

## Hearing Transcript

### Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing on U.S. Southern Command and U.S. Northern Command

Thursday, April 6, 2017

MCCAIN:

Well, good morning. Since there's going to be a vote starting at 11 I believe we'll try to expedite the process here and I will forgo my opening statement, except to welcome the witnesses and ask Senator Reed if he has an opening statement so we can get right to the witnesses after he completes that.

REED:

I'm tempted to say yes, but this morning I have to say no -- no.

(LAUGHTER)

Would you please include my opening statement in the record Mr...

MCCAIN:

Both moving and important opening statements will be made part of the record. Welcome to the witnesses Admiral Tidd and General Robinson.

Please proceed, General Robinson.

ROBINSON:

Good morning Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished members of the committee. I certainly am honored to be here today. Pleased to testify with my very, very good friend Admiral Kurt Tidd.

Northern American Aerospace Defense Command and unit -- United States Northern command are two distinct commands, but they are unified in a common purpose. Every day, the men and women of NORAD and U.S. North, soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, civilians, Americans and Canadians stand ready to defend two great countries, the United States and Canada.

Today, our adversaries are seeking ways to extend their operational reach into North America and to hold us at risk. The men and women of NORAD and U.S. Northern command stand watch, ready to defend against these adversaries. Today we have a competitive advantage against them. This advantage will not continue in the future however, if we continue to operate under a

continuing resolutions I echo the secretary, the Chairman, the service chiefs in saying that developing the joint force we need in the future requires an actual budget this year.

Continuing resolutions do not enable continuity of effort. We need an appropriations bill, unrestricted by sequestration, to upgrade our work fighting capabilities against threats to us here in the homeland. These adversaries include North Korea where Kim Jong-un and continues his provocative behavior. He has conducted nearly three times as many ballistic missile tests as his father and grandfather did combined.

North Korea uses what they learned from each test to make improvements to their missile capabilities. We are watching them very closely and we are also watching Iran as it develops a space program with potential dual use technology. NORTHCOM is prepared to counter ballistic missiles should North Korea attempt to launch on in an attack on the United States. While I am confident in our ability to defend the homeland today, we must keep improving. We are working in close partnership with the Missile Defense Agency to improve our sensors and the reliability of our ground-based interceptors.

Also today, Russian cruise missiles can reach us from greater ranges than ever before. No longer do they have to come close to North American airspace to hold us at risk. But I'm also confident in NORAD's layered approach to cruise missile defense. But again we must evolve and we are doing so as our adversary capabilities increase.

Senator McCain, at my confirmation hearing you asked if I had ever visited the Southwest border. One year later, I can tell you that I visited our Southwest border on foot, by boat, by air, in a tunnel and, yes sir, even on horseback.

I have gained an appreciation for the incredible variety of terrain along the Southwest border and how transnational criminal organizations and their networks can exploit that terrain. I've also stood with my great friend Kurt (ph) on the Guatemalan soil looking north to see firsthand the network challenges that SUDANA (ph) and SEMAR (ph) face and what they are doing to strengthen their -- Mexico's southern border.

To counter these threat networks NORTHCOM partners with law enforcement agencies, SOUTHCOM, other combatant commands, the intelligence community, military partners such as the SUDANA (ph) and SEMAR (ph). All the while supporting Secretary Kelly's requests. The men and women of NORAD and NORTHCOM stand united in a common purpose, ready to face the threats of the United States and Canada today. And we are evolving to face the threats of tomorrow. Sir, we have the watch.

ROBINSON:

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to speak, and I look forward to your questions.

MCCAIN:

Thank you.

Admiral Tidd.

TIDD:

Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, members of the committee; thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

I'm pleased to be here with my NORTHCOM teammate, General Lori Robinson. Although we focus on distinctly different mission sets, our teams work together to keep our nation safe from a range of challenges. While General Robinson and her team are directly responsible for defending our homeland, SOUTHCOM extends that defense well beyond our borders throughout our southern approaches.

Now I want to do something a little bit different today with my opening remarks. I want to tell you a story. Picture this, we gain information on a group of individuals who are planning to make their way to the United States. They're carrying a weapon that will kill dozens of people and put hundreds more in the hospital. This powerful weapon will -- will drain millions from our economy in terms of healthcare costs, crime, and lost productivity. It's neither high- tech, nor new. We know exactly how dangerous it is and this weapon passes freely through our defenses, as do hundreds more just like it.

Chairman, members, I tell you this true story to point out an uncomfortable fact. Those people are members of a threat network and the weapon that they move today is drugs. On average, one metric ton of cocaine will kill 10 Americans every year and harm hundreds more. Last year we watched almost 450 tons pass freely toward our country. What made it through translation to American lives lost and illicit profit that fuels instability and violence.

Now, I tell you the story focused on drugs today because it's the scenario on which we have the best information. But these adaptive threat networks can move anything. What keeps me up at night is the potential for even more deadly cargo moving through these networks and directly into our cities. ISIS has encouraged its followers to exploit the vulnerability of the pathways leading directly into the United States in order to move weapons of mass destruction.

To address this challenge, we're changing our approach to better understand and disrupt the immediate threats. We're working with our partners to reduce the vulnerabilities that allow these networks to exist in the first place. And we're expanding information sharing and building the capacity of our partners so that they can better secure their territory against these challenges.

And today I also look forward to talking to you about other issues that we're addressing. Extremist networks, like ISIS, are radicalizing and recruiting individuals and they're encouraging them to conduct attacks on U.S. and partner interests in our region. Russia, China and Iran are actively engaging in Latin America. While most of their activities aren't military threats, yet, some do warrant examination. Even seemingly benign activities can build malign influence.

With the peace accord now final in Columbia, a firm anchor for regional stability and one of our most trusted partner, Columbia still faces a challenging road ahead. We continue to stand together in defense of our shared interest. And lastly, detention operations and Joint Task Force Guantanamo remain a sensitive and a demanding mission that are men and women continue to execute with discipline and professionalism. Now it's time to address the infrastructure requirements that we've been putting off. The safety and the security of our troops depend on it.

Finally, I would like to thank this committee for its unwavering support to the men and women both in uniform and out who serve our country. And I look forward to answering your questions, thank you.

MCCAIN:

Thank you very much Admiral.

General Robinson, North Korea tested another medium-range ballistic missile this week, Kim Jong-un, known to some as the crazy fat kid, as states his intention to test an ICBM. How confident are you that you can intercept a North Korean ICBM targeting the homeland?

ROBINSON:

Senator McCain, I am extremely confident of our capability to defend the United States of America and be able to intercept an ICBM should it reach our homeland. Right now, as you know, he can't reach our homeland, but I'm confident, should he do that.

MCCAIN:

Admiral Tidd, your predecessor once testified before the Homeland Security Committee that he watches drug trafficking take place, particularly in the Caribbean, but does not have the equipment and funding necessary to -- or intercept some of that drug trafficking.

What's your assessment of your ability to intercept and stop drug trafficking that you can see but don't have the capability to address?

TIDD:

Senator, we continue to have those shortfalls. We continue to be able to see a significant amount of traffic heading towards the Central American Peninsula, unfortunately we only have the resources to be able to intercept about 25 percent.

MCCAIN:

Would you supply for the record what you need in order to be able to intercept a 100 percent?

TIDD:

Simply put, more ships, more aircraft.

MCCAIN:

Again for -- would you be a little more specific...

TIDD:

Yes sir, for the record we'll provide the exact calculations.

MCCAIN:

I think we all know the -- some of this -- there's an epidemic of fatalities due to some of these drugs being used by more and more Americans as they leave oxycontin etcetera. So I think it's even more important now for us to have the ability to intercept these drug shipments. Are you seeing an increase or decrease or the same?

TIDD:

Senator, we're seeing the volume continue to go up. We're seeing some significant improvement on the part of some of our partner nations in their ability to be able to conduct intercepts but we still watch far more go by that we can actually act on.

MCCAIN:

Volume of what drugs have you seen?

TIDD:

We are focusing on -- on cocaine, that's what we principally see, because it departs that the SOUTHCOM region and heads north. But we're also aware that these threat networks that I spoke of previously are also actively engaged in the movement precursor chemicals that produce the other drugs that you mentioned.

MCCAIN:

In the NDAA, we called for greater cooperation with our military assets with our border patrol and other agencies -- civilian agencies of government. Have we seen any progress in that area? General Robinson.

ROBINSON:

Sir, I would -- I would say we actually have. In fact, last summer, when I went down on the Southwest border I saw Marine Corps sensor -- ground sensor platoons providing information to border patrol folks. I saw UASs on the border...

MCCAIN:

Drones.

ROBINSON:

Drones on the -- on the border, providing intelligence capability. And I watched Army reconnaissance units...

MCCAIN:

Are you satisfied with the level of use and cooperative effort? Understanding we have Posse Comitatus and we do not put our military in direct contact -- but that we're utilizing the assets of the military as well as we could?

ROBINSON:

Sir, we're looking at ways. How can we continue to maximize our capability and capacity. I'm working very closely with Army North commander, Jeff Buchanan; specifically Fort Huachuca and the drone -- capability and capacity there.

