

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
GENERAL JOSEPH F. DUNFORD.

SUBJECT: A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING THE U.S. MILITARY INCLUDING THE
LATEST STRATEGY FOR DEFEATING THE ISLAMIC STATE AND OTHER TERRORIST GROUPS,
CHALLENGES FROM NORTH KOREA, CYBER WARFARE, WEAPONS ACQUISITION, AND
RECRUITING AND STRENGTHENING U.S. ALLIANCES.

MODERATOR: OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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JEFF BALLOU: [sounds gavel] Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, colleagues
all, members. Welcome to the National Press Club. My name is Jeff Ballou. I'm the 110th
President of this historic private club with the trademarked phrase the world's leading
professional organization for journalists, and where we would like to say given the current
time and press freedom we are the Constitution. Please submit questions via the cards on
your table if you haven't already, and you can also, those of you who are viewing, you can
also submit them via Twitter at Press Club D.C. hashtag #NPCLive, hashtag #headliners, and
those of you in the house, once again for those of you who came a little late, now is a good
time to silence your cellphones and other devices that make noise. We do welcome you to
tweet and follow the action and send questions in here to the club.

Some upcoming events: Chicago Mayor and former Clinton Senior Official Rahm
Emmanuel will be here on June 20th for a headliner's luncheon, a headliner newsmaker with
the former Obama Energy Secretary, Ernest Moniz will be on June 21st, another headline
newsmaker the same day at 11:00 AM with Greek Minister of Economy, Dimitri
Papadimitriou, my good colleague Peter Baker will be here on June 29th on his latest book,
Obama And the Call of History, and following the theme of today's luncheon, General Mark
Milley, the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army will be here on July 27th. For information on
these and other events you can log on to www.Press.Org. That's www.Press.Org.

And now is the time to introduce the Head Table. Going to my far left, your right,
Heather Forsgren Weaver, freelance journalist and a member of the National Press Club

Headliners Committee, Team rather, that organized today's luncheon. Max Lederer, publisher of *Stars and Stripes*. Pat Host with Jane's Defense and current member of the National Press Club Board of Governors. Tony Capaccio, member of the National Press Club and defense reporter for Bloomberg News. Colonel Abigail Linnington, Director of the Chairman's Action Group. Member Amanda Macias, national security reporter for CBS Radio. Captain Gregory Hicks, Special Advisor to the Chairman for Public Affairs. Skipping over myself for a moment, Elizabeth Bumiller, Washington Bureau Chief of the *New York Times* and member of the National Press Club. Skipping over the Chairman briefly, Kevin Wensing, Captain United States Navy retired and a National Press Club Headliners member who coordinated today's luncheon. Thank you, Kevin. John Sergeant Shaft Fales, United States Marine Corps, Vietnam veteran, and President of the Blinded American Veterans Foundation. Thank you for your service, Sir. [Applause] Ken Dalecki, U.S. Navy Vietnam veteran and Senior Vice Commander of the D.C. Department of the American Legion, American Legion Post 20, which meets here at the National Press Club, if you didn't know that already. Thank you very much, Sir. And also Chair of our Fellowship Team who takes care of our wonderful members who are sick and distressed. Steve Sami, publisher of *Military and Diplomats World News*. And I think I skipped over John Donnelly. I can't skip over John. John is many things to us. John is the President of the Military Reporters and Editors Association, Chair of the National Press Club Freedom Team, a past member of the National Press Club Board of Governors, and one of the ardent fighters for press freedom in the club. Thank you for your service to the club, John. [Applause]

And now the good part. As the tensions between the U.S. and Russia and Syria, all at the same time, seem to be heating up over the shooting down of a Syrian jet over the weekend and Congress debating just how much money the U.S. military should get this go-around, enter the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph F. Dunford Junior who is the 19th person to occupy this post, the nation's highest ranking military officer and principle military officer to the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the National Security Council. And prior to becoming Chairman October 1st of 2015, General Dunford served as a 36th Commandant of the Marine Corps. He previously served as the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps from 2010 to 2012 and was Commander International Security Assistance Force, known as ISAF, in the United States Forces Afghanistan from February 2013 to August 2014. That will come in handy in the questions, sir.

A native of Boston, Massachusetts, General Dunford graduated from St. Michael's College and was commissioned in 1977. He served as an Infantry Officer on all levels to include the command of the Second Battalion Six Marines and command of the Fifth Marine Regiment during Operation Iraqi Freedom. There are many, many more accolades, but since time is of the essence I'm going to, we're going to get right to the Q and A. How we're going to do this is the General and I are going to go up on the stage here, we're going to conduct a conversation, fireside chat style. We have a lovely stack of questions here and some have even come in through the internet and the President's office now has an iPad, so many of you have taken advantage of that and will be following along and hopefully keep up with current doings. We do have a special request of the Chairman and I, and I think we can accommodate that, and that is to have a moment of silence for those who were lost and injured on the USS Fitzgerald.

Thank you. With no further ado, General, let's go up on the stage and you can have some opening remarks and we'll take some questions.

[Applause]

Mr. Chairman, the floor is yours.

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: Okay, Jeff, thanks, and ladies and gentlemen, thanks very much. It is good to join you here today and I appreciate the flexibility of the club in rescheduling. I canceled at the last minute in April, which I typically don't have to do, but as you can understand sometimes that is required, and I had to do that.

I'm actually glad that it was a relatively slow news weekend, so I come in on a Monday, there is probably, there is probably not many questions and not much you're interested in, and there is certainly nothing controversial that I could address today. [Laughter] So I feel very comfortable. So with that, Jeff, I'll turn it over to you.

JEFF BALLOU: Well, take us, let's just, okay we'll just go right into the questions. We thought we were going to have a few extra minutes, but fine.

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: I can actually speak for 50 if you're-- I'm happy to do that. I didn't think you were looking for a filibuster.

