

STATEMENT OF

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COMMANDER

U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

BEFORE THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

ON

THE POSTURE OF U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

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I. Introduction

In over 30 years of supporting U.S. forces in the Central Command area of responsibility (AOR), I have never witnessed it so tumultuous. Change is the only constant and surprise continues to be the dominant force in the region. Across the AOR at large, both opportunities and challenges exist. The USCENTCOM AOR encompasses the world's largest energy reserves, yet also some of the most crucial and vulnerable chokepoints. It is home to a rich array of cultures, religions and confessions; but also tainted by radicals, violent extremists, malign networks and state-sponsored agents and unconventional proxies who seek to violently exploit those differences. These problems are coupled with systemic challenges of poor governance, a large youth demographic bulge and insufficient economic opportunity, and the social construct between governments and their people breaking down in numerous places.

USCENTCOM is postured to address these challenges, while working closely with the Department of State and other agencies to promote peace and stability. The USCENTCOM AOR remains of great strategic importance to other world powers and is vital to many of America's most enduring national interests. The historic transformation underway throughout the region requires extensive U.S. engagement. We must see this Awakening for what it is, not for what we wish it to be: the Awakening reflects a breakdown in the social contract; it may or may not embrace democracy as a result of the understandable unrest.

The defense of our interests in the AOR comes at a grim cost. Over ten years of war in this theater have cost us precious casualties, including more than 612 killed and 8,251 wounded since I took command in August of 2010. At the same time, it has also brought out the best of our all-

volunteer force and produced a generation of elite leaders as your troops proved themselves the equals of previous generations of combat veterans who answered their country's call.

II. Strategic Landscape

Arab Awakening

While the Arab Awakening will manifest differently in each country, it is important that we see what is happening in its true context: while we may hope and support efforts for more democratic governments, its origins lie in the breakdown of that social contract between governments and their people. Unjust or unresponsive regimes have fallen or are in the throes of falling as is the case in Syria. Of all the uncertainties associated with this ongoing movement, one thing is certain – the region is never going back to what it was. The Arab Awakening continues to impact countries across the region and the world with an uncertain future and redefined political landscape. Popular calls for more responsive government continue to move at different paces and it is too early to discern its final stage. Our ability to respond demands unprecedented flexibility and balancing of national interests.

Though coalition efforts succeeded in supporting the rise of a new Libya, Syria is unraveling in disarray. Additionally, working closely with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the U.S. contributed to the ongoing transition of power in Yemen; however, violence continues to plague that country, some of it fomented by Iran and much of it fomented by Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). While transformation is underway across the region as a result of the Arab Awakening, malign efforts by other regional actors – particularly Iran – to influence the ultimate outcome represent perhaps the greatest immediate and long-term threat to regional stability. As

Egypt continues its transition to a fully-functioning democracy, our bilateral relationship is likely to face challenges along the way, as evidenced by the tension that has resulted from the NGO raids and their aftermath. We must adapt our military approach and stay steadfast to our values as we remain engaged in the region. We will be pragmatic, principled and proactive. We must be prepared for all contingencies in case of crisis, but there is reason for optimism despite some pessimistic forecasts.

Middle East Peace

It should come as no surprise that the lack of a sustainable solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is a preeminent flame that keeps the pot boiling in the Middle East, particularly as the Arab Awakening causes Arab governments to be more responsive to the sentiments of their populations. The inability to resolve tensions between the state of Israel and the Palestinians imposes a heavy cost on our activities in the AOR, and is raised in almost every meeting I have with key leaders in the region, particularly in the Arabian Peninsula and Levant. A peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians would facilitate more public, robust support by regional partners for U.S. initiatives, bolster regional collaboration and remove fertile ground for extremism and resentment to flourish. We owe it to the next generation to do everything possible to solve this vexing issue that gives so much fuel to extremist ideology.