MCCAIN:

Finally, and both of you may answer, if we continue sequestration what does that do to your ability to carry out these responsibilities? I'm specifically speaking about this flood of Mexican manufactured heroin, opioids and others that are creating havoc in some parts of our society. You -- whichever one you want. Admiral Tidd.

TIDD:

In our case, anything that restricts the ability of the services to provide forces...

MCCAIN:

Yeah, but I'm talking about sequestration specifically.

TIDD:

Sequestration will further limit the ability of the -- of the services to provide any resources to us.

MCCAIN:

General.

ROBINSON:

And sir, I'd -- I'd totally worked closely with the interagency and so anything that takes away from...

MCCAIN:

I'm talking about sequestration specifically.

ROBINSON:

Yes, sir. I'll then echo what...

MCCAIN:

What are the effects of it on your ability to carry out your mission?

ROBINSON:

Sir, you -- the president nominated me and you confirmed me to defend the homeland. If I looked at what the United States Air Force talks about in their ability to provide pilot capability, trained ready pilots to defend the United States of America, and in a year or so they will be down 1,000 pilots, will I be able to have the aircraft availability that I need?

ROBINSON:

If I look at ballistic missile defense and our ability to look at long range discriminating radar and the capabilities that, as we move forward, I get concerned that that will have an effect on that. Those would be two things that I would specifically.

MCCAIN:

Thank you.

Senator Reed.

REED:

Well thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Admiral Tidd and General Robinson, for your service. And please thank the men and women who every day support you and support us. Your commands depend significantly on other federal agencies.

It -- when you brought up -- you both brought up the issue of drug infiltration to the United States, that involve Treasury Department in terms of going after the financial backers that are involved. Obviously Homeland Security, the Coast Guard. Those are the -- the those the ships I think you're talking about and -- in terms of the more ships you need. They're not navy ships, their Coast Guard ships and aircraft.

You -- we have to reduce the demand. That means healthcare in the United States so that someone who has a problem doesn't go to the street and get drugs. They go to a -- the health clinic and get rehabilitation one hopes. So the whole -- the point I would ask both Admiral Tidd and General Robinson is that -- just the essential need to adequately funding resources for other agencies that you work, is that essential to your mission, i.e. Even if we gave you everything you asked for, if you didn't have those other components you couldn't accomplish your mission?

TIDD:

Senator, that's correct, particularly in the SOUTHCOM region it is a team effort and that team requires significant contributions to be made by the State Department, by the intelligence community and by our federal law enforcement agencies. Department of Homeland Security is probably our staunchest ally in the work that we do.

As I point out frequently, because of the -- the commitment of Navy ships to other regions around the world, my Navy in the SOUTHCOM region all has white hauls and orange stripes, we couldn't do our job without the U.S. Coast Guard.

REED:

Thank you.

And General Robinson, your comments?

ROBINSON:

Yes sir, if you go back to Admiral Tidd's conversation about the networks and understanding about the commodity on the network, I want to understand what the commodity is on the network because everything I do to illuminate it -- the disruption part of it comes to other lead federal agencies, whether it's DHS or CBP or whomever.

And so, any cuts that any of those folks take doesn't allow that disruption and endgame of what happens to that information that I provide to them. So it's incredibly important that as a team we bring this together.

REED:

Thank you very much.

Admiral Tidd, one of the interesting things that -- in your testimony and our discussions is the presence of China and Russia -- interesting that Russia has built an international police training facility in Nicaragua so that they're actively training Nicaraguans and I -- that's a surprise to me because I -- you know, that used to be a sort of no-go zone for --the only training is with the United States.

But the point is that it comes down to matching that and exceeding that with our IMET program, which is a State Department program, is that a fair judgment?

TIDD:

Senator, programs like IMET that you mention are critical to our ability to build the partnerships with the countries throughout the region to ensure that they have the -- the trained individuals. It also creates partners who have a profound understanding of the United States because they come and they spend time in our schools.

It pays enormous dividends. It's an investment, often, that doesn't pay off for 10 or 20 or sometimes 30 years but it is an incredible investment in future relationships for our countries. We do watch closely what Russia and China and Iran are up to, they are countries with -- that are countries of global concern and it's important that we pay attention to what they do here in this theater.

REED:

Let me just -- a final question, Admiral Tidd, if I could, that is, Venezuela is under huge pressure because of economics, politics, everything. Can you give us sort of a sense of the outlook?

TIDD:

Senator, the entire region is watching closely what happens in -- in Venezuela. As -- as you're well aware, when I mention the word Venezuela tomorrow the newspapers of Caracas will be stories that U.S. SOUTHCOM is engaged -- in operations against Venezuela, nothing could be further from the truth.

But the reality is that the enormous economic instability that's taking place in Venezuela effects the entire region and the OAS is watching that very closely and taking very, I think, important action.

REED:

And just quickly, is there Chinese, Russian interest in Venezuela, is that -- would they take advantage of that type of disruption?

TIDD:

Both countries have significant economic involvement in -- in Venezuela and it would be difficult to imagine that they would not look to -- to take advantage of further instability in that country.

REED:

Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN:

Senator Inhofe.

INHOFE:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Robinson, first of all, I'm sure that you developed your -- your horse skills during your tenure as the wing commander at Tinker Air Force Base. And it has obviously come in handy. As I mentioned to you when you were in my office, I wanted to lay the groundwork for a question that I think is significant.

Before this committee the -- General David Mann had said -- and this is his quote, he said that there are "nearly 30 countries that possess ballistic missile capability. Together, these countries have approximately 50 different variants of ballistic missiles. Additionally, there are currently 13 new intermediate range and eight intercontinental ballistic missiles of variance under development."

Now, in 2009 the administration cut the missile defense budget by \$1.4 billion, delayed and then ultimately terminated the system had been set up in both the Czech Republic and -- and Poland for a ground based interceptor. They terminated the multiple kill vehicle and decrease the number of ground-based interceptors from 44 to 30 -- to 30. Now, you testified that the MDA is really doing four things right now.

One would be to increase the interceptors back to 44 from 30. Secondly, upgrading the ground system hardware and software. Number three, continuing development efforts on the redesigned kill vehicle. And number four, to deploy the long ranged radar.

Now my question would be, do you think that these actions are sufficient to overcome the problems that you and I talked about and that you mentioned in your opening statement? I mean -- you know, if you do these things like in -- additional improved sensors, additional improved ground-based interceptors. What else needs to be done or is -- is this enough?

ROBINSON:

Well, sir, first of all, happy quail breakfast day.

INHOFE:

Yes.

ROBINSON:

I apologize for not being there. And I believe that the strategy that...

INHOFE:

It's our 55th consecutive year, I might add.

ROBINSON:

Yes, sir, I know that. And it's a wonderful event. I -- I believe the MDA strategy as they've laid out the -- improving the sensors for better discrimination, improving the reliability of the kill vehicle and then looking at the number of ground-based interceptors is exactly the strategy that we should go based on what we see today.

INHOFE:

Well, and I appreciate that.

Admiral Tidd, I think it's safe to say that the under resourced commands would be your command and AFRICOM. That's my opinion, do you agree with that?

TIDD:

I do.

INHOFE:

The -- if you look at some of the programs and Senator Reed mentioned the IMET program. And I often look at these programs in the under resourced area of AFRICOM, such the IMET program which is -- I've always thought is great. Once you develop a relationship, at that stage in the careers of individuals you got them. And the other obvious point is, if we don't do that China will.

Secondly, the foreign military sales and foreign military financing. You know, is that something that should be expanded? So on those two programs, what -- what do you think and be expanded? And are there any barriers to your -- to you from being able to expand those programs?

TIDD:

Senator, I'd -- I think that the IMET program as you describe is probably, you know, one of the single most important long term investments that we can make in establishing positive, constructive relationships based on trust with our partners. There's nothing like a -- an officer coming or a senior enlisted coming and studying in our schools and living in the United States and experiencing for themselves all that this country represents to be able to counteract the sometimes negative messages that they might see in -- in the international press.

And so, when we -- when we have those opportunities they are absolutely priceless. They pay off because we see time after time after time, particularly throughout our region, the senior military leaders of many of the services in the countries have trained in the United States, they've lived in

our country, they know who we are. And -- and frankly I think our country and our culture sells itself.

So I can't place enough value on a program like IMET, we could always use more. And -- and one of the challenges is it is, like most of the resources, allocated based on a regional prioritization and SOUTHCOM typically comes in at the bottom of that prioritization.

INHOFE:

What about barriers to you improving these programs?

TIDD:

Yeah, thus far we have not run into any other barriers except that we run out of money.

INHOFE:

OK, thank you Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN:

Senator Shaheen.

SHAHEEN:

Thank you Mr. Chairman and thank you both for being here and for your service to this country.

You both mention the threats that transnational crime networks pose to the United States and to global stability for that matter. And Admiral Tidd you started out with a story about drug traffickers, which we have seen very directly in the state of New Hampshire where the heroin and opioid epidemic is a huge threat, we have the third highest overdose rate in the country.

