

Statement by

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## **Introduction**

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Thornberry, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify on policy matters related to the USCENTCOM and USAFRICOM theaters, alongside Commanders General Votel and General Waldhauser. I would also would like to thank the women and men of the Department of Defense, whose dedication, talents, and sacrifices enable us to execute our policies and achieve our objectives in the Middle East, Africa, and elsewhere.

As this is my first appearance before this Committee, I would also like to recognize and thank you for the strong collaboration and bipartisan support you provide the Department. I also appreciate the vital contribution this committee can make to our national dialogue on defense issues. I spent nearly 8 years serving as a senior staff member with national security committees in Congress—both in the House and the Senate. And although I did not have the privilege of serving on this particular committee, my time with HPSCI and SASC instilled in me a deep respect for leadership provided by this committee, and the invaluable connection you provide to the American people. Students of military history spend a great deal of attention on the relationship between military commanders and statesmen; or another way to say it, on the proper level of civilian oversight of military activity and operations.

An equally important component of military history is understanding national will—the will to see threats clearly, approach them with sound policy, and remain committed to a country’s defense—even when the costs seem high. And in the American system, the U.S. Congress is a fulcrum point where those two vital components—thoughtful oversight and sustained national will—come together. I believe, to maintain our security, we must do all we can to sustain both. It is a noble and sometimes difficult challenge, and we at the Department of Defense appreciate your unique role in ensuring that our military has the resources, authorities, and legitimacy necessary to

deter and, if necessary, defeat any foe. It is a privilege for me to be here today with two very devoted commanders to explain our national policy toward the Middle East and Africa.

Our approach to Middle East and Africa policy is nested within the guidance from the 2017 National Security Strategy and the 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS). The overall goals of the National Security Strategy are to protect the American people, defend the Homeland, and to promote prosperity and peace from a position of strength. The National Defense Strategy supports our National Security Strategy by focusing on three key aspects of U.S. power: our lethality, our partners and allies, and our institutions. The NDS also gives clear guidance and priorities to the Department: while we must continue to address terrorism threats, long-term competition with other states is our top national security priority. We face a complex, volatile, and dangerous security environment—marked by competition and aggressive behavior from China and Russia and ongoing threats from North Korea, Iran, and terrorist groups. To compete effectively in this environment and defend future generations of Americans against rising near-peer competitors, our forces must remain dominant by increasing modernization, technological adaptation, and readiness; we must also ensure increased lethality and reforms maximize taxpayers’ contributions; and, we must strengthen our partnerships and alliances around the globe. The need to address near-peer competitors now and in the future requires us to make certain adjustments to our posture and avoid unnecessarily prioritizing urgent problems at the expense of building readiness and capacity for potential high-end conflict in the future. And, as we do so, we must deter and confront adversaries, while avoiding miscalculation or escalation that would distract and ultimately undermine our national security interests.

In the Middle East and Africa, our policy objective is to increase regional stability and secure U.S. interests by working by, with, and through a network of international partners. By enhancing the capabilities and capacity of our partners to provide for their own defense and

contribute to regional problems, we reduce the risk to our Homeland while increasing the internal security and stability of potentially vulnerable states. We often consciously play a supporting role to other government agencies and our partners in these regions. We seek to address shared security threats with partners and allies, while maintaining the ability to act unilaterally, if and when necessary.

### **Middle East**

The Middle East remains vitally important to our national security for four fundamental reasons. First, we are involved in active operations at the request of, and in support to, our partners in countering extremists that threaten the region and the Homeland. Second, the Middle East is the cross roads of global competition with Russia and China. Third, we face an aggressive Iran whose actions destabilize the region, particularly through the transfer of advanced conventional weapons to militants and terrorists. Finally, our national security and national economy depend on open commerce through the Middle East maritime domain, a free flow of natural resources, a reduction in factors of instability, and the disruption of violent extremist organizations. We must remain postured and engaged throughout the Middle East, adjusting our responses and investing in our partners.

To that end, the Department's policy objectives are to ensure continued success in our campaign against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and al-Qa'ida (AQ), while also preparing to compete with China, Russia, and Iran for regional and global influence, and investing in sustainable partnerships to reduce the vulnerabilities of weak states as part of a whole of government effort to address instability. These policy objectives inform our decisions on the risks and benefits of actions, but in a deliberate manner. We understand the importance and trust emplaced upon the Department as good stewards of security for every American. This is our

commitment to our national security and prosperity.