Non-State Threats in Under-governed Areas

Our terrorist adversaries are networked and globalized, not bounded by geography, rules or specific organizational or hierarchical lines. They operate in the shadows of under-governed spaces and safe havens, and remain ever determined to harm us, our allies and innocent civilians

around the world. The successful targeting of Al Qaeda leadership has weakened the organization from a morale perspective as well as a command and control standpoint. Yet there is a resiliency as the threat morphs and other franchises arise that must be met by more than military power alone. We must focus on undercutting ideological extremism in order to reduce its attractiveness to disappointed peoples.

Although we have achieved substantial success against the terrorist threats we face in the AOR, the global threat is not stabilized, and is in fact evolving. Years of activity have allowed Al Qaeda to syndicate relationships with other violent extremist organizations as, for example, we have just witnessed with respect to Al-Shabaab. There are strong indications of resilient and possibly stronger Al Qaeda elements emerging in locations outside of Iraq and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas in Pakistan. Iraq, too, will be challenged to hold Al Qaeda at bay. These same organizations also seek to exploit the turmoil and foment regional tensions amidst the Arab Awakening. We must remain vigilant as Al Qaeda attempts to reconstitute and consolidate in areas more hospitable to their pernicious activities. In short, this fight is not over.

At the same time, Iran poses the single greatest threat to U.S. interests and to our friends and stability in the region, and poses a global threat through its world-wide proxy network as recent attacks have demonstrated.

Naval Presence

With the withdrawal of our last troop units from Iraq, excluding our men and women in the Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq, and as we continue to draw down in Afghanistan and

transition operational lead to the Afghanistan National Security Forces, our ground-based troop presence across the region is decreasing. However, as the President has stated, “our strong presence in the Middle East endures... and the United States will never waver in defense of our allies, our partners, or our interests.” The question then becomes, how do we maintain our presence with a light footprint?

To accomplish this, the USCENTCOM AOR will assume an increasingly maritime character with special operations forces (SOF) and strong air enablers. Naval forces – with embarked troops – provide presence and a cost efficient means of rapidly projecting power in a crisis to execute contingency operations. Sustained naval presence and response forces provide a lighter “footprint” on the ground, and are vital for reassuring our partners, deterring those with malign intent and tempering destructive actors from fermenting trouble in our region.

The maritime environment also permits freedom of action unfettered by international boundaries and agreements. However, the stacked Iranian threats in our AOR of ballistic missiles, long range rockets, mines, small boats, cruise missiles and submarines demand stronger naval presence and capability to protect vital sea lines of communication. I view with concern efforts to decrease our naval presence and capability when our volatile AOR and the threats of the future are increasingly maritime. Demands on our naval forces will only grow in the future; I anticipate that we will need more maritime missile defense, anti-fast attack craft capabilities, amphibious ships and mine-countermeasure capability, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets. Maintaining a credible naval force covered by sufficient aviation combat power is essential for demonstrating our enduring commitment to regional partners, building trust and

relationships and rapid projection of power in a crisis. We are working to address our near-term capabilities and I am grateful for the Committee's strong support.

Fiscal Realities

We are entering a period of increased national fiscal austerity. This reality may force us to do less in the region; however, we will not do it less well and the quality of our performance will remain the best in the world. Our strategy starts with what we determine the Armed Forces must be capable of doing, bounded by a clear articulation of the objectives – or “ends” – we seek to achieve in the region. Our approach and posture are predicated upon several national-level documents, chief among them the National Security Strategy and the newly published Defense Strategic Guidance. We seek to match our regional ends with our methods – or “ways” – and our resources – or “means” – and determine how to mitigate risk. Key to our success is making grounded projections into the future rooted in hard-learned lessons from our current conflicts and which provide an operational shock absorber when the inevitable surprises present themselves – and to do so while ensuring we are responsible stewards of every dollar allocated.

Specific to USCENTCOM and its components, we operate austere according to our needs, not our wants. We prioritize our efforts to leverage the expertise and capabilities of others. My headquarters structure is expected to decrease 30% over the next five years. We are rigorously reviewing every contract and we intend to increase our effectiveness while we excel in meeting efficiency goals. General Allen and his team are doing detailed, commendatory work in scrubbing requirements to pursue an Afghan-right approach and provide cost-savings back to the

Department as demonstrated by the return of \$1.6 billion in the FY12 Afghanistan Security Forces Fund request last fall.