And as Senator McCain pointed out, your predecessor talked about his inability to be able to intercept some of those traffickers because he didn't have the equipment and the resources to do that. Can you talk about what -- what you're doing currently to work with authorities in this country to intercept those drug traffickers?

TIDD:

I -- I will address the -- I suppose the southernmost part of that point...

SHAHEEN:

Right.

TIDD:

... and then I would defer to General Robinson to address the...

SHAHEEN:

Right.

TIDD:

... as it -- it comes closer to -- to our border but because we recognize that the shortfall in U.S. platforms available to conduct the detection and monitoring mission, that's one of the reasons why we have shifted our focus from -- exclusively on the commodity itself to a focus on the networks that engage in -- in the trafficking. Thinking that if we can focus on those networks and find the - the areas where -- where the networks overlap and then working with partner nations so that their law enforcement or their military or, in some cases, our U.S. federal law enforcement agencies have the authorities to be able to engage in that endgame.

We use our -- our abilities to build the picture and then to share that picture in a way that can be used by those with the authorities to -- to be able to conduct the disruption action. We think that being a -- building a stronger inter-agency team that we will be able to -- to apply pressure across the length and the breadth of the networks, recognizing that we may not directly touch the networks that are directly responsible for the movement of the opioids that are wreaking such havoc in your state but that any pressure that we apply across these networks will have a beneficial effect across the length and breadth.

ROBINSON:

So ma'am, you know, you heard Admiral Tidd talk about that -- one thing I think that is incredibly important for you and this committee to know that Admiral Tidd and I meet about every other month to sit down and discuss what he just talked about.

ROBINSON:

So his -- the information that he has and that he's sharing with the lead federal with his partner nations is the same information I'm sharing. So as we stood in Guatemala and the river that defined the -- the -- the barrier between Guatemala and Mexico, that information does not stop at that -- at that river.

And so, if you think about it then as a larger network, the things that he shares with my staff and my folks; whether it's intel sharing at -- at border points, whether it's building partnership capacity to help a partner nations or whether it's direct linkages with border patrol and DHS. That information that he gets, that I get, that I provide either to Lead Federal Agency or partner nations so that they can take of business at the endgame.

And so this relationship between the two of us is very strong and we have a third partner that we bring into it; General Tony Thomas, Special Operations Command; to talk to us what's happening overseas. To help inform that larger network.

SHAHEEN:

And the National Guard has a counter drug task force that has providing critical support to law enforcement in New Hampshire. Do you all work with the -- that counter drug task force with the Guard as well?

ROBINSON:

Ma'am, we work very closely with the Guard. And so the information that we get -- that I provide to lead federal agencies goes out to other agencies throughout the states.

SHAHEEN:

And when you -- when you and I met yesterday, and I appreciated the opportunity to sit down with you, one of the things we talked about was the northern border. And the fact that -- what -- what we have seen in New Hampshire is that there -- there are some drugs going back and forth across our northern border as well. And I think that's less well known.

ROBINSON:

Yes, ma'am. And -- and again I would say, as I mentioned yesterday, we had a very close relationship with the lead federal agencies in Canada as well with us. And so that information not just stops at our southern border, but also goes to our northern border to share with our partners there.

SHAHEEN:

Thank you. Just quickly, I'm almost out time. But I know you talked yesterday and again today in response to Senator Inhofe about sensors and kill vehicles and the need to continue with those programs. Is -- are there any other improvements that you think we should take in order to address missile defense, given North Korea's rising capabilities?

ROBINSON:

Ma'am, I think we're on a very good solid track where we're going and the strategy that we have today. Again, I would urge for a budget to have predictability so we can keep on that track.

SHAHEEN:

I agree. Thanks very much.

MCCAIN:

(OFF-MIKE)

ROUNDS:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral Tidd and General Robinson, first of all let me thank you both for your service to our country. General Robinson, on page 12 of your statement you say, "the increased standoff capability, low altitude and small radar signature of cruise missiles make defending against them a technical and operational challenge."

Yet on the very next sentence you say, "I am confident in the layered approach provided by our family of systems to conduct cruise missile defense." What is this layered family of systems that we will be using in cruise missile defense? And if you could describe those family members for me please.

ROBINSON:

Sir, I would tell you it comes on two approaches. If you look on the northern approach from Russia over Canada and Alaska, we are doing an analysis of alternatives to upgrade the radars that are there. So that we can be able to detect, track identifying, if necessary engage at ranges to defend Canada and the United States.

ROUNDS:

These are land-based radar systems?

ROBINSON:

Sir, right now they are. But what I have done from a requirements process is defined -- hey, I want to be able to do that at ranges to defend. I don't want to just, say, upgrade my radar. Because then you don't allow the people that think differently or different ways to look at that problem. So that's from the northern approach.

Now here, in the national capital region, is the first part where we have sensors and capability here in the national capital region. If I go back out and then I look at my F-16s with AESA radars and the ability to use them to be able to detect at longer ranges, we can do that and then...

ROUNDS:

These are found in block 50s?

ROBINSON:

Yes sir, I think it's block 50s. I know -- all I've asked for the requirement is to be AESA radars so we can be able to detect at ranges but, most importantly sir, to be able to identify at ranges, to be able to defend the national capital region.

And then the last part of the layer for phase one is to -- what kind of radar or what kind of capability can I get to be able to look at longer ranges out over the Eastern part of the United States and the -- and the ocean to be able to -- to detect at even longer -- so those are some of the layers that I talk about. As we go further, phase two and three is now more part of the country.

ROUNDS:

I understand. You didn't mention the F-15C models, do they play into the role in defending against the cruise missile threat?

ROBINSON:

The F-15s, yes sir, they play into defending here in the -- in the United States, yes sir.

ROUNDS:

My understanding is that there's a possibility that we'll be looking at perhaps reducing the number of F-15Cs due to the increase in cost of maintaining the structural integrity of that aircraft between now and the year 2020, is that figured into your plans?

ROBINSON:

Sir I -- from the conversations that I've had with the Air Force, which have been very small, I know that that's something they're looking at. Obviously my voice would come into this to make sure that we have enough capacity to defend the United States from an air threat.

ROUNDS:

What's the split between the number F-15s that you have available versus the current number of block 50 or the F-16s that have the appropriate radar in them today?

ROBINSON:

Sir, I don't have that number, I'll take it for the record and get back...

ROUNDS:

Would you please?

ROBINSON:

Yes, sir, I will.

ROUNDS:

I'm just curious, is the plan -- is there a plan in place to begin using F-35As in the middle of this for -- for this particular defense system?

ROBINSON:

Sir, I know as the Air Force brings the F-35s onboard that will be a conversation that we'll have, making sure that I have the right capability and the right capacity to defend in the air domain.

ROUNDS:

The reason that I ask is -- it appears to me that this is a -- this is one of the more serious threats that we have with -- with cruise missiles, air launched cruise missiles. Second part is -- is you've currently got F-15s that apparently there is some concern about their long term viability. Your F-16s, which you have right now, you've got block 30s, block 40s and some block 50s -- I understand.

ROBINSON:

Yes sir.

ROUNDS:

The block 40s, which we have in South Dakota, may very well be, if properly equipped with -- with the -- the appropriate radar may very well be stand in or at least be capable of handling part of that as the F-15s go on. I guess I'm getting back down to, is that part of the discussion that you're having or are we not that far along?

ROBINSON:

We're not that far along. The Air Force, I think, is just looking into that and as I can tell you sir, I will assure you, my voice will be a part of that conversation because the importance of defending in the air domain, the United States, and those are the capabilities that I us.

ROUNDS:

Thank you.

ROBINSON:

Yes sir.

ROUNDS:

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN:

(OFF MIKE)

PETERS:

Thank you Mr. Chairman and thank you to our witnesses, appreciate Admiral Tidd and General Robinson, appreciate your patriotism and your work in a very difficult job and you do it with distinction, thank you so much.

First, Admiral Tidd I want to -- to have you kind of elaborate a little more on a point that you brought up to a question that Senator Reed asked related to the U.S. Coast Guard. In addition to serving on this committee, I'm the Ranking Member of a subcommittee that oversees that Coast Guard and am very concerned, as I know you have expressed, with some potential budget cuts for the Coast Guard.

So I'd like you to elaborate a little more on what -- do I think that is a very powerful statement that you made that your navy has white hulls and orange stripes, as to the impact that the Coast Guard has. So certainly we need to protect their resources so they continue to execute that mission.

But I would like you to go a step further as to what additional resources do you think would be necessary for them to enhance their capabilities to support you? You've talked in your testimony about how of this maritime border is certainly one that we have to pay a great deal of attention to. And perhaps our discussion shouldn't be about defending funding for the Coast Guard, it should be about additional resources they need or could use to supplement the great work that you're doing now.

TIDD:

Well, Senator, I -- obviously I would defer to the expertise of the commandant of Coast Guard...

PETERS:

Sure.

