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Overarching Questions

The Central Command Area of Responsibility (AOR) requires a Combatant Commander to balance an unprecedented range of challenges: two hot wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, tensions with Iran and Syria, chaos in Lebanon, crises in Sudan and Somalia, and regional efforts to counter violent extremism to name just a few.

- QUESTION: General Petraeus, can you give us your assessment of the overall priorities and force requirements in the region and tell us how you plan to balance across the range of demands? How will you tailor your approach to deal with different extremist groups in different contexts in the CENTCOM AOR?

Military Readiness

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of the Army, the Army Chief of Staff and the Commandant of the Marine Corps have all testified to Congress about the enormous strains on U.S. Soldiers, Marines and their families. They have also expressed concern that the current pace of operations is both unsustainable and taking a substantial toll on the United States' ability to respond to other crises beyond Iraq and Afghanistan.

- QUESTION: Generals, do you share their assessment that the current pace of operations is not sustainable and that the lack of ready and available ground forces for other contingencies increases our level of strategic risk? What, if any, steps would you recommend taking to reduce the strains on our ground forces and rebalance risk?

Iraq

Generals, as you both have commented on numerous occasions, America's path forward and ultimately out of Iraq depends on a successful transition from U.S. forces leading population security missions to an "overwatch" posture characterized more by an increased focus on training and advisory missions. For Congress to exercise its oversight role, we need to better understand what an "overwatch" position looks like.

- QUESTION: Please outline for the committee exactly what your definition of "overwatch" is, describe the key features of the transition to such a posture, and the key capabilities and missions that will characterize American operations in Iraq in an overwatch position.

General Petraeus, during your last visit to Congress you commented that further reductions in violence in Iraq will only occur in the context of political accommodation between the various actors in Iraq. Over the last several months, American and Iraqi negotiators have been outlining both a Status of Forces Agreement and a broader Strategic Framework Agreement that will help shape the contours of our future relationship with Iraq. The Maliki government has asked for many things from us, including an extensive amount of security assistance to the ISF along with external security guarantees.

- QUESTION: To what degree are we making security assistance and ISF capacity building conditional on the integration of the Sunni community

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– particularly the so-called Sons of Iraq? What do you think will happen if large armed units of Sunni security volunteers fail to be integrated into Iraq's security forces? Shouldn't we be using these ongoing negotiations to exercise our significant leverage over the Maliki government and push them toward more political accommodation on key issues?

Iran

General Petraeus, in your new role at CENTCOM you will have an important influence over how America deals with Iran. Your predecessor, Admiral Fallon, repeatedly advocated engagement with Tehran, and Secretary Gates said in a speech last week: "We need to figure out a way to develop some leverage with respect to the Iranians and then sit down and talk with them. If there's going to be a discussion, then they need something, too. We can't go to a discussion and be completely the demander with them not feeling that they need anything from us."

- QUESTION: What are your views on Iranian intentions and capabilities regarding Iraq and the region, and how will you approach the issue of engagement with Iran?

Afghanistan

General Petraeus, the new Pakistani government is implementing a truce with the Taliban and other extremists along the border with Afghanistan. The truce will likely include a redeployment of Pakistani forces away from the border. As you know, that border is only a solid line for our forces and Afghan and Pakistan

government forces. The terrorists cross it at will. This sanctuary in Pakistan continues to undermine allied efforts to help Afghanistan and provides Osama bin Laden and his deputies a safe-haven.

- QUESTION: How do you see a truce between the Government of Pakistan and the militants affecting the ability of U.S. forces in OEF to accomplish their mission? What changes do you expect to be required to U.S. deployments near Afghanistan's border with Pakistan, and do you see this requiring an increase in U.S. force levels?



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