While new Strategic guidance prioritizes the Pacific region, we remain committed to our strategic interests in the Middle East. We will stand by our friends and partners in the region and that is not going to change. Our military approach will necessarily evolve and adapt and our partners will become even more important as we work to ensure regional security and stability. Our efforts in the Middle East reflect a multilateral coalition-building approach with traditional allies in the region and we fight alongside the largest wartime coalition in recent history in Afghanistan. We have forged key partnerships throughout the Gulf region both bilaterally and through the GCC. These efforts promote cost-sharing, and in fact, directly contribute to U.S. economic interests through security assistance purchases.

As we work to maintain the cohesion of the coalition and our momentum in security operations in Afghanistan, it will be necessary to include those critical and unwavering partners who stand by us but who would not be able to participate without some training, sustainment and reimbursement support from the U.S. These efforts would not be possible without the resources and funding you provide. To that end, your support for the Commanders' Emergency Response Program and Afghanistan Infrastructure Fund provides key tools we need to build capacity for a successful transition. I also appreciate your attention to the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund and reintegration authority – key, flexible tools in accomplishing this part of our mission.

IV. Strategic Priorities, Vision and Approach

The 2011 National Security Strategy identifies four broad, enduring American interests as:

- *The security of the United States, its citizens, and U.S. allies and partners*
- *A strong, innovative, and growing U.S. economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity*
- *Respect for universal values at home and around the world*
- *An international order advanced by U.S. leadership that promotes peace, security, and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global challenges.*

Our overarching goal is to support U.S. objectives through peaceful means and to prevent conflict. However, in the case of impending conflict, my job is to provide the President feasible military options. Throughout history, not being militarily prepared for operations and contingencies has never proven a reliable path to keep the peace. Therefore, we are and will remain prepared to respond to crises, deter and prevent war and ensure military readiness and flexibility. USCENTCOM's vision for the AOR is *a region where improved security leads to greater stability and where regional cooperation helps to isolate and counter those who would use violence in pursuit of their goals.*

USCENTCOM's strategic approach is to build and maintain a robust and flexible force posture that promotes regional stability through relationships with key allies and partners. We will accomplish this by consistently conducting military-to-military engagements – which builds trust – and by promoting security cooperation with partners, while retaining the right to self-defense and force protection. Additionally, events do not occur according to the neat lines and areas of responsibility we draw on the map of the world. Security challenges posed by piracy, violent

extremist organizations and criminal elements based in the Horn of Africa impact operations in the USCENTCOM AOR. Broadly, the challenges in our AOR are not isolated, and most solutions require extensive collaboration with our allies within and beyond USCENTCOM's boundaries. In the future, it will become increasingly important to invest in building relationships and the capacity and capability of our partners to respond to emerging challenges.

The United States has the power to both inspire and intimidate. Going forward, we will emphasize the power to inspire. A major component of inspiring is building relationships through a diplomatic approach. Strengthening our relationships with allies, forging greater collaboration with international partners and ensuring effective coordination within our own government will continue to hallmark our approach. Exceptional U.S. civil-military partnerships among USG interagency actors like those forged these last ten years are the gold standard that must be sustained in all our endeavors. In that regard, I applaud Secretary Clinton's QDDR initiative, which is strengthening in unprecedented ways interagency collaboration to achieve USG objectives.