TIDD:

In terms of -- of -- of building the plan that would be required. But as -- as I've said before, because of higher priority commitments for U.S. Navy warships in other parts of the world, the U.S. Coast Guard has -- has surged additional capacity, almost doubling the number of cutters devoted to the U.S. SOUTHCOM region. That's it.

I know that that is a challenging responsibility that they are shouldering. And so we were very concerned that we are already shorthanded in the number of ships that we have available on the

high seas in the Caribbean and the -- the Eastern Pacific to be able to deal with the known cases of -- of -- of movement on along the pathways.

And so my concern is that the Coast Guard be able to continue to -- to meet the -- the commitments that they have established.

PETERS:

Well, I appreciate that and and -- in your written testimony, you -- you've discussed as well the impact of your navy ships in the area. And you talk about exploring nontraditional alternatives to fill these requirements until more littoral combat ships are in the fleet.

Could you describe some of these nontraditional alternatives? And also explain how they may compare to the capabilities of the littoral combat ship?

TIDD:

I -- not having yet had the luxury of having a littoral combat ship down in our region I can't tell you exactly how it would compare. But to what we're trying to do is -- is sensors on other types of platforms that -- that -- that come down there to be able to share information. Working very closely with our partner nations so -- and ensuring that they are -- have the capability to be able to be out and and operate in the -- in the seas.

We have tremendous support provided by other countries that also have interest in the -- in the -- in the region. For instance of France, the Netherlands and -- and Canada all periodically provide warships that -- that contribute to that mission. But I very much look forward to -- to the arrival of the first littoral combat ships in our theater. I think they have capabilities that are ideally suited for the -- the theater that -- that we are talking about.

PETERS:

Very good.

And, General Robinson, also talking about Coast Guard assets; but in the area of responsibility that you have, which is the Arctic. And the receding ice and the opening up of those sea lane and the very significant Russian presence of that exists up there.

Could you speak a little bit about the importance of the U.S. Coast Guard in the Arctic region? And how assets certainly cannot be reduced. In fact, we should be thinking about having a -- a larger presence to counter a growing Russian presence.

ROBINSON:

Sir, I would tell you that the Coast Guard presence in the Arctic is very important. If you recall, last summer, the cruise ship Crystal Serenity that went through -- for the first time having a cruise

ship go through the Arctic it under -- you know talks about the need for the Coast Guard there in the Arctic. So I certainly support the Coast Guard and all their endeavors to be a part of.

PETERS:

Right, thank you very much.

MCCAIN:

(OFF-MIKE)

ERNST:

Thank you, Admiral. Thank you both for being here, Admiral Tidd, General Robinson, thank you so much for the great work that you're doing on behalf of -- of NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM.

ERNST:

Admiral Tidd, I'll start with you and want to thank you -- I see the -- the great state of Iowa has been able to provide yet a second sergeant major to SOUTHCOM, we're pleased that you're both here with us. I did appreciate meeting with you last week or last month, excuse me, we had a very good conversation and during that conversation you brought up the fact that you have seen more activities from the Russians, you mentioned that just a little bit earlier, as well as some other countries.

You stated that it may not be with a military bent but that there were some other activities that they were engaging in, can you enlighten us as to the types of activities you are seeing from the Russians and why that would be of a national security interest to us?

TIDD:

Thank you Senator, I -- we have seen the deployment of ships, particularly frequent deployment of intelligence collection ships that we know operate frequently on the East Coast of the United States and then spends time down in the -- in the Caribbean.

We've also seen, periodically, the deployment of long range aviation that comes down and -- and spends a bit of time down in our theater. But of probably greater long term concern is the very aggressive arm sales programs where Russia is down and talking with our traditional partners and attempting to displace the United States as a -- as the partner of choice. And then the part that I think is -- is most troubling, we see that they're engaged in a very aggressive misinformation campaign.

Basically peddling the story that the United States is not a reliable partner in Latin America, that we are not interested in the region and that we are -- are withdrawing from the region. It's troubling because as -- because of resource constraints that we have had and -- and the requirement for the

number of forces available in our theater is that has -- has declined, that plays directly into that narrative that -- that Russia has been -- has been peddling.

And so, it's -- it is -- these are relationships that we have with strong partners and it's just up to us to be able to -- to prove that are the partner of choice.

ERNST:

So not only do we need to maintain a presence there but we also need to reinforce our own message...

TIDD:

Absolutely.

ERNST:

... to those -- to those areas. And, Admiral Tidd, in February of 2017 the Associated Press reported that Trinidad and Tobago has become the largest per capita source of ISIS recruits in the Western Hemisphere. And according to the report, as many as 125 fighters have traveled from the island to ISIS controlled areas over the past four years. So are you concerned about the rise of ISIS in SOUTHCOM?

TIDD:

Senator, we're very concerned. There is, I think, a tendency often to think that ISIS is only present in the Middle East or North Africa and the reality is ISIS is present here in the Western Hemisphere.

You cited the case of foreign fighters that have gone over Iraq and Syria to fight, obviously we're very concerned about the return of those fighters. But what's become more troubling is an effort - - and active effort on the part of -- of ISIS to communicate to radicalize individuals to telling them, stay home and conduct attacks in your home countries against your countries and the United State and our interest in this region.

So, you cited Trinidad Tobago but that's not the only country where we know that there is a -- a presence of radicalized individuals to whom the ISIS message is very appealing and I think it's a - - it's an area that we have to pay close attention. Our counter-network approach that we are applying enables us to recognize that the -- this presence of ISIS in the theater when previously when we focused exclusively on a -- on commodities.

It was -- oftentimes it was -- we focused more on the -- on the criminal networks and -- and did not do pay attention to the fact that there are also terrorist networks as well.

ERNST:

Yes. So those terrorist networks, they understand that those pathways that are being used by various cartels and so forth...

TIDD:

Yeah.

ERNST:

Moving goods into the NORTHCOM area. Do you think those could be exploited then by those terrorist organizations?

TIDD:

ISIS in the -- one of the recent issues of Dabiq Magazine communicates directly in English language to radicalized individuals to attempt to exploit those pathways into the United States. So we have to assume that they're going to try.

ERNST:

OK. Those that are -- are fighting in Iraq and Syria, how are they able to reach back into the Caribbean and radicalized the folks there? What do you think is the primary means of communication?

TIDD:

I think it's Internet. It's by cyber means.

ERNST:

And cyber something that you believe we should pay attention to, then.

TIDD:

I -- I -- I think we all recognize that it's a -- it is a domain that must bear increasing attention.

ERNST:

Absolutely. I appreciate that. And then, do you think we are doing enough to counter ISIS's recruiting efforts in the SOUTHCOM region?

TIDD:

That is probably the -- the -- you know, one of the areas of -- of greatest work that we are engaged in order to work with our partner nations. And in our discussions with them, they now recognize that -- that -- that they must pay attention to the radicalization phenomenon.

We were all -- I think had a wake up call with the attacks that occurred in Paris and Brussels, but also in San Bernardino and in Orlando. That the individuals can become radicalized and -- and can conduct horrific attacks. And -- and so it's up to all of us to work together, exchange information and attempt to remove the -- the conditions that lead radicalization.

ERNST:

Thank you, I appreciate that. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MCCAIN:

Before I call on Senator King, I just want to make it clear to everyone, Admiral Tidd, if we are really serious about addressing this issue; the flow of drugs into the United States of America. That Senator Shaheen has described as so dramatically affecting her state and, frankly, states all, that we need to provide the assets. It's not something that's a mystery.

Is that -- is that right? If we want it to be far more effective, you would need the assets in order to do that. Is that correct?

TIDD:

Senator, that's correct.

MCCAIN:

Senator King.

KING:

Thank you for asking my first question, Mr. -- Mr. Chairman.

Senator -- Admiral Tidd, your -- your opening statement was -- was very powerful and -- and -- and also disturbing. Powerful because you describe this in terms of an attack. And that's what it is. It's an attack on our country and to -- to -- to talk about the numbers, since we've been sitting here, four people have died of overdoses in United States. It's about four an hour. 37,000 people a year, one a day in my state of Maine.

It is absolutely unacceptable to know that that's happening and to couple it with your testimony that you're only able to interdict 25 percent of the shipments you know of because of a lack of resources in the Coast Guard.

And couple that with a proposed 15 percent cut in the Coast Guard budget, I just don't know how we can possibly turn a blind eye to the implications of this. Your -- your -- I just want you to

reiterate, your -- your -- you -- your testimony was that you are only able to interdict 25 percent of shipments you know of because of a lack of essentially Coast Guard assets. Is that correct?

TIDD:

Senator, it's -- it's due to a lack of -- of any surface assets; whether it's U.S. Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, partner nation. I mean it's -- it is a shortfall of platforms that are capable of conducting intercepts on tracks that we know are out there.

KING:

And so a cut in the Coast Guard budget which would further constrain the -- the provision of those assets would not be in the national interest would it?

TIDD:

Senator, all I will say is I'm absolutely dependent on the Coast Guard to conduct the -- the operations that we are able to conduct.

KING:

And there aren't sufficient assets today, is that correct?

TIDD:

That's correct.

