintain a culture of continuous improvement.

We will continue to deliver warfighting advantage for the Joint Force and partners throughout competition, crisis, and conflict. We are doing so by executing our service like authorities to build and sustain campaigns in and through cyberspace and the information environment. Through these efforts, we seek to counter adversaries in competition, to deter conflict, and prevail against aggression. Aligning efforts of both U.S. Cyber Command and NSA is essential to achieving these goals and is in the best interest of the nation and national security. It all starts with people, the men and women of U.S. Cyber Command working with NSA and partners here and abroad. We win with people. Then men and women of the United States Cyber Command are grateful for the support of this committee and Congress that has been given to our command. I look forward to your questions.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you very much, General Nakasone. Gentlemen, thank you for your testimony. And as I indicated in my opening statement, Mr. Secretary, we have made progress in strengthening the ASD SO/LIC to act as a service Secretary-like position regarding SOCOM, but there is more to do, particularly with respect to personnel, facilities, and other aspects of your office. Could you comment on what more must be done?

MR MAIER: Thank you, Chairman. And again, I would think this committee in particular for the ongoing and very consistent support for the ASD SO/LIC

position, and indeed my staff.

So, Mr. Chairman, I give you a quick snapshot to say that I think we have established a degree of momentum and a bit of irreversibility, which certainly wasn't the sense of things when I first took this role, and a lot of that has to do with the continued support of Secretary Austin, Deputy Secretary Hicks.

I think, as I have testified in this committee before, the best snapshot I can give the committee is when the Secretary of Defense convenes his service secretaries, it convenes the Secretary of the Army, the Secretary of the Air Force, and the Secretary of the Navy, and me as ASD SO/LIC to ensure that SOF voice and perspective is in the room.

To your question, Mr. Chairman, on areas of growth, I think we do need to continue to add staff. We have added about 20 or 25 people over the last two years with support from this committee, and that is against about 50 people currently.

So, it is a very small staff compared to the services, even with our limited authorities relative to them. And then I think most importantly, leadership billets. We need more ability for people in a very hierarchical Defense Department to be able to participate in meetings at the right level of seniority, sir. So, I would highlight those.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. General Fenton, what is the value of SOCOM in having properly empowered service Secretary-like civilian like Secretary Maier?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, thank you very much for that question. And I would say on a couple of fronts, very, very, very big value. First and foremost, as the Secretary Major just mentioned, his ability to be at the service, excuse me, of Secretary tables with the SecDef and represent issues for the SOCOM team along the lines of people, education, training, and even as he mentioned, where SOF will be and play a big role in terms of integrated competition. Excuse me, that is extremely important for the SOCOM enterprise.

I would say, next, his ability to be with the service secretaries and represent issues from SOCOM back to the services that we take our folks in from is very important for us, and we are very grateful for that.

And certainly, his direction, in many ways, throughout the Department in terms of how SOCOM views not only integrated deterrence but crisis response in counterterrorism has been a welcomed guidance for me. So, I am very grateful to have a service Secretary, and as I told you. I think, Chairman, when I was that confirmation, I looked forward to testifying next to my service Secretary.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you very much, General. General Nakasone, the issue of readiness with cyber mission forces has been a persistent issue we have discussed at the committee on numerous times.

The Cyber Mission Forces play a very key role and they have very demanding task. They require personnel with special aptitude, training, and experience. And one of the ironies, of course, is when you develop such a person, he or she becomes very attractive for outside employers, so you have a retention problem as well as other problems. And in some cases, in the past, it has been indicated that the services are not providing you the skilled and trained individuals you need, which does not provide you with the maximum possible use.

So, could you comment on the present situation with respect to Cyber Mission Forces, and also any steps that we should be taking to improve their readiness?

GENERAL NAKASONE: Chairman, as we take a look at the readiness of 133 teams, it really comes down to three Rs. It is the readiness piece of it – I am sorry, it is the recruiting piece of it. It is the training piece of it.

And it is the retention piece of it. And so, when you look at that, where I see this right now is the fact that the services have done a good job of recruiting the forces that I need. Assigning the numbers are one of the things that we are working with right now to make sure that we have all of the folks that we need. We have worked very, very hard to get the training to a very simple and predictable level.

That continues to improve. The other piece that we need to work hand in hand with the services is the retention piece, which you highlighted. The challenge of someone that has this type of training is very, very attractive, to the outside.

But several of the services, the Marines included, have made tremendous progress in this, in being able to focus their Marines on doing what these Marines wanted to do, which is cyber operations. In being able to stay within

our force for long periods of time, we see a reflective retention rate that is much higher.

CHAIRMAN REED: Well, thank you very much. Gentlemen, again, thank you for your testimony. Let me recognize Senator Wicker.

SENATOR WICKER: Thank you. First question to General Fenton, and this is about the naval small craft instruction and technical training school, NAVSCIATTS, which provides training to foreign forces on small boat operations and unmanned aerial systems. The annual operating cost is \$14.8 million, and that is divided across multiple stakeholders, including the Navy, SOCOM, and our foreign partners.

So, General Fenton, let me ask you, do you agree with General Richardson, the Commander of SOUTHCOM, who said the school generates outside return on investments? Ukrainian troops were being trained there last year when President Putin launched his unprovoked and illegal attacks on their country.

Do you agree, sir, that NAVSCIATTS provides value to our Combatant Commanders and key foreign military partners?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, thank you for that question. I am absolutely familiar with these NAVSCIATTS, as you refer to. I was more familiar with it when I was in **INDOPACOM** as a Deputy Commander, and there I saw value in that type of training, and I will say in many types of training, certain.

And we think this committee for a number of efforts that SOCOM has at its disposal in terms of 333, the 1202, and 127-echo that increase the capability of our forces and create partnerships in the way that we need those partnerships, and in SOCOM we call those partnerships pacing –

SENATOR WICKER: And \$14.8 million is a relatively modest investment, would you agree?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, I am not familiar with the budget. I am familiar, again, with the type of training that NAVSCIATTS produces.

SENATOR WICKER: Okay. So, we have established that there is value there, so I appreciate that. Let me turn then to General Nakasone. Tell us about cyber in support of our Ukrainian allies and the Russian use of cyber in support of their

illegal and aggressive invasion of Ukraine.

GENERAL NAKASONE: Senator, the story begins on the 3rd of December 2021, when we deployed a hunt forward team to Kyiv. That began a 70-day journey for us to ensure that Ukraine was at a much higher state of cyber readiness. As you know, we saw early attacks on specific Ukrainian sites within their government, and we also saw continued attacks as the invasion approached. What we were able to do during that time was work with a series of partners to bring the tools and technology to Ukraine that was able to assist them as Russia conducted continued attacks.

We continue today with support to a number of different Combatant Commands, U.S. European Command, and the training mission for Ukraine. Also too U.S. Strategic Command, as we take a look at ensuring that our NC3 network, our nuclear command and control and communications network, is the top and most important network and is fully secure.

As we move forward, we continue full spectrum operations with a series of partners to include Ukraine to provide them assistance as they battle the Russians.

SENATOR WICKER: Well, okay. Do you expect Russia is able to intensify new capabilities in a spring offensive this year?

GENERAL NAKASONE: From the cyber perspective, we are watching this very carefully, Senator. They are a very capable adversary. We continue to work very tightly with our other partners within the U.S. Government, CISA, FBI, to ensure that our U.S. critical infrastructure is protected, and NATO in general to ensure that they are aware of the tradecraft of the Russians might use.

SENATOR WICKER: Okay, Secretary Maier, what more do you need? You were asked and you said you need to add staff, and then you need more attention to the leadership billets.

Do you have what you need in terms of funding right now to do this and to deal with your enormous challenges? And if we give you the same amount you got this Fiscal Year with an inflation adjustment, will that be enough?

MR MAIER: So, Ranking Member, speaking just to my specific office, I think we are probably on a good pathway just in terms of funding. I already highlighted

some of the other requirements.

In terms of the entire special operations enterprise, I think our priorities are represented, understanding full well that the challenge with inflation means that if our budget is flat, that reduces our buying power, so that is something we will need to keep a close eye on, sir.

SENATOR WICKER: And yet you need additional staff and you need increased leadership billets.

MR MAIER: Yes, sir. So, I think we are on a good trajectory with the leadership billets. We are part of that conversation in the Department. I think especially in outyears years, we are going to need to add more staff to build that capability to really help this transition I have described, from counterterrorism crisis response to also include the peer competition that we have talked about and I expect we will talk about more, sir.

SENATOR WICKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Wicker. Senator Shaheen, please.

SENATOR SHAHEEN: Thank you, gentlemen, for being here this morning, for your testimony, and for your service to the country.

I think I would start this question with you, Secretary Maier, because SOCOM and CYBERCOM really are at the nexus of DOD's efforts to address the weaponization of information, which I think has become as much an issue for us as we are looking at our ability to be successful around the world as our military capability. So, can you, Secretary Maier, talk about DOD's role in addressing that misinformation, and how DOD coordinates with other agencies and Departments within Government to address disinformation?

MR MAIER: Yes, thank you for the question, Senator Shaheen. So, I would broadly start with describing DOD information as rooted in military objectives. So, as we talk about how this fits into the interagency, we have a distinct role and a value to play, but not for broad messaging, not for all the work that, say, the State Department or some other entities would do.

And I think we have looked at significant components of the information operations enterprise and really tried to tighten and target it more so the value

proposition and the measures of effectiveness are there. This is really a journey we are on, and I think it is one that the leadership of the Department is very, very focused on.

So, I would leave you with the idea that this is much more of a priority in the context of integrated deterrence that the national defense strategy calls out, because information is so critical, as you said, to all the aspects of success, especially as we start to think about adversaries we are trying to deter, ma'am.

SENATOR SHAHEEN: So, as you think about our efforts to recognizing – you are saying that we are trying to be more focused and how we address information at DOD. But clearly, what happens at State and in other Government agencies affects what DOD does. So, are there policy changes? Are there resources? Is there coordination that should be done that we should be thinking about? And I would ask General Fenton and Nakasone to respond to that as well.

MR MAIER: Briefly, ma'am, I think we need to invest more in the DOD information operations enterprise. It has not been one that has frequently been a focus, frankly. And I think with more capability in the Department and all hands, our ability to coordinate in an interagency standpoint, that is still very much a work in progress, ma'am.

SENATOR SHAHEEN: General Fenton.

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, I would echo all of Secretary Maier's comments. And then I would add that the integrated deterrence approach, I think, does demand a whole of Government approach in information operations, and SOCOM is one part of that in the Department side, but we also coordinate with other agencies of the Government to ensure that we are integrated and that folks know that the SOCOM piece is a traditional military activity.

The information operation space, as I like to say, is a place we absolutely have to be as part of a military, traditional military activity, and to get effects for Commanders either to message an adversary, to see misinformation and provide that to a host nation. So, Senator, I think our key message to the SOCOM enterprise as we move forward is, we remain aligned with the Department and certainly as part of the whole Government approach. It is a key part for us, and our State colleagues and other colleagues in the U.S. Government are very

important as we do that.