JEFF BALLOU: No, not at all. Clearly we had, just to jump right into it, we just had a very tense shoot down of a Syrian jet by U.S. forces and we had a very ominous statement from Russia that plays into the whole de-confliction agreement between the countries, essentially saying anything West of the Euphrates we're shooting down. What is your reaction to that? Have there been any developments? Do you have any updates on where that stands? Is de-confliction gone? I mean what is the latest, sir?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: First of all, we have worked very hard on de-confliction and it's important to point out why. For the last eight months we worked on de-confliction with the Russian Federation and pro-regime forces through the Russians. The purpose was to make sure that our air crews were safe, to make sure our personnel on the ground were safe, and to make sure we could prosecute the Defeat ISIS campaign in Syria, which is the reason why we're in Syria. That has worked very well over the past eight months and we have worked through a number of issues with the Russian Federation. We have an effective link between our operation center in Qatar and the Russian Federation on the ground in Syria. That link is still ongoing here this morning, as when I left the building this morning we're still been communicating over the last few hours.

I, like you, saw in the open source some reporting from Moscow which I won't address right now. I would just tell you that we will work diplomatically and militarily in the coming hours to reestablish de-confliction. The Russian Federation has indicated that their purpose in Syria, like ours, is to defeat ISIS and we'll see if that is true here in the coming

hours, because all of our operations in and around Iraq and southern Syria are designed specifically to get after ISIS and we have agreed in the past, that is we and the Russian Federation and pro-regime forces, that operations that the coalition was conducting in Syria were effectively degrading ISIS's capability, and we'll work to restore that de-confliction chain in the next few hours.

JEFF BALLOU: So, are you confident that U.S. forces won't be shot down?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: I'm confident that we are still communicating between our operations center and the Russian Federation operations center, and I'm also confident that our forces have the capability to take care of themselves.

JEFF BALLOU: Okay, because some people have been writing in some of those early questions did Russia effectively declare World War Three? I mean it's not that bad, but--

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: Yeah, honestly, Jeff, I think the worst thing we, any of us could do right now would be, you know, address this thing with hyperbole. An incident occurred. We have to work through the incident. We have a channel to be able to do that, and I think it's going to require some diplomatic and military engagement in the next few hours to restore the de-confliction that we have had in place. And again the de-confliction that we have had in place is in our mutual interest, because it allows us to address what at least pro-regime forces have indicated is our common enemy, ISIS.

JEFF BALLOU: And have you been in touch with your counterpart in Russia?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: I have not as of yet this morning. I have met with my Russian counterpart twice this year and we have communicated maybe another five or six times.

JEFF BALLOU: Which also leads to what is the situation in Raqqa going to be when it's all said and done? Who is going to control it? You have got a number of questions about how that recasts the situation in the region.

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: First of all, we're supporting the Syrian Democratic Forces in seizing Raqqa. That's a force of about 50,000, of which about 20,000 or 25,000 are Arab and the balance are Kurdish. Even as we support their efforts to seize Raqqa there is an ongoing effort, led by the State Department, to put together a governance body so that as soon as Raqqa is seized there is effective local governance. That governance will local, will leverage Arab leaders who are from Raqqa and we'll also work on establishing the security force made up of local personnel so that there is stabilization efforts that will follow the seizure of Raqqa.

JEFF BALLOU: Let's move around the region a bit. Iraqi Kurds have announced that they are going to hold an Independence Referendum on September 25th. What would that mean for U.S. interests in the Middle East? Should the U.S. support it?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: Look, our stated objective at this point is a stable, secure, and sovereign Iraq and we're supporting Iraqi security forces in defeating ISIS inside of Iraq. And I think the issue of the Kurdish Referendum is one that will have to be worked out between President Barzani and Prime Minister Abadi and the Iraqi people.

JEFF BALLOU: This is going back to the question also becomes, and the earlier things about Russia and Syria and whatnot, whether or not you have to relocate or strengthen the security even more at the training base to be prepared for other regime attacks. They keep saying it's defensive strikes only against the regime, but when does this cross the line into war with the Syria government?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: Yeah, I think it's important to point out that the incident that took place this weekend followed a combined arms movement of pro-regime forces, subsequent SU aircraft flew into the area. We made every effort to warn those individuals not to come any closer and then the commander made a judgment that there was a threat to the forces that we were supporting and took actions. The only actions that we have taken against pro-regime forces in Syria, and they have been two specific incidents, have been in self-defense, and we have communicated that clearly.

JEFF BALLOU: Back to Afghanistan, do you foresee adding the 4,000 troops that there is a lot of discussion about whether or not there are additional forces allocated to Afghanistan, has that decision been made? How many forces, how many troops are going? When are they going? And how is that going to unfold?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: Sure. Let me see if I can answer that question and a few others that haven't been asked about Afghanistan right up front. First of all, no decision has been made with regard to the deployment of additional forces in Afghanistan. One decision that was made by the President was to delegate that decision to Secretary Mattis in terms of forces that would be on the ground. But also, and this is what is important and probably has been under reported, is that Secretary Mattis's decision about additional forces in Afghanistan will be made in the context of a broader strategy review for South Asia that is ongoing and is expected to report back probably sometime in the middle of July. So when Secretary Mattis makes a decision about force levels, which he will clearly communicate with the President, the Secretary of State, in fact the guidance, the direction that he has received is to do that in conjunction with the Secretary of State, when Secretary Mattis makes that decision about force levels you can expect that he will communicate that in a broader context, again specifically the context of that strategy review. So, it won't be just about Afghanistan. There are a number of interdependent variables that bear on the problem inside of Afghanistan across the region and we'll be prepared to talk about those as well when we talk about force management levels.