KING:

Thank you. Your answer was very diplomatic.

General Robinson, let's go to missile defense. You testified you have confidence in the missile defense structure that we have today but we don't live in a static world. The -- the North Koreans, just in the last few months have gone from liquid fuel to solid fuel which drastically cuts our warning time, are we continuing to develop our capability and what are the gaps, where should we be focusing in order to strengthen our missile defense system?

ROBINSON:

Sir, thank you for that. As we look at -- as you so rightly said, our lack of indications and warning is increasing and so as we look to -- in the future, how do we ensure not just that but then when something launches to make sure that we have the right radar in the right place.

KING:

And discrimination in radar is also...

ROBINSON:

That's exactly what -- you took the words right out of my mouth, I was going to talk about the ability to ensure that we have discrimination as we move to the future. So when you talk about our radars, it's to ensure that we have discrimination and ensure that we have an architecture that today is terrestrial but tomorrow -- maybe even more in the future will move to space.

And so those are the things that we need to continue looking as we move to the future is ensuring we've got the right radar, at the right place, at the right capability and with reliable kill vehicles.

KING:

So if you were -- if you were granted a billion dollars to spend in this area, do I take it that radar and particularly the discrimination radar would be where you would go first?

ROBINSON:

That's where I would go first sir.

KING:

Thank you. General, do you have any idea, off hand, an approximate number of Russian icebreakers that they have available in the Arctic region?

ROBINSON:

No sir, I don't. But I know they have more than we do.

KING:

If I said it was a low of 17 and a high of 40, would that sound reasonable?

ROBINSON:

Yes sir.

KING:

And how many icebreakers do we have available?

ROBINSON:

I believe it's one.

KING:

One and a half if you count...

ROBINSON:

OK, 1.5.

KING:

But the one that we have actually transits between Antarctica and the Arctic, is that not correct?

ROBINSON:

Yes sir.

KING:

And -- so the -- the --and the icebreaker is the essential infrastructure of the Arctic region, it's the road builder in effect.

ROBINSON:

Sir.

KING:

And this is a place where we really are in a serious deficit situation and the prior administration proposed the additional building of one icebreaker but that's still a long way off but do see this as an important priority, even those this would not be a naval asset but probably be a Coast Guard asset but it is one that is crucial to our future in the Arctic, is it not?

ROBINSON:

Sir I -- I absolutely support, you know, the Coast Guards endeavors to bring more icebreakers to the arctic, as you suggested, it is a pathway for them.

KING:

And one of the things that you're seeing in your command is a significant Russian buildup of military assets along their shore of the Arctic?

ROBINSON:

Sir, I've seen their buildup but what I've also seen is Russian long -- long range aviation that comes east of the Urals that often does out of area flights that are in my AOR.

KING:

And that's another threat that we -- we talked prior about the North Korean threat but that's another threat that is -- is particularly that's the NORAD mission, is it not?

ROBINSON:

Yes sir, you're exactly correct, defending the air space, both for the United States and Canada from the air domain.

KING:

And final short question, we have a seamless cooperation and a agreement, arrangement and working relationship with the Canadians in terms of NORAD?

ROBINSON:

Absolutely, sir. It's a binational command.

KING:

Thank you.

ROBINSON:

Yes, sir.

KING:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN:

(OFF-MIKE)

PERDUE:

Thank you, Chairman. And I -- I really appreciate you bringing both these combat commanders together.

I -- I have a particular concern about what Russia is doing in our hemisphere. I have a quick question for both of you. When you look at what Russia's bracket -- how -- how they've bracketed Europe with their facilities in Murmansk (ph), Kaliningrad, Crimea -- now Tartus (ph) and -- and Latakia, I see them attempting to the same thing here.

So the Arctic, which was just mentioned, it looks like to me they've open up a new Arctic command, they've got four Arctic BCTs they've now assigned up there. They've got 16 deporter ports north of the Arctic, 40 icebreakers as you said, plus 11 more on order. And we're down to one and a half icebreakers.

I'd like to know what your assessment -- first of all, you agree with that assessment, General? And what is our -- and -- and -- that you can talk about here, what's our tactical response to that buildup in the Arctic?

ROBINSON:

So, sir, I would agree with your assessment. What I would tell you about response, I'll parse it in a couple of different bins. First, as we watch the Russians come in east of the Urals, in the air domain, I ensure on my NORAD side that I have the right capability and capacity with adequate indications and warnings to make sure that we can defend Canada and United States; specifically Alaska.

So in the air domain I -- I do that. From a policy perspective, at the end of 2016, the department policy put out an Arctic strategy. And that Arctic strategy talked about ensuring security, promoting safety and promoting defense cooperation.

(CROSSTALK)

PERDUE:

I'm sorry, do we have a Arctic Command...

ROBINSON:

No.

PERDUE:

... today? We don't?

ROBINSON:

No, sir.

PERDUE:

Thank you.

ROBINSON:

No. My job is the commander of Northern Command is to provide -- I'm the -- our advocate for Arctic capabilities, that's what I do. But I'm in the process of writing a strategic estimate for the Arctic; where I will be able to talk about theater security cooperation, talk about capabilities and - and then kind of put my role out there with...

(CROSSTALK)

PERDUE:

Will you share that with the committee?

ROBINSON:

I will...

(CROSSTALK)

ROBINSON:

... when we're done. In fact, we should probably be done this fall and I would be happy to share that estimate with you.

PERDUE:

Thank you.

Admiral, in -- in the Southern Command, likewise -- in this is not a recent development. And it looks to me -- it's very obvious what Russia's trying to do here. They're bracketing us, they're already are playing our -- our elections the same way they're playing in cyber warfare in Eastern Europe.

In Latin America between 2000 -- 2001 and '13, Russia sold Latin America \$15 billion worth of arms. That's about 40 percent of what were sold in the region. When I look at what they're doing with Nicaragua particularly -- well between 2008 and 2011, I didn't know this. If you look at what Russia sold -- they've sold more than 3,000 surface-to-air missiles to the region just in that five year -- or that three year period.

In the last couple of years, particularly in -- since '14, in Nicaragua alone 50 combat tanks, an established ground station for Russian satellite network. And -- and they are -- they're talking about Russian-made fighter jets now to -- to add to their fleet. And as was reported last week, in TAS (ph), they're announcing joint military drills together in Nicaragua. I find this to be very destabilizing.

Do you agree with that assessment? And if so, what is our response to Russia specifically in Nicaragua and Venezuela, relative to the fact that we've got troubled governments there anyway?

How do we manage the diplomatic development and -- and defense efforts in that area, specifically related to what Russia's doing?

TIDD:

Well, Senator, I think the -- the first responsibly we have is to -- is to pay attention to it and not to ignore it. And to ensure that, if we're concerned about what Russia is engaged in an Eastern Europe that we pay at least as much attention to what they're engaged in our own hemisphere.

As you point, out they've got historic relationships going back to the era of the Soviet Union with Nicaragua and with -- with Cuba. They've develop them with -- with Venezuela, they're one of the largest suppliers of -- of high capability arms to Venezuela. So -- so it's very troubling that as -- as they establish themselves and become the -- I suppose the -- both the arms supplier, but also having greater influence in those two countries, right close to -- to -- to our -- our own nation, that out to be a matter of some concern. We have continued to pay attention to it.

Our relationships with the countries in Latin America is -- is strong. But they are relationships that must be tended to. We must continue to engage and we must continue to demonstrate, not just by words, but also by -- by our action, our engagement that -- that we are reliable partners.

PERDUE:

Thank you both.

Chairman, General Milley this week said that the a lack of a budget and the -- and the potential danger of going to a C.R. bordered on professional malpractice. And I want you two combat commanders to know at least one senator here agrees with that 100 percent.

I don't fully understand what a C.R. does to limit your -- tie your hands in terms of moving money back and forth, but I take you at your word that it totally limits you from doing that. That to me is more dangerous than the total number.

And so for one, I'm standing firm with the chairman here that this is the most dangerous thing that we're facing right now. General Mattis said earlier this year that the debt was the greatest threat to national security. Well here's where the rubber meets the road. And I want to pledge to both of you guys my personal full support to do whatever we can to make sure that we avoid that debacle.

Thank you, Chairman.

MCCAIN:

(OFF-MIKE)

WARREN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Admiral Tidd and General Robinson, for being here and for your leadership.

I just quickly want to underline a point that was raised by Senator King and Senator Reed. And that is about the importance of our nonmilitary foreign assistance and other civilian instruments of our national power to your missions.

So is it accurate to say that you work with the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security and other civilian agencies in efforts to maintain security and stability in your regional areas of responsibility?

General Robinson.

ROBINSON:

Yes, ma'am.

WARREN:

Thank you.

And Admiral Tidd.

TIDD:

Absolutely.

WARREN:

You know, the budget proposal put out by the Trump administration calls for about a 29 percent cut to the State Department and significant cuts to FEMA and other domestic agencies. I just want to ask in general, would funding cuts to agencies that conduct diplomacy, provide disaster relief and perform other civilian functions, make your job easier or make your job more difficult?