SENATOR SHAHEEN: General Nakasone.

GENERAL NAKASONE: Senator, it begins overseas. We are very familiar in how to do these operations. We have seen it in the elections. We have seen it with Russia, Ukraine. We have seen it with Iran.

The same actors that are interfering in our elections are the same actors that are doing influence operations. We go after them. This is what, you know, persistent engagement is for U.S. Cyber Command and the National Security Agency. We find them and we continue to ensure that we understand exactly what they are doing. We examine their tradecraft, and then we share it with a series of different partners. This is only done effectively, as both the Secretary and General Fenton have indicated, is with partners. So, inside the United States, sharing signatures with the FBI who share it with social media companies, being able to work with allied partners who have a broader understanding.

But then I think it is also with, you know, how do you bring the totality of our Government against them. Whether it is State Department, Treasury, FBI, being able to go after them.

The one thing we have learned, though, on this is that they never go away. They are always there, and you always have to be persistent.

SENATOR SHAHEEN: So, the Fiscal Year 2020 NDAA, trying to better focus the Department's efforts on information operations and then establish a principal information operations adviser, and ask the Secretary of Defense to conduct information operations and require a strategy and posture review that was due more than a year ago.

It still hasn't been delivered by the Department. Can you tell us what the status of that report is, Secretary Maier, and when we could expect delivery?

MR MAIER: Senator, yes, we understand both the strategy and the posture review are overdue. They both are now in senior level coordination, so above my level. They passed through my review.

So, I would expect in a matter of weeks they would come to you. I would say, in understanding the times out, that these have helped to animate a lot of the

conversations and deep action within the Department to really focus down it in on posture, and then the strategy has prompted a relook at how we go about doing information operations, per your opening question, ma'am.

SENATOR SHAHEEN: Thank you. So, I should assume we would have it by maybe the end of April?

MR MAIER: That is our intent. Yes, ma'am.

SENATOR SHAHEEN: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Shaheen. Senator Fischer, please.

SENATOR FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Fenton, in your nomination hearing last year, you agreed with your predecessor, General Clark, that without sustained CT pressure, we are going to continue to see terrorist groups that are more able to focus on planning and preparing for external attacks. Do you still agree with that statement?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, I absolutely agree with that statement. And there is a direction to the SOCOM team from the Secretary of Defense to have that as one of our three main priorities, integrated deterrence, counterterrorism, counter VEO, and crisis response.

SENATOR FISCHER: I remain highly concerned that we aren't seeing sustained CT pressure that we need in Afghanistan, especially with respect to ISIS-K. And it is my understanding that we have only had one single strike in over a year.

I don't believe that that translates into sustained CT pressure against ISIS-K. Can you describe the challenges of conducting the over the horizon CT operations without the reliable partners on the ground, without basing it in neighboring countries, and without reliable access to airspace?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, thank you for that opportunity to comment. On the first portion of that reference to Afghanistan, I would defer certainly to General Kurilla, his team. They have a more fulsome insight with a series of partners, than I would have, and additional challenges.

And SOCOM being one part of a whole Government team, I am sure there are many others that would give you a different insights and probably some more

fulsome data. But what I would tell –

SENATOR FISCHER: Do your insights, sir, differ with some of theirs that they have made to this committee?

GENERAL FENTON: No, but what I would tell you, Senator, is that part of addressing ISIS in Afghanistan is addressing it globally. And when I look at that question, I certainly view it through the Secretary's priority, and for us, defend the nation. And I think counterterrorism and VEO, it is a very high priority for SOCOM.

And as we think about it, we certainly, first and foremost know that your Special Operations Command team, in partnership with COCOM, because ISIS is a global organization, can sense, see, and strike anywhere in the globe.

And in essence, many of our operations are in places where we are not proximate to the target. And in fact, last year, an operation that went off in Northwest Syria to remove ISIS, number one, from the battlefield, we had to fly across Syria to get there. So, we are very far from that target.

But our ability to see it, sense it, and then strike it, unquestionable. And I think we have been able to do that globally throughout this year in places, Somalia with sustained pressure on ISIS, against an ops and communications node.

And I would add also that that global pressure for SOCOM, in concert with partnerships, goes on even in the **Indo-Pacific**. So, my sense to you, Senator, is that we absolutely have to keep the pressure on ISIS, on any of those terrorist networks.

And if I think about it with a number of the operations that have occurred, and I would be happy to talk more in a closed setting, it has been an extremely challenging year for these extremist operations, with a number of operations we put together, to include in Syria.

SENATOR FISCHER: Well, SOCOM has been primarily focused on counterterrorism mission for the last 20 years. The special operation forces have a lot of capability that they can bring to the **Indo-Pacific**. You earlier mentioned your experience there, and I value your knowledge and experience.

Can you provide an update on how you plan to rebalance your forces that you

have through restructure, training, and exercises, or to develop any kind of unique capabilities in order to meet the increased demand signal that we are getting from **INDOPACOM**.

GENERAL FENTON: Thank you very much for an opportunity to comment on that. I think as we – Senator, as we look at our priorities across the when category of integrated deterrence, crisis response, and counterterrorism, it is an adjustment.

I have heard it referred to in other places as a pivot. I would tell you it is an adjustment for how we are going to address strategic competition, integrated deterrence. It is in our DNA. We have been doing it – we have, as your special operations forces, were really born to do this. And in **INDOPACOM**, I think what it means is, through the lens of prevention, deterrence, and preparation, beginning with partnerships, partnerships with nations in that region that want the U.S. there.

They want to see a U.S. capability. And frankly, in many ways, when that US capability shows up, through the lens of special operations forces, we are absolutely able to move a partnership toward the U.S. and away from the **PRC**.

I think that same type of partnership helped us in Ukraine with the training that we were doing there with the Ukrainians, from 2014 and on, saw the special operations way of warfare and the way of doing business. All of that is very applicable to what we are doing in the **Indo-Pacific**, but I defer certainly to Admiral Aquilino for a more fulsome of how he sees it, because I am always in line with his requirements.

And we do that through our Theater Special Operations Command, our TSOC, Special Operations Command Pacific. We take lead from them at the SOCOM enterprise. But we are invested there, Senator Fischer, in a way to deter, prepare for, and then if needed, prevail in conflict.

SENATOR FISCHER: Thank you, and thank all of you, gentlemen, for your service.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Fischer. Senator Gillibrand, please.

SENATOR GILLIBRAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Nakasone, we have been working together on helping to develop a greater cyber capability

amongst new personnel, and we created this cyber academy for civilian workforce, which should be accepting its first class in 2024, applications in 2024 for a class in 2025.

And we are using the universities that NSA has already assessed as having the correct cyber capability and cyber curriculum. But in light of your testimony, I wanted to ask, would it be helpful to you to have a dedicated cyber force training just for permanent Cyber Command personnel for the military side as well? And if you did want that, what would that look like?

GENERAL NAKASONE: Senator, first of all, thank you for the work that you have done to build a greater population of cyber savvy folks. I am not sure that we need an academy yet. What I am very, very focused on is being able to look at the continued success we are going to have with the program that you have worked with in New York.

I am very interested in continuing the successes that we have had across the National Guard with State partnership programs. You are very, very familiar with the New York National Guard's work with Brazil, and other National Guard forces here.

And I am also very, very focused on ensuring that the ROTC and academy programs continue to have strong growth in terms of the numbers of people that can be commissioned into our force.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Gillibrand. Senator Cotton, please.

SENATOR COTTON: Thank you, gentlemen. Mr. Maier, you acknowledge in your opening statement that the shift away from counterterrorism is the primary role of our nation's special operations forces.

But far from decreasing the need for those forces, I would suggest that the current threat environment calls for even more capability. The need to continue our counterterrorism missions, support foreign and internal defense activities to bolster allies, and engage in new types of operations that are going to counter **Chinese** and Russian aggression. In that operating environment, would a decrease in force size or budget seem like a reasonable step to you?

MR MAIER: So, Senator Cotton, thanks for the question. Yes, this is the crux of the challenge, right. We are being asked to do more and our forces is probably

static. So, I would not advocate for a reduction in forces, sir.

SENATOR COTTON: I regret that you are here today, and not 48 hours from now when we are going to get the President's budget. Because I am troubled that you may, in fact get a reduction in budget or forces. Have any thoughts on what we are going to see on Thursday?

MR MAIER: Senator, as I think you know, I can't talk to what is likely to be in the budget, but I think as General Fenton and I both said, the priorities that we have identified are represented in that budget.

SENATOR COTTON: That is okay. Well, if my fears are proven out, I think you can count on many members of this committee, probably in both parties, to try to make sure that our special operations forces have the resources they need. General Fenton, do you agree that SOCOM requirements and your relevance are growing in this threat environment, not decreasing?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, I would agree with that. I think that the SOCOM requirements to be in campaigning and competition are absolutely important and exceedingly asked for by Combatant Command teams, where I draw my requirements from. Certainly, in line with our Theater Special Ops Command, the TSOCs.

But we see it because much of this begins with partnerships. Partnerships that we forge through the SOCOM team and enable. And the payoff in many ways can be looked at in the vicinity of Ukraine.

SENATOR COTTON: So, a decrease in either your budget or your personnel levels would add risk to your mission and therefore to our nation.

GENERAL FENTON: Well, Senator, I – no one wants to see a decrease in the personnel or the budget. I would tell you that I think it would not reflect the requirements, number one, a decrease of that. And number two, we would be forced at some point to make hard choices, because each and every time I think you will see me give you the best Special Operations Command for the budget we get.

SENATOR COTTON: Okay. Mr. Maier, when you talk about your personnel, I want to return to something else you had in your opening statement because I want to make sure we are using this personnel budget the right way. You talked

about the need for more staff. I got to tell you, that gets my hackles up pretty quickly.

I think we have plenty of staff in the Pentagon, way too much. Frankly, I think we have too many people dressed like you and me and not enough people dressed like the men to your right in your left, performing these jobs. Could you explain a little bit more about what kind of staff you are talking about and why you would need more staff?

MR MAIER: So, Senator, I was referring specifically to the special operations low intensity conflict staff that performs the Title 10 responsibility of the organized train, equip for SOCOM.

So, frankly, sir, a lot of what these staff do on a daily basis is try to articulate the SOF value proposition back into the Department with the services. Some of my concern is that as we go from the less intense environment of counterterrorism or go towards a less intense environment without the intense focus on counterterrorism, that some of what SOF has traditionally been afforded will be lost in that.

So, sir, sometimes this is just as simple as making sure that we have the SOF value proposition represented in resourcing, training, planning. I have been frankly surprised at times of how that has been forgotten or too narrowly defined as being a counterterrorism problem. So, you know, my 40 some odd staff are very much in that business. And, you know, it is the analytics. It is supporting special programs, other things like, that that are very, I think, akin to the SOF value proposition, but don't have representation often within the broader Department, sir.

SENATOR COTTON: Okay. General Fenton, one final question. In your opening statement, you talked about the strategic transition for the special operation forces. Could you explain a little more about the role that special – that your force, the special operations forces, are going to be expected to play in the future fight? And if so, if you can at an unclassified level, maybe help share that story.