The reason why this number 4,000 has been raised is there is a request by the commander to thicken the advise/assist effort in Afghanistan. In other words, he has identified areas where he believes additional forces could make the advisor effort in Afghanistan more effective. There is also an outstanding requirement for forces that the

commander asked for from NATO last year, and so that is what you have also heard him talk about publicly. And we're short about 3,000 from the stated NATO requirement for forces in Afghanistan. So that's where the numbers come from, but again what I would emphasize is that any decision on numbers is going to be done in that broader context.

JEFF BALLOU: And speaking of strategy, Senator McCain came out swinging this morning. You have to give him credit, he is doing it to both Democratic and Republican Presidents and Congress, and controlled Congresses, about whether or not there is a strategy for Afghanistan, and he is asking, "Where is it? When is it going to be delivered? Where is it going to be? Where is it headed?" What is your take on that?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: Sure. Well, Secretary Mattis and I had the opportunity to appear before Chairman McCain and the Senate Armed Service Committee last Tuesday, and when he raised that question Secretary Mattis said that number one we agree that Afghanistan is not where we want it to be, and we have spent the last couple months discussing where it might go in the future. And he, as I will today, indicated to Chairman McCain that sometime in the middle of July we would have that strategic review complete. We certainly will consult with Chairman McCain and the other members of the Congress as the coming weeks go on. And then when the Secretary makes a decision about resourcing for the military dimension, realizing that there is broader issues that have to be addressed in the diplomatic and economic areas.

JEFF BALLOU: Which raises the question of the authorization of use of military force again. How much lobbying, if you will, is happening between you and the Congress, or just are you-- How is the dialogue unfolding in terms of eventual actual passage of an authorization for the use of military force and how is that going to be applied?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: Yeah, Jeff, I mean I haven't lobbied, but I have been asked several times in testimony what my thoughts were on the authorization of use of military force, and those who don't know, we are relying now on the 2001 Authorization of Use of Military Force that was after 9/11. It was modified in 2002. What I have said is that we have all of the legal authority that we need right now to prosecute Al-Qaeda, ISIS, other affiliated groups, but my recommendation to the Congress was that they pass an authorization of use of military force, and I thought one of the more important things is that our men and women that are in harm's way would see a clear and unmistakable support from the American people through their Congress. That's what I believe right now would be very positive if Congress would pass an authorization of use of military force. And again I haven't lobbied for that effort, I'm precluded in law from lobbying, but when I'm asked in testimony, as I have been now several times, I'm certainly able to answer that question, and what I have focused on is the message that we would be sending to those people who are actually making the sacrifice that what message would be sent if Congress would authorize use of military force. It would reinforce, I think, the message.

JEFF BALLOU: So, speaking of, what do you say to an American voter who is deciding whether or not they're going to voice an opinion to their member of Congress about, who might be skeptical that thousands of more U.S. troops could be deployed and a slightly

tweaked strategy might break the stalemate in Afghanistan or other parts of the region, and after billions of dollars that have been spent, and everything that has been done? Is there sort of a fatigue that is out there? How are you going to convince the American people that this is going to be a necessary thing if you decide to deploy thousands of troops to the region for Afghanistan and if you have to escalate your involvement in Syria?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: Yeah, I think it's important that the conversation about Afghanistan take place in the context of our vital national interest in South Asia and South Asia as a whole, and there are two very simply that I would talk about in public. One is the remaining threat from terrorist organizations in South Asia who have expressed a desire to have another 9/11 in the United States and conduct attacks. There is about 17 different groups out of 20 that we have globally identified as terrorist organizations, 17 of them operate in the South Asia area, and to continue to put pressure on those groups I believe is critical and vital to our national interest. And I would also argue that the pressure that those groups have been under for the last 15 years has been what has prevented another 9/11.

The other interest that we have in the region is preventing a regional conflict in South Asia. So, again when the strategy comes in it's less about what has happened over the past 16 years than it is about what are our national interests today in South Asia, what is the context within which we are pursuing our national interests in South Asia, and what is the diplomatic, economic, and military campaign plan that is necessary for us to protect and advance our national interests in South Asia.

I don't believe it's useful to have a conversation about where we have been, how much money we have spent, or how long we have been in Afghanistan. What is most important is articulating to the American people their interest in that region, why does it matter here in the United States. We owe them that. We should be able to articulate that when we roll out the strategy. And what is it that we're doing, again not just militarily but diplomatically and economically to advance our interests? And that is the conversation we'll be prepared to have.

JEFF BALLOU: So, what is the end game in Afghanistan, in Syria, and what is your prediction for new cost and U.S. lives if that were to happen?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: What I would say is from a military dimension to be clear about what is it that we're trying to do, we're trying to support our partners on the ground in driving the level of violence down to where local security forces can actually deal with security challenges with a minimal amount of international support, and we're trying to do that from West Africa to Southeast Asia, because what we're dealing with is a transregional threat. One of the manifestations of that transregional threat is in Afghanistan, but again it extends from South, from West Africa to Southeast Asia, and in all cases that is the broad design of our strategy is to support local forces in actually addressing those security challenges. Some need more support than others, but the methodology is consistent across that transregional threat.

JEFF BALLOU: To what degree does that involve pressuring Pakistan?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: Well, I think Pakistan is a key to Afghanistan and its security and in ensuring that Haqqani does not have sanctuary in South Asia, making sure the Taliban don't have sanctuary in South Asia, making sure that there is a secure border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is critical, making sure there is effective political and military relationships between Pakistan and Afghanistan. That is one of the interdependent variables that is going to allow us to be successful.

JEFF BALLOU: Let's talk about, going back to Syria, can you talk about the role that Iran is playing in Syria? Is it increasing, particularly through Hezbollah?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: I mean Iran is playing an unhelpful role in Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East. And I have, some of you may have heard me describe it this way before: I think their major export is malign influence across the Middle East. And so again Iran, unlike the United States and the coalition, is not focused on ISIS inside of Syria; Iran is focused on propping up the regime that committed atrocities in a civil war and, from my perspective, addressing the grievances of the civil war in Syria is going to be necessary for us to have peace and stability and no longer have a sanctuary for violent extremism.

