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STRATEGIC OPTIONS FOR THE WAY AHEAD IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

FEBRUARY 26, 2009

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STRATEGIC OPTIONS FOR THE WAY AHEAD IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2009

U.S. SENATE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:34 a.m. in room SH–216, Hart Senate Office Building, Senator Carl Levin (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Levin, Reed, Bill Nelson, E. Benjamin Nelson, Bayh, Webb, McCaskill, Udall, Hagan, Begich, Burris, McCain, Inhofe, Sessions, Thune, Martinez, and Collins.

Committee staff members present: Richard D. DeBobes, staff director; and Leah C. Brewer, nominations and hearings clerk.

Majority staff members present: Thomas K. McConnell, professional staff member; William G.P. Monahan, counsel; Michael J. Noblet, professional staff member; Russell L. Shaffer, counsel; and William K. Sutey, professional staff member.

Minority staff members present: Joseph W. Bowab, Republican staff director; Adam J. Barker, research assistant; William M. Caniano, professional staff member; Richard H. Fontaine, Jr., deputy Republican staff director; Paul C. Hutton IV, professional staff member; David M. Morriss, minority counsel; and Lucian L. Niemeyer, professional staff member.

Staff assistants present: Kevin A. Cronin, Christine G. Lang, and Ali Z. Pasha.

Committee members' assistants present: Jay Maroney and Sharon L. Waxman, assistants to Senator Kennedy; James Tuite, assistant to Senator Byrd; Vance Serchuk, assistant to Senator Lieberman; Elizabeth King, assistant to Senator Reed; Ann Premer, assistant to Senator Ben Nelson; Jon Davey and Mike Pevzner, assistants to Senator Bayh; Gordon I. Peterson, assistant to Senator Webb; Stephen C. Hedger, assistant to Senator McCaskill; Jennifer Barrett, assistant to Senator Udall; Michael Harney, assistant to Senator Hagan; David Ramseur, assistant to Senator Begich; Brady King, assistant to Senator Burris; Anthony J. Lazarski, assistant to Senator Inhofe; Lenwood Landrum and Sandra Luff, assistants to Senator Sessions; Matt Waldroup, assistant to Senator Chambliss; Adam G. Brake, assistant to Senator Graham; Jason Van Beek, assistant to Senator Thune; Brian W. Walsh, assistant to Senator Martinez; and Chip Kennett, assistant to Senator Collins.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARL LEVIN, CHAIRMAN

Chairman LEVIN. Good morning, everybody. Today the committee receives testimony from outside experts on options for the way ahead in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Our witnesses are: Lieutenant General David Barno, U.S. Army (Retired), who is the Director of the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies at the National Defense University; Ambassador James Dobbins, Director of the International Security and Defense Policy Center of the RAND Corporation; and Dr. Marin Strmecki, Senior Vice President and Director of Programs with the Smith Richardson Foundation.

We welcome each of you. We thank you and we are grateful for your attendance and for your testimony.

The current policies of the United States and its allies are not succeeding in stabilizing Afghanistan. The Department of Defense (DOD) reports that insurgent-initiated attacks are up 40 percent in 2008 over the previous year. The Director of National Intelligence (DNI), Dennis Blair, testified earlier this month that the Taliban-dominated insurgency has increased the geographic scope and frequency of attacks and that security in eastern areas and the south and northwest has "deteriorated."

The United Nations (U.N.) announced this month that Afghan civilian deaths reached a new high last year of 2,118 and that U.S., North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and Afghan operations, particularly air strikes, were responsible for nearly 40 percent of the civilians killed. A recent public opinion poll showed declining support among the Afghan people for coalition efforts and a loss of legitimacy for the Afghan Government of President Karzai. Of those surveyed, a majority viewed the United States unfavorably, with fewer than half, 42 percent, having confidence in coalition forces to provide security where they lived.

A main source of Afghanistan's insecurity and instability comes from Pakistan. The Afghan Taliban, extremist militant groups, and al Qaeda fighters use Pakistan's Federally Assisted Tribal Areas (FATAs) and the Baluchistan region around Quetta as a safe haven from which to launch attacks into Afghanistan. President Obama has recognized the declining security situation and that it cannot wait for the completion of a comprehensive policy review and has approved Secretary Gates's request to deploy an additional 17,000 U.S. troops, including key enablers, to Afghanistan by this spring and summer. This increase on top of the more than 35,000 American troops already in Afghanistan and 32,000 other foreign forces participating in the NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) will provide needed capabilities, particularly in the Regional Command (RC)-South, where, according to Deputy Commanding General for Stabilization Brigadier General John Nicholson, the border is wide open for extremist militants to attack from sanctuaries on Pakistan's territory.

Recently, DNI Dennis Blair stated to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence: "No improvement in the security in Afghanistan is possible without progress in Pakistan." He added: "No improvement in Afghanistan is possible without Pakistan taking control of its border areas and improving governance, creating economic and educational opportunities throughout the country."