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, thank you for that. I will focus on integrated deterrence, and where the Secretary and the Department have asked us to be aligned. And when I think about that, I think about a long three, really three lenses, prevent, prepare, and then prevail. I think on the prevention side, it is

all about being forward, it is about being deployed, or our skills, cultural understanding, language, and a familiarity with many of these environments that come from organizations in our enterprise that know those places as well, such as our first Special Forces Group in the **Indo-Pacific**, for instance, have a very deep familiarity with all things that go on in many of the partner nations.

I think it is key to keep that certainly thick and strengthened. So, part of it is being out training, advising, assisting, building capabilities, and using many of the tools this committee gives us in the form of security cooperation, 1202, and counterterrorism tools. That is a very key part.

I think it also allows us an opportunity to help the Joint Force and enable them as we are out in those environments and are able to prepare through our understanding of everything from seabed all the way to the space domain.

And then work in concert with General Nakasone and Jim Dickinson in a SOF space cyber triad. I think those are all very important. There is an acceleration towards that. It began before, certainly under General Richard Clarke, and we are accelerating that in the special operations team, while we stay vigilant on the counter-terror mission and certainly our crisis response duties as directed by the Secretary.

SENATOR COTTON: Thank you, gentlemen.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Cotton. Senator Blumenthal, please.

SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Let me begin by adding an exclamation point to the point that Senator Cotton just raised about the need for ample resources devoted to our national defense, most especially the kind of work that you are doing. I think your testimony today reinforces my hope that we will have bipartisan support for that kind of sufficient investment in our national defense.

I have been to Ukraine three times over the roughly last year, once before the invasion, and had an opportunity to talk to some of the special forces trainers who were there working with Ukrainian personnel. General Fenton, I am hoping that there has been continued training outside of Ukraine. I realize none of those special operations forces are located physically there now.

When I was there last, a number of weeks ago, none were there, at least visibly

to us. But I am hoping that that training mission is continuing outside of Ukraine.

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, thank you for that. It absolutely is continuing outside of Ukraine in a number of locations, bringing the capability that continues to assist Ukrainians off as part of the entire Ukrainian military. And that training goes on, along.

A number of the lines you have seen before, the capability to defend themselves, the capability to mission plan and orient, an understanding of the intelligence, and certainly an understanding of creating dilemmas for the Russian formation.

And so, the Ukrainian SOF is a key part of the Ukrainian military's approach. We do that, as your special operations team, certainly under General Cavoli's direction and watching in concert with his teammates in order that that is integrated with the entirety of the approach the SecDef directed.

CHAIRMAN REED: What is your assessment as to how well the Ukrainian special forces have operated?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, I think they have been superb from the very beginning, and I will start the journey in the 90s when Special Operations, and Special Forces in particular, or ten Special Forces Group made contact with Ukrainian forces after the fall of the Soviet Union.

And that generational relationship, something that is very, very important to your special operations community, in my sense laid the pathway for in 2014 our ability to really get after it after the first invasion by the Russians.

SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: Thank you.

GENERAL FENTON: So, they have done superbly well and they have been extremely willing to prepare and to fight.

SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: And to learn.

GENERAL FENTON: And to learn, yes, sir.

SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: General Nakasone, I think a number of experts have been somewhat surprised that the Russians haven't been more aggressive in the cyber sphere against Ukraine in this past year.

What is your assessment as to why they haven't been more aggressive, why they have been somewhat apparently quiescent, or maybe the Ukrainians have just resisted and fended them off without our knowing it?

GENERAL NAKASONE: Senators, the Russians have been very active in Ukraine in terms of conducting a number of cyber-attacks, including destructive and disruptive attacks. I think there is several pieces of the story here that are important though.

First of all, when you begin the plan and you think it is going to be a very easy invasion, perhaps you don't do enough planning with regards to your enabling activities. Secondly, give full credit to the Ukrainians. They did a tremendous job in terms of building their cybersecurity resilience.

And the third piece is, is that this is again for persistent engagement, my discussion previously, being able to enable and act with your partners. The Russians have not been as successful, and there is a number of reasons for that.

And I would point also to the fact that we have been able to bring a series of partners, including the private sector, that have a tremendous capability and capacity against the Russians.

SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: I have been impressed when I have spoken to President Zelenskyy with his focus on cyber. Do you think that there is a greatly increased danger or risk of Russian cyber-attack if the counteroffensive anticipated this spring by Ukraine is successful?

GENERAL NAKASONE: We are watching this very carefully. This is the matter of vigilance that I spoke to earlier, because by no means is this done in terms of the Russia, Ukraine situation. And so, as Russia looks at, you know, armaments coming into the country, as Russia looks at different support, how do they react?

One of the things that we are charged with is ensuring the security of the U.S. critical infrastructure and key resources with our partners in DHS and FBI. And so, this is something that we are working closely every single day on, Senator.

SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: Thank you. Thank you very much to you all and thank you for your service.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal. Senator Ernst, please.

SENATOR ERNST: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, gentlemen, excuse me, for being here today. Secretary Maier and General Fenton, I really do commend your submission of the joint statement to our committee. It reflects both alignments and oversight from civilian policymakers, as well as our uniformed leaders, so thank you for submitting that.

Secretary Maier and General Fenton, as outlined in your SOF vision and strategy, how does the SOF balance its various missions with great power, competition, counterterrorism, and crisis response, your three main missions? Because right now we are seeing great power competition increase, ever increasing with Iran, of course our pacing threat with **China**, and of course with the Russian incursion and war in Ukraine.

So how do you balance those missions, and how should that great power competition affect your mission?

MR MAIER: Thank you, Senator. And so, I will take it from a more strategic level, and then ask General Fenton to speak in more detail. So, I would say, first and foremost, it is a risk assessment and it is weighing against the requirements.

So, there is always more requirements from the Combatant Commanders than we can meet as a force and those numbers keep going up. But I think at the same time, we are very focused on the idea that while the strategic focus is, of course, on the pacing challenge of the **PRC** and the acute threat of Russia, we can't be surprised by an attack from another adversary.

And I think managing that risk is many cases what the SOF enterprise does very well. We are in essence the hedge against that risk. So it is a constant effort to look for areas where we can innovate, to be able to do more, do things on a more sustainable fashion, and in some cases look for where we are getting what my New England friends would call a twofer, where we are able to do counterterrorism work and have those partnerships and access that then helps us also on the NDS priorities, ma'am.

SENATOR ERNST: Yes, thank you. General Fenton.

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, thank you for that question. I think to your point

on balance and adjustment, that is an – I am constantly focused on that in the Command. As you mentioned, integrated deterrence, crisis response, and counterterrorism operations, all of those extremely prior – extremely high priority for the SOCOM team. I think on the integrated deterrence side, we take our lead from the Combatant Commands and their requirements for engagement in their regions, what they need for partnerships, how they need capabilities build, and Senator, in many ways our counterterrorism tools and the form factors that we have in terms of how we present forces.

Those are equally applicable in the integrated deterrence, the requirements from the COCOMs, for developing a force and competing with adversaries such as the **PRC**, as they are for actual counterterrorism efforts that you know very well. So, I think it is a balance. Some of those tools are interchangeable. We can bring them across a spectrum. Very often it is about the relationships that then turn into things that we have seen in Ukraine and we just have mentioned here, SOF investment early, and we have seen that in many other places as well.

SENATOR ERNST: Thank you. I appreciate that. And I know that my colleague, Senator Cotton, talked about your top line and strength cuts and how that would impact SOF. I am very, very concerned about that.

And it doesn't matter what Commander it was, whether it was General Tony Thomas, or Rich Clarke, or now you, General Fenton, I have always brought this up in discussions and every SOCOM Commander I have visited with has said, you know, ma'am, we are going to make do. You know, we will execute the mission regardless of the budget. I get that.

But I just need to stress to this committee, how important it is that we continue to fund you at the appropriate levels. You give us the greatest bang for the buck with what you do all around the globe, so we won't question that.

But I do want to dig in a little more. I, General Fenton, I have supported Section 1202, irregular warfare authorities. That was done in the Fiscal Year 2018 NDAA. And your joint statement describes this as essential for applying SOF capabilities against malign actors. So, in your personal opinion, would enabling those partner forces that are responding to hostilities enhance SOF's irregular warfare contribution to great power competition?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, thank you for that. And I will thank this

committee for, you know, the 1202 authority. That is a very important tool in the arsenal of the special operations tools that we use to either develop partnerships, build capability and capacity of a nation. And certainly, then move forward.

So, thank you very much for that. It is key for us to engage in partnerships at that level that involve irregular warfare, our ability to operate and build up a capability of a nation, also have it able to look at any malign influences that is coming into it and identify those, and then address them.

And those forces that we work with provide options for their national command leadership, as well as dilemmas for any adversary. So, Senator, I would say of a very small investment in many ways.

Almost like your special operations team. It is a very small investment, but for a very high return on the dollar. So, I thank you very much for that and happy to talk more about it in closed session.

SENATOR ERNST: Very good. Thank you very much, gentlemen. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator. Just let me recognize Senator Hirono and ask Senator King to preside while I attend the Banking committee. Senator Hirono.

SENATOR HIRONO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you all for your testimony today. And General Fenton and Secretary Maier, thank you for meeting with me earlier. General Nakasone, I have been deeply concerned by the state of critical infrastructure on and off military installations, crumbling and out-of-date infrastructure lead to delays and maintenance schedules, and put communities at risk for environmental disasters, as we have seen in Hawaii.

But it also leaves infrastructure that is critical to our national security, but often as an afterthought, like wastewater treatment plants and pipelines, exposed to cyber-attacks. That is why I very much appreciate President Biden's National Cybersecurity Strategy's focus on defending critical infrastructure, i.e. things like wastewater treatment plants and pipes.

How would the Department of Defense collaborate with other Federal agencies to implement the infrastructure goals outlined in the President's National

Cybersecurity Strategy?

GENERAL NAKASONE: Senator, from a cybersecurity perspective, we begin, first of all with a focus on DOD critical infrastructure. Two weeks ago, I was in Hawaii to see Admiral Aquilino and to work with him in terms of looking at the DOD critical infrastructure within the islands.

We work with a series of partners when requested to provide that assistance. That comes as a request for assistance from other agencies to the Department, of which then we would be part of that assistance.

SENATOR HIRONO: Don't you think that maintaining our – the physical aspect of our critical infrastructure is a very important part of your ability to do your mission?

GENERAL NAKASONE: Certainly, we need a platform upon which to operate. I agree with you, Senator. And so, what we are focused on, though, is obviously the cyber elements of that and then working again through the Department to assist and answer those requests.

SENATOR HIRONO: So, I think it is all – you know, we need to look at these things in a much more total kind of an aspect. That is why it was really important for Admiral Aquilino to ask for an assessment of the infrastructure needs across the services in Hawaii, but I would say across the country.