*Operation INHERENT RESOLVE and Yemen*

In Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, our sustained support to partner counter-terrorism operations is bringing success. In Iraq and Syria, we have driven ISIS out of territory it once held. As we turn to consolidating those gains and ensuring the lasting defeat of ISIS, we will continue to work with our coalition and interagency partners to build local security forces and governance in Syria and continue our work supporting the Iraqi Security Forces, including the Counter Terrorism Service. Now that ISIS has been denied its territory, we must remain flexible and adaptive to any changing tactics by the enemy. The Global Defeat-ISIS Coalition was developed to defeat a global enemy—but we must not lose focus on securing our gains in Iraq and Syria.

Specifically in Syria, our stated U.S. policy priorities are to defeat ISIS, support a negotiated end to the conflict through a United Nations (UN) brokered deal, and to see the withdrawal of all foreign forces in the country, particularly those of and backed by Iran. The U.S. military mission in Syria, however, remains limited to the D-ISIS campaign. We are working with our partners and allies to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS. We are also working with the Department of State to enable local security forces and prevent the resurgence of ISIS networks in territory liberated from the group. Our drawdown represents a new phase in a continuing mission as we transition from liberating territory to enabling local security and stability alongside our partners in the Global D-ISIS Coalition. The President decided that the United States will continue to have a residual force in Syria even after the territorial defeat of ISIS to support and enable our partners on the ground to ensure the lasting defeat of ISIS. That drawdown will proceed based on the conditions on the ground, although the requirements of that residual force are still be developed by our military planners. As such, we do not have a timeline to share today, because these are not

time-based decisions.

In Iraq, our policy remains to provide support to the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) at the invitation of the Government of Iraq to support its ongoing fight against ISIS. We seek a sovereign, secure Iraq that protects our shared security interests. We have forged a strong partnership with the Government of Iraq and its security forces during the long, arduous process of liberating approximately one-third of Iraq's territory from ISIS. In the years following the 2014 fall of Mosul to ISIS, the United States has mobilized the most powerful nations in the world to support the defense and security of Iraq's sovereignty, and they played a leading role in rebuilding the ISF into a professional, efficient, and capable fighting force. Iraq's security forces have made substantial gains, but require continued support to ensure ISIS cannot re-emerge to threaten Iraq's security. U.S. security assistance strengthens Iraqi sovereignty by building Iraqi capacity and developing capable security institutions to increase Iraq's resilience.

In Yemen, DoD's military actions and partner support are intended to help end the war and avoid a regional conflict, counter the threat from AQAP and ISIS-Yemen, mitigate the humanitarian crisis, and help our partners defend their territory. The United States' seeks a peaceful resolution to the conflict that will bring much-needed stability to Yemenis and the region. Together with the Department of State, we are working to bring all parties to the negotiating table by showing that we take the Coalition's security interests seriously. The Department has two lines of effort in Yemen. First is our fight against terrorist organizations that threaten U.S. national security interests. Terrorists from Yemen are responsible for attacks against the U.S. and our allies, including the 2000 USS Cole bombing, the 2009 Christmas day airline plot, and the attacks in Paris in 2015. Along with our partners, we have significantly degraded al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula's external plot capability and ISIS-Yemen's presence. Our second line of effort is to provide limited, non-combat support to the

Coalition, which is defending the recognized Government of Yemen. This support began in 2015 under President Obama after Iran-backed rebels attempted to overthrow the Yemeni government and began cross-border attacks into Saudi Arabia. That support continues under President Trump, based upon a 2017 that coupled continued support with ways to further limit civilian casualties. DoD's support to the Coalition has been a key factor in influencing Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to back the UN process. Supported by Iran, the Houthis are using increasingly sophisticated ballistic missiles and explosive unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attacks against our partners—including civilian facilities and airports where American citizens are present. Houthis also target military and commercial vessels in the Red Sea, which threatens a major global maritime chokepoint.