I disagree with his unqualified assessment. While actions by the Government of Pakistan that would root out the Afghan Taliban in Pakistan's Baluchistan region surely would be helpful, Afghanistan's security cannot be totally dependent on Pakistan's uncertain efforts to eliminate militant sanctuaries along the Afghan-Pakistan border, for many reasons. I question whether Pakistan has the political will or the capability to take on the Taliban and other militants. Evidence of their unwillingness or inability to do so has been clear and longstanding. There have been reports for some time that the Afghan Taliban council, or shura, meets in the Pakistan city of Quetta and commands attacks in southern Afghanistan from that safe haven.

The militant Baitullah Mehsud, who is suspected by the Pakistan Government itself of orchestrating the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, holds an open press conference in South Waziristan. To make matters worse, the Pakistan Government inflames opposition to the United States with their strong public criticism of our air strikes. Afghan Taliban cross unhampered from Pakistan's Baluchistan area into southern Afghanistan. There is evidence indicating that some elements of Pakistan's intelligence service may provide support to militants conducting cross-border incursions into Afghanistan and at a minimum Pakistani forces look the other way while the extremist militants cross over the border to attack coalition forces in southern and eastern Afghanistan and then pull back to sanctuaries on Pakistan's side of the border.

The bottom line for me is that we need to accelerate the planned expansion of the highly motivated and capable Afghan army and to more quickly erase the shortfall in U.S. and allied training and mentoring teams embedded with Afghan security forces. In addition, the Afghan army needs to take the lead in countering the greatest threat to their security, the threat from cross-border attacks from militants in those sanctuaries in the Pakistan border.

The Afghan border police, with its history of corruption, should either be transferred from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Defense, as promised, by the way, long ago, or dramatically retrained and reformed.

At this committee's hearing on January 27, Secretary Gates warned against trying to create a "central Asian Valhalla" in Afghanistan. He has called for more concrete goals, security for the Afghan people, and better delivery of services, that are achievable within a 3- to 5-year timeframe.

The United States cannot and should not bear the burden alone of meeting the additional requirements for the Afghan mission. Over 40 NATO and other allies are contributing to that mission. However, NATO members have yet to fulfill the mission requirements that NATO agreed to for personnel and critical support like airlift and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets. A new strategy should call upon NATO and other allies either to provide additional forces and capabilities or, if they will not do so, they should help defray the costs of training and sustaining the Afghan national security forces or assisting Afghanistan in building its capacity to govern itself.

The administration's strategic review needs to also look at how we can bring all instruments of national power to bear in Afghani-

stan, particularly our civilian tools of diplomacy, development, and the rule of law. I am encouraged to hear that the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development are looking to increase their civilian presence in Afghanistan at the national, provincial, and district levels.

I saw firsthand how development assistance at the local level can serve as a key enabler of the security mission when I visited a primary school near Bagram which was built with funding through the Afghan National Solidarity Program (NSP). Three villages had come together to pool very modest amounts of money to construct that school to give their boys and girls a better life and they were prepared to defend it with their lives against the Taliban.

We look forward to hearing from our witnesses. We very much appreciate their contributions to the debate as we look to the ways forward.

Now I'll call on Senator McCain for his opening comments.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for holding this hearing today. I join you in welcoming our witnesses. Each is a well-regarded specialist with extensive experience in the region.

More than 3 years ago, some of us called for a major change in our strategy in Iraq. The change in strategy in Iraq that we called for was one based on the fundamental principles of counterinsurgency, the imperative to secure the civilian population, and a significant increase in the number of American troops. As we know now, through the courageous efforts of our troops on the ground and the wisdom of leaders such as General David Petraeus, Ambassador Ryan Crocker, and General Ray Odierno, the situation has been reversed in Iraq.

We face a similar moment now with respect to the war in Afghanistan. Nearly every indicator in Afghanistan now is headed in the wrong direction. Many Americans have begun to wonder whether it's truly possible to turn this war around. Commentators increasingly focus on past failures in Afghanistan by the Soviets and British. Others have suggested that it's time to scale back our objectives in Afghanistan, to give up on nation-building and instead focus narrowly on counterterrorism.

I for one remain confident that victory is indeed possible in Afghanistan, but only with a significant change in strategy. We all know that the American people are weary of sending our young men and women off to such a distant land. But it's absolutely critical they understand the stakes in this fight. We must win the war in Afghanistan because the alternative is to risk that country's reversion to its previous role as a terrorist sanctuary, one from which al Qaeda could train and plan attacks against America. Such an outcome would constitute an historic blow to America's standing and in favor of the jihadist movement and severely damage America's standing and credibility in a region that already has doubts about our staying power, and deal a crushing blow to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

A terrorist sanctuary in Afghanistan would enable al Qaeda and other groups to attempt to destabilize neighboring countries, such

as a nuclear-armed Pakistan. Broader insecurity in Afghanistan, with the violent refugee flows, and lawlessness it would prompt, could spill beyond its borders to Pakistan or other states in south and central Asia, with grave implications for our national security.

The problem in Afghanistan today is that we have tried to win this war without enough troops, without sufficient economic aid, without effective coordination, and without a regional strategy. The ruinous consequences should come as no surprise. If we change our policies, the situation on the ground too will change.

I say this with some confidence because we've been through this before, and I refer not to Iraq, but to Afghanistan itself. For a brief but critical window between late 2003 and early 2005, we were moving onto the right path in Afghanistan. Under then-Ambassador Khalilzad and Commander Lieutenant General Barno, who is with us today, the United States completely overhauled its strategy. We increased the number of American forces in the country, expanded non-military assistance to the Afghan Government, and, most importantly, abandoned a counterterrorism-based strategy that emphasized seeking out and attacking the enemy in favor of one that emphasized counterinsurgency.

