



Chairman Hal Rogers

House Committee on Appropriations

FY 2017 Budget Hearing: Central Command
March 17, 2016
Opening Statement As Prepared

Mr. Chairman, thank you for yielding. General Austin, thank you for taking the time to be here today. I welcome you back to the defense subcommittee. I would also like to congratulate you on your upcoming retirement. You have served our nation honorably over the course of your 40 year career, most recently as the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army and before that as Commander of US Forces in Iraq. You've shown true dedication and leadership over the last three years in your current post as CENTCOM Commander, and we wish you all the best with your future endeavors.

The servicemen and women under your leadership face some of the most complex, unprecedented challenges on earth. As ISIS continues its violent campaign throughout the region, you have undertaken a tireless effort to halt their advance and protect major metropolitan areas from being overtaken by the group. At the same time, States in the region, alongside humanitarian organizations and coalition partner forces, are struggling to cope with the large number of refugees fleeing the seemingly endless conflict in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere. Declining oil prices are contributing to even greater economic instability in the region, forcing our partners to make difficult choices about how to respond to these threats. All the while, Russian support for the Assad regime further complicates efforts to stabilize the conflict in Syria, and continues to fuel tensions in the region despite their recently announced plan to draw down their presence in the State.

This Committee appreciates the magnitude of the challenges that you face every day. The men and women serving in the Central Region endure the hardship and sacrifice of being away from home, in harm's way, charged with protecting the US and our allies from the threat of violent extremism emanating from the Middle East. As you know well, these threats transcend borders and fuel instability in the region that has worldwide consequences.

We are grateful for your leadership and your dedication to addressing the extraordinarily complex threats we must address in the Middle East. You have led our troops through unprecedented challenges, amidst great uncertainty, with limited information and constrained resources. You have our support, and I look forward to hearing your assessment of the current threat environment and our efforts to combat violent extremism. Thank you again for your many years of service, we wish you all the best. I yield back.

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