USCENTCOM military efforts will continue to firmly nest with and buttress diplomatic efforts. A good start point is four principles of our foreign policy in the Middle East. *Support for peaceful democratic change; at their own pace:* for every nation must ultimately incorporate the will of their people that we are watching unfold across the region with the Arab Awakening. *Support for economic modernization to bring the benefits of economic progress to the wider population:* so more people have a sense of hope and ownership. *Renewed pursuit of a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace to achieve a two-state solution:* because the status quo is not

sustainable. As Harvard professor C.H. McIlwain said in 1937, “the preservation of the status quo is a solution that can satisfy none but the contented and just now most men are not contented”. *Our own enduring stake in regional security and territorial integrity: to check mischief of malign actors and reduce terrorist threat to all nations.*

Using these four principles as our guideposts, USCENTCOM will work toward five broad strategic objectives in the AOR. *We will promote common interests in order to enhance stability and security as we defeat violent extremist organizations (VEOs) that threaten the U.S. homeland, our overseas interests, or U.S. allies. Importantly, we will counter the proliferation, acquisition, and use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). We will support Department of State’s broader diplomatic objectives by assisting in setting the conditions that will enable representative government and prosperity. Lastly, we will prepare U.S. and partner forces to respond to emerging challenges.*

Through persistent military engagement, USCENTCOM will maintain a presence in the region to protect vital interests, prevent future conflict, ensure access in the event of a crisis and invest in future regional security. Acknowledging each country's unique circumstances, we will advance our strategic objectives through a tailored approach by seeking a nexus of common interests and identifying common ground with partners that puts us on a trajectory for shared, long-term benefit. Trust and harmony of effort among partners are what counts when the inevitable crises strike: Our fundamental premise is every country has something to contribute through strong regional relationships to strengthen our collaborative efforts. Numerous nations in the region trust us – making our presence and pursuit in building enduring military relationships all the more paramount.

Military-to-military engagements serve as vital connective tissue in our relationships with partners and allies as the U.S. seeks to respond effectively to the Arab Awakening, while continuing to pursue regional stability and security. USCENTCOM seeks to build partner capacity and competencies – developed through training, professional military education, foreign military sales, bilateral and multi-lateral agreements and exercises. Building partner capacity is the long-term solution to reduce costs on the U.S. and to defend our interests in a fiscally constrained environment. The result is competent partners – technically and tactically capable of taking lead on issues of mutual interest – having as much at stake as we do. Years of nurturing our military-to-military relationship with Jordan and United Arab Emirates contributed to the mutual trust and interoperability necessary for their support of Libyan operations. The Egyptian military, while not perfect in its leading of the transition, has performed more responsibly than anyone would have presumed. Without years of assistance and partnership with the U.S., this would not have been the case. When you compare the Egyptian military’s actions with the events continuing to unfold in Syria as the Syrian military continues to ruthlessly use lethal force with impunity against the Syrian people – the value of properly constructed, ethical military-to-military engagement is clear.

V. Review of the AOR

The primary threats to these interests from those with hostile intent are: state-based aggression; non-state actors / violent extremist organizations (VEOs); weapons of mass destruction; and some combination thereof. Each of these threats is in play across this dynamic AOR.

There is only one state in our AOR actively seeking to destabilize the region and actively fomenting violence – **Iran**. The combination of Iran’s potential nuclear weapons aspirations, defiance of international obligations and norms, employment of proxies to attack others around the world to include U.S. forces, and regional hegemonic goals make Iran the single greatest threat to regional stability – and to the security of the United States – in the Central region. Iran and its surrogates foment much of the malign activity across the AOR. From active attempts to exploit the Arab Awakening, to working to undermine and subordinate the democracy in Iraq, to supporting the Asad regime in Syria, to heightening Shiite-Sunni tensions, to active support for Lebanese Hezbollah, Iran’s activities are motivated by its hegemonic ambitions, despite its growing regional and international isolation. An Iranian decision to develop nuclear weapons will have a destabilizing effect on the region and could motivate its neighbors to proceed with their own nuclear development programs. Iran’s well-established pattern of deceit and reckless behavior has progressively increased the potential for miscalculation, and is the primary catalyst pushing the region toward an arms race or armed conflict.

While the fight against violent extremism continues in **Afghanistan**, military progress is undeniable. The ISAF Campaign Plan is succeeding; even while progress and violence coexist. While significant risks remain and development of the Government of Afghanistan’s economic and governance capacity is a persistent challenge, we continue the effort to neutralize the enemy in Afghanistan while transferring the lead for security to Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) which has made great strides in growth, quality and effectiveness. The Afghans are proving themselves on the battlefield and I am optimistic that the 2014 date, established in Lisbon by NATO, is achievable for the Afghans to in the lead across the entire country.