Today, fewer than 60 DoD military advisors, deployed to Saudi Arabia, enable the Coalition to address these threats. These advisors are not engaged in offensive military operations against the Houthis. Rather, they help the Coalition defend itself from these external attacks. I want to emphasize that Yemen is at a key juncture and the United States plays a critical role. We must remember that the conflict in Yemen is rooted in a Yemeni civil war that broke out when the Houthis overran Sana'a. If the Houthis continue to refuse to negotiate meaningfully with the legitimate Yemeni government, we will see a failed state on the Arabian Peninsula. A change in our approach would work *against* our efforts to encourage negotiations and develop a legitimate, inclusive government, and could actually accelerate that path to a failed state. Withdrawing U.S. support would embolden the Houthi rebels, revitalize their combat operations, and undermine the negotiations at a vital point in the talks.

### *Partnerships: Levant and Gulf*

Our successes in these immediate conflicts highlight the unwavering commitment of our

defense partnerships across the region. Jordan, Lebanon, and Israel all play critical roles in our efforts to prevent Syria from once again becoming a safe haven for extremists, just as our long-time partners in the Gulf are instrumental in supporting the international D-ISIS Coalition. We continue to support Egypt in its fight against terrorists in the Sinai who threaten Egyptian, Israeli, and U.S. security interests. For decades, we have invested in these bilateral partnerships to advance our collective security. Our national security depends on more than our force posture and our own actions. Through our resources and network of partnerships and alliances, we seek to build local capacity, develop coalitions to respond to future threats, and ensure the United States remains the defense partner of choice in the region.

Saudi Arabia remains a central pillar of our regional counterterrorism efforts and is a key stakeholder in the Yemen conflict with whom we must work to achieve a peaceful solution. Despite recent challenges we must address, Riyadh's influence extends through the Muslim world to Central Asia and East Africa; leveraging it serves as a force multiplier for U.S. interests. As the Arab military with the most developed expeditionary capabilities, the UAE is helping us take the fight to al-Qa'ida and its affiliates in Yemen and Somalia and also supports NATO operations in Afghanistan. Oman serves as a critical waypoint for DoD operations in the USCENTCOM area of responsibility and is a consistent voice for moderation in regional affairs. Kuwait remains a key partner for force-flow and logistic support to U.S. forces throughout the entire region. Qatar, as the second largest customer of Foreign Military Sales and a critical host for U.S. forces, is taking steps to increase its interoperability with U.S. and NATO forces. Bahrain helps to shape the Gulf's security architecture as a key U.S. partner in regional coalitions and U.S.-led defense initiatives, including the international D-ISIS Coalition. Bahrain also hosts the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet, reinforcing a strong and enduring security partnership.



### *Middle East Strategic Alliance (MESA)*

The Department of Defense is working closely with the Department of State and our regional allies to advance the establishment of the Middle East Strategic Alliance (MESA). MESA is designed to advance the regional stability, security, and prosperity over time through enhanced multilateral cooperation in the political, economic, energy, and security spheres. Prospective members include the Gulf Cooperation Council, Egypt, and Jordan. The alliance will be predicated on the principles of sovereignty, equality, multilateralism, and non-hostility. MESA will not degrade the United States' existing bilateral relationship with participating countries, nor replace existing organizations like the Gulf Cooperation Council. Instead, it will build upon these existing relationships and structures to enhance multilateral cooperation and obtain greater benefits for all nations. MESA will enable the United States to rebalance its resources to meet global priorities, while continuing to secure its interests and honor its security commitments in the Middle East. MESA will employ a conditions-based approach that fosters confidence, cohesion, and multilateral cooperation among participants over time through achievement of clearly defined milestones and confidence-building measures.

### *Great Power Competition in the Middle East*

Even as we see combat success, we must recognize the importance of our posture for near-peer competition, regional challenges from Iran, and the residual terrorist threat to our Homeland. Russia and China seek to expand their influence in the Middle East using similar tools, but otherwise unconstrained by respect for international rules and norms. We see Russian and Chinese defense sales increasingly seeking to drive a wedge between us and our long-time partners. We see Russian military action in Syria influencing how partners balance their security interests. We see Chinese economic activity—along with a corresponding

expansion of its military footprint—finding new homes across the region. These actions put our own influence—both military and economic—at risk. In response, we must continue to invest in our regional partnerships.

