

Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen
Subcommittee on Defense
House Committee on Appropriations
FY14 Oversight Hearing: United States Central Command and International Security
Assistance Fund
March 14, 2014
OPENING STATEMENT AS PREPARED

The Committee will be in order.

Generals, the turmoil and instability in the Central Command area of responsibility is concerning to all Americans. Continued uprisings associated with the Arab Spring, the undeterred desire by Iran to seek nuclear weapons, the presence of Al Qaeda throughout the Middle East and Northern Africa, Taliban factions in Pakistan and Afghanistan, state sponsored terrorism exported from that region throughout the world, and a refugee crisis created by internal conflict, are concerning, just to name a few. Undeniably, this is a region in turmoil.

Today we welcome the sharing of your expertise, sound military judgment, and candor. This is a closed hearing, so feel free to get to the facts. Just as you have the daunting task of trying to bring peace to a troubled region of the world, this Committee has the daunting task of giving oversight and requisite funding to support your efforts. Make no mistake – this Committee is united in its bipartisan, unwavering, strong defense of this nation and its allies. We can only perform our duties adequately when we receive candid, unbiased advice from our nation's military leadership.

The Ranking Member and I were pleased to have recently led a Delegation visiting several key nations within the U.S. Central Command. As I have previously mentioned, this is a region plagued with turmoil and instability – and – “there is no ‘good news’ to be found in the region. Our partners and allies appear very worried about U.S. commitment, resolve, and frankly, our reliability.” Yet, there was a further perception among our Delegation that the Administration’s lack of announced intentions regarding post 2014 may mean a zero option.

Generals, this Committee wishes to explore these perceptions further during our hearing today.

Nevertheless, we are pleased to welcome you both. You are the two Generals that make difficult missions in this part of the world a reality.

General Lloyd J. Austin III is the Commander, U.S. Central Command. This is General Austin’s second appearance before this subcommittee in his capacity as the Central Command Commander. General Austin is a West Point graduate and his extensive combat experiences include Operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, and Operation New Dawn. He has commanded at every level, previously served as the Chief of Staff for U.S. Central Command, and most recently served as the Vice Chief of Staff for the U.S. Army.

General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., is the Commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and U.S. Forces Afghanistan (USFOR-A). General Dunford has also commanded at every level in the Marine Corps. He was Commanding General to the First Marine Expeditionary Force and Commander, Marine Forces Central Command. Prior to accepting command of ISAF and U.S. Forces Afghanistan, General Dunford served as the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps.

Generals, thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to attend this hearing. Generals, we look forward to your testimony, but first, I would like to call on the ranking member, my friend, Pete Visclosky for his comments.

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The Subcommittee stands in recess until the morning of March 25th at 10am when we will hold a briefing regarding the Navy and Marine Corps budget.