For, again, you, General Nakasone and General Fenton, the Administration's NDS identifies **China** as the pacing challenge for our military, and to create enduring deterrence, it is critical that we remain the partner of choice in the **Indo-Pacific** area, which is why I have supported additional funding for exercises in the region and building on long standing relationships, like the compacts of free association, which we are concluding our negotiations on.

What opportunities have your respective Commands had for multilateral training last year, specifically in the **Pacific** AOR, and how will you build from those going forward? This is for General Nakasone and Fenton.

GENERAL NAKASONE: Senator, we began with Cyber Flag, which is our annual keystone exercise. We invited a series of partners from the **Pacific**, that includes Korea, that includes Australia, that includes other nations within the **Pacific** that decided to come and exercise with us. That is one piece of it.

The second piece is what I had spoken to previously, which is a State partnership program, working very, very closely with Hawaii, the Hawaii Army National Guard, Hawaii Air Force Reserve and National Guard to be able to assist them as they take a look at Indonesia and the Philippines, two countries that are partnered with the State of Hawaii. And so that is an area that I think has got tremendous potential in the coming year.

SENATOR HIRONO: General Fenton, I am particularly interested in really strengthening – I agree with your area of focus, General Nakasone, but also, you know, the Pacific Island nations such as Palau and Marshall Islands and Micronesia. Can you add to the response, please?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, I can. I will start with your special operations team out there through the Theater Special Operations elements, SOCPAC, Special Ops Command Pacific, is part of all the **INDOPACOM** exercise events. It is very key for us because our ability to build partners and allies, along with the entire **INDOPACOM** team for your special ops, is a pacing item. It is very important and certainly a high priority for this nation and the Secretary of Defense.

Below that we also have our own either bilateral or multinational special operations training events in the region or back in places around bases that we have in CONUS. So, our ability to be linked up with the **INDOPACOM**, desired in states for partners and allies, and really enable that, plus what we bring in, it is in our nature, it is in our DNA to be a partner force of choice, I think is very, very impactful for Admiral Aquilino and **INDOPACOM**.

I would say to your, partnering anywhere is important to us, so to the island nations, whether it be Oceania, Micronesia, Melanesia, Polynesia, your special ops team has relationships there already.

Some of that is not in exercise, but certainly in contact or in deployments as we have had throughout the years, and we will continue to do that, and strengthen it as the **INDOPACOM** team and Commander would want.

SENATOR HIRONO: Thank you. My time is up but I just wanted to mention, General Fenton, that I did appreciate that in your prepared remarks, you talk about diversity of thought and background in our people as a critical enabler of the American advantage. Thank you very much. And the focus on maintaining

that kind of diversity, I completely agree with you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR KING: Senator Tuberville.

SENATOR TUBERVILLE: Thank you, Senator King. Thank all of you for your service. Thanks for being here today. General Nakasone, I like what you said in your opening, we win with people. I think that is everything that we do, especially our country.

You know, in your department, when you are looking to recruit people, obviously cyber is your purview, what other areas do you look for in young people? Information technology? I mean, what all areas do you look for in recruiting somebody for cyber?

GENERAL NAKASONE: You look for someone that can do critical thinking, Senator. That begins with – there are more than just information technology majors out there that are successful in cyber. There are linguists, there are mathematicians.

There are, you know, liberal arts majors. What we are looking for is someone that has an interest, has a passion to do this type of work. That doesn't want to leave work until they are able to get the access that is necessary for us to have an effect.

SENATOR TUBERVILLE: Is that growing? Is – are we losing more to the private sector? How is that going?

GENERAL NAKASONE: So first of all, on the recruiting piece, the services have tremendous success in recruiting cyber forces. They are not having a problem filling it. I think the challenge becomes later on is there are a number of choices that young people have. And so, I think we have to think a bit differently here.

First of all, maybe we need to lengthen the, you know, the obligation to become trained in cyber because it is so attractive. Secondly, I do believe that when you come to our forces, that is the only thing that you should do for your career.

Much in the same way I have watched special operations forces be successful. When you become a special operations force operator, that is what you are doing all the time, and that is what they want to do. Our force is the same way you.

SENATOR TUBERVILLE: Yes. How is retention in your Department of young people once they fill their duty? Do we have pretty good retention to re-up –

GENERAL NAKASONE: So, it is a mixed bag service. Senator, I can certainly come back to it with the numbers. But the challenge, of course, is that there are a lot of choices. And so that is what we have to make sure that we are on guard for.

SENATOR TUBERVILLE: How concerned are you about TikTok and the influence that they are having on Americans kids?

GENERAL NAKASONE: So TikTok concerns me for a number of different reasons. One is the data that they have. Secondly is the algorithm and the control, who has the algorithm. Third is the broad platform.

Influence operations, as we talked about previously, it is not only the fact that you can influence something, but you can also, you know, turn off the message as well when you have such a large population of listeners.

SENATOR TUBERVILLE: Yes, thank you for that. General, you don't have a recruiting problem, do you?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, I will start that we are recipient of services and I would want all to know that we are very integrated with their recruiting efforts, and there are some challenges out there for the services. Right now, your special operations team is not having a recruiting problem. We are aggregated at a very high level of recruitment. And the Department has got a retention number, I think, that is one of the highest in decades, and we are right there along with them.

SENATOR TUBERVILLE: Yes, you require the most rigorous training standards in military, correct?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, we require very high standards. And folks who want to come and be part of that journey, who have determination, grit, initiative, willingness to see something through, and frankly, what we really look for is somebody – a quiet professional. Maybe he will do this mission and succeed, and then get ready to do the next one.

SENATOR TUBERVILLE: Would you agree that it is also the most riskiest part

in our military?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, there is a lot of our teammates out there across the services that do some incredible feats of both their mission and bravery. I would say we are one part of what our Department has as the most incredible military formation in the history of mankind.

SENATOR TUBERVILLE: That is a pretty diplomatic way to put it, General.
[Laughter.]

GENERAL FENTON: They do some really tough mission.

SENATOR TUBERVILLE: Yes, very tough. You know, I think there is a lesson here for the rest of our military, and it is not everybody, but, you know, America's youth want to serve an organization with purpose and patriotism. I mean, we all saw that growing up. In light, it seems people rise to standards that you set for them. I mean, I saw that in my former life of coaching.

I mean, you set a standard and most of the time, if you push them hard enough, no matter where they won't or not, they will reach that standard. So, I want to thank for what SOCOM does and everything that you all stand for, because you are on the front lines every day and you are usually the first one to get there and the last one to leave. So, thanks to your group, and the people that stand up for this country, and patriotism that they have for us. Thank you very much.
Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR KING: On behalf of the Chairman, Senator Warren.

SENATOR WARREN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So, one of the primary purposes of this hearing is to evaluate your Command's budget requests. Most Federal agencies have to balance their must haves against their nice to haves when it comes to requests for money, and they have to account for long term costs.

For example, the maintenance of fleet vehicles that they want to buy, but not the Department of Defense. DOD submits its budget for the things it wants, and then it submits a second list of things that they want funded and they don't add what the long-term costs will be. DOD calls this second list unfunded priorities.

I call it a wish list. Now, last year, some parts of DOD stuck to their budgets and

didn't put anything on a wish list, but not SOCOM, nope. SOCOM got \$13.2 billion in its regular budget, then turned around and asked for \$656 million additionally.

Now one of the items on SOCOM's wish list last year was \$8.7 million to ensure that a SOCOM armament facility could meet blast exposure standards that protect service members from traumatic brain injury.

General Fenton, do you agree that if SOCOM needs funding for a project that will ensure that it is in compliance with basic safety standards and help protect workers from brain damage, that project should be part of the Command's budget?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, I put a high priority on safety.

SENATOR WARREN: So, should it be part of your budget then?

GENERAL FENTON: Any budget I build will reflect my priorities, and priority is safety, and certainly align with the NDS.

SENATOR WARREN: So that means you think that something like this should be in the base budget?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, I put a high priority on safety and my budget will –

SENATOR WARREN: But you are telling me your budget reflects your priorities and somehow this didn't even make it in the basic budget.

So, look, let me ask it this way then. This armament facility improvements weren't funded last year. So, are you going to put that in your base budget this year or are you going to count on Congress to add extra money for it, which it didn't do last year?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, the first thing I will do is get intimately familiar with the armament facility you are discussing right now. I am six months of the job. I am still working my way through a number of certainly locations in the special ops community. So, I will take that for the record and get back to you, but my budget will be reflective of my priorities that are aligned with the national defense strategy, and safety of our entire force is certainly a high priority for me.

SENATOR WARREN: Well, I appreciate that, but I just want to make another

point for the record. I wasn't born yesterday. You know, I get what is happening here. SOCOM and other commands are gaming the system.

They take costs that should be part of a base budget request's essential programs, like funding to come into compliance with brain injury prevention standards, and then put them on the wish list, daring Congress not to fund them, and that way they can boost their overall budget allocation.

In January, I sent a letter to Secretary Austin, along with Senators Braun, Lee, and King, telling DOD not to send Congress any wish lists as part of this year's budget. So, General Fenton, this is your first time submitting a budget as the Commander of SOCOM.

You will be sending it over to Congress this week, so you should be right on top of this. Will you pledge not to request any unfunded priority items on top of your annual budget request?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, I will submit the budget that reflects my priorities aligned against the NDS, and I will submit that. And any UPL, required by law, that reflects facts of life changes, accelerated capabilities, and any additional NDS initiatives –

SENATOR WARREN: Let me stop you right there. I just want to be required – you need to submit a list, you are right. That is required by law. But you don't need to put anything in it or ask for any funding from it.

The list from European Command and Transportation Command were blank last year. That is, they lived within their budget. They did not come back for an additional bite at the apple.

And I am just asking if you will agree to do the same thing. That is what budgets are about. They are about making your priorities clear, and I want to know if you are willing to live within the budget you have from the DOD and not come back here for more.

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, I would submit a budget that is aligned with my priorities and aligned with the NDS.

SENATOR WARREN: Is that a yes or a no?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, as requested by law and by law, I will submit a UPL. I will take into consideration any facts of life –

SENATOR WARREN: Okay. That is, frankly, that is not even a very artful dodge. Look, we don't have any other part of the Federal Government behave this way and for good reason. The budget process is about making tough choices and setting clear priorities.

Anything in the regular budget must include an analysis of the long-term costs, not things that are on the wish list. I have a bipartisan bill to eliminate waste like this, but DOD could shut it down voluntarily right now, and I urge you to do that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR KING: On behalf of the Chairman, Senator Rounds.

SENATOR ROUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen, first of all, thank you for your service to our country. And I have to admit, I like seeing options in the budget. I like seeing alternatives. It doesn't mean that everything that is on the budget is necessarily going to be funded by or recommended by this committee. But to see the other options out there, from my perspective, I appreciate seeing those others that sometimes may not make it all the way through the budget process. General Fenton, SOCOM has undoubtedly been reorienting from counterterrorism to preparation for a high end, near-peer fight.