The insurgency is less capable, physically and psychologically, than in previous years. The ISAF Coalition has broadly arrested insurgent momentum – limiting insurgent freedom of movement, killing or capturing leaders and fighters, and in many areas effectively separating the insurgents from the population. The enemy’s reliance on high-profile attacks and assassinations of Afghan senior leaders illustrates our enemy’s limited military options against ISAF and the ANSF, and diminished capacity to influence events on the ground. Violence is down in Helmand and Kandahar and enemy efforts to sustain attacks in Kabul have failed. Yet, the insurgency remains both resilient and capable, so we must remain vigilant and resolved as our gains are reversible.

Execution of the major elements of this complex campaign – transition, surge recovery, ANSF growth, evolution to security force assistance (SFA), reconciliation and establishing an enduring force – must be comprehensive, maintain hard-fought momentum, and preserve coalition unity. I appreciate your continued support of the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund and reintegration authority, which are key to building on our successes. General Allen and his team, in partnership with the Department of State and GIRoA, are carefully examining plans to train, equip and sustain the ANSF and have revised our approach to be appropriate to the situation. Additionally, as U.S. drawdown proceeds, preservation of enablers in terms of logistics, medical evacuation, communications and air support (among others), will be essential for our partners, many of whom have expressed concern over potential loss of these capabilities. As these major efforts proceed, increasingly integrating Coalition and partner-nation plans and insights will be critical to maintaining Coalition support in the lead up to the NATO summit in Chicago in May and

through 2014. This, the largest coalition in recent military history, validates the common interest of our international and regional partners, and we must sustain our “in together out together” approach in our mutually supporting efforts. Continued support of the Coalition Support authorities, to include lift and sustainment, will enable key partners to maintain their active engagement in support of security transition and in training and advising the Afghans to build on the momentum in establishing independent operations.

In **Pakistan**, the threats we face come together in a potentially dangerous nexus. The unstable environment in Pakistan is exacerbated by terrorist attacks and tenuous government control in parts of the country, economic distress, radicalization of segments of the population, a military over-stretched, strained relations with India, repeat natural disasters and more. The United States has a vested interest in Pakistan and, despite challenges to the bilateral U.S.-Pakistan relationship, Pakistan remains a regional partner and must play a constructive role if Afghanistan is to achieve long-term security.

Although 2011’s challenges were numerous – from fall-out over Wiki-leaks and the Ray Davis incident to significant tensions following the raid that killed Osama bin Laden, Haqqani Network attacks on our Embassy in Kabul, and the tragic Salala incident in which 24 Pakistani troops were killed in a cross-border friendly-fire incident – our focus must remain on shared strategic interests. A candid, constructive military-to-military partnership can help establish common ground from which to act against our common enemy. As you know, Pakistani intelligence support has been critical to neutralization efforts against Al Qaeda senior leadership even while some aspects of its security policy appear self-defeating. Cross-border coordination is improving

between ISAF and Pakistan's military. Continued support for the Pakistan Counterinsurgency Capability Fund, Foreign Military Financing, International Military Education and Training, and the Coalition Support Fund for Pakistan provides the tools to enable this military-to-military partnership and pursue what are truly shared interests.

Our successful military drawdown from **Iraq** puts the need to develop a new strategic relationship with the Iraqi government at the forefront of our regional policy. The Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq (OSC-I) has been established and testifies to our respect for Iraqi sovereignty. Our relationship going forward will be based on mutual respect between two sovereign nations. USCENTCOM will work to expand security cooperation activities and deepen our military-to-military ties with Iraq while helping to expand its military engagement with key regional partners. Simultaneously, we remain clear-eyed, recognizing Iran's access to and efforts to subordinate Iraq and work to counter that malign influence. OSC-I – working under Chief of Mission authority and with the full support of USCENTCOM – is the lead proponent for executing the military component of our intent. Thank you for your fast action in support of our special authority for OSC-I and for your continued patience as we work through a successful transition. The danger from Al Qaeda in Iraq is still serious and it remains capable of spectacular attacks against the people and the government there even as it takes advantage next door in Syria to mount attacks there.