All of this was overseen by an integrated civil-military command structure in which the ambassador and the coalition commander worked in the same building from adjoining offices. The result was that by late 2004 governance and reconstruction were improving. Projects like the Ring Road were at last getting off the ground. Warlords were being nudged out of power. Militias like the Northern Alliance were being peacefully disarmed of their heavy weapons and national elections were carried off safely. The Taliban, meanwhile, showed some signs of internal dissension and splintering.

Rather than building on these gains, we squandered them. I believe that we need in Afghanistan a counterinsurgency strategy focused on providing security for the population, tailored for the unique situation in Afghanistan, and backed with robust intelligence resources and a sufficient number of troops to carry it out. This strategy must be outlined in a theater-wide civil-military campaign plan.

We should also more than double the current size of the Afghan army to 160,000 troops and consider enlarging it to 200,000. The cost of this increase, however, should not be borne by American taxpayers alone. The insecurity in Afghanistan is the world's problem and the world should share its costs. In addition, I believe the United States should continue to invite European troop contributions and press for the reduction of caveats on their use.

I also believe we should move away from stressing what Washington wants Europe to give and more toward encouraging what Europe is prepared to contribute. Many of our NATO allies and other allies and partners outside NATO, including the Gulf countries, are fully capable of contributing many badly needed resources.

We also must increase our non-military assistance to the Afghan Government, with a multi-front plan, something akin to a Plan Afghanistan, for strengthening its institutions, the rule of law, and

the economy in order to provide a sustainable alternative to the drug trade.

Afghanistan's problems exist of course in a regional context and we must increasingly view them as such. A special focus of our regional strategy must be Pakistan. For too long we have viewed Pakistan as important because of our goals in Afghanistan. Yet Pakistan is not simply important because of Afghanistan. Pakistan is important because of Pakistan. We cannot simply subordinate our Pakistan strategy to our Afghanistan policy.

I especially look forward to our witnesses' testimony regarding the role of Pakistan, its present state, and its role in the region.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you. I welcome our witnesses here today and look forward to their observations on this crucial issue. This issue, the situation in Afghanistan, will be with us for a long time. It's going to be long, it's going to be hard, it's going to be tough. It will require additional, I'm sorry to say, expenditure of American blood and treasure. We need the input of our witnesses today, among others, to help us shape the strategy that will succeed. We cannot afford to lose.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator McCain.

A quorum is now present and we need to consider the committee rules for the 111th Congress. The proposed rules which are put forth by myself and by the ranking member are identical to the committee rules from the 110th Congress. The changes that were proposed, that we discussed in the executive session of February 12, are not included.

The proposed rules have been reviewed, as I indicated, by Senator McCain and me and our staffs. I understand that they're acceptable to both sides.

Is there a motion to approve the proposed rules?

Senator MCCAIN. So moved.

Chairman LEVIN. All in favor say aye.

[A chorus of ayes.]

Opposed, nay.

[No response.]

The rules are approved.

Thank you very much.

General Barno.

STATEMENT OF LTG DAVID W. BARNO, USA (RET.), DIRECTOR, NEAR EAST SOUTH ASIA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES, NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

General BARNO. Chairman Levin, Ranking Member McCain, and members of the Committee on Armed Services: Thank you very much for the invitation to offer my views today on strategic options for the way ahead in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Although I continue to serve in the DOD at the National Defense University, the views I offer today are my own. In addition to my 19 months as the overall U.S. and coalition commander in Afghanistan from late 2003 until mid-2005, I've remained engaged on these issues in my current job, which has included trips to Afghanistan and Pakistan, in fact included a visit to RC-South just last month for 3 days in Kandahar, Zabul, and Helmand Province.

On a more personal note, my youngest son just returned from a 12-month tour of combat in Afghanistan as an air cavalry scout platoon leader in the 101st Airborne Division. We're very proud of him. We're very grateful to have him home safe and we pray every day for his fellow young Americans that are still in harm's way.

My brief remarks this morning will attempt to summarize a more lengthy written testimony that I've provided. The focus that I'd like to bring today is to understanding U.S. goals, defining our core objectives, identifying what I call first principles for success, and depicting a phased approach to a military strategy. I'll also briefly speak to issues that link Afghanistan and Pakistan because that linkage is very important.

My thinking I would note also reflects a good deal of collaboration and discussion with Dr. David Kilkullen, a counterinsurgency expert and former Australian Army officer, although I'm only speaking for myself here today.

In my judgment the international effort in Afghanistan at the beginning of 2009 is drifting towards failure. There's still time to turn it around, but it will take strong U.S. leadership, a change of strategic direction, and a focused and substantial effort. Results will not come from continuing business as usual or simply adding more resources. Major change is essential.

Fundamental questions remain for both the international and the U.S. effort: Who is in charge? What's the plan? What does success look like? Today U.S. and international goals at times seem unclear at best.

I would say any discussion of reversing the downward trajectory today must start with a discussion of objectives: What is winning? Can we win? Maybe even the most fundamental question: Who is "we"?