JEFF BALLOU: Staying in the region, are you concerned about any long term implications of the current Gulf crisis on regional security and has the crisis affected U.S. military operations in the region? I think you said something last week on Capitol Hill that your operations are relatively unaffected, but with Turkey sending troops in and the army, the U.S. Army bringing troops around and around Qatar, how does that, what is happening in terms of operations with CENTCOM right there in the middle of the country that is at the center of the sphere?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: Sure, and I think most people know, but the reason why we watch Qatar, among the many reasons we watch Qatar so closely is that is where our Combined Air Operations Center is located, that's where the preponderance of aircraft that support our current campaign against ISIS is located, and so it's pretty significant. That is also the location of the Forward Command Post for the United States Central Command. What I would tell you is has there been friction associated with what is ongoing, the political challenges between the GCC and Qatar, absolutely, but what I said last week remains true in that we have continued to be able to operate even through that friction.

JEFF BALLOU: And what-- Are you playing any sort of diplomatic role in trying to resolve the issues working in concert with Secretary Tillerson and so forth?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: We obviously work the military to military lane, and we're continuing to do that in support of Secretary Tillerson. But I think, Jeff, you answered the question well. This is primarily Secretary Tillerson's lane right now to resolve this issue between the GCC and Qatar and come up with a negotiated solution to the challenge that addresses the issue.

JEFF BALLOU: With Al-Qaeda, ISIL, and their offshoots popping up all over the world, with a World War Two strategy of defeating, or defeating this enemy with our allies in various parts of the world? I can't quite read this.

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: Okay, I'll speculate as to what that individual means. [Laughter] First of all, we don't have, and let me, it's probably important, let me explain our strategy for dealing with transregional violent extremism again, of which ISIS is one manifestation. First of all, what connects the groups from West Africa to Southeast Asia? Really three things: The flow of foreign fighters, the flow of resource, and the narrative, the message that they disseminate. So, strategically the idea is to be able to cut, and I describe those things as connective tissue between the groups, so strategically what we're trying to do is cut that connective tissue. How are we doing that? By establishing a broad coalition with a good exchange of information and intelligence so that we can get after the flow of money, the flow of foreign fighters, and deal with the narrative.

We have now 60 members in a coalition just in Iraq and Syria. I met a few months ago with about 45 of my counterparts from around the world to improve our information and intelligence sharing. We have an interagency intelligence and information sharing location in the Middle East where right now we have about 20 countries that are represented both militarily and their intelligence organizations and they're interagency. When I say interagency in the United States it would be organizations like Homeland Security. And the idea is likeminded nations are sharing the intelligence information that will allow not just for effective military operations, which is one dimension of the problem, but also an effective legal framework in countries where foreign fighters either came from or will return to, and also an effective way of sharing information so we can anticipate the flow of foreign fighters and resources.

So, with regard to the combat operations, those combat operations then are designed to enable local forces to deal with specific regional challenges. So there is a number of regional efforts, but there is a strategic framework that connects those regional efforts and that strategic framework is getting after those three elements that actually connect these organizations. And the long term end state of the strategy is drive the level of violence down in each of the countries where it exists, in each of the regions where it exists, drive the level of violence down and increase the capacity of local forces such that local forces can deal with that challenge. That's where we're going. That is very much unlike a World War Two strategy and in very isolated cases are U.S. or coalition forces doing the fighting. The majority of fighting, and you can look at the majority of casualties, are being experienced by local forces that are fighting for their own countries, and that is the strategy.

So I would be happy to have a reattack if somebody wants to come back and ask another question about that strategy, because I think understanding that is very important. And by the way, my assessment, my assumption probably more properly, is that we're going to be dealing with violent extremism for a long period of time. Some people have described it as a generational problem, but whatever it is it's going to be a long period of time. And so one critical element of our strategy is that it must be politically sustainable, it must be fiscally sustainable, and it must be militarily sustainable. And one thing I want the American people

to know is that we're conducting a campaign against violent extremism in the context of all of the challenges that face our country right now, to include North Korea, China, Iran, and Russia. And so when I talk about sustainability it's sustainability in the context of making sure that we can address-- The United States is a nation that thinks and acts globally. We don't have the luxury of dealing with one thing at a time. We're dealing with all of those simultaneously, and to deal with all of those simultaneously again you need to have a strategy that is sustainable, and in the case of violent extremism fully leverages the capabilities of local partners on the ground who again are doing most of the fighting and most of the sacrifice is from local forces.

JEFF BALLOU: Speaking of the list you just spouted, North Korea. North Korea has been increasingly active, shall we say, in its missile tests. How are the U.S. forces positioning themselves to deal with this particular threat, if you're seeing it as a threat, and how are you trying to deescalate what is an increasing tension in the region, and specifically how is the new South Korean President helping in this regard?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: First of all, to the question do I view it as a threat, I do. It's clear to me that Kim Jong-un, the regime is on a path of attempting to developing an intercontinental ballistic missile and matching that with a nuclear warhead that can reach the United States. We should be concerned about that and we are. The primary means of dealing with that is diplomatic and economic pressure, a campaign led by Secretary Tillerson. The military dimension on a day to day basis is in support of Secretary Tillerson and as a result we have a very open dialogue, a very aggressive dialogue with the State Department to make sure that everything that we're doing, everything that we're doing in terms of our military posture is supportive of Secretary Tillerson's primarily economic and diplomatic campaign. And many of you have watched closely what has happened in the UN. There has been two I think unprecedented sanctions of regimes that have been passed this year and that is the primary way that Secretary Tillerson hopes to do that.

In the meantime we have a responsibility, we the Department of Defense, number one to deter any provocation by Kim Jong-un in the meantime, and to provide the President with a list of options in the event that hostilities occur, and that is exactly what we're doing. So, again what I want to emphasize is the military dimension today is in support of the diplomatic and economic effort led by the State Department, and at the same time we have an effective posture in the region to deter KJU and also to respond in the event that deterrence fails.