Assume a situation in which we had to respond under Article 5 and support our NATO allies in Europe, and **China** concurrently took military action to claim Taiwan. What do you assess would be SOCOM's capability to support a two-theater war concurrently in Europe and the **Pacific**?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, what I can tell you now is that your special operations team is already globally deployed, 5,000 personnel in 80 different countries at Combatant Command request, and at times a Departmental request.

Our ability to address the integrated deterrence piece, crisis response, and counterterrorism, we were absolutely able to do all that. We are able to do the front-end competition, integrated deterrence with training, building capability partners and allies, and at the same time, we are also ready to prepare an environment for the Joint Force and prevailing conflict.

SENATOR ROUNDS: I think what I am really trying to get at is, is it seems as though our policy here is not necessarily to win in two theaters. We need everything that we can do to be in a position to give the young men and women on the front lines every opportunity. We should be talking about now before it ever happens.

And I just and with regard to a budget which you will prepare, and bring in, and lay out, would it be fair to say that there are other items that could be done in the very near future that could help us do a better job of preparing for a two front defensive capacity?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, I stay focused daily on readiness and training, and providing the President and Secretary a range of options for whatever conditions they may put in front of us.

As you describe, some level of potential two front, or we stay trained and ready to provide options across a number of contingencies that the Department has asked us to plan for, along with the Combatant Commands. At the same time, also providing dilemmas for the adversaries, both either in integrated deterrence or in – high in conflict.

SENATOR ROUNDS: Thank you. General Nakasone, as we all know, the Cyber Mission Force comprises elements provided by all of the services. Is there anything we should do to better execute this construct?

GENERAL NAKASONE: Senator, I will be coming back to the committee under 1502, the NDAA section that came out in the recent NDAA, to talk about the shortfalls. So that comes at the end of March.

That will be the first indicator that I will have to be able to communicate with the committee. I suspect between that and section 1534, which requires me to come back at the end of June with the Secretary and the Chairman to talk about shortfalls in readiness, we will be able to outline exactly what we think are the areas. There are some, and there are areas that we can work with the services to improve.

SENATOR ROUNDS: Thank you. Also, General, last year we discussed the benefit of an SPM13 and SPM21, and what they provided the Command to effectively conduct cyber operations, recognizing that they are both classified in

nature, but basically, they have streamlined and lay out a collaborative effort in which to provide accelerated timeframes for cyber operations.

As you look over the year since, what, if anything, has changed in your assessment and the impact they have had on cyber operations?

GENERAL NAKASONE: Senator, really very little impact. If I can rewind the clock just a bit, 2018, as you recall, you assisted with us to make sure that within the NDAA that we saw cyber as a traditional military activity, that was a huge step forward for us.

I would also say that the policy memorandums that you talked about there, they are their foundation for what we do, any matter that is much more predictable, both for ourselves and for policymakers. So, we continue to work with it. We are continuing to move forward.

SENATOR ROUNDS: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR KING: Thank you, Senator. General Nakasone, on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is essential for the national defense and 1 is nice to have, where would you rank Section 702?

GENERAL NAKASONE: 10 plus and let me talk a little bit about 702. Thank you, Senator, for that question. As you know, FAA 702 allows the U.S. intelligence community to collect the information and communications of foreign targets of interest operating outside the United States that use U.S. infrastructure services.

So, outside the United States, the intelligence community can collect against foreign targets of interest. It is critical for what we do. And what have we seen since FAA 702 was enacted in 2008 and reauthorized two times? It has disrupted terrorist plots. It has alerted us to cyber- attacks.

And finally, it has uncovered CI threats. Last year, we are able to utilize this in a series of ransomware, in a series of being able to uncover what adversaries were trying to do to us against our critical infrastructure. And most importantly, as General Fenton can testify, is, you know, what we were able to do against – an essential piece that we need as a nation.

SENATOR KING: I think the key word is essential. Thank you, General. Talk to

me about the relationship between electronic warfare and cyber. Is elect – who is in charge of electronic warfare. Because in a conflict, electronic warfare and cyber is going to be where it begins.

GENERAL NAKASONE: So traditionally the service has had electronic warfare capabilities that they deploy with their forces. I think what you speak to is a synchronization of this battlefield in cyberspace, which we are starting now to work very, very closely with the Combatant Commands.

SENATOR KING: I am concerned that if electronic warfare is scattered among the services, it is not going to have the attention, for example, that cyber has because we have Cyber Command.

And electronic warfare is definitely going to be part of the conflict, whether it is jamming or disabling satellite communications, those kinds of things. There is no central – what you are telling me is there is no – it is not part of your Command and there is no Central Command that controls it.

GENERAL NAKASONE: Is not part of my Command. But again, a lot of the electronic warfare that is done, is done in support of service requirements. And so, they have service forces that do this.

I think what you are speaking to, Senator, is, you know, much in the same way we have tactical forces that assist the services, is there some type of national capability that we might need? And I think that is something that we have to look very carefully on.

SENATOR KING: I worry about coordination and duplication, two sides of the same coin. You mentioned briefly in your opening statement, election interference in 2022. Is election interference, in terms of cyber, an ongoing problem? It hasn't gone away.

GENERAL NAKASONE: It hasn't gone away. This is something we will deal with for as long as I can look at the future and we see cyberspace and the ability for adversaries to influence what goes on.

SENATOR KING: Is it things like hacking and meddling with the system, or is it more in terms of disinformation?

GENERAL NAKASONE: So, what we have seen, Senator, really, when you talk

about infrastructure, that is more of an interference piece. We see the influence piece much more prevalent these days and being able to operate outside the United States, go after trolls and other different actors that are trying to create influence.

SENATOR KING: And these are – can be Russia, Iran, North Korea, **China**. They are actively involved in trying to affect and interfere in our politics. Is that correct?

GENERAL NAKASONE: You have hit the top four plus proxies.

SENATOR KING: **China** cyber capability, is it on the rise? They have been not as aggressive in terms of elections and interference as the Russians have been over the last 10 years or so. Is **China** starting to become more aggressive or are you seeing more activity, less worry about reputational risk, and those kinds of things?

GENERAL NAKASONE: So, they have a different playbook, I think, than the Russians, from what we have seen. The other piece is that as I mentioned last year, this is a very capable, capable force. And so, we can cover many of the areas that I can discuss in closed testimony, but again, a very formidable foe.

SENATOR KING: The new national cyber strategy was just issued last week. Any gaps? I don't expect you to criticize it, but do you have any suggestions you can share with us?

GENERAL NAKASONE: I am really pleased with the National Cyber Strategy. I think that this is something that we have long wanted in terms of what is the responsibility of both the Government and the private sector, and being able to meld that is critically important for us.

I think in the weeks to come, obviously the Department of Defense's cyber strategy will nest within that, and so I think for the first time, we will probably have, you know, from the Government all the way down to our department something that is very effective.

SENATOR KING: Think of that as a coherent Government wide strategy.

GENERAL NAKASONE: Yes, Senator.

SENATOR KING: Thank you, General. Senator Budd.

SENATOR BUDD: Thank you all for being here. So, General Fenton, you know, there has been a series of concerning incidents, suicides, murders, overdoses, drug trafficking arrests surrounding the special operations community at Fort Bragg.

But I think you and members here of the committee, we know that those reports, they are not indicative of the thousands of incredible men and women at USASOC. I am hoping that you can discuss some of the issues that we are actually seeing in Bragg, including those, and if you can describe what SOCOM is doing to combat these challenges. And I will just also just say that our office is here to help, and I am sure on both sides of the aisle, all of us are here, on your team in that regard.

GENERAL FENTON: Well, Senator, thank you very much for an ability to comment on that, for an opportunity. That very issue hits at the heart of our number one priority, our people, who are competitive in comparative advantage and who we place a lot of trust and confidence in.

And this type of behavior, atypical to the 70,000 plus that are doing the right thing almost every single day, each and every day the majority are absolutely doing that, is first and foremost it disrespects that type of work that our SOCOM enterprise is known for. Second, it certainly, it is not behavior that is welcomed.

I want everybody to know that is not the type of behavior that is welcomed in this formation and is not indicative of an organization in whom the nation has placed a lot of trust. We hold ourselves to a higher standard. And the Command Sergeant Major and I are – first of all, we are very angry when we get reports like that, and we are deliberately laser like focused on this. And in fact, we talk about it as a corrosive.

These are corrosive toward the trust and confidence that this committee, the Secretary, and certainly the nation has in us, and we are we are laser focused on eradicating that from SOCOM enterprise. One is too many, but we recognize we are not immune. So, we look at it through a number of lenses.

First, it is a leader issue in preventing this, reinforcing the standards, the behavior of a drug, some type of other untoward illegal, not moral and ethical

behavior. Not who we are, not who we want our formation. And we asked our whole formation to be on alert and to help point that out for us and let us as leaders start to take action.

Second, it is reinforcement policies that tell folks this in the event they just came into this formation and they didn't know any better, and they are at risk of doing something like that that disrespects decades of successful operations of many, many who came before and those who come after.

Responding. I think a key piece in that one is holding folks accountable. And you will see us do that because that sends a very big signal back, when appropriate, Senator, back to the enterprise about this behavior is absolutely not welcomed and not part of the SOCOM enterprise.

So, you got my commitment on this, Senator. I have been – in about six months, it has been a top priority because of what it does, not only to the trust that this committee and others have in the SOCOM team, but to our overall readiness. And that readiness is important because it needs to be a very lethal force each and every time the Secretary puts us on the job.

SENATOR BUDD: Thank you. And you have our commitment as well. Secretary Maier and also General Fenton, you have talked a little bit about this today, but can you please expand on balancing the need for special operations forces to continue conducting counterterrorism in the Middle East and Africa versus the important role they play in great power competition? And do we have the right mix of forces to accomplish both? We will start with you, Secretary.

MR MAIER: So, Senator, thanks for this point. This is maybe among the most important points that I focus on every day. And I think the answer is somewhat. So, I think we have a very lethal, very capable counterterrorism force.

What we are working to do is make that force more sustainable over time, because, frankly, many of the threat actors are still out there and we are still having to do this mission.

But being able to make it more sustainable so we can draw on the unique capabilities of the SOF enterprise to bring that to the fight against a potential **PRC** or Russia, certainly to establish that integrated deterrence we seek, sir.

SENATOR BUDD: Thank you.

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, I would just add that it is a balance, as we look at it across the enterprise with the three missions of the integrated deterrence and counterterrorism crisis response.

And as I mentioned before and will reinforce, the capabilities we have in the counterterrorism marine arena transfer as well over into our integrated deterrence approach. But at the same time, we know that very often they are unilaterally asked for.

In this case in Africa, we work with AFRICOM Commander and our Special Operations Command Africa, our TSOC, is a way to address their requirements. Keep the pressure, as I mentioned earlier.

One of the things at SOCOM we look at is the threat has been disrupted, but it persists, and our job is to remain vigilant. And when we can set, see, and illuminate, we take action in concert with the Combatant Commanders and certainly under SecDef direction.

SENATOR BUDD: Thank you all very much. I have some questions for the record, General Nakasone, I will submit for you, but I yield back. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you very much, Senator. Senator Kaine, please.