Core objectives I think include several for the United States Winning for the United States in this context equates to achieving American policy objectives in Afghanistan and in the region. I would outline them as follows.

First, that the Taliban and al Qaeda are defeated in the region and denied useable sanctuary and that further attacks on the United States and our allies are avoided.

Second, that Pakistan is stabilized as a long-term partner that is economically viable, friendly to the United States, no longer an active base for international terrorism, and in control of its nuclear weapons.

Third, success for NATO: the trans-Atlantic alliance preserved, with NATO's role in Afghanistan recast into a politically sustainable set of objectives.

Fourth, a stable and sustainable Afghan Government that's legitimate in the eyes of the Afghan people, capable of exercising effective governance, and in control of its territory.

Then, finally, the regional states are confident of U.S. staying power and commitment as their partner in the long-term regional struggle against violent extremism.

I would offer that in order to achieve these objectives a mathematical equation might be in order, an equation which sounded like this: that success achieving those objectives equals leadership plus strategy plus resources; leadership plus strategy plus resources.

Our system will tend to distort our focus towards the resource component, towards generating more troops, dollars, euros, and more aid workers and police mentors, and that will absorb tremendous amounts of our energy. But resources cannot be a substitute for the lack of a plan, nor can they take the place of the most essential ingredient, which is the dynamic leadership needed to deliver success.

None of this is new. What is new, however, I think is the growing recognition among even our allies that today's fractious mix of all the different players in Afghanistan cannot effectively reverse the trend lines without strong American leadership. Resources poured into a disjointed strategy with fragmented leadership produce a stalemate, and that's a description we often hear used with regard to Afghanistan today. Stalemate in a counterinsurgency represents a win for the insurgent.

So I think in order to address this we ought to think about focusing first on what I call first principles, or the things we need to do to set conditions for a new approach. The first of those I would characterize as making the Afghan people the center of gravity of all of our efforts. We say this today, but the practical application of this is very uneven across the country. The Afghan people down to the local level are the ultimate judgers, arbiters, of success in Afghanistan. International civil and military activities that alienate the Afghan people, that offend their cultural sensibilities, or further separate them from their government are doomed to fail. Protecting the Afghan people and nurturing their hope and cautious optimism for a better future is an essential requirement of our collective success in Afghanistan.

The second item is creating true unity of effort, a critical principle that we again speak about today often, but we rarely find in the field. It's unity of effort within the military arena and between the civil and the military spheres. Ultimate success is really integrating those two effectively on the ground. We've spent countless dollars and tens of thousands of troops' efforts in Afghanistan over the past 8 years, but a very sober assessment would conclude that the whole has totaled far less than the sum of the parts.

The enemy seeks to disrupt our unity of effort. We have given him many of the tools to do so. Only by dramatically improving the coherence of our military effort and by fully connecting it to the civil reconstruction, governance, and development efforts can effective progress be made.

Third and final principle: There has to be a simultaneous bottoms-up and top-down approach in Afghanistan. The current ongoing debate between strengthening the central government versus strengthening capacity at the local level must be ended. Afghanistan requires both a capable national government in Kabul and an effective local set of institutions at the province, district, and village level. They have seen this in their history 30, 40 years ago.

Action in this arena has to be two-pronged. In Kabul, the international community must focus on the central government in building key capacity there. In local areas, at the province and the district level and down to the village level, bottoms-up action will be required, and in many cases it will have to be enabled and led by

military efforts, especially in the south, which is the least secure part of the country.

In the south and east of Afghanistan, because of poor security, military forces will have to lead civil actors in this enterprise. In the north a much different scenario exists. In fact, I typically call the north of Afghanistan the stability zone and the south of Afghanistan the counterinsurgency zone. In the north, civil efforts and peacekeeping operations by NATO military forces are appropriate. In the south, because of the lack of security, because of the violence, military-led efforts, often by the United States, leading the civilian enterprise are essential.

With the foundation provided by these principles, an overarching counterinsurgency approach must be developed. It has to be tailored to the nuances and differences in each region, but it has to be one strategy, and a unified strategy must include counternarcotics, rule of law, governance, development, building security forces, and counterterrorism, all within a single strategy, all very doable, and all something we've seen before in Afghanistan, but what does not exist today.

Without this unified strategy, I think we will continue on the current path. A change in approach can only be led by the United States.

At the operational level, which is where strategy connects to events on the ground, the sequence of action in my view would look like: stabilize, protect, build, and transition. Over the next few years it might look like the following: 2009 would be the stabilize phase, which essentially is a holding operation focused on setting conditions for a successful Afghan election this year. The Afghan election of 2009, the presidential election, is the strategic report card of the entire enterprise of Afghanistan and it's occurring this year. That has to be the focus of our security efforts for 2009.

For 2010, the protect phase, which will begin this year as well, to allow us to regain the initiative from the enemy in a counteroffensive against his very aggressive, violent attacks, particularly across the southern half of the country. This protect phase would focus on building additional security for the population, growing state institutions, while persuading and enabling the Afghan Government to be more effective at the local level. Again, this will often be led by our military units partnered with civilian limited capacity, especially in the violent areas.