### *Iran*

The United States' partnership in the Middle East are invaluable as we pursue opportunities and face other regional challenges. For example, Iran will continue to challenge the United States and our partners in the region for influence. DoD stands in full support of the U.S. Government efforts to counter Iran's destabilizing influence and support our partners in the face of growing Iranian military threats.

While we do not seek conflict with Iran, we cannot ignore either Iran's destabilizing behavior across an already complex region or its investments in advanced military capabilities. DoD is addressing the Iran threat through a combination of our force posture, which deters Iranian aggression and limits its freedom of maneuver, and building the capabilities and capacity of our partners to address the Iranian threat in their own region. Although Iran does not possess the same conventional military capabilities as Russia or China, it has continued to invest in strengthening its conventional and unconventional capabilities. We increasingly face an Iran that proliferates advanced conventional weapons with the purpose of building influence in vulnerable states. To that end, the United States policy is to address these threats through an array of diplomatic, economic, intelligence, and military tools. For the Department of Defense, this means working by, with, and through partners on the ground to reduce Iran's influence and building the capacity of vulnerable states to ensure their own defense. As we seek to balance our global responsibilities, our dynamic forces remain poised to address any Iranian provocation.

It is important to highlight that the Department takes the Iran threat seriously. We will take

actions to degrade and impose costs on Iran's destabilizing behaviors, ever cognizant of the risk of unneeded escalation into war.

### *Afghanistan*

Assistant Secretary Shriver is responsible for defense policy on Afghanistan and Pakistan, and therefore, I will not speak in detail about our South Asia Strategy. I am, however, responsible for our NATO policy, and thus work closely with ASD Shriver, USCENTCOM, USEUCOM, and the Department of State to ensure that our NATO allies, who have since 2001 stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the United States in Afghanistan, have a current understanding of the status of negotiations and the vision for the future. Acting Secretary Shanahan recently committed to the NATO alliance during the Defense Ministerial in Brussels that no decision had been made about future force posture and any future discussion would be in concert with our allies.

### **Africa**

Vast, diverse, and dynamic, Africa is a continent of opportunities and challenges that have the potential to surge in either direction depending on how they are met. Home to more than a billion people, Africa's population is expected to double by 2050; this growth will strain resources and services, likely lead to increased migration, and could exacerbate security threats by increasing the risk of political instability, communal conflict, transregional terrorism and illicit trafficking. At the same time, Africa includes multiple burgeoning economies with long-term opportunities for U.S. trade and business partnerships and is a critical source of global commodities as well as farmland and inexpensive labor. Further, sub-Saharan African countries are the most unified and influential regional group at the UN General Assembly, and have the potential to influence key decisions. It is imperative that DoD remains engaged to help partners foster positive trends and

arrest the negative ones.

As outlined in the 2018 DoD Africa Strategy, the Department will continue to pursue African-led security solutions while maintaining the ability to act unilaterally to protect U.S. citizens and interests. As such, DoD will: (1) support the U.S. whole-of-government effort to address African security challenges; (2) leverage international partnership to support security objectives; (3) maintain strategic access and influence; and (4) seek low-cost, resource-sustainable, innovative security solutions.

Employing our “by, with, and through” approach, we use a variety of tools to work closely with African and other international partners to achieve several policy goals, including capacity building programs, security assistance, military equipment sales, education and exercises. First, we seek to advance U.S. interests and influence in the region and maintain strategic access, which is especially important in an era of increasing near-peer competition on the continent. Second, we seek to deny safe havens to terrorists and disrupt their ability to direct or support external operations against the United States, our interests, or our partners. Third, we seek to support our Department of State and interagency colleagues by securing U.S. diplomatic posts and providing crisis response capabilities. Fourth, we strive to grow current partners and develop new partnerships to advance U.S. interests. Fifth, we work to assure DoD access to the continent and adapt DoD posture to meet evolving needs. And finally, we seek to enhance African partners’ capabilities by supporting the strengthening African security forces and development of institutions at both the national and regional levels so to help achieve shared objectives into the future.