SENATOR KAINE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to our witnesses. Secretary Maier, I want to talk to you about a previous job you had that I still think you are very involved in. I understand that you previously led the DOD defeat ISIS task force. Is that correct?

MR MAIER: Yes, Senator.

SENATOR KAINE: And that you continue in your role as Assistant Secretary of SO/LIC to focus on the anti- terrorism mission, including the defeat of ISIS, correct?

GENERAL FENTON: Correct, Senator.

SENATOR KAINE: That task force included international partners. I think there are about 80 international partners. And it is fair to say that in your work on that task force and currently it involved a lot of coordination with Iraqi defense forces, isn't that correct?

MR MAIER: It did, yes, Senator.

SENATOR KAINE: I know that my colleagues might have seen that Secretary Austin has paid an unannounced visit to Iraq. That news of that broke this morning. I just want to read a phrase, a quote from him, the U.S. forces are ready to remain in Iraq at the invitation of the government of Iraq, he said this following a meeting with Prime Minister Al Sudani.

Further, "the United States will continue to strengthen and broaden our partnership in support of Iraqi security, stability, and sovereignty." Do you think the U.S. being in partnership with Iraq for their stability and sovereignty, for their own sake and for the region, is an important priority?

MR MAIER: Senator, yes, I do. And I think it is critically important to managing a very challenging political situation, too, with obviously the Iranian and proxy threats there as well, sir.

SENATOR KAINE: Just for my colleagues, we have two war authorizations against the government of Iraq, our strategic partner who Secretary Austin is visiting today. We have 2,500 American troops in Iraq at the Iraqi government's request. One of the war authorizations was passed in 1991. It is 32 years old.

The other war authorization was passed in the fall of 2002. The invasion of Iraq began on March 19, 2003, 20 years ago next week. I have a proposal that is very bipartisan, 12 Democrats and 12 Republicans have joined together to urge Congress to repeal the two Iraq war authorizations.

This is going to be marked up in the Foreign Relations Committee likely in the next few days, and hopefully will be on the floor for a vote soon, coincident in timing with the 20th anniversary of the Iraq invasion.

And I just wanted to bring it to the attention of my colleagues. I urge that we repeal the Iraq war authorizations to recognize reality, an enemy that we were trying to push out of Kuwait in 1991, an enemy whose government we wanted to topple in 2002, is no longer an enemy.

They are a security partner of importance right now. Second, Congress should exercise our Article 1 authority over war, peace, and diplomacy and not allow it to be on autopilot. Third, an authorization that is no longer necessary becomes sort of a zombie authorization that can be grabbed and used for mischievous

purposes if we are not careful.

And fourth, I even think we send a powerful message not just to allies and strategic partners, we even send a message to adversaries that you may be our adversary today, Iraq once was, but the U.S. specializes over time in turning adversaries into allies. Look at Japan, look at Germany, look at other nations.

And we hold that hope out to everyone that we will defeat you should we need to, but we also hold out an olive branch and look for an opportunity to beat a sword into a plowshare and turn an adversary into a partner. The proposal that I have, Mr. Chairman, that I hope will be voted on in the floor this month has the support of the Administration, and they have indicated that neither of the two authorizations are necessary for any current U.S. military operation, and thus their repeal will not endanger in any way the security of the United States or Americans anywhere in the world.

And I would just urge my colleagues possibly to take a look at this once the Foreign Relations Committee acts, because I believe we will be taking this matter up on the floor very soon. And with that, Mr. Chair, I yield back.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Kaine. Senator Mullin, please.

SENATOR MULLIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Fenton, can you explain to us, and I know you have been asked this question before, but I just want it for context again, the value of the SOF community.

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, I think the value of the SOF community transcends all three mission areas that we have right now. Our integrated deterrence approach, which the previous was strategic competition the days before the tragic events of 9/11, when we were developing partners and allies, competing for relationships, building partners of force – of choice, and in many places with our security cooperation approach, actually strengthening nations across the globe. I think that is called for even more now. And as we come forward with 20 years of hard-earned combat credibility, a technology fluence, and an incredible formation. And the SOF formation is a formation that knows the hard skill. It knows technology.

It deploys around the world on a moment's notice. And in that case, all that value transitions over to integrated deterrence. On the counterterrorism side,

the center for 20 plus years. In places all over the world, your special operations command team, along with the rest of our military interagency partners, I think brought immense value to this nation, disrupting degrading terrorist networks globally and figures, the names that many folks know here are no longer and have been removed from the battlefield and are no longer a threat to this nation. On crisis response, our ability at SOCOM to, within a very short notice, deploy forces and arrive in a country and either safeguard our U.S. diplomats, citizens, or rescue them if that is indeed the task, and then bring home safely. I think it is all part of this special Operations command value proposition.

And I would add a very small investment on the budget that we are very grateful for, and I think a very high return on investment across all those and many more that in the interest of time, I can follow up with you in a classified session.

SENATOR MULLIN: Appreciate it. One last quick question for you, and then if you could be brief on it, I would like to – you just kind of explain the partnerships that we have with our allies in Europe and how that is benefiting us, and I would say in the with Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine.

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, I go back to a very specific part here of the very high value proposition I think your special operations teams bring. It started with a relationship, our ability in small teams to be with Ukrainians in the mid-90s developed a level of trust. Speed of trust is important in these, as you know very well.

And then in 2014 began in earnest a level of training that was about resistance and resilience, and those look like skills of developing a military – Ukrainian special operations that has an NCO corps, that knows about mission command, has initiative, and frankly has been, as I have seen and certainly talk a lot about, very valuable to the Ukrainian military effort writ large. I think we have also had the ability to learn from them.

They have got an incredible way that they take equipment off the battlefield and re-engineer it. That is really great for us because we learn as much from our partners as I hope they do from us.

So, I think in a very small way, that ability for the Ukrainian SOF and the Ukrainian military to resist, and now absolutely really fight against this aggression, and has paid dividends. Started with a high investment with the

special operations team.

SENATOR MULLIN: Thank you so much. And, Mr. Chairman, I am going to kind of divvy here a little bit. General Nakasone and I know each other, and I just want to raise a point here.

The General is over a program that is very forward leaning, and I would ask that we would – we would ask the Senate Intel and the House Intel to brief us on a program that General Nakasone is over. And in you will see – it would reflect, in my opinion, his complete incompetence in his ability to lead this program.

I think it is important when we are talking about a budget that he is over, that it is important for us to know that we have leadership there that we can rely on to make sure the dollars are protected and the investment has a return. And I think before we can do that, we actually need to know what has happened.

I was involved in a briefing when I was on the Intel committee that turned into a hearing, and I think it is imperative for us to know the General's risk adverse approach to a program that needs to be extremely proactive.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Mullin. Your comments are noted and we will follow up.

SENATOR MULLIN: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN REED: At this point, let me recognize Senator Manchin.

SENATOR MANCHIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Chairman Nakasone, let me just say I am sorry because I have all the confidence in the world in you and we have been working very close together, and I am chairman of the Cyber committee and also along with Mike, Senator Mike Rounds. We both appreciate your service, and we are looking forward to any hearing you want to have. And but I can tell you, you have the support of a bipartisan group here, which is very, very deep.

Next of all, General Fenton, I would like to ask you a question, based on the publishing of the 2019 SecDef, DOD, CYBERCOM Operations Forces Memo, which directed the organization of the DOD Cyber Operation Forces, there has been substantial appropriation development of CYBERCOM organization and capabilities.

The question is what is the status of the current Special Operations Forces program developed within SOCOM, and what effort is needed in – to keep pace with CYBERCOM?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator. I will start by, we have got a very close relationship with General Nakasone and CYBERCOM, and it has progressed into an area that we now call a capability of SOF space, cyber triad.

At its heart, it is the ability to converge those capabilities, the SOF placement access, the cyber work, and certainly the space work in places for integrated deterrence effects that we would otherwise not get if we were doing it individually, and bring certainly a bigger sum back to not only the mission but to any partner we are working with.

That has been an incredible effort alongside General Nakasone's team. We are very grateful for that. And also, in the SPACECOM arena. We are moving that forward with exercises, experimentation, a number of senior leader huddles, and I think that you will see that progress, Senator. And we would be happy to talk about the progress.

SENATOR MANCHIN: My final question is for all three of you, and I will start with Secretary Maier, General Nakasone, and then General Fenton, what can we do to help as Congress? What would be the greatest help we could be to you, all of us in the Senate and our Congress – or our cohorts over on the side, the other side of the House. That would be the greatest – and I think, if I am asking, the having a budget done on time, what does that mean for you?

MR MAIER: So, Senator, thanks for the question. I think we will probably all say that having a budget that is consistent, predictable, and –

SENATOR MANCHIN: Does it save you time? Does it save your money?

MR MAIER: It saves this time. It saves us money. It adds predictability. It allows us to put things on contract. And frankly, for –

SENATOR MANCHIN: We are talking September 30th.

MR MAIER: Yes, sir. And I think from the perspective of enterprise and the special operations enterprise, it is going through transition. The ability to modernize is hurt by the fact that the budgets don't come predictably. So that is

really where sometimes it comes home to roost, and it is –

SENATOR MANCHIN: So, a budget on time would be a pretty high priority?

MR MAIER: Yes, sir.

SENATOR MANCHIN: General Nakasone.

GENERAL NAKASONE: It is the same thing, Senator. It is on time. It really does –

SENATOR MANCHIN: Does it reduce your cost?

GENERAL NAKASONE: It is predictability. It is being able to, you know, actually spend the money when it is actually due as opposed to, you know, a shortened period of time. We also have new starts that will not be delayed, would actually be able to get on. So, we would welcome it.

SENATOR MANCHIN: When was the last time that you had a predictable budget on time?

GENERAL NAKASONE: Not since I have been the Commander.

SENATOR MANCHIN: General Fenton.

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, I will start first by, you already help in many ways with a number of the tools that we use at SOCOM, 33, 1202, now 127. But to your point on the budget, I will echo my colleagues here at the table, predictable, reliable, on time. And then I will just add that CRs hurt.

In SOCOM, our priority, number three, is transform, and we think of ourselves as a pathfinder and a trailblazer. And we need new capabilities to not only surpass adversaries, but always to be dominant. That is not possible with new capabilities and new contracts with a CR. It is also we work with a lot of littles, little companies that want business with Special Ops Command because they know we are transformative, and that we are a trailblazer for the Department. They can't wait forever to get their money, and many of them aren't there anymore as a result of – my sense is a number of CRs from –

SENATOR MANCHIN: This makes – does this sound reasonable to you all that I have been told by some retired Admirals and Generals that if we did our budget

on time now, by the 85 budget, the budget law that we had – the President is supposed to have his budget submitted by the 1st of February, and here we are.

The House and the Senate are supposed to have theirs by April the 1st and reconcile by April the 15th. And then we are supposed to have a budget completed by September 30th. I have been told if all that happened, that the military could have a savings anywhere between 5 to 10 percent on today's cost.