The build phase and consolidation would be 2010 to 2015, again focused on protecting the population, building the state and nonstate institutions. Improved security would have to be built from the bottom up in Afghanistan in this phase and allow the concurrent growth of economic and governance institutions.

Then finally, the transition phase, which is 2015 to 2025, would see the movement to Afghan control. Some of that would occur in the previous phase, especially in the north, where we have a much more secure environment. This transition phase would allow us to return full Afghan control across the country as security has improved, the civil-led effort now is in front of the military effort, and that the growth of Afghan institutions and economic capability has taken root.

Across this entire period of time, we have what I would call a prevent phase, which is counter-sanctuary operations to disrupt the enemy and ensure that we keep him off balance. But we have to do that in a very careful, balanced way to ensure it doesn't unhinge the rest of our operations. That can be a problem that we see in the newspaper headlines today.

Finally, a few brief words on Pakistan. Pakistan arguably presents the United States with its greatest strategic challenge in the region. It's well known that Pakistan's the second largest Islamic country in the world, armed with several dozen nuclear weapons. That said, the conflict in Afghanistan is not simply a subset of a broader challenge in Pakistan. Solving Pakistan will not in and of itself solve Afghanistan. Pakistan requires its own strategy and its own solutions in a regional context as the United States looks at our requirements.

We must assist Pakistan in managing change inside of Pakistan, led by the Pakistanis, economically, militarily, perhaps even societally. But these immense combination of factors are going to be very difficult to overcome.

Essential to our long-term prospects with Pakistan is building a strategic partnership with Pakistan that takes us beyond today's what I call use and abuse relationship, the continual give and take of how we can get more from the Pakistanis and how they can get more from us. We have to have a vision of a long-term relationship there that allows them to believe in the sustained presence and the sustained involvement of the United States in the region. Their lack of that belief today undercuts all of our efforts.

So in conclusion, I would argue that the war in Afghanistan can be won, but only by the concentrated application of strong U.S. leadership beginning here in Washington, a new unified civil-military strategy which must be implemented from the bottom up on the ground, and the right resources to enable a new set of dynamic leaders to fully implement this new plan.

We must clearly acknowledge that only the United States can be the engine that powers this train and it's the only nation that can lead this renewed international effort.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of General Barno follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY LTG DAVID W. BARNO, USA (RET.)

Serious problems in Afghanistan demand a "reset" of the international effort to reverse the decline and set a new trajectory. The central component of success required in this fragmented endeavor is the reassertion of American leadership of our friends and allies. This discussion focuses upon understanding U.S. goals, defining our core objectives, identifying first principles for success, and depicting a phased approach to a military strategy. It also briefly speaks to issues with Pakistan and Afghanistan. This paper reflects significant collaboration and discussion with David Kilcullen, counterinsurgency (COIN) expert and former Australian Army officer. However, the opinions expressed here are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect either those of Dr. Kilcullen or those of the Department of Defense.

INTRODUCTION

The international endeavor in Afghanistan at the beginning of 2009 is drifting toward failure. There is still time to turn it around, but this will take strong U.S. leadership, a change of strategic direction and a focused and substantial effort. Results will not come from continuing "business as usual" or simply adding more resources. Major change is essential.

Eight years into a broad and substantial multi-national investment and 2 years since the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) assumed military leadership, the Taliban have returned in growing strength, poor governance and corruption are widespread, the Afghan people's confidence is ebbing, and the political sustainability of NATO's effort over the long term is in question. An increasingly fractured international civil effort is mirrored by a fragmented NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) military organization with 41 members—all of whom operate under differing rules and a myriad of national strategies and caveats. Fundamental questions remain for both the international and U.S. effort: Who is in charge? What is the plan? What does success look like? Today, U.S. and international goals and objectives are unclear at best. Success is possible, but only if dramatic changes are applied—and applied rapidly. 2009 will be a decisive year in Afghanistan—for the international community, for the Afghan people, and for the Taliban.

DEFINING OUR GOALS

Any discussion of reversing a downward trajectory in Afghanistan must start with a discussion of objectives. What is "winning?" Can we "win?" Even the most fundamental question: who is "we?" Different actors in the Afghan campaign have disparate interests and objectives, a reality often poorly appreciated. The goals of the Afghan Government may not be synonymous with those of the international community. The goals of NATO members and the alliance writ large may not be identical to those of the United States. The goals of the diverse civil players in Afghanistan—Afghan and international—may not align well with those of the military forces fighting what most would describe as a deadly COIN fight—a full-fledged war.

While each of these groups has its own set of discrete objectives, this paper will focus on the challenges from an American perspective. Bottom line up front: Success in Afghanistan will require a re-assertion of American leadership. While such leadership must be exercised through close and genuine partnership with our friends and allies wherever possible, the past 3 years of decline have amply demonstrated that lack of full American attention and an over-reliance on other actors and international institutions as substitute for strong U.S. leadership will ultimately fall short.