### *External Actors*

Governments from across the globe are increasingly engaged in Africa. In the era of near-peer competition, DoD remains vigilant against Chinese and Russian influence in Africa that may

threaten U.S. interests in the region and elsewhere. China's first overseas base – in Djibouti – operationalizes its military and commercial expansion. Many Africa partners employ Russian and Chinese hardware and increasing training opportunities with Moscow and Beijing are helping to shape the next generation of military leaders. And Chinese and Russian security assistance, which often does not prioritize building long-term African security capacity, can undermine transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights in Africa. U.S. efforts to strengthen African security forces and develop institutions at both the national and regional levels focus on enabling Africans to take the lead in dealing with African security challenges. Additionally, we will prioritize our efforts to bolster our relationships, advance U.S. influence, and maintain strategic access.

#### *Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs)*

Africa is home to a growing number of transregional and localized terrorist groups. Instability in multiple countries and regions in Africa provides opportunities for terrorism to proliferate. Government failures in maintaining security, delivering essential services, and providing economic opportunities in these regions create conditions that allow terrorists to expand their reach and influence. Further empowering these terrorist groups are illicit networks that move drugs, weapons, and persons across the continent. In addition to profiting from instability, terrorist networks in Africa benefit from the expansive and porous state borders.

As DoD recalibrates to address the eroding U.S. military advantage against China and Russia, we will not neglect the enduring challenge of terrorism. Counterterrorism resource adjustments based on progress of programs and alignment with NDS objectives will result in a 10 percent reduction of the overall DoD effort in Africa over the next several years. The Department will preserve the majority of our counter-VEO activities in Somalia, Djibouti, and Libya and focus our assistance in West Africa on enhancing partner efforts. The majority of our security

cooperation efforts to build partner capacity remains relatively unaffected.

### *African Sub-Regions*

DoD efforts are primarily concentrated on four sub-regions, including the Horn of Africa, Maghreb, Sahel, and Lake Chad Region, while attention is also given to central and southern Africa.

On the Horn of Africa, a secure, stable, and prosperous Somalia is important to protect U.S. interests, maintain regional stability, and ensure freedom of navigation through the Red Sea corridor. The threats from al-Shabaab and ISIS-Somalia, along with poor governance, corruption, and drought, have created a continually complex challenge. The Department of Defense is working to help the Somali National Army assume security responsibilities and address security threats themselves. Our focus on the development of the Danab (“Lightning”) Advanced Infantry Brigade is seeing progress—with over 1,000 trained soldiers placed in formed companies and battalions. Additionally, the Department’s kinetic activities are impacting al-Shabaab and ISIS leadership and operations. For the first time in 30 years, Somalia contributed to a security event outside its borders by participating in the U.S.-sponsored multinational naval exercise Cutlass Express 2018. However, progress is gradual. The January 2019 al-Shabaab attack in Nairobi , which killed one American, is a stark reminder of the grave threat and continued need for security sector improvements to help address challenges emanating from the fragile Somali state. Thus, we continue to help build partner capacity of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) Troop Contributing Countries (TCC) through our bilateral assistance programs and work in concert with them and other countries in Somalia. We support AMISOM’s intended transition of security responsibilities to Somali security forces by 2021 and recognize the need for the Federal Government of Somalia to demonstrate sustained progress in the interim. Within efforts to develop

AMISOM TCC capacity, we continue to promote defense institution building through mechanisms like the Security Governance Initiative with Kenya. The Department is also employing an array of cooperative activities to support Prime Minister Abiy's transformative efforts in Ethiopia. Djibouti, as host to Camp Lemonnier and its 27 tenant commands composed of members of all four services and DoD civilians, is a critical U.S. partner. With China's naval base juxtaposed just a few miles from our enduring U.S. location, we will manage our strategic interests while navigating potential coordination and safety challenges resulting from its proximity. .

In the Maghreb, the United States has a strategic interest in a secure and stable Libya and greater Maghreb. In support of that objective, DoD continues counterterrorism activities to degrade terrorist groups, such as ISIS-Libya and al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and supports diplomatic efforts to advance the political reconciliation process. Specifically, DoD works closely with the Department of State to ensure cohesive policy making, consistent messaging, and episodic diplomatic missions to Tripoli, and also engages international military partners to leverage assistance where necessary. Across the Maghreb, DoD employs security cooperation tools, including training, exercises, and equipment sales, to achieve shared security objectives. These efforts include enabling Tunisian, Moroccan, and Libyan support of the D-ISIS campaign, while also helping Tunisia transform its forces and secure its borders, bolstering Morocco's role as a security exporter, and enhancing our defense relationship with Algeria as it fights extremists.