We witnessed last year the benefit of mature military-to-military relationships as the Arab Awakening unfolded in **Egypt** unlike how it's unfolding in Syria. Although there have been challenges – including the ongoing NGO issue – the Egyptian military continues to facilitate the

transition to democracy and civilian rule. As Egypt makes progress in its democratic transition, USCENTCOM will remain committed to our long-standing relationship with the Egyptian military. Field Marshal Tantawi is enabling the democratic process to unfold, presidential elections are upcoming, and the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) will transition to a freely-elected, civilian government by the end of June. Transition periods are difficult, but this situation presents unique opportunities to reaffirm and enhance U.S. relations with the Egyptian military and emergent civilian government via sustained diplomatic and military-to-military engagements. In a democratic system, everyone is free to share their views, and those views may not always be compatible with our own. But I believe the prospects for a continued close and positive relationship with Egypt – even if it is more complicated than it has been in the past – are better because of the long standing ties between our two nations.

Jordan remains one of our staunchest regional allies, ready to stand by us when we need them and one that has deployed side by side with U.S. forces. Jordan has shared interests with the U.S. – and other responsible Middle East nations – in regional stability and reform. We remain grateful for King Abdullah’s leadership in hosting direct discussions between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators. The Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) leadership is committed to its partnership with the U.S. and understands that in order to stay relevant, they must adapt their forces. To that end, they are conducting a Strategic Defense Review aimed at transforming the military to a lighter, more adaptable force capable of operating against today’s threats.

As the sole multi-confessional institution providing stability in **Lebanon**, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) is the principal governmental organization viewed with respect by Lebanese from

across their society. We support the LAF through a variety of programs as they perform a balancing role in maintaining peace and addressing Lebanon's territorial integrity. Over the years, our efforts with the LAF have been crucial in building the capability and capacity to serve as a counterbalance to Lebanese Hezbollah (LH). In that sense, these programs have served security in the country and region, and warrant our continued support. Our shared goal is to offset the influence of LH and malign Iranian influence – which are very strong.

Events in **Syria** will have strategic repercussions throughout the region. The Syrian regime has a substantial chemical-biological weapons (CBW) capability, a significant integrated air defense system, thousands of shoulder-launched anti-air missiles and a wholly unsustainable political hierarchy. The tumultuous security situation continues to deteriorate as the Assad regime escalates the level of lethal force employed upon its own people. As a result, the regime is battling for its survival against a popular uprising, raising the prospect of a civil war. The bravery of the Syrian people is laudable but the options available to address the situation are extremely challenging.

We continue to see growing signs of **Gulf Cooperation Council** unity and cohesion, and a growing appetite for U.S.–GCC multilateral exercises, air, sea and land. The Gulf states have demonstrated a strengthened willingness to work with one another, and with international partners, to counter malign influence in the region. Our State Department is working with the GCC to formalize our security policy coordination among and with GCC member states. GCC member states are stalwart partners and we continue our close collaboration with them, both bilaterally and multi-laterally.

The **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** has been a valued partner in operations in Desert Shield/Desert Storm, Bosnia, Kosovo, Somalia, Afghanistan and Libya and we continue to deepen our military relationship. The Emirates recently completed their very successful participation on Operation Unified Protector in Libya and continue their support to Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. In an effort to strengthen its air and missile defense capability, the UAE recently signed a Foreign Military Sales case for their purchase of the Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system, valued at approximately \$3.5 Billion. The UAE was the first foreign government to purchase this system. The UAE's many contributions today and close military ties over many years marks this partner among our strongest friends.