CORE OBJECTIVES

"Winning" for the U.S. in this context equates to achieving American policy objectives in Afghanistan and in the region. Those objectives can be outlined as follows:

- The Taliban and al Qaeda defeated in the region and denied usable sanctuary; further attacks on the United States or allies avoided.
- Pakistan stabilized as a long-term partner that is economically viable, friendly to the United States, no longer an active base for international terrorism and in control of its nuclear weapons.
- NATO success: the transatlantic alliance preserved with NATO's role in Afghanistan recast into a politically sustainable set of objectives.
- A stable, sustainable Afghan Government that is legitimate in the eyes of the Afghan people, capable of exercising effective governance and in control of its territory.
- Regional states confident of U.S. staying power and commitment as their partner in the multi-faceted regional struggle against violent extremism.
- The United States' regional circle of friends expanded, and the influence of enemies (e.g., violent extremists) diminished.

In order to accomplish these objectives, the U.S. must work closely with a myriad of partners—first and foremost, but also the governments of allies, friends, and neighbors who comprise both the international military and civil efforts. Additional stakeholders include a diverse set of actors from nongovernmental organizations, private entities and international institutions such as United Nations and its many agencies.

None of this is new—what is new, however is the growing recognition that this diverse mix of sometimes fractious players cannot effectively counter an increasingly powerful enemy without strong U.S. leadership. Of the myriad of actors involved, only the United States can provide the leadership "engine" required for the multi-faceted international to succeed in Afghanistan: it alone possesses the resources, regional influence and combat capabilities to act as lead nation—from facing the growing military threat to the provision of "in-conflict" (versus "post-conflict") reconstruction and development efforts. The United States recognizes that it has vital interests at stake in Afghanistan and the region; many other nations view their vital interests in Afghanistan as simply preserving their relationship with the United States.

SUCCESS: LEADERSHIP PLUS STRATEGY PLUS RESOURCES

Put as a mathematical equation, success—meeting the above U.S. policy objectives—derives from the balanced combination of leadership, strategy and resources. Our system distorts our focus toward the resource component: generating more troops, more dollars and euros, more aid workers and police mentors absorbs vast amounts of our energy. But resources cannot be a substitute for the lack of a plan—nor can they take the place of the most central ingredient: the dynamic leadership necessary to deliver success.

Missing during the past 3 years of de facto NATO primacy was an effective American leadership "engine" to unify and drive the international effort in Afghanistan toward a singular set of objectives and strategy. Beginning in 2005, the U.S. largely approached the military handoff of the Afghan conflict to NATO as a "divestiture" opportunity—NATO would take charge of Afghanistan, demonstrate the alliance's relevance in the 21st century, and free the U.S. to focus on the immense challenges in Iraq. At the U.S. Embassy, an integrated U.S. civil-military enterprise in 2005 shifted toward a separate civil approach with the dissolution of the overall U.S. military headquarters in Kabul and the arrival of NATO as the over-arching military command.

Unfortunately, despite a new American commander leading NATO's ISAF for the first time, the conflict rapidly became decentralized in application—much different from previous U.S.-led NATO missions (such as the 1995 Balkans "Implementation Force" effort or 1999 Kosovo Air War). This individualistic approach with contributing nations effectively designing their own campaigns has proven problematic. The past 2 years of NATO command in Afghanistan have exposed numerous flaws in alliance inter-operability and seen a spike to unprecedented levels of insecurity and both military and civilian casualties—violence today is up 543 percent on 2005, according to United Nations figures, a rise of several orders of magnitude over the previous 5 years. 2007's high point of violent incidents became 2008's year's lowest point.

In the military dimension, 2005 levels of U.S. and coalition unity of command has largely been replaced by loosely coordinated NATO national efforts focused on the small slices of Afghanistan, semi-autonomous from any unified military strategy on the ground—and in some regions simply providing a purely peacekeeping (and often symbolic) military presence. NATO has spoken of a "comprehensive approach" in its operations, but confusion regarding NATO's historic role as a conventional military alliance have preempted it from taking greater ownership of integration of military and civil effects in this irregular war where success requires the effective integration of both. Many NATO nations remain profoundly uncomfortable characterizing the effort in Afghanistan as a "war" at all—despite rocket attacks, roadside bombs, ambushes and thousands of casualties on all sides. In the civil sphere, the U.N. mission has broadly lacked the will and until recently, the mandate to unify the civil sector, and still avoids the notion of somehow "joining up" with a military organization and strategy. In sum, the current approach has proven a recipe for deterioration and potential failure.

Resources poured into a disjointed strategy with fragmented leadership produce stalemate—the description often applied to the current situation in Afghanistan. Stalemate, in a COIN, represents a win for the insurgent.

Lack of continuity and coherence in our leadership and our strategy removes any possibility of delivering effective results without a major change of approach. Over the last 8 years, our standard response to challenges in Afghanistan has always focused on more resources; at the same time we have cycled through at least six different U.S. military commanders, seven NATO ISAF commanders, six different U.S. embassy leaders, and four chiefs of the U.N. Mission.

The number of diverse "strategies" has closely paralleled this revolving door of senior leadership. In this extraordinarily complex conflict, strategy is important (and will be explored below), but leadership is vital—leadership that includes both organizational structures (e.g., military commands) and people: the human beings who will fill critical roles in the effort, from senior NATO military commander to U.S. ambassador.

FIRST PRINCIPLES

Achieving success in Afghanistan requires the international community—led by the United States—to focus on three "first principles" in order to create the conditions for a new approach. These principles must be the touchstones of any new strategy and provide a lens through which any set of decisions should be viewed. Absent these principles, no new strategies, no infusion of troops and money, and no increased in international support will prove effective.

