

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF

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DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC PLANS AND POLICY

JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

BEFORE THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

MIDDLE EAST POLICY

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Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished Committee Members, thank you for this opportunity to update you regarding how our military forces are supporting U.S. policy objectives in the Middle East.

Our interests in that vital and unsettled part of the world are significant, and we are committed to working with the states of the region to strengthen security, enhance deterrence, and prevent war.

The U.S. seeks to increase regional stability, decrease violent extremism, and counter the proliferation and use of Weapons of Mass Destruction against our nation, our allies, and our partners. We cannot do these things alone. Rather, to accomplish these goals, we work together every day with other agencies of our government, with forward stationed State Department professionals, and with partner countries in the region.

All these missions require us to maintain significant combat power forward and to continually interact with our partners by way of operations, training, and investing in military-to-military relationships. Let me share a few examples:

Operations: Our forces in the Middle East operate continuously on land, in the air, and on the sea; routinely conducting freedom of navigation operations, forward deployments, and port visits. They enhance stability and safeguard access to the global commons. U.S. military forces in the area are significant, with thousands of personnel deployed throughout the region, especially in and around the Arabian Gulf and in Afghanistan. Included in those numbers are U.S. soldiers and Marines with armor, artillery, and attack helicopters; highly trained Special Operations Forces; our most advanced aircraft; advanced surveillance assets; a wide array of missile defense capabilities, including Ballistic Missile Defense ships and PATRIOT batteries; and a large naval presence, including a carrier strike group, minesweeping capabilities, and an Afloat Forward Staging Base (AFSB).

Exercises: Military exercises increase proficiency and interoperability across all mission areas, including warfighting, counterterrorism, maritime

security, and peacekeeping. USCENTCOM's extensive exercise program includes, on average, 35 significant exercises each quarter. In 2013, our training efforts included EXERCISE EAGLE RESOLVE, which was hosted by Qatar and included forces from 12 nations; EXERCISE EAGER LION in Jordan, which involved 8,000 personnel from 19 nations; and the International Mine Countermeasures Exercise in Bahrain, in which 40 nations and 35 ships participated. These are just a few of the hundreds of engagements conducted by all Services with foreign partners each year.

Senior Leader Engagement: In conjunction with the Department of State, our military maintains an aggressive schedule of leader interactions to strengthen relationships. These help us better understand regional perspectives on common security issues while fostering cooperation. For example, Chairman Dempsey participated in the Middle East Chiefs of Defense Conference in Jordan last August. Also, CENTCOM Commander, General Austin, and his service component commanders continuously engage their regional counterparts, such as at the regional Air Defense Chiefs' Conference in November, 2013. Engagements such as these allow us to listen to partner nation concerns, assure them of support, and demonstrate U.S. commitment to the region.

Building Partnership Capacity: We complement operations, exercises, and key leader engagement with efforts aimed at strengthening partner capacity. A key aspect of these initiatives are Foreign Military Sales and Foreign Military Financing programs, including more than \$75 billion in U.S. arms sales to Gulf Cooperation Council states since 2007. We are also co-developing advanced Ballistic Missile Defense capabilities with Israel. International Military Education and Training is another key investment we are making to build enduring relationships with partner nation civilian and military leaders. We have trained over three thousand officers through this program over the last 13 years. Finally, we are working with partners throughout the region to help them better defend critical assets, both in

the physical sense and in the cyber world, including military sites and key infrastructure.

Ladies and Gentlemen, your military's men and women are forward deployed every day in the Middle East in support of our national defense. We are proud of their efforts and their sacrifice.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to your Committee this morning. And please accept my gratitude for all you have done for us.