General Robinson.

ROBINSON:

It would make it more difficult, ma'am.

WARREN:

And Admiral Tidd.

TIDD:

More difficult.

WARREN:

Thank you. I agree.

Admiral Tidd, I want to turn back if I can to something you said last year. In your posture statement, you expressed concern about economic conditions and persistent threats to people's safety that caused the mass migration of unaccompanied children from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras -- back in -- in 2014. Are you still concerned about these underlying factors?

TIDD:

We think that we must continue to pay attention to the -- the push factors. And -- and insecurity in Central America is a -- a significant push factor.

WARREN:

Are -- are you worried about gangs and other criminal networks that take advantage of these conditions to be able to recruit and to stay in business?

TIDD:

Yes, we are.

WARREN:

And do you think that lack of security and economic opportunity provide an opening for some of our adversaries to exert influence in these areas?

TIDD:

I think we'd -- we're seeing in a number of -- of countries in Central America.

WARREN:

So let me ask you, Admiral Tidd, what more should the United States government be doing to address these underlying conditions?

TIDD:

I think the -- the efforts to provide some limited resources that are available to -- in the case Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, to -- to -- for them to develop a regional solution to a regional problem is very important.

It -- they -- a bar -- a very high bar -- a condition has been set for them to -- to receive those resources. But I think we must be realistic and we must help them achieve those -- those standards. Because it's ultimately in all of our interests that they achieve them.

WARREN:

And this is something you're working on now, actively?

TIDD:

Senator, it is.

WARREN:

I -- I appreciate it. And I also want to note that in your posture statement last year you thanked Congress for funding the State Department and USAID to implement the U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America to help address these root causes of migration. You know, there's been a lot of talk about how to address unlawful immigration.

By itself, the tallest wall in the world won't help us if we choke off funding for nonmilitary strategies to address the root causes of migration from Central America. And I think that would be bad for regional stability and for our security.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN:

(OFF-MIKE)

WICKER:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral Tidd, you state that the southern border should be the last line of defense, not the first. Given the diminishing Navy presence dedicated to Southern Command, is the Coast Guard an increasingly valuable partner as a forward line of defense?

TIDD:

Sir, you know, we also talk about there's a -- a -- an eight a third border, and that's the maritime border. And that -- up through the Caribbean. And the Coast Guard right now is the principal maritime -- U.S. maritime force of that's present in the Caribbean.

WICKER:

And I think they do a good job for you. Your testimony states that SOUTHCOM lacks the forces necessary to interdict about 75 percent of identified and validated drug trafficking targets. As successful in interdiction requires two things. An endgame asset, a boat or a helicopter to stop the trafficker, and law enforcement authority to make the arrest.

Does the Coast Guard's new National Security Cutter have these two attributes?

TIDD:

Senator, they do. The National Security Cutters are a superb platform, very capable. And, frankly, their -- their presence -- they -- they also have the sea keeping abilities to operate in the -- in the Eastern Pacific, further offshore where the vast majority of the -- the trafficking is occurring today. And so they're a very valuable platforms.

WICKER:

The newest National Security Cutter recently seized 16 tons of cocaine worth \$400 million. In fact, the Coast Guard has reportedly seized about 100 metric tons of cocaine, about \$3 billion worth, since its first operational deployment. Do these National Security Cutters arguably pay for themselves in this regard?

TIDD:

Senator, I -- I would never turn down an additional National Security Cutter operating in the SOUTHCOM region.

WICKER:

One other thing, you -- your testimony states that Southern Command is dedicated to becoming a platform for experimentation and innovation. And this includes unmanned platforms and -- and advanced sensors. So tell us about that. Expand on -- on that testimony if you will, sir.

TIDD:

Senator, I -- in our efforts to -- to find new and innovative ways to get after the -- the resourcing problem, we -- we have aggressively discussed with services and with the research and development organizations that we would be an ideal region to come and test out new technologies. Perhaps new technologies that are being developed for a different theater, for a different problem set, but that we have a meaningful operational mission.

We can provide real feedback. And that the my commitment as a combatant commander is to ensure that we eliminate any bureaucratic impediments to being able to bring them down and operate them. Test them out for period of time and provided that feedback.

WICKER:

Well, thank you very much, Admiral. And I would like to invite you down to the Gulf Coast of the Stennis Space Center to see the cutting-edge research being done at the Naval research lab. And - with regard to unmanned underwater vehicles. And also the Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command operating a large fleet of UUVs. You might want to come down and visit us. And perhaps you could leverage these installations as you push for new innovations.

TIDD:

Thank you very much, Senator.

WICKER:

Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

DONNELLY:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you both for being here today. I appreciate you taking the time to come by my office, both of you, to talk about the heroin crisis is impacting Indiana and so many other states that we've heard from other members here today.

It may be the single biggest threat to the safety and security of the people of my state and I'm convinced we're -- we need to do everything, everything we can to stop it. This is a whole of government effort, we heard the Chairman talking about the 75 percent figure and we've been talking about that for a while and is as we look at this -- in Indiana in 2015 we lost more people to opioid and heroin deaths than in car crashes, which forever was the biggest thing and now this has changed it.

And the heroin is coming in from Mexico and it's coming in across borders that we actively monitor, it's not coming through the desert or over hills or over here are over there, it's coming through -- through our cross points, and -- so as we look at this on Admiral Tidd, we talk about the 25 percent figure, that we catch 25 percent of what's coming in. The other 75 percent are killing my friends and neighbors.

We -- we have lost so many families, children and brothers and sisters and so what I'd love to see is, as the chairman was talking about, a plan. Here's -- here's if we had all the resources, how much resources do you need? How much time will it take? What will we do? How do we stop it? Can you put that together for us?

TIDD:

Senator, we'll be happy to work with our partners in in Northern Command. I think the -- as we discussed in your office though, the challenge we have is we're not going to interdict our way out of this crisis. This is going to be a -- a -- a challenge that will require a significant amount of work on demand reduction side of the problem as well as on what...

(CROSSTALK)

MCCAIN:

Can I interrupt Admiral, we're not asking you to address the demand side, but if you're capable of stopping some of the flow, let's -- let's have that. Sorry Senator Donnelly.

DONNELLY:

That's OK sir.

TIDD:

Yes, Senator.

ROBINSON:

Sir, if I could add, as we discussed in your office too, you know, all the support that we give to Department of Homeland Security on the border is incredibly important. Whether it's Intel sharing or providing detection and monitoring to -- to help them do their jobs there on the border.

DONNELLY:

And I know you know the real world effects. Let me tell you just a couple. Have a small town in southern Indiana, town of 4200 people, the opioid crisis has hit it so hard and this is a few years ago, 174 cases of HIV in a town of 4,200 people.

In another small town -- or small county, rural county, we had a shipment of heroin come in from Ohio. It was laced with fentanyl, which is 10 times more powerful than the heroin. In a two hour period in one county we had 10 overdoses and one death in a two hour period from this. It is -- and as Senator Shaheen and others of said, this is not just an Indiana problem, this is a nationwide problem that is eating us alive and I always look and I go this might've been the young person would've cured cancer, who would've found that the key to ending diabetes.

And so if we can stop that other 75 percent, and we can, and it's a resource issue. That's why am so eager to get the plan of if -- if we gave you the keys to the kingdom so to speak. You have the resources, you have everything you need. So how do we do this? Because every day as we're sitting here right now it's coming through the checkpoints.

General Robinson, I wanted to ask you about Mexico's ability and willingness to work with us on this in -- in a collaboration. In your written testimony, you indicated Mexico is growing increasingly capable of helping us. What's your assessment of the capability and the will of the Mexican government and security forces to work with us on combating this?

ROBINSON:

Sir, I -- I will tell you, having been on Mexico's southern border talking to their senior leadership about their strategy on the southern border, in addition to working very closely on the border with their military; on the willingness of the Mexican military and them to work with us is very, very great. I've been very impressed.

DONNELLY:

Well, as long -- the more you can send that message to them, the stronger and better off we'll be. Because this really is a national emergency.

DONNELLY:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN:

Mr. Cotton.

COTTON:

Thank you, Admiral Tidd and General Robinson, for your testimony day and for your continuing service to our country.

Admiral Tidd, how different is Russia's activities in Latin America today from the Soviet Union's activities there in the Cold War, if different at all?

TIDD:

I think that it's -- it's certainly none not ideologically motivated like it was during the Cold War. It's -- it's motivated for economic reasons and for the ability to -- to gain influence with countries in the region.

COTTON:

To what extent is Russia, and for that matter other hostile powers, in the old -- old world aiming to tie down the United States, our attention and our resources in the new world so that we cannot project power and influence into the old world?

ROBINSON:

So, sir, I would say if you look -- specifically, as you mentioned, Russia. As they've increased their capability and capacity, as they continue to work west of the Urals, the thing that I watch is them coming east of the Urals. And so, on occasions, they will come over and power project or do out of area operations.

And so that makes me then, as the commander of NORAD, increase my levels of responsiveness and put force structure in the right place at the right time should they power project.