The deep U.S. – **Bahrain** security relationship is the cornerstone for our collective security in the Gulf region. Home to our sole main operating base in the Mid-East, Bahrain provides key support for U.S. interests by hosting U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet and providing facilities for other U.S. forces engaged in regional security. Bahrain faces a challenge balancing the demands for greater political participation by its citizens and the maintenance of security and stability as it continues needed political reform. In this regard, the small island nation is a microcosm of the tensions sweeping through the region. After the unrest a year ago, the government invited in a group of internationally respected human rights and legal experts to lead the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI). The government gave full support to its investigation. The BICI findings and recommendations were received by the King on live television and the government's positive response to the recommendations is encouraging. While implementing the recommendations is not an easy task, the Government of Bahrain has taken encouraging

steps on reform, and it is important we support the efforts they've undertaken to date. Dialogue between the government and opposition groups is essential. One of the greatest bulwarks against Iranian influence is a strong and stable Bahrain that is inclusive and respects the rights of all its people. Bahrain is an important partner, and has been a reliable friend through good times and bad. It is showing now, by learning from its mistakes, that it is equally committed to this important relationship.

Qatar hosts significant U.S. military capabilities and has taken an increasing role in pursuit of regional stability, supporting operations in Libya with both military and humanitarian aid. Qatar will continue to pursue an assertive and independent foreign policy and is playing an important role in an effort to stop Syrian brutality, including through an Arab League resolution suspending Syria's membership. Qatar has also placed wide-ranging sanctions on Syria in response to the Assad regime's violence against its own citizens.

Oman is strategically located along the Strait of Hormuz and the Indian Ocean and has played a steady role and voice of moderation in the region for many years. Internally the Sultan remains admired and he addressed demonstrators' concerns in early 2011 in positive ways. We have shared appreciation of the situation in the Gulf and Oman provides valued military advice for maintaining stability.

Kuwait remains a steadfast friend of the U.S. and has been indispensable in facilitating U.S. troop and equipment flow in and out of the AOR. Kuwait's foreign policy will continue to be grounded in its long-standing strategic alliance with the U.S. We maintain a robust security

cooperation program with the Kuwaitis and their support for U.S. forces is essential for maintaining collective regional security.

For decades, security cooperation has been a cornerstone of our relationship with the **Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**. As we face ever more sophisticated regional challenges in the Middle East, upgrading Saudi Arabia's defense capabilities sustains our strong military-to-military relations, continues operational interoperability, and helps the Kingdom prepare to meet regional threats. In difficult times, the Kingdom has demonstrated its willingness and capability to use its military capabilities to fight as part of a coalition against regional hegemony. Modernizing the Saudi military and allowing the Kingdom more prompt access to equipment deters hostile actors and ensures the security and stability of the Kingdom coupled with our long-standing military ties.

Following the signing of a GCC-backed plan under which President Saleh handed over his executive powers to the Vice President, a national unity government was formed and a presidential election took place on February 21, 2012. **Yemen** has a new leader after over three decades of rule by President Saleh. Following an extended period of internal strife, Yemen is poised for effective political transition. The GCC plans also provided for the creation of a Military/Security Committee which has played a key role in de-escalating the security situation and will be instrumental in reorganizing the military and security structure in Yemen. The new Yemeni government will need assistance in order to reorganize its military under civilian control and build capacity to deal with critical national security threats. We are supporting military professionalization and look to continue our relationship in the fight against Al Qaeda in the

Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in accordance with our national policy. We expect increased Iranian malfeasance in an attempt to undercut Yemen's efforts to create a peaceful path to the future.

The **Central Asian States** are key to our Afghanistan campaign because the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) is a critical part of ISAF's resupply and retrograde efforts. Over the past two years, the expansion of the NDN for transportation to and from Afghanistan has been one of the most significant areas of cooperation with our Central Asian partners. Central Asia shares similar threats from the Afghan border regions and CENTCOM military assistance focuses on building the capacity to fight against violent extremists. We are committed to preventing violent extremist organizations from using Central Asia as a base for terrorist operations and strengthening relationships based on shared understanding of the terrorist, criminal and narco-trafficking threats. Military assistance is focused on building counterterrorism capacity.

Our relationship with **Kazakhstan** continues to mature. We have recently signed new agreements for five years of defense cooperation and Kazakhstan continues to contribute to the Afghanistan mission. In 2012, Kazakhstan desires to expand the number of nations participating in Exercise Steppe Eagle, a peacekeeping exercise co-sponsored by Kazakhstan and the U.S.