You are talking \$40 to \$80 billion. Does that sound reasonable? That is, I mean, it is tremendous. And it is that type of effect – I don't know if you all looked at and evaluated it for per area of DOD. Secretary, do you have anything on that, or if you looked at it under those conditions, because the person never hesitated when they told me this.

MR MAIER: So, Senator, I can't account for that exact measure, but I can tell you that it is more costly. And as I think my colleagues and I have indicated, there is a risk to it as well. That it is not only financial, it is the ability to execute and operate with some degree of predictability, which of course, the nation looks at us to do.

SENATOR MANCHIN: Well, I know that we have many examples that you can look back on and find out when we did do one on time and everything, but if you could and give us an accurate account or close as accurate as you can be, what would be the savings?

Because we are in a position now, we are having debates and discussing, we can do things, we can change this year, change our ways and not commit the sins of the past. I am hoping we can do that.

But it has a tremendous effect on our military, which is what we are depending. First of all, thank all of you, and all of you setting there, for your service. I appreciate it more than you know. And again, I want to thank you all. I yield my time back.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Manchin. Senator Schmitt, please.

SENATOR SCHMITT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Fenton, I appreciate the time we had to spend together and talk about some of the threats around the world, and your role and your team's role in combating those threats and getting ahead of those threats. And to me, as I mentioned, there is no greater

threat than **China** on the world stage. And in this, you know, great powers era that we have been discussing, the alliances in the **Indo-Pacific**, to me, are critical. You have mentioned it in my meeting with you. We have heard about that today. General Nakasone had mentioned Indonesia and the Philippines. We have talked about the Philippines.

What specifically would you like to see this committee address as we move forward in this Congress to do everything, we can put ourselves in the best position to continue to cultivate and support those alliances?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, first, thanks for the session with you the other day. I appreciate your time. I know how busy you are. I would comment on the extreme importance in the power of the partners and allies. You and I spoke quite a bit about it, and in the Indo-Pacific, but certainly globally, as the Secretary has discussed with the Department and in many ways is doing that with NATO's alliance, vis-a-vis the Ukraine, and all the work that has gone into the entire whole of Government team to make that stronger than ever, is a signal that aggression by adversaries like Russia will not be tolerated.

I think it is just important – just as important as we discussed in the **Indo-Pacific**. We have got a number of bilateral treaty allies out there. They are extremely important partners, as **INDOPACOM** goes ahead on its daily and certainly its overall mission.

In particular for the special operations team, we actually like to think that we are a premier partner force. We have longstanding ties throughout the region that we look to continue to strengthen and maintain. And we certainly each and every day don't take them for granted, and we look to reinforce them. I think that is important that that continues to grow. And I think it is – as you think about this, Senator, it is about the growth of partners and allies, and the power in that. Not only for the rules-based order, but probably for the vision of where we go the next 3 to 5, even 10 years.

So, I would just recommend that it is a continue to focus on partners and allies, the power that comes with that, the partnering, the burden sharing, and certainly the capability grows – growth that we have all experienced in that. And I could talk certainly more –

SENATOR SCHMITT: Well, and I don't – listen, I don't want you to – I want to

give you the time to be able to get back to my office with this, because this is something that to me is of paramount importance, particularly in the **Indo-Pacific** theater and will be a long-term commitment on my end.

And as you work through – and by the way, you won't be the only one I am asking this question that comes before the committee of what can we do, because I do think that is just critical, and in doing everything we can to guard against **China's** global domination ambition, which has been stated.

And so, I want to work with you on that. And I guess, General Nakasone, if I could ask you this, and to the extent that you can share, what you can share with this committee in the open setting here, just where we are at with **China's** capabilities, whether it is on cyber or AI, our defensive capabilities versus their offensive capabilities. This will be an ongoing discussion. But in the open setting, I certainly wanted to ask you about that.

GENERAL NAKASONE: Senator, they are a near, peer threat. They are very good. They have been able over the period of two decades to develop not only their military but also their industrial base.

As we look to the future, those capacity and capabilities, whether or not it is in artificial intelligence, machine learning, whether or not it is looking at the capacity to grow cyber forces, they are very good, but they are not, they are not, first of all, as good as us. And secondly, they are not ten feet tall. And so, we can get in closed session more in terms of some thoughts on this, but I did want to make sure I hit that.

SENATOR SHAHEEN: Well, I will just close with this. I agree with the concerns that have been raised by other committee members and you with TikTok. To me, TikTok is a **Chinese** AI weapon aimed directly at the United States of America, and we better take it seriously. So, among other things. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Schmitt. Senator Duckworth, please.

SENATOR DUCKWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I just have to say, I had a wonderful working relationship with Senator Blunt, who has recently retired. And I would have to say, Senator Schmitt, I agree with you with your concerns on the **Indo-Pacific** region. And in fact, my question, gentlemen, is

going to follow up a little bit on my colleague's line of questioning.

But I did want to start with saying that Mr. Assistant Secretary and General Fenton, your written testimony references the first SOF truth, humans are more important than hardware, and I couldn't agree with this more. And two weeks ago, I led a CODEL to Japan and Indonesia. My interactions on that trip reinforced just how important those alliances and partnerships are. We must not forget that human ties are the United States strategic advantage in the **Indo-Pacific** region, and these human relationships are critical to countering malign CCP activity in that region.

General Fenton, I appreciated our discussion last week. And can you please elaborate furthermore in that questioning line, and on an unclassified level, on how the SOF community fosters close relationships with our allies and partners?

Specifically, how does Special Operations Command's ongoing work with other nations, from the smallest unit operations all the way up through your leadership-to- leadership relationships with military leaders in some of these countries, reinforce our campaign plans in Southeast Asia?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, thank you. I really appreciated our discussion as well, and I appreciate your reference in that. I will start with just emphasizing that partners and allies are absolutely a key focus for the Department, the Secretary, and for your Special Operations Command team.

And I put that in contrast to what **China's** focus may be in terms of clients or customers. We are about partnerships, we are about friendships, we are about the power of many to make us all stronger. And I think we see that in the way that we approach, firstly, your special operations team.

As you mentioned, we start very much from a perspective of, it is in our training and in our schoolhouses to work through these because we recognize it is the speed of trust. It is the speed of a relationships, in many ways with our partners and teammates around the world. You will see us at a very tactical level. And I won't mention any countries. And certainly, Senator, I could talk more in a closed session. You will see us at a tactical level doing events like training, shooting, jumping, driving, and building capabilities that use the tools that this committee has honored us with. I think at an organizational level, we

will be showing folks how we have grown ourselves in the 20 plus years of combat, what it meant to weave in technology, how we understand our gathering of intelligence, how we understand mission type orders.

And I think at the institutional level, what you will see your special operations team doing in any of the COCOMs is work with the COCOMs to ensure that the nation we have a relationship with understands the special operations forces and what they can do, the types of missions, and if I may be the return on investment and the value that they will bring that nation in a way that I believe we certainly bring to this nation.

SENATOR DUCKWORTH: Thank you, General. Turning now to General Nakasone. General, I just want to say I, too, have complete trust in your ability to do your job. And in fact, your forward leaning posture allowed us to keep tabs on the well-being of my constituent, who was held in Haqqani network hands and also in his safe return. So, thank you very much for the work of you and your subordinates in that. I want to talk about the cyber domain.

Of course, it has no boundaries. I included legislation in Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA authorizing DOD to establish a pilot program to enhance the cybersecurity of our allies, and in particular the readiness of military forces of Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia. And this year I plan to expand that program to include Malaysia and the Philippines.

Could you elaborate on specifically why the cybersecurity of our allies and partners is important for U.S. overall, U.S. national security? And if you, if possible, can you comment on the value of direct engagement with our overseas partners to help build their cyber skills, and how that is important for our own national security?

GENERAL NAKASONE: Certainly, Senator. I think that there is no better example than Ukraine. We have watched this now for over a year. We are a very capable partner that was able to raise their level of cybersecurity, was able to fend off a much larger foe. But it is not only that, it is also the ability for us to share information with that partner. We want to be able to share our information in the future. And being able to share information in cyberspace means that you have to have an assurance that the partner can secure your information.

And that is a critical piece. And I know that the work that you have done to drive that type of cybersecurity, both in the element of the bar has to go higher for our partners to operate, but also, we have to have the confidence that we share information, that our information is between us and that partner.

SENATOR DUCKWORTH: Thank you. I yield back, Chairman.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you very much, Senator Duckworth. Senator Scott, please.

SENATOR SCOTT: Thank you, Chairman. I want to thank each of you for being here. General Nakasone, first, let's talk about **China**. The – is there anything that China sells us? We have cranes now at the Port Miami that they are worried that there was the ability for **China** to surveil what we are doing at our ports.

You look at what some of my colleagues have talked about, the risk of TikTok. Is there anything that **China** sells in this country that you don't believe creates a potential cybersecurity risk? And what would it be, if they could sell us anything that wouldn't?

GENERAL NAKASONE: Senator, certainly you point to the challenge of cyber, which is a huge attack surface, right. Whether or not you trade in some type of good or you trade in some type of commodity, there is always an opportunity. You know, I think this points to the challenge that we have to be able to address, which is supply chain. To make sure that the elements of the supply chain that we operate, particularly within the Department of Defense, are secure.

SENATOR SCOTT: So, do you think that Americans should have – do you think it puts America at risk if Americans have TikTok on their phone?

GENERAL NAKASONE: My concern with TikTok, Senator, really is from two pieces. One is the fact that there is tremendous amount of data and understanding where your data is, is critical, I think.

And the second piece is the opportunity for influence. This is a means upon which, you know, you receive information or don't receive information. And that is where, you know, I always look at that in terms of being able to measure that risk.

SENATOR SCOTT: So, if you were running a, let's say one of our electrical grids

in the country, if you were responsible, knowing now what you know in the job that you have now, would you allow – would you buy anything from **China**? Would you allow the employees have TikTok? Would you any business? Would you buy DJI drones? Would you do anything knowing what you now know in this job?

GENERAL NAKASONE: Senator, very difficult in the scenario that you point to our picture to imagine that you can really do that. I mean, there is so much of what we do is based upon international trade, and **China** has the corner on some things.

I think what I would do is ensure that the areas that are most sensitive to our operation are well censored, and I have the confidence that what is being utilized there, I understand where that information may be going.

SENATOR SCOTT: In a world where there was an alternative to every **Chinese** product and app and service out there, if there was an American alternative or American ally alternative to them, would you, at that point if you running one of these companies, would you guarantee that your company did no business with **China** if there was a good alternative? And would you think the same thing about our Government, knowing what you know?

GENERAL NAKASONE: So again, coming back as a prospective, perhaps future business owner, I would take a very, very hard look of anything that was coming from an adversarial nation and being able to understand that.

SENATOR SCOTT: General Fenton, can you talk about what other things you are doing to prepare your forces to deal with **China**, and where are they beating us, and where – and what do we need to do more and better, knowing that **China** doesn't like our way of life and wants to demolish our way of life?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, I think the very first thing we are doing in Special Operations Command is focus the formation on the adversaries of **China** and Russia, but in particular **China's**. Reordering the formation in terms of focus.

