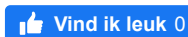




DOD nominee won't speed release of detainees at Guantanamo



By [Jordan Gass-Pooré - Spring 2015](#) Feb 04, 2015



Click on photo to enlarge or download: Ashton Carter, President Barack Obama's nominee for secretary of defense, tells the Senate Armed Services Committee on Wednesday that budget cuts are dangerous but he intends to spend money appropriately. The committee plans to vote on his nomination next week. SHFWire photo by Jordan Gass- Pooré

WASHINGTON – Ashton Carter got off easy at his [confirmation hearing](#) for secretary of defense Wednesday, with just a little lip from [Sen. John McCain](#), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Carter, nominated by President Barack Obama in December to be [Chuck Hagel's](#) replacement to lead

the Pentagon, advocated for strengthening foreign alliances and asked that Congress end across-the-board mandatory budget cuts called sequestration.

“Sequester is risky to our defense,” Carter, a former Department of Defense official, said.

The Republican-led committee posed a marathon series of questions to Carter that seemed on one hand to dredge up the past, and on the other an attempt to predict the future.

Senators weren't shy about telling Carter how they really feel about the Obama administration's strategies on foreign affairs, but when it came to the transfer of detainees from the military prison at [Guantanamo Bay](#), Cuba, it seemed like Carter was on the same page as the committee.

The defense secretary has the power to delay the transfer of prisoners from Guantanamo Bay.

Freed detainees could become a security threat to U.S. military troops abroad, the senators argued.

[Sen. Kelly Ayotte](#), R-N.H., estimated that 107 former Guantanamo Bay detainees have gone abroad and resumed terrorist activities.

The White House was critical of Hagel for his delay in transferring detainees.

Ayotte asked Carter to promise that he wouldn't be pressured by the federal government to continue this increase of transfers.

Without skipping a beat, Carter agreed.

The confirmation hearing was the first time the committee could question Carter about the increase of Guantanamo Bay transfers.

Instead of increasing transfers, Carter sided with [Sen. Mike Rounds](#), R-S.D., to say that it's important to interrogate terrorist detainees for what they called intelligence information.

Detainees, though, aren't at the top of Carter's secretary of defense to-do list.

That honor goes to the Islamic State group.



Click on photo to enlarge or download: John McCain, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, prepares to challenge defense secretary nominee Ashton Carter on Wednesday about the Obama administration's strategy to combat the Islamic State group because he doesn't believe there is a strategy. SHFWire photo by Jordan Gass-Pooré

The Islamic terrorist group poses the most immediate threat to the country's national security, Carter said.

The group poses the greatest risk because of its widespread membership.

"One group, two locations," Carter said of the Islamic State group's influence in Iraq and Syria.

These are risks Carter said he hasn't seen before.

When Carter, 60, started his defense career, he said the world was simpler. The main risk was the Cold War, when the enemy and boundaries were defined.

The Islamic State group is the complete opposite and its effects are far reaching.

Carter repeatedly said the way to achieve the lasting defeat of the Islamic State group is to rebuild morale and power in the Iraqi government and a secure a partnership with Syria.

McCain, R-Ariz., challenged Carter about the Obama administration's strategy to combat the Islamic State.

McCain asked Carter if there is a strategy because he said he doubts there is one. Carter dutifully replied: "I believe I understand our strategy," then remained mum about the topic.

One strategy is to supply the Jordanians with weapons quickly to fight the Islamic State group.

"The Jordanians are ready to fight," Carter said.

All that appears to be stopping them is what Carter referred to as bureaucratic red tape.

Carter said he has firsthand experience with this when he ran the Pentagon's weapons acquisition and logistics programs before becoming deputy secretary of defense.

U.S. military assistance is also needed in Ukraine and the Balkans – a region Carter wants to reunite – to counteract Russian aggression, Carter said.

Carter's solution: more NATO troops.

[Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W. Va.](#), agreed.

"This isn't a partisan issue, it's an American issue," Manchin said. "Americans will pay more taxes to support the military."

More money will be spent to deploy more U.S. troops to the Middle East.

Carter said the U.S. military also needs to modernize weapons to avoid repeating mistakes of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Nuclear weapons aren't going anywhere, the physicist said.

If the U.S. isn't prepared to handle national security crises, [Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C.](#), asked Carter why he wants to cut the Department of Defense budget.

It's less about cutting the budget than spending its funds appropriately, Carter said. He said misappropriation of funds is hindering the country's progress.

If confirmed as defense secretary, Carter will manage the Pentagon's multi-billion dollar budget, and any war efforts.

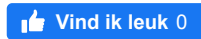
The Senate and Armed Forces Committee is expected to vote on Carter's confirmation early next week.

Reach reporter Jordan Gass-Pooré at jordan.gass-pooré@scripps.com or 202-408-1490. SHFWire stories are free to any news organization that gives the reporter a byline and credits the SHFWire. Like the Scripps Howard Foundation Wire interns on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#).



About Jordan Gass-Pooré - Spring 2015

Jordan Gass-Pooré is a Spring 2015 reporter for the SHFWire from Texas State University.



Recent Posts



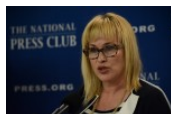
Fixing (and paying for) the country's crumbling water system

Apr 13, 2016



Top U.S. companies stash over a trillion dollars in offshore tax havens

Apr 14, 2016



New report: Equal pay day, women earn 79¢ to men's \$1

Apr 12, 2016

Free content in your inbox

Scripps Howard Foundation Wire content is free to any news organization that gives the reporter a byline and credits the SHFWire. Feel free to pull stories and multimedia off the website or contact us if you need assistance.

Intern Blog



Finishing a marathon - and then what?

March 24



An election year like some others, or not

February 18



The Scripps Howard Foundation's **Semester in Washington program** is an internship program for [college journalism students](#) who write for the Scripps Howard Foundation Wire.



Luis Gonzalez



Erica Y. King



Karina Meier



Erick Payne



Tia Rinehart



Luke Torrance

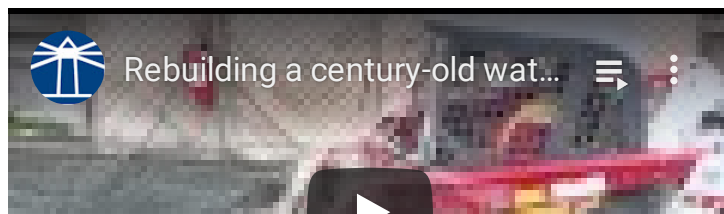


One **multimedia fellow** spends the year working with, and teaching the Semester in Washington interns. The fellow reports, writes and manages the SHFWire website.




Heather Khalifa

Latest Video





Like SHFWire on Facebook

 Vind ik leuk

 Delen

908 personen vinden dit leuk.
Registreren om te zien wat je vrienden leuk vinden.

Follow SHFWire on Twitter

Tweets by @SHFWireInterns

Follow SHFWire on Instagram

Unable to show Instagram photos

Need a story covered?

SHFWire interns can cover breaking news or a scheduled news event and write longer feature stories. We ask only that you give the reporting interns a byline and that you credit the Scripps Howard Foundation Wire. Interns write news, sports, business, health, home and garden, personal technology, travel and food stories.

Whatever your needs, email your assignment requests to jody.beck@scripps.com or call 202-408-2748.

Scripps Howard Foundation Wire

1100 13th St. N.W. - Suite 450
Washington, D.C. 20005
202-408-2748