Kyrgyzstan continues to be a key partner for U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and the region. The peaceful transition of power to President Atambayev demonstrated the Kyrgyz Republic's effort to sustain democratic reforms. Our military relationship continues to improve, particularly in the

areas of regional security and military security cooperation. Additionally, the Kyrgyz Republic aims to deploy a U.S.-trained peacekeeping mission within the next two years.

For **Tajikistan** building and maintaining counterterrorism, border security and counternarcotics capability to protect our mutual interests from the threat of violent extremist organizations are paramount to regional stability. In concert with our counterterrorism efforts, we are working with Tajikistan to improve disaster response. Tajikistan is committed to deploying their U.S.-trained peacekeeping battalion on a United Nations peacekeeping mission in 2012. We continue to explore options to facilitate the transit of goods and services in support of ISAF with this important partner.

Our security cooperation with **Turkmenistan** continues to develop along lines consistent with our mutual objectives of countering violent extremists and improving border security to counter narcotics trafficking.

Our relationship with **Uzbekistan** continues to improve in a deliberate, balanced way driven by regional security considerations, expansion of the Northern Distribution Network and mutual benefit. Security cooperation serves to provide increased U.S. access and influence in cultivating engagement for humanitarian and democratization efforts. We recently signed new agreements providing important new capabilities in support of Afghanistan and expect cooperation to

continue to progress in a methodical step-by-step manner that addresses security threats of our mutual concern.

VI. Critical Needs and Concerns

The improvised explosive device (IED) remains one of the greatest threats to our men and women serving in harm's way. The ubiquitous nature of the IED threat networks, operating in an environment characterized by the easy flow of dual use components through legitimate businesses with access to readily available explosive materials, presents an ominous threat to our nation's security interests at home and abroad well beyond the end of mission in Afghanistan.

An effective counter- IED (C-IED) effort requires specific and focused capabilities to address both the threat networks and their devices. It is critical that DoD maintain an ability to continually identify likely capability gaps and focus our supporting communities of interest to develop viable solutions. The Joint IED Defeat Organization (JIEDDO) has been instrumental in coordinating the research and development (R&D) community to provide material solutions, rapidly harnessing the latest technologies and concepts in order to field effective and timely C-IED requirements to the warfighter. The synchronization of JIEDDO's three lines of operation-- Attack the Network, Defeat the Device, and Train the Force--builds on the experience amassed over the past decade enabling the Combatant Commanders a capability to defeat the IED as a weapon of strategic influence. Expanding the community of practice to academia and industry in focused pursuit of pre-detonation detection measures is the next step in this important effort.

ISR capabilities remain vital to our ability to operate in denied areas and support multi-intelligence collection across all domains. We must sustain our capabilities and continue enhancements that keep us ahead of threats while supporting all plans and operations. In addition to communications and hardware assets we rely upon, the imbedded intelligence community personnel and liaisons at USCENTCOM provides continuous expert support to the Command and all deployed elements. Sustaining this effort is critical to USCENTCOM's ability to stay abreast of regional dynamics and the changing threats.

Information operations provide USCENTCOM a key non-lethal, traditional military tool to counter all threats and "win" in the strategic messaging campaign. As an example, we conduct Regional Web Interaction Program (RWIP) activities online to degrade violent extremist organizations' recruiting and fund raising. RWIP activities are coordinated with a number of USG Departments and Agencies, focus solely on undermining extra-governmental violent extremist organizations that pose a potentially lethal threat in our region, and do not address the American public nor are they a Public Diplomacy tool to increase popular support for any U.S. policy.

VII. Conclusion

I appreciate your support for USCENTCOM as you fulfill your role as the responsible overseers of the American people's tax dollars. To that end, I would like to extend my personal gratitude for your continued support to our men and women in uniform. We intend to earn your respect by

being the best possible stewards of resources allocated in this challenging time: we will continue to challenge assumptions with cost-saving measures in mind.