JEFF BALLOU: Speaking of North Korea and China, it seems the President has been trying to utilize a newfound relationship with his counterpart in China to try to resolve tensions in North Korea. How is that impacting what you just said? And is there anything that you're doing in the region that might have an adverse effect, for example what you're doing with the South China Seas?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: So, the President met with the President of China at Mar-a-Lago I think it was the end of April. They discussed two issues. One of them was this issue of North Korea and the commitment to de-nuclearize the peninsula. Secretary Tillerson has

said that a key element of any success we would have in de-nuclearizing the peninsula would be the cooperation of China. So, it's a bit early probably to judge how far we have come in the past four or five weeks, but that is a critical piece. In the meantime, Jeff, to talk about are there things that we are doing that might be counterproductive to gaining China's support up in North Korea, we view that issue as separate from other issues in the region that we're dealing with and we maintain open lines of communication with our Chinese counterparts.

And to that point, we will this week have a meeting at the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense level with their counterparts. I will join that and then follow up the day with my counterpart in the Pentagon. We will discuss a wide range of issues to include the issue that we just spoke about at length, the North Korea issue.

JEFF BALLOU: Sorry to jump back to Syria. Our good colleague, John Donnelly from CQ Roll Call: What is the legal justification for targeting Syria government forces?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: We are there and have legal justification under the Authorization of Use of Military Force. We are prosecuting a campaign against ISIS and Al-Qaeda in Syria.

JEFF BALLOU: Cyberattacks. Cyberattacks threaten the national infrastructure and our complex weapons and defense systems. How is the military doing in recruiting the talent needed to defend and defeat cyberattacks?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: Whoever asked that question, I think it's a great question and something I don't take for granted. One thing I would have said if I did filibuster up front and talked about our people, I would tell you that we have effectively recruited and retained an all-volunteer force, even after 16 years at war, but there is certain skillsets, and cyber is one of them, where we have a growth industry inside the department and there is a lot of competition in the industry for the same people that we're trying to incentivize to join the U.S. military or serve as a civilian, so we're not taking that for granted. We are, as you know, looking across the department for different ways to modernize our personnel system, to do just that, to recruit and retain high quality people to include cyber. We have grown the cyber force. We had a plan for 133 cyber mission teams. We outlined that plan about three years ago. 70% of those teams now have reached full operational capability. All the rest are reached initial operational capability. That means they're out there doing what they get paid to do every day. So we have met the current requirement, but as we look forward I imagine that our requirements will grow.

We have identified a requirement to grow our cyber capability. That means we will need more high quality motivated people to come in that are committed to the mission, and we've got to find a way to incentivize that. And that doesn't necessarily mean that the way we have done business in the past is the way we're going to be able to do business in the future.

JEFF BALLOU: And another one from the audience: How do you create a rational military strategy with an impulsive President?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: Okay, I don't think someone really expects me to answer a question like that, and I mean that sincerely. I mean the one thing that I'm very proud of, and I hope as Americans, I mean I am proud of freedom of the press and I'm proud of what you do every day, and I'm not just saying that, but I also-- [Applause]

JEFF BALLOU: Thank you, Sir.

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: No, I mean that.

JEFF BALLOU: Appreciate that.

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: And I've said that in private to the folks I work with closely in the Pentagon. But I hope you're equally proud that the United States military remained apolitical during a very difficult political season, and I'm certainly proud of our men and women in uniform, and I can't think of a single case where an active duty member has violated what in effect is our ethos. And I'm equally sensitive to making sure that that record maintains in the future, and as the senior U.S. military officer in the country I think our men and women look to me as an example, and so I would never answer a question like that, and so thanks.

[Applause]

JEFF BALLOU: Just a reminder, those who may be watching: Not everybody in the room is a journalist, so we ask for a bit of a decorum from our colleagues and hold your applause. Those applauding may be guests or members of the public. The United States is providing thousands of weapons and heavy weapons to Kurdish groups which have been regarded as terrorist organizations by Turkey. How do you guarantee that these weapons will not be turned against your 65 year old NATO ally after fighting against ISIL?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: All of our-- First of all, we are very focused on maintaining the relationship that we have, as you pointed out, Jeff, our NATO ally in Turkey, and to that point I have made nine trips to Turkey in the past 12 months, I have met with my Turkish counterpart probably no less than 15 times in the last year to try to make sure we maintain a very effective relationship with a NATO ally. We have also told them that at the end of the day a key element of our campaign is making sure we accomplish the mission with our relationship with Turkey, our NATO ally, intact.

So, we have sat down with the Turks. We have a very tight framework to allay their concerns. We have transparency in reporting. We're providing them routine reports of exactly what we're doing. We're providing them transparency on the type of weapons that we have. And we have put in mechanisms in place to make sure that the weapons that we're providing to the Syrian Democratic Forces are intended for Raqqa and Raqqa only and don't find their way back inside of Turkey. So, whoever asked that question, it's a very important question, it's a strategic question, because it affects a relationship with an important ally, but we're mindful of that. And to that point, Secretary Mattis next week will once again meet

with his Turkish counterpart in Europe and go through this. And last Thursday he wrote a very detailed letter to his Turkish counterpart, providing a routine update, and again both I speak routinely to General Hulusi Akar who has become a good friend, he is a Turkish Chief of Defense, and General Mike Scaparrotti, our European Command Commander, speaks to General Akar probably at least once a week. And we have a very, very robust presence of both the United States Central Command the United States European Command in Ankara in a joint operations center with our Turkish counterparts, again to mitigate the concerns that you outlined, Jeff.