Across the Sahel, DoD is focused on supporting partner efforts to contain terrorist organization activity and prevent such threats from migrating across a larger swath of bordering states. Mali continues to face growing insecurity and persistent attacks from terrorist groups, such as Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (IS-GS). A rise in attacks have taken a toll on tri-border states, Burkina Faso and Niger; and states to the south, such as the Ivory Coast, Benin, Togo, and Ghana, are increasingly concerned. In order to

help stabilize Mali and manage the broader threat, DoD continues to support the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the development of the G5 Sahel Joint Force and capacity building for its members, and French counterterrorism operations. An African-led solution to the transregional issue, the G5 Sahel Force is an encouraging initiative that is slowly advancing toward full operational capacity. Given the size and scope of the counterterrorism operations within the ungoverned spaces of the Sahel, persistent pressure in support of our partners is required to arrest the increasingly lethal terrorist activity and help enable diplomatic and development efforts in these fragile states.

In the Lake Chad Region, where Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa (ISIS-WA) operate, there has been a measurable decrease in violent Boko Haram activity from 2017 to 2018. However, ISIS-WA, has significantly increased its number of high-profile attacks in the same timeframe, placing tremendous pressure on regional militaries and contributing to a growing humanitarian crisis in Nigeria. Through the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), composed of forces from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria, and the institutional development of the partner militaries in the region, we lend critical support to partner counterterrorism efforts and enhancing partner capability to counter this growing terrorist organization threat. Niger, which is facing threats on multiple fronts (e.g., Sahel and Lake Chad Basin), is an increasingly capable partner that will host a contingency support location in Agadez. Cameroon, which is also contributing to numerous security missions, has proven itself an effective partner, yet gross human rights violations are a concern. Nigeria, Africa's largest economy with an exploding population that is expected to double by 2050, is at the fulcrum with ISIS-WA and Boko Haram primarily resident in its Borno State. DoD is working with Nigeria through intelligence support, defense institution building, and other security cooperation efforts to boost its capability while also devoting the array of security cooperation resources to support the rest of the MNJTF partners.



### *Gulf of Guinea, Central and Southern Africa*

The countries that compose these regions struggle with many of the trends that afflict the aforementioned nations, manage a variety of challenges, and offer numerous opportunities. From maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, Ebola in Democratic Republic of Congo, peacekeeping contributions from southern Africa, to near-peer competition and strategic minerals, continued engagement and cooperation with countries of these sub-regions is important.

### *Trafficking and Other Criminal Activity*

Illicit trafficking undermines legitimate local economies, exacerbates systemic corruption, fuels conflict with local law enforcement, and provides a funding mechanism for rebel groups and terrorist networks that threaten U.S. interests. West and East Africa, for example, remain top transit points for the illicit global narcotics trade due to insufficient law enforcement and high rates of corruption. Southeast Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, and Mozambique) is a major transshipment hub for heroin from Afghanistan, promoting regional corruption and distorting financial markets. Well-armed, equipped, and organized networks exploit porous borders and weak institutions to profit from trading in poached wildlife thereby threatening the existence of precious creatures, damaging economic potential, and corroding systems.

DoD's collaborative security approach in Africa protects U.S. national interests, improves operational readiness and flexibility within the Joint Force, and maintains our strategic access and influence in this competitive region. As part of a whole-of-government approach, DoD will prioritize engagement where the most significant U.S. defense interests are at stake, partners manifest the political will to address security challenges, and targeted efforts are most likely to have a positive impact.

## **Conclusion**

Under the guiding framework of the NDS, the Department is well-positioned to address the range of dynamic issues facing the United States in the Middle East and Africa. This balanced approach helps ensure the Department can meet a variety of present and future threats while enhancing the strength and agility of our forces. With your support, we will continue our strategically predictable, yet operationally unpredictable, approach and demonstrating commitment and resolve, while keeping our adversaries off-balance. Thank for the opportunity to share my views relating to USCENTCOM and USAFRICOM posture.