TIDD:

And I think, if I could add to that, it's in -- certainly Latin America, they don't have vital strategic interests. And so they see these as opportunities to take advantage of at least a perception of the United States being focused in other crises in other parts of the world.

COTTON:

Speaking of countries without vital strategic interest in Latin America, let's turn to Iran.

Admiral Tidd, you state on page nine of your written testimony, that "with the easing of economic sanctions Iran may be seeking to rebuild its relationships in the region. Tehran uses cooperative technology, economic and diplomatic interests is the centerpiece of its regional diplomacy. Although on the surface it portrays its actions as innocuous, Iran could exploit its cultural centers to build networks which could be leveraged to extend its influence and advance its interests."

To your knowledge, are there deep cultural, historical, religious ties between Latin Americans and Persian Shiites?

TIDD:

No, Senator, not long standing.

COTTON:

Didn't think so. You say earlier, in your written testimony, on page four and five; Hezbollah members, facilitators, supporters engage in licit and illicit activities in support of the organization moving weapons, cash and other contraband to raise funds and build Hezbollah's infrastructure in the region.

Hezbollah is the terrorist organization based in Lebanon a cat's paw of Iran. To you knowledge do Arab Shiites have deep cultural and historical ties with Latin America?

TIDD:

I -- what I would observe is that -- that Hezbollah has been present in this region is small pockets scattered throughout the region for decades. They've been actively engaged largely in criminal activities to raise funds to support the terrorist activities of Hezbollah in other parts of the world.

But we also recognize that it was -- Hezbollah was responsible for the two terrible terroristic attacks on Jewish sites in the Israeli consular center in Argentina back in the 1990s. So -- so they've been present here and we view them as probably the -- the most dangerous of the -- of the terrorist groups present in this region.

COTTON:

I want to zero in on phrase in that statement, moving weapons cache and other contraband to raise funds, what kind of other contraband is Hezbollah moving in Latin America?

TIDD:

I think one of the more interesting one is cars. Basically movement of -- of cars to raise money, to launder money in order to -- to develop the resources to fund Hezbollah activities in the Middle East.

COTTON:

What about drugs?

TIDD:

They -- yes sir, drugs also.

COTTON:

So Hezbollah, a declared terrorist organization, that operates in the Middle East, is responsible, in part, for the drug flow in Latin America that has the impact that you've hear senators on this dioce talk about today, killing Americans in our hometowns?

TIDD:

I -- I would say they are one of a number. They certainly are not the largest but they play a contributing role.

COTTON:

Thank you.

MCCAIN:

(OFF MIKE)

KAINE:

Thank you Mr. Chair and thanks to our witnesses for your testimony.

Want to ask about, just follow up on a couple of points that Senator Cotton was making. General Robinson, we talked, had a good visit in my office yesterday and you talked about the flows of drugs on the seam between NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM as sort of a system of systems, we

have to look at it as networks and systems and if -- if these distribution networks can bring drugs here, they could bring human trafficking, they could potentially get people into the United States -- terrorists into the United States.

They could bring weapons of mass destruction, biological agents and is that how you both kind of look at this challenge that -- it's not just -- interdiction of drugs is really important but also, it's important to disrupt these networks because they could also do us harm in other ways.

ROBINSON:

Yes sir. As we discussed it's the importance of illuminating that network, understanding what's on it and then whatever that commodity is making sure that the information for the customer of the commodity gets it so that they can finish whatever activity they're doing, so your point is exactly right.

And that's why it's incredibly important that Admiral Tidd and I, and our staffs, share information because, again, it just doesn't stop at the river.

KAINE:

And -- and, let's just focus on the commodity -- there's all kinds of commodities we could worry about but just the commodity of the drug trade, Admiral Tidd you've talked about this, you know, 25 percent of what you know you can stop and if you had more assets you could stop more and I'm all for that.

So Coast Guard, military assets to stop more but let's drill down on this. If you had enough assets to try to stop everything you knew about but there was still a significant demand for drug in the United States, there would still be drugs that get to the United States, correct?

TIDD:

Yes, Senator, unfortunately I believe that to be true. And these networks are very adaptive and so they will -- if the -- if the price is right they will work very, very hard to work around the -- the bars that we try and put in their place. So it's -- it -- it is a dynamic problem that we'll continuously have to work at.

KAINE:

Is -- is there anything you can do within your military lane, you know, that would bring down drug demand? Is it that other parts of our government?

TIDD:

I -- I'm not aware, at least not in USSOUTHCOM.

KAINE:

Yeah. So that's other parts of our government. So if we're going to deal with this significant national security issue, we ought to be funding the interdiction efforts to the degree that you talk about. But if we don't do anything on the demand side we're going to continue to see the national security problem. And -- and ultimately this is about the budget.

I mean in the -- in the submitted budget there's not only a proposed cut to the Coast Guard, there's \$100 million reduction of funds to SAMHSA the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration. There's dramatic cuts to CDBG funds, which are often used by community drug prevention, drug treatment programs. And so this is an example of how a defense budget, SOUTHCOM, fits together with a non-defense budget Coast Guard, which is under DOT. It's not part of the -- it's part of non-defense discretionary. SAMHSA's part of non-defense discretionary. CDBG's funds, part of non-defense discretionary.

So as we look at the sequester. There are so many things that are in the non-defense discretionary budget that are really about our defense. And if we're not wise in those investments, we're going to continue to have this challenge of drugs flowing south to north and potentially creating networks that can move other commodities as well. Did either of you disagree with that?

TIDD:

Senator, what I -- I would just observe is that if -- if somehow you can wave your hand and the drugs disappeared overnight, these same threat networks would engage in other activities in order to preserve their power and their access to resources. So that's why we focus on the networks. We think it's -- it's the -- we've got to be able to bring pressure to bear on the networks.

KAINE:

I -- the chair and ranking on this committee have been so eloquent, you know, really, since I got here to the Senate about the foolishness of the sequester. And I understand why was put in place in a vote in the summer of 2011 and then it went -- went active March 1, 2013. But it was put in place at a time of a political reality where the -- there was significant Republican majority in one House and then two, but a Democratic president.

So it was going to be kind of a budgetary check. I would just argue the GOP now has all the levers; White House and both Houses. These non-defense expenditures of the kind that we're talking about; Coast Guard, SAMHSA funding; could help us deal with the drug problem. They're really important for national security.

I think the time is just to get rid of the caps -- not just lift the caps on Defense and then keep capping non-defense. Just lift the caps on both and let everybody make the case for what we need to interdict or make the case for what we need to bring down the demand on drugs. And especially with power all in the hands of one party right now, there's no danger that the Dems would sort of roll the majority on the -- on the budgetary side.

But I think lifting the budgetary cap on defense without doing it on non-defense means we're going to hurt an awful lot of priorities that are in the non-defense side that actually are -- directly contribute to some of these national security challenges that we're talking about. One other quick question, activity of China in SOUTHCOM to follow up on -- on Senator Cotton, he asked really a good questions about activities of China? Military activities?

TIDD:

I would say right now that the -- the activity is largely economic in nature. The military focused activities; they are very aggressively engaged in an IMET like program. Where they will seek to bring senior military leaders from -- from throughout the region to -- to Beijing for all expense paid trips.

TIDD:

And it's a -- again, its an opportunity to influence the -- the region and to displace the United States as the partner of choice in Latin America.

KAINE:

Thank you.

Thanks Mr. Chair.

MCCAIN:

(OFF MIKE)

SULLIVAN:

Thank you Mr. Chairman and appreciate the witnesses' testimony, I think you're seeing this as helpful.

I think it's as much important to this committee as it is to all of you, some bipartisan consensus on some key issues. A lot of us -- my state of Alaska is also dealing with the opioid problem in a massive way. There's concern about the Coast Guard's budget, I chair the subcommittee on the commerce committee that oversees the Coast Guard.

I can tell you -- it's clear to me that Secretary Kelly doesn't agree with cutting the Coast Guard's budget so we're all going to work together on that and I think it's a seam, in some ways, between this committee and the commerce committee because the Coast Guard is a branch of the U.S. military and it's a very important branch of the U.S. military.

So I think a lot of us are concerned on that and then you've seen a lot of concern and interest in the Arctic, not just coming from the senator from Alaska but bipartisan group of senators are

concerned about that so, General Robinson, you are the -- you are the advocate for the Arctic in terms of capabilities, there's a lot of talk about icebreakers. We have really one and a half, Russians have 40, building 13 more, Senator Perdue talked a lot about that. Have you actually been on one of the icebreakers that we have?

ROBINSON:

No sir, I haven't.

SULLIVAN:

So I was this weekend. The Polar Star, which is the heavy icebreaker, and the Healy which is the medium icebreaker. And I want to mention -- and it's -- again I'm not sure which jurisdiction it is in terms of committees, but they're shameful -- shameful.

The Polar Star was built in the 70s with technologies from the 60s and, as Senator King mentioned, it deploys down to Antarctica -- we should never, never allow the men and women who serve in the U.S. military to deploy on such a bucket -- I mean this ship is a joke and it's dangerous and I encourage you, as the advocate for the Arctic, to go out and look at what our men and women, who volunteer, deploy on. These guys have to go on bay to get parts for this ship. It's shameful.