JEFF BALLOU: Thank you. Jumping around a bit, the Senate passed a broad sanctions package last week against Iran and Russia. How are the details of that, broad strokes, impacting U.S. military strategy in those countries or in the region both towards Russia and towards Iran?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: Sorry for a relatively short answer on that, but there has been no impact on the military dimension of our relationship with either country at this point.

JEFF BALLOU: Okay, budget questions, and there is a lot of them. Are you comfortable--

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: After 17 hours of testimony last week--

JEFF BALLOU: I was going to say, you were on the Hill quite a bit last week.

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: -- I'm really looking forward to these. Go ahead, Jeff.
[Laughter]

JEFF BALLOU: Are you comfortable with how the U.S. is defending defense dollars to address emergent military capabilities of near competitor states?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: The short answer is no, and let me walk back. I think it's fair to say at the turn of the century, 2000, we had a decisive competitive advantage in our ability to project power when and where necessary to advance our interests and meet our alliance commitments. We could do that. And just for those who don't track what we do routinely, I believe there are two sources of strength in our country, at the strategic level it's the network of allies and partners that we have built up since World War Two, and at the operational level it's been our historic ability to project power from the United States, again to advance our interests and meet our alliance commitments.

Our peer competitors have studied the United States since Desert Storm. They studied the development of precision munitions. They studied our ability to project power. And in almost every case, you look at China, Russia, Iran in particular, what they have done over the last few years is started to develop what has been called in the trade journals the Anti-Access/Area Denial Capability. And what that simply means is develop a wide range of capabilities that keep the United States from moving into Europe in the case of Russia, moving into the Pacific, meeting our alliance commitments or then operating freely within

Europe or within the Pacific. And so my greatest concern and the emphasis that I placed on it last week in testimony I think highlights that is that the United States of America has to maintain a competitive advantage in the ability to project power when and where necessary to meet our alliance commitments or advance our interests.

And as a result of anti-ship cruise missiles, anti-ship ballistic missiles, electronic warfare capability, anti-space capability, a wide other range of maritime offensive undersea capabilities, there are areas of concern. And so one of the things that we're doing at a very classified level is communicating with Congress to talk about the areas of competitive advantage, and we have identified a number of those, and we can talk with specificity about where are we today relative to where we need to be in maintaining a competitive advantage, where will we be in five years in our ability to maintain a competitive advantage, and what specific capabilities must be fielded to ensure that the Chairman in 2022 or 2023 can be as confident of our ability to project power then as I am today.

So, again, as a result of unstable budgets and operational tempo while we have been focused on violent extremism, while we have delayed modernization programs from the nuclear enterprise to our ship building program, our potential adversaries haven't had to suffer through that same experience, and what they have been on is a very consistent pattern of capability development designed specifically again to limit our ability to project power. And as Americans we should be concerned about that, because our ability to project power is a critical element of conventional deterrence. And I believe right now that our competitive advantage has in fact mitigated the risk of conflict, and the loss of that competitive advantage conventionally would be a risk. And obviously the loss of a safe, effective, and reliable nuclear deterrent is also a concern, and so that really is the primary thrust of our budget recommendations.

JEFF BALLOU: Between the Budget Control Act, the continuing resolutions, your countless hours of testimony, has Congress and the White House essentially failed the military by not coming to an agreement and getting the military the ability it needs in its funding to increase its personnel, strengthen its modernization, and all those other things you just mapped out. I was reading through your testimony, scores of hours of testimony, and House, Senate, committee by committee by committee the same things kept coming up over and over and over again that you were being effectively shortchanged.

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: The one thing that I said in testimony and I routinely say is I fundamentally don't believe we should be sending our young men and women into a fair fight. We shouldn't be doing that as Americans. We're going to send them someplace, we ought to send them with the wherewithal to accomplish the mission with the minimal loss of life or equipment. That is, I think, our responsibility. We're not going to be able to do that with the Budget Control Act. We're not going to be able to do that with more continuing resolutions. We are where we are right now, it began back in 2012, and with the exception of one assignment I've been intimately involved in where we have been since 2012 with regard to the budget, and as a result of continuing resolutions every year, as a result of the Budget Control Act we haven't been able to properly prioritize and allocate the resources the American people give to us for the nation's defense. And if we don't lift the budget caps, if

we don't repeal the Budget Control Act, and we don't get back to regular order, that is passing a budget every year, we will not get out of the trough that we have found ourselves in as a result of seven or eight or nine years, and it's going to take us some time to get out of that trough, but the only way we'll get out of that trough is to have regular order in the budget process. We cannot sustain the path we're on right now and maintain that competitive advantage. [Applause] Speaking of regular order.

JEFF BALLOU: Speaking of regular order. There are several things you can pluck out of that. I mean you've got decades old ICBMs, you've got all of this, military vehicles that are not equivalent to their peer counterparts in other, in competitor nations. Where do you start? I mean there seems to be a long, long laundry list of what you have to fix in order to be competitive.

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: First of all, it starts with the nuclear enterprise, and we have made that, we believe that is the department's number one responsibility is to deter nuclear war, and it would be nice if we didn't have to invest in a nuclear enterprise, it would be nice if nuclear weapons weren't a part of our national defense strategy, but the truth of the matter is the enemy gets a vote and actually Russia has increased the role of nuclear weapons in their defense strategy, and maintaining an effective deterrence is important, so that is job one. I spoke about our ability to project power, Jeff, and again what we have done is we have taken a look at each of the four state actors and the one non-state actor, so I don't use this four plus one is what we call it inside the building as a predictive model, but here is an important assumption that you can test: What I believe is if we build a U.S. military with the right inventory of capabilities and the right capacities, that is the right size, so the right capabilities and the right size for us, that can deal with Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, or violent extremism, or some combination thereof, that we'll have the right force in the future to maintain a competitive advantage and deal with what we most certainly will deal with is the unexpected.