First, the Afghan people are the center of gravity of all efforts. This fundamental understanding must underpin and influence every aspect of a new approach in Afghanistan. Securing the population entails more than simply protection from the Taliban: success requires the Afghan people to have confidence in their personal security, health and education, access to resources, governance and economic future—a broad "human security" portfolio. The Afghan people, down to the local level, are the ultimate arbiters of success in Afghanistan. Progress rather than perfection is a standard they understand and will accept. On the other hand, international civil and military activities that alienate the Afghan people, offend their cultural sensibilities, or further separate them from their government are doomed to fail. Nurturing the reasonable hope and cautious optimism of the Afghan people in a better future is the sine qua non of our collective success in Afghanistan.

Second, creating actual unity of effort within the civil and military spheres is essential—and ultimately integrating the two. Countless dollars and tens of thousands of troops have been committed to Afghanistan over the past 8 years, but a sober assessment would conclude that the whole has totaled far less than the sum of the parts. The enemy seeks to disrupt our unity of effort; we have given him many of the tools to do so. Only by dramatically improving the coherence of the military effort and by connecting it to the civil reconstruction, governance and development effort will effective progress be made. A "comprehensive approach" wherein each nation designs its own national approach ensures disunity of effects.

The civil dimension of the enterprise has been even more fragmented than the disjointed military effort. Successful Afghan Government programs such as the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS), the Independent Directorate of Local Government, and the National Solidarity Program should form the drivers of this integrated effort—and serve as the nexus of an integrated civil-military plan. Only the United States has the capacity to lead this integrated effort—and it should exercise its leadership by fully supporting and enabling the Afghan Government, allowing allies and the international community to solidify behind an Afghan plan, with an Afghan face, built on Afghan institutions with improved capacity and effectiveness.

Third, simultaneous bottom-up and top-down action is required. The recurrent debate between strengthening the central government versus strengthening capacity at the local level must be ended. Afghanistan requires both a capable national government in Kabul and effective, legitimate local institutions at province, district and village level. Models for this relationship exist in Afghan history over the centuries, most recently in the 1960s and early 1970s. Action in this realm must be two-pronged: Kabul and the central government as the "top-down" focus of the Kabul-based international community; and province and district level "bottoms-up" action, enabled (and sometimes led) by military efforts.

Improvements in central government from the capital must become the main task for the Kabul-based international community, with institution-building efforts jointly led by the United States, key allies, and United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan: effective local government will be difficult if the national institutions of power remain broken. These efforts should be focused toward key ministries of the Afghan Government, which directly impact the local population, as well as on support for a more effective executive system around the president. At the same time, a renewed effort must be made to concentrate resources and direct assistance at the growth of local governance capabilities and sustainable State and societal institutions at the province and district level.

In the south and east, because of the poor security environment, much of this effort must be led by military forces with civil actors in support—a different scenario from the north, where much better security permits civil-led efforts. As security improves (akin to the north and west), the primacy of military versus civil roles can be reversed. As in Iraq, improvements in security are an essential first step that will prompt faster progress in governance and development programs, which will in turn enable greater security, leading ultimately to a virtuous cycle of improving conditions. Moreover, focused international attention in Kabul can do much to provide increased resources for provinces and districts, as well as to enforce accountability—while adhering to the "first, do no harm" commandment in influencing local matters.

With the foundation provided by these first principles, an approach for the next several years can be outlined.

OPERATIONAL SEQUENCING

The broad outline of a new strategy in Afghanistan translates into an operational sequence of reducing the threat while securing the population, simultaneously building up the capacity and legitimacy of the Afghan Government at the central and

local level, then transitioning each category of effect to sole Afghan control once a sustainable Afghan capability is achieved.

This is a classic COIN strategy for Afghanistan—but a unified strategy as opposed to the multiple disjointed approaches that exist today. Due to the protracted nature of COIN, the severe lack of development and infrastructure in the region, and the intractable nature of regional dynamics affecting the conflict (such as the India-Pakistan confrontation) this strategy is a long-term enterprise that may take 10 to 15 years of effort to deliver decisive and enduring results.

However, assuming the international community allocates adequate resources and chooses sound security objectives, enough progress might be made to allow significant reductions in coalition combat troops well before this time, based on conditions on the ground rather than a rigid timeline.

But executing a strategy focused on the long-term in Afghanistan is currently not feasible, due to the current dangers that are the result of the decay of government legitimacy and a deteriorating security situation on the ground. So before we can begin executing a long-term strategy the United States and the international community must first halt the deterioration, stabilize the situation, and regain the initiative. Only the United States can lead this effort, and only through a military-led action in its first phases.

Therefore, at the operational level, the level at which strategy is implemented through campaigns and civilian programs on the ground, the sequence of action is "Stabilize, Protect, Build, Transition." This can be summarized as follows:

2009—Stabilize Phase (Holding Operation): Focus a surge of U.S. and Afghan forces, and additional combat forces from other partners willing to contribute, on the central essential task of protecting the population during the August 2009 elections and on stabilizing the security situation. The election outcome will be a key test of legitimacy of the Afghan Government, and indirectly, the international effort. A successful election outcome—one that meets international standards of fairness and transparency and strengthens Afghan institutions—offers the chance to hit the political reset button, restoring the legitimacy of the Afghan Government and with it the credibility of the international effort.