There are a number of elements in our formation that understand the **PRC** and what they have been doing for years pretty well. But there is work that we have got to do to certainly bring in additional portions of the formation along. We do much of that through our education process in our schoolhouses that – all the

components, our Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine components.

And frankly, at our joint Special Operations university, understanding of the **PRC** and the PRC way of warfare. We knew that very well when we fought the ISIS threat. We understood how they were going to wage war, and now that is the understanding of the **PRC**. Second, I would say is being present in any region and trying to understand their malign activities. As I mentioned before, diplomatic pressure from the **Chinese** – from the **PRC**, economic coercion from the PRC creates clients and customers. We are out there to build partners and allies.

And I think that also allows us to get a sense of what **PRC**'s malign activities are globally. And then on any given transfer, Senator, we are providing ranges of options for the Combatant Commanders and certainly for the Secretary to address either in deterrence, preparing, and if needed to prevail. And you have got the best special operations team in the world to do that. And that same time, we are presenting a lot of dilemmas to the adversary, the **PRC**.

SENATOR SCOTT: Thank each of you.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Scott. Senator Rosen, please.

SENATOR ROSEN: Well, thank you, Chairman Reed. I really appreciate you holding this hearing. I would like to thank each one of the witnesses for being here and, of course, for everyone's service to our nation. And so, General Nakasone, I have quite a few questions for you on our cyber workforce and Nevada National Guard. But I am going to get into cyber workforce first because the National Cybersecurity Strategy, which was released just last week, it calls for expanding the national cyber workforce. I know it is critical we continue to invest in innovative, nontraditional cyber capabilities and in talent to support the Department of Defense cyber mission requirements.

So, in last year's NDAA, as reported out of this committee, it included my Civilian Cyber Reserve Act, bipartisan legislation I introduced with Senator Blackburn to create a civilian cyber reserve that ensures additional cyber capacity for CYBERCOM in greatest – times of greatest need.

And so, this year, of course, I look forward to working with the chairman to ensure this critically important legislation will be included in the final

conference. But I was hoping, General, that you could discuss the value of reserve models, including the value of a potential civilian cybersecurity reserve to support your cyberspace operations.

GENERAL NAKASONE: Senator, first of all, thank you for your support of U.S. Cyber Command, and in general, the work that we do in cyberspace. It begins with humans.

And so, this idea of being able to have many more analysts, many more operators, many more developers is something that is, you know, part and parcel to our success in the future. It is not only with the civilian workforce that you have championed, but it is also this idea of how do you bring a larger base to bear?

How do we bring it from K through 12 that makes people very interested that science, technology, engineering, mathematics is the way of the future. And girls that code all these things that will provide a greater base for us to draw from are really important to us.

SENATOR ROSEN: Well, you are speaking my language. As a former software developer, now co-founder of the Women in STEM Caucus, and trying to promote STEM education all the time, this is music to my ears.

And so, of course, in Fiscal Year 2021, the NDAA required the Department of Defense to submit to Congress an evaluation of the reserve models to support these cyberspace operations, and the report was never submitted. So could you update me on the status of the report and also the requirement I added in the Fiscal Year 2023 bill to have DOD enter into an agreement to assess the benefits of such a program. I would really like to see us be able to move forward on this.

GENERAL NAKASONE: Senator, if I might take that for the record, just to make sure I can leverage the Department of Defense for that.

SENATOR ROSEN: That would be perfect. I have some other questions, too, on auspices – excuse me, specifically for Nevada’s National Guard. But, you know, the National Cybersecurity Strategy rightly identifies a strengthening our international partner capacity. It is a pillar of our collective cybersecurity, our hunt forward operations in Ukraine in particular.

It really shows us the value of international partnerships. I have advocated for

more funding for hunt forward as we identify more vulnerabilities. And so, our Nevada National Guard, we have three partner nations as a National Guard State Partnership Program, Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa.

So how is the program promoting cyber partnerships with our allies and partners, and what challenges do you see – are you facing building these and where can we create a better strategy for this command?

GENERAL NAKASONE: So first of all, I see very, very few – very, very few limitations on what we need to do in the future. The countries that you talk about there in the **Southwest Pacific**, we have worked very closely with our partners in Australia to look at how do we kind of incorporate all of them as we understand their needs, their requirements, their vulnerabilities, and then be able to assist them. A very, very small amount of money in a very, very small amount of time yields tremendous results, in my opinion.

SENATOR ROSEN: Yes, I agree. I want to tell you that I am also very excited because Department of Homeland Security recently announced another cyber strategy as it is going to expand the Abraham Accords collaboration among the U.S., Israel, UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco to include cybersecurity.

And so, as you work to promote multilateral partnerships between the Abraham Accords countries, how do you think this is going to help you with that?

GENERAL NAKASONE: Well, just think about hunt forward operations. We began those in 2018. Since 2018, 47 different missions, 22 countries, 70 different networks. And when we take a look at what has been able to be done – what we have been able to do is the fact that, one, it builds tremendous confidence between nations, right. When the United States deploys a hunt forward team to country x, country x knows that the United States cares. And it is for us being able to work with a partner to understand their requirements, and also build a higher bar of cybersecurity.

SENATOR ROSEN: Well, thank you for being there. We have heard that from our allies and partners. It means a lot when you are there. You show up and we work in partnership with others to help potentiate what they are doing to protect themselves. So, thank you again. My time is up, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Rosen. And the open portion of the

hearing has concluded. For the benefit of my colleagues who might be listening, we have two votes. One is already underway.

We will adjourn here and convene our closed session, SBC217, immediately following this. I urge my colleagues to vote and then join us. And I would also like to commend the panel for their excellent testimony – our excellent testimony. And also – [technical problems]. Senator Sullivan, please.

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it very much. General Fenton and Mr. Maier, I know this has been touched on, but it is an issue that I think is really important.

How is the shift going from your rightful and exceptional focus on CT operations, primarily in the CENTCOM AOR, to the **INDOPACOM** region as our pacing threat? And what is the kind of orientation of the strategy in that region? And what I mean by that is, the CT, SOCOM focus post 9/11 was very kinetic, which our guys did an incredible job at. But the **INDOPACOM** strategy and focus is not kinetic, at least not now. We all hope it is never going to be kinetic.

So, it is a very different mission set. I don't know if that impacts morale. It is not as – well, I would like both of you to talk about that, because I have been concerned that it has been hard. You have done such a good job in that AOR, and that AOR is still important.

And the issue of making sure that violent extremist organizations do not threaten our nation, particularly with weapons of mass destruction, is still critical. But the pacing threat is **China**. Every day we see something. You saw the foreign minister of **China** yesterday publicly saying, hey, we are on a collision course towards war. We don't want that, but we better well be ready for it. And your operators are the best in the world. There are no **Chinese** forces that can hold a candle to the U.S. Special Operations enterprise, not even close.

So, it is a giant strategic advantage we have over them. I want them to fear the hell out of it. So, what are we doing and how is that shift going?

MR MAIER: So, Senator, thanks for the question. Maybe I will start and then General Fenton can address some of the issues that are core to his force here.

So, I would say that the shift is very much underway, but I think it is a question of how do we maintain the counterterrorism capabilities, because if you look at

the maps, sir, of course, many of the areas that were problems continue to be problems.

So, we are we are having to manage that risk. At the same time, we are doing, as you correctly said, sir, a different mission in the **Indo-Pacific**. And I think the idea that we are not very kinetic or not kinetic at all in the **Indo-Pacific** is not necessarily something that means that the same kind of SOF skills are not relevant.

So, as we think of things like placement and access, and really relying on partners sometimes for that placement and access, but also the ability to work unilaterally go to places, that last tactical mile that at times only U.S. Special Operations can do, that is still relevant in the **Indo-Pacific**, even if the finish is not a kinetic or lethal finish.

And I think, second Senator, I would highlight the by with and through approach, really working through partners, that has really been the hallmark of the counterterrorism efforts, especially the last decade or so, is very, very relevant again in the **Indo-Pacific** because we want our partners to be in the lead.

But we have demonstrated in places like Ukraine we can do that from a distance. So, it doesn't have to be the hand on the shoulder that we are always – we have been familiar with in the past.

So, I think these fundamental tools and the approaches we have used are still very relevant in the **Indo-Pacific**, sir.

SENATOR SULLIVAN: General Fenton, how is the reorientation of the **INDOPACOM** theater going?

GENERAL FENTON: Senator, I am going to start by agreeing with you that your special operations formation is the best, the very best in the history of mankind.

SENATOR SULLIVAN: **Chinese** don't have anything remotely close to it, and they know that. We know that.

GENERAL FENTON: And I agree with that. And the same thing with Russia and any other adversary out there. That's right. And the other part is that we exist and included with the entirety of the U.S. military. And the CYBERCOM team is

exactly the best, and we have all that. So, I think, and I would want everybody that wishes this nation harm, and if there is an adversary out there, **China** –

SENATOR SULLIVAN: I just want **INDOPACOM** theater to know that we are out there too, right.

GENERAL FENTON: Yes, sir.

SENATOR SULLIVAN: I sure I want the **Chinese** to wake up thinking they got Navy SEALs all over them, every day.

GENERAL FENTON: Yes, sir. And your special operations team is out there and in a very sustainable, durable way, in a concert with Admiral Aquilino's requirements. And I would tell you that we can handle these challenges.

And I will start by saying special operations really never left strategic competition and great deterrence. And you and I talked about this a Senator, I think last year where I was the special ops commander responsible in the Pacific for the special operations forces that both did counterterrorism with one partner that we can I can talk more in a closed session about but competed with the **PRC** all day long by building partnerships, relationships, and capability.

That continues. At the same time, we will not take our eye off the persistent threat of global terrorism. And so, we will still handle the CT mission. And there will be a number of forces that have the CT mission each and everyday hunting anybody that wishes harm to this nation but can slide over to present some level of dilemma to an adversary in an integrated deterrence arena.

And I would just add much of our counterterrorism experience is desired by these partners and nations as we go forward to train and becomes a key part of the partnership. So, Senator, I would just end with, your SOCOM team is absolutely ready to handle that challenge. I think there is a large portion of our force that is excited about this. They want to do what the nation needs.

And right now, the nation needs us to get very involved, and we are, and deter **PRC**, and certainly to address aggression by the Russians. And they want to be knee deep in it. You know, your special operations team will, and at the same time handle the counterterrorism mission and any crisis response mission where a U.S. citizen or a diplomat needed to be safeguarded or rescued.

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I just want to say to General Nakasone, no question. I just think you are – publicly because a lot of what you do is not public. I think you and your team are doing an exceptional job, General. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Sullivan. The open session has concluded again. We have two votes. I would urge my colleagues to go to the first vote. We will resume immediately in SBC17 for the closed session. And to each of you gentlemen, thank you for your testimony. General Fenton, Secretary Maier, General Nakasone, let me tell you, all have been extremely diligent, dedicated and offered superb service to this nation over many years, and we are in your debt. Thank you all very much for that. I will adjourn the open hearing. [Whereupon, at 11:55 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]