I mean as I tell people, if there is anything I've learned in 40 years of active duty it's to be humble about our ability to predict the future. But again, just like any industry, you have to benchmark yourself against something. So what we have done is benchmarked ourselves against those four plus one, and the way we will inform our priorities that we provide to Congress is by looking at where we are today relative to where we'll be five years from now in terms of our competitive advantage, and that will be where the priorities outside the nuclear enterprise are established.

And of course there is other things about training the force and so forth, but I'm speaking about it from a joint inventory perspective.

JEFF BALLOU: Let's go global again. You mentioned briefly NATO. When the President was on his overseas trip he had some pretty tough words for NATO. How did those words have an effect on your dealings with your counterparts and with the allies that we have dealt with for so so long?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: This is, and some may find this hard to believe, but first of all I was in NATO, I think, probably 10 days ago, I'm there at least every quarter, met with all now 29 members of NATO, witnessed this afternoon, I think about 4:00 I'll meet with my Montenegro counterparts, so I'm either speaking to or meeting with one of my NATO counterparts every week. Certainly a week doesn't go by where I'm not meeting with one or more of them, so I have a pretty good sense, I think, for where we are in our relationship, and I would tell you the military to military relationship, to include our combined operations in Afghanistan, to include our combined operations in Syria and Iraq, to include the partnership we have with the French in West Africa, to include the partnership we have with the French and the United Kingdom and the United States in East Africa has not suffered a bit. And, frankly, I think given the common challenges we have right now, I would find someone hard pressed historically to go back and find a time when more than 30 nations have stayed together in the fight for over a decade like we have in Afghanistan where we have been able to put together a coalition of 60 countries of which 22 are actually contributing effective military capabilities in Iraq and Syria.

So, what I would ask you to do when you think about what impact, where we are with regard to our allies is look at what we're doing, not what we're saying, and what we're doing across the world is pretty, I believe from a coalition and an alliance perspective, pretty effective.

JEFF BALLOU: Chairman, when serving as Commandant in the Marine Corps you were the only Service Chief to oppose the integration of women into ground combat arms jobs and units and chose not to appear at the Secretary of Defense's press conference to announce the change. Now that you're Chairman of the Joints Chief of Staff what is your current position on the issue? Are you now in favor of opening all military jobs and units to qualified women? If not why not?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: I hope people will appreciate that when you provide military advice you do so in good faith, and at the end of the day when you're in uniform and you're inside the Department of Defense you provide military advice and then our civilian leadership, as it should be, makes a decision. So the day Secretary Carter made a decision I had but one task, which was to with full commitment implement the decision that Secretary Carter made and to make sure that the command climate that was set from our most senior leaders all the way down to the squad leaders was an effective command climate to implement that decision.

I also want to tell you that when I made the recommendation to Secretary Carter it wasn't a I don't recommend women be integrated. First of all, even as a Commandant in the Marine Corps, I opened up all but two percent of the occupational fields in the Marine Corps as my recommendation, and with those fields that I did not recommend I outlined the specific conditions that I thought would be, should be set before we moved forward with full integration. So it was a question of, "Mr. Secretary, we have done some very careful analytic work. We have done some experimentation. Here is the issues that should be considered when we go to full integration. And my recommendation is we address these issues before we integrate." In the conversation he said, "Okay, that's fine. I understand your perspective. I

believe that we can address the issues.” He said, “I accept the issues that you’ve raised.” And by the way, if you look at the memo that Secretary Carter signed out to implement the decision every single issue that is in the letter that I sent to him is reflected in Secretary Carter’s implementation memo. And he said, “Okay, General, I got it, but here is what I believe: I believe the issues that you’ve raised can be addressed in implementation and this process doesn’t have to be sequential.” I said, “I got it. Yes, Sir.” And we’ve been off.

And so I haven’t thought about anything other than executing the Secretary’s decision since that day and that’s the way it ought to be.

JEFF BALLOU: Along those lines, Mr. Chairman, there are thousands of transgender service members who are honorably serving in the military today. Last year then Secretary Carter created the new policy allowing transgender individuals to openly serve and allow new transgender recruits to join. Why is the Pentagon considering changing this policy?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: Okay, first of all let’s be clear. There is-- Transgender personnel are serving right now and there is no review ongoing that would affect the ability of those currently serving to continue serving, provided they can meet the physical and mental qualifications of service, be worldwide deployable, and the same standards that every other soldier, sailor, airmen, marine meets. The issue now is the challenges of assessing individuals and the criteria for assessing, and so that is, there have been some issues raised with regard to challenges of assessing transgender individuals, and that is what the Secretary is reviewing.

So, this is not a reversal of the policy that was implemented before. This is the next phase of implementation was accessions, and there have been some issues identified with accessions that the Service Chiefs, some of the Service Chiefs believe need to be resolved before we move forward, and so that’s where we are right now.

JEFF BALLOU: The Joint Strike Fighter is entering service, but with many cost overruns and delays. Will it continue as a program or is it too expensive to maintain?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: Well, that is a pretty loaded question that someone has an agenda in the way that they phrased that question. First of all, the F35 is operationally deployed today, so it will remain as a program, and the initial operating capability in the Marine Corps was made before I changed jobs in July of 2015. I had sufficient confidence in the F35 to declare it initially operational, capable, and declare that first squadron capable of worldwide deployment, and it subsequently has deployed. We also, you will see in the budget, have a significant buy of F35s in the budget this year and we expect that to continue in the future.

The challenges associated with the F35, whether they be engineering or cost overruns, I would argue, are not anomalous to many, many other programs that we have had inside the Department of Defense, and, frankly, the cost overruns, a bit of that is history, because over the past 18 to 24 months I think most people would argue, and Congress certainly I think

supports this perspective, that the Program Manager has done a great job of getting a lot of those cost overruns back in check, and the cost of the aircraft and the operation and sustainment costs also in check. So, the short answer is the F35 is a critical program. I believe it's not a better F18 or a better bomb truck fourth generation, but it's a transformational capability, both its ability to deliver ordinance as well as its ability to serve literally as a server in the sky is going to transform the way we fight, and I think we fully haven't appreciated all the things it's going to do to change our war fighting concepts.