We should not have the men and women of the Coast Guard deploying on such a unseaworthy vessel and we need to do something about it. You mentioned the new strategy on the Arctic, it talks about FONOPs, which I think is important, do you think we have any remote capability of conducting FONOPs if the Russians try to say block off sea transportation routes or block off access to resource development?

All of which, I guarantee at some point they're going to try and test us on -- that's why they're building up so much capacity. Do we have any kind of capacity right now to conduct a FONOP that would try to push back on Russian aggression, build up in the Arctic?

ROBINSON:

Sir, we have discussed that briefly but I haven't taken it to the next level of discussion, but I...

SULLIVAN:

I think the answer's no but that's my view having been out there but do -- do you have an answer on that?

ROBINSON:

Sir we have discussed it briefly but we haven't taken it to the next level of discussion. I -- I do watch where Russia -- Russia ships are each and every day, I can tell you that.

SULLIVAN:

Well, it's one of these things, we put out a strategy, it's the new DOD strategy, we say we're going to do this and my view we don't have even the remote capability to do this. And when we have a strategy that says we're going to do something, we don't have the capability to actually do it, it undermines U.S. credibility in the world and, lord knows, we need to get credibility back in our foreign policy and national security.

Let me talk about missile defense. Do you agree that the threat to the homeland is increasing almost daily?

ROBINSON:

I think that Kim Jong-un very much wants to reach out and touch the homeland.

SULLIVAN:

So General Hyten said February 11th was a real, real important date -- a bad date with regard to the security of the Continental United States and Kim Jong-un's capability because they tested solid fuel rockets. I'm not convinced at all.

As a matter of fact, I don't think we have -- I think we need to do a lot more with regard to missile defense. Do you agree with that?

ROBINSON:

Sir, I -- given the budget, where we are today in today's budget and the strategy that we have of making our sensors better and making our kill vehicles better is the right strategy. I think if we have a different budget then we can have a different stress...

SULLIVAN:

So let me ask you the question without your reference to the budget. Do we need -- do -- given the increasing threat, which everybody sees, given the likelihood -- not the likelihood. The certainty that within one, two, three, four years Kim Jong-un is going to be able to reach us with an intercontinental ballistic nuclear missile. Don't worry about the budget, just give me your military answer.

Do you think we've done enough to -- are we -- are you satisfy where we are on missile defense right now for our nation?

ROBINSON:

Yes, sir. I am.

SULLIVAN:

OK. I'm not in word and we're -- we need to do a lot, lot more given this threat is can be on our shores. He's going to have the capability in nuke cities in the lower 48 at some point in the future. We know that. And I don't think we have -- we've done enough on missile defense and I think we need to do a lot more.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN:

(OFF-MIKE)

GRAHAM:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Robinson, if we did a C.R., would it substantially hurt your capability to defend the homeland from such attacks?

ROBINSON:

Sir, as you know as a -- as a consumer of the service's capabilities, the U.S. Air Force -- the chief testified yesterday about being down 1,000 pilots. I need trained and ready and qualified pilots to defend our airspace. If you look at things that we're doing to delay on maintenance, and AWACS being one of those things to delay maintenance, I need E-3 airborne also to help defend...

(CROSSTALK)

GRAHAM:

So a C.R. would be hurtful?

ROBINSON:

Yes, sir.

GRAHAM:

If we went back into sequestration next year, would that be disastrous?

ROBINSON:

Yes, sir.

GRAHAM:

Same for you, Admiral.

TIDD:

Sir, the services are already challenged provide resources for SOUTHCOM. And so anything that decreased the available resources is only going to make it -- the matter worse.

GRAHAM:

That would include a C.R. and sequestration?

TIDD:

I understand, yes, sir.

GRAHAM:

OK. How many ships do you need to cover your theater? In a -- not a perfect world, but in a better world.

TIDD:

We -- we've had a long standing requirement for a combination of medium and -- and high endurance platforms for as many as 23 service combatants and -- and accompanying aircraft.

GRAHAM:

How many do you have now?

TIDD:

On a -- on any given day, probably about six.

GRAHAM:

So do you think that the time they did the survey for 23, things have gotten better or worse in terms of the theater?

TIDD:

Sir the -- the -- in that particular regard, they are worse.

GRAHAM:

OK, so you got six ships. A long time ago you said you needed 23 and things are worse now than they were when you said you need 23. OK.

So General Robinson, let's get back to North Korea. Do you believe that it is the intention of the -  
- the regime to develop a ICBM that can hit the homeland?

ROBINSON:

Yes, sir.

GRAHAM:

Do you believe it's just a matter time until they achieve that capability? Unless something changes.

ROBINSON:

Yes, sir.

GRAHAM:

Do you believe it's just a matter of time until they can miniaturize a nuclear weapon to put on top  
of the ICBM?

ROBINSON:

In my discussions with General Hyten, yes sir.

GRAHAM:

OK. So I guess there's two ways to deal with that threat, never let the missile program mature to  
the point it can hit the homeland, that's one, is that correct?

ROBINSON:

Yes, sir.

GRAHAM:

The other would be to have a missile defense system that could knock it down?

ROBINSON:

Yes sir.

GRAHAM:

What do you prefer?

ROBINSON:

I prefer both.

GRAHAM:

I agree.

(LAUGHTER)

That's like the best answer anybody could give. Do we have both?

ROBINSON:

Today we have exactly what we need to defend the United States of America against North Korea.

GRAHAM:

So if a missile were launched from North Korea in the next year we could knock it down?

ROBINSON:

Yes sir.

GRAHAM:

OK. Do you agree with me, it's better not to let them have that missile?

ROBINSON:

Yes sir.

GRAHAM:

OK. So, in terms of homeland defense, what's the biggest threat to the homeland -- starting with North Korea and kind of listing the threats...

(CROSSTALK)

ROBINSON:

So I would...

GRAHAM:

... that you see.

ROBINSON:

Yes sir, I worry about North Korea as we were just discussing from a ballistic missile defense perspective. When I look at Kin Jong-un and his lack of indication and warning as General Hyten talked about the other day...

GRAHAM:

Right.

ROBINSON:

... and all of that. I also look at Russia and their long range aviation and the capability that they've provided. Right now, I pay attention to Iran because of some of the technologies that they're using and I also, obviously, watch China as they continue to go further and further away from...

GRAHAM:

So these are nation-state threats?

ROBINSON:

Yes sir, but I also am very concerned about the homegrown violent extremist and things that can -- can happen with them. This goes back to the conversation that Admiral Tidd and I had about the networks and what's on the network.

GRAHAM:

Speaking of emerging threats, are you familiar with the increased use of drones by terrorist organizations?

ROBINSON:

Yes sir, I've read that.

GRAHAM:

Do we need to up our game when it comes to dealing with potential drone attacks on the country?

ROBINSON:

Sir, so, as the person responsible for force protection over installations, I pay attention to that each and every day. And I know that the department we're working very hard on a policy on what we do with that.

GRAHAM:

Do you think we need to change our laws at all to be able to deal with this threat?

ROBINSON:

I -- I think we need to understand what it could be and what it could do to each -- from an installation perspective, what do we need to have...

GRAHAM:

Is it fair to say that in five years this threat, if not unchecked, is going to get worse and more lethal?

ROBINSON:

Sir, if you just look at the number of -- the proliferation of drones itself and then you add to what you were just talking about and you mate those two together, I can only imagine.

GRAHAM:

Thank you both very much.

MCCAIN:

Admiral Tidd, we'd like to have a letter from you describing what additional assets that you could use effectively to apprehend all of those (inaudible) -- the drugs that, particularly in the Caribbean, that seems to be an area, as we tighten the border, of increased trafficking.

And General Robinson we'd like to know, from you, also, if you could write us a letter, how we can fully utilize the assets of our uniform military in keeping with the posse comitatus rules that - - so that we can maximize border security.

And, finally, General would you believe that a definition of a wall could be electronics, could be towers, could be UAVs, could be anti-tunneling capabilities, surveillance towers -- in other words, dramatically increasing our capabilities through the use of technology?

ROBINSON:

Sir, anything that disturbs, disrupts and gets after the flow of traffic is...

MCCAIN:

I'm asking, would (ph) technology that -- be more effectively utilized? I'm talking about towers, I'm talking about...

(CROSSTALK)

ROBINSON:

Yes, sir. Those are all helpful as part of a wall.

MCCAIN:

Well, then write us a note, would you, as to what assets you think could be used in construction and ways of -- of preventing the flow not only of drugs, which has been a central theme of this hearing. But also the possible infiltration of terrorists as we see Mosul and Raqqah fall. And we all know that these individuals are spreading out throughout the world.

So we'd appreciate that information from both of you. And I hope it's not too tough task...

ROBINSON:

(OFF-MIKE) sir.

MCCAIN:

And I'm certainly glad to see this interservice cooperation. It's a rare and beautiful event. Thank you.

This hearing is adjourned.