JEFF BALLOU: With the proliferation of “lone wolf actors of terror” what steps are being taken by the U.S. military to prevent Osama Bin Laden's grown son from perpetuating terror strictly in the U.S.?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: Okay, those seem to me to be two separate issues, right, the lone wolf in the United States and Osama Bin Laden's son. Earlier I spoke about this network for intelligence and information sharing, so to the latter question making sure that we have a common intelligence picture, common operational picture, that is that we have a common understanding with all the nations that are affected by extremism is a critical part to keep those individuals from being able to plan and conduct external operations, which is job number one for us in the counterterrorism fight is to prevent attacks on the United States or on our allies and partners.

With regard to lone wolf attacks, we are in support of local and federal law enforcement officials, and so if you're talking about lone wolf U.S. citizens inspired by propaganda the military dimension of that problem is battlefield success that undermines the credibility of the narrative even as local law enforcement and so forth deal with individual U.S. citizens who may be inspired to commit acts of violence.

JEFF BALLOU: We're running short on time, so I'm going to one more substance question and then I'm going to give you our traditional mug. What can be done to stem the flow of refugees in the Mediterranean Sea and human suffering? Should refugee centers be built in North Africa and other areas to provide safe havens for those fleeing violence and famine, and what role should NGO or groups like the Vatican play?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: Let me answer that question at least in my lane, and I would argue a lot of times when we look at violent extremism we focus on the risk of attacks, and we should. The tragic loss of life associated with violent extremism is a big issue. But if you think about it, probably the most significant effect of violent extremism has been the flow of refugees, certainly the impact it has had on Europe from a political perspective, and then just the sheer human suffering that has taken place as a result of 10 million people just in the case of Syria that have been dislocated or have become refugees, about half have become refugees, half have been dislocated inside of Syria. So, it's a tragic outcome of violent extremism.

I think the military dimension of that particular problem is working with local partners to create the conditions where people can be safe at home and don't have the need to go and become refugees, and obviously we can also support in providing some immediate

support in the form of water, supplies, and food, and making sure that the conditions are conducive to nongovernmental organizations or in the case of USAID or government organizations to be able to provide that kind of support. But we work very closely with USAID, particularly in stabilization of places like Mosul and Raqqa. And I can tell you when we sit down and develop a campaign plan for Raqqa and Mosul sitting at the table is USAID to make sure that we can go into stabilization immediately after hostilities cease and set conditions as quickly as possible to relieve some of the human suffering.

JEFF BALLOU: Before I ask the last question I'm going to present our traditional National Press Club mug, and Mr. Chairman, your picture will go on the wall outside with the rest of the historic speakers that have been coming here since we started the speakers program in 1920. Last question goes back to Syria.

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: Wait a minute.

JEFF BALLOU: Last question. I said one before. There is one last one.

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: Alright, alright.

JEFF BALLOU: Can you expand upon your plans after ISIL is defeated? That is an optimistic question. You say that the-- Does it become a safe zone? Are you prepared to protect it from aerial attack? And is there a no fly zone? And are you then planning to expand that zone?

JOSEPH F. DUNFORD: Okay, I think it's probably, if you don't mind I'm going to answer a different question. I mean we'll certainly-- No, I mean I'll answer the Raqqa piece, but there is a broader question, which is what about after ISIS? So, after ISIS and Raqqa, I mentioned earlier we're working now with the State Department to make sure there is effective governance there, make sure there is local forces that are recruited to provide security inside of Raqqa, and that is our plan for Raqqa. But what I would tell you is that violent extremism is not over with ISIS, and that is why in fact one of the reasons why I'm running now at 1330 is we have 1:30 we have all of our Combatant Commanders and Service Chiefs together here in about 30 minutes for a quarterly review of where we are in dealing with violent extremism and very much looking towards long term framework for our operations.

Again, I talked earlier about politically, fiscally, and militarily sustainable with an assumption that this is a long term fight, and making sure that we constantly review our organizational construct, making sure we constantly review our intelligence sharing relationships, making sure we constantly review the success of our partners on the ground and what additional support they need is all part of what we're trying to do. But this is a long term fight, and so Raqqa is tactical, Mosul is tactical. I believe it will have strategic effects on the overall messaging, because it certainly undermines the credibility that there is a physical kalifate that exists in the Middle East when they lose Raqqa and Mosul, but we ought not to confuse success in Raqqa and Mosul as something that means it's the end of the fight. I think we should all be braced for a long fight, and that's why we're so, we so

emphasize making sure that we have the broadest network possible of partners to help deal with this challenge, because it's not about just the United States, it's about the 120-plus countries from which foreign fighters have come just to Iraq and Syria, and to the degree that we can get all 120 of those countries, or as many of them as possible, to cooperate in intelligence sharing, information sharing, and effective action, limit the freedom of movement of foreign fighters, limit their ability to share resources, and erode the effectiveness in their narrative that we'll be successful, but again we're prepared for a long term fight and a constant review of how we're addressing it.

If there is one thing I would leave you with, don't ever think that those of us in uniform are complacent about any of the issues that we've spoken about today. In fact I tell people that when I was a Second Lieutenant my level of experience arguably was way down here, but my level of confidence that I had all the answers was way up here, and as I speak to you today my level of experience is arguably way up here and my level of confidence on the issues that we're dealing with today, that I have all the answers is way down here. These are extraordinarily complex if not wicked problems we're dealing with, and beware of those with too much confidence that they have all the answers. Thank you.

JEFF BALLOU: Thank you.

[Applause]

JEFF BALLOU: I ask you stay in your seats as the Chairman leaves the hall. For more information on our programs you can log into www.Press.org. We are adjourned. Thank you, Sir.

[Applause]

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