2010—Protect/Regain the Initiative Phase (Counter-offensive): continue to protect the population and state institutions while persuading, enabling and mentoring the Afghan Government to govern more effectively—top-down and bottom-up. This will entail substantial growth in security forces: U.S., allied, Afghan Army and Police.

2010–2015—Building Success Phase (Consolidation): protect the population, build Afghan state and non-state institutions. Improved security built from the bottom up around the country provides space for concurrent growth of key economic and governance functions. Success in the security sphere incentivizes reconciliation efforts. Begin selective transition (Afghanization) in the north and west.

2015–2025—Transition/Movement to Afghan Control: continue selective transition—as further geographical areas (provinces/regions) or functional aspects (e.g. agriculture, local government, customs and border protection, policing) of the state achieve sustainable stability, hand-off control over them to responsible Afghan institutions. International military presence draws down.

Continuous—Prevent (Counter-Sanctuary Operations) Throughout the operational sequence above, the "prevent" task is concurrent, continuous, and (because it disrupts other tasks) is conducted only to the limited level needed to prevent another international terrorist attack on the scale of the September 11 attacks. Tactical opportunities which undermine broader strategic goals are avoided.

POLITICAL STRATEGY

Although providing a detailed political strategy is outside of the scope of this piece, a short synopsis of the complementary political approach is provided here. The underpinning political strategy is to regain the initiative through a sustained surge of international military efforts partnered with improved local civil functions while generating increased leverage over the Afghan Government, aimed at reversing its loss of legitimacy through the circuit-breaker of successful 2009 elections. This increased leverage is then used, via persuasive, enabling and coercive measures ("carrot and stick"), to create a reformed Afghan Government that governs in a more effective and credible manner (building on its own improved legitimacy

through the 2009–2010 elections process, ideally including district elections promised in 2002 but not scheduled so far).

As part of this overall political approach, the negotiation and reconciliation strategy is aimed at identifying and co-opting reconcilable elements of the loose insurgent confederation, while simultaneously targeting and eliminating the tiny minority of irreconcilables. Strength matters in this effort: regaining the psychological initiative by creating military success accelerates the potential for breakdown of Taliban fighters and promotes reconciliation—insurgents with no hope for a future are much more likely to lay down their weapons than those who believe they are winning. Conversely, pursuing negotiations while your adversary perceives he is winning negates any prospects for success.

THE MILITARY STRATEGY

An effective military strategy is paramount in an environment where all agree that lack of security prevents progress across all other elements of power. Despite the role of the enemy—Taliban and affiliated networks—in creating this dangerous security environment, coalition military forces must avoid the temptation to focus upon the enemy as the centerpiece of their actions to restore security: the population must remain the center of gravity. Focusing on the enemy risks endlessly chasing an elusive actor who has no fixed locations he must defend, and can thus melt away at will. It also creates civilian casualties, undermining popular support for the effort, as the enemy hides behind the population and deliberately provokes casualties.

NORTH VS SOUTH: STABILITY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY APPROACHES

Geographically, Afghanistan can be broadly divided into two security zones: the relatively more secure northern part of the country (the "Stability Zone") and the dangerous and unstable south (the "Counterinsurgency Zone"). A military strategy for Afghanistan must recognize this disparity and of necessity focus its finite resources and planning upon the south. The Stability Zone (comprising Regional Command (RC)-North based in Mazar e Sharif and RC-West based in Herat) presently demands few military forces: Afghan National Army units stationed there are largely underemployed (while currently unavailable to rotate to the south). NATO forces in the north perform a traditional peace-keeping and reconstruction role—offering a useful security presence but making little direct contribution to stabilizing the much more dangerous south. That said, pockets of Taliban influence are growing in Pashtun areas across the north, and NATO military forces assigned to these areas must be prepared to counter this increasing threat.

The Counterinsurgency (COIN) Zone—the primary area of insecurity and combat action—comprises RC-East based in Bagram and RC-South in Kandahar. Forces in the COIN Zone are engaged in near-continuous combat action and account for the bulk of casualties in both NATO ISAF and in Operation Enduring Freedom—U.S. counterterrorism forces not under NATO command. Enemy suicide attacks, ambushes, roadside bombs and popular intimidation occur predominantly in the COIN Zone.

POPULATION SECURITY: MILITARY LEAD

A population-centric strategy focused upon the COIN Zone should be based upon classic COIN theory, modified and tailored so that it applies to the specific circumstances of the Afghan context. Owing to the very dangerous security environment in the COIN Zone, military commanders must take the lead in the civil-military effort. Military civil affairs units joined by a select number of appropriately trained and equipped civilian volunteers, with adequate legal authorities, will focus on improving the accountability and performance of Afghan provincial and district governance, catalyzing economic development and improving the rule of law. Civilian volunteers will often be at the same levels of risk as the military units with whom they are partnered—which reinforces the need for military-led efforts with "combat" reconstruction and development capabilities.

As increased (mostly American) units flow into the COIN Zone—perhaps as many as 30,000 more in 2009 alone—both combat actions and casualties will increase as more contacts between Taliban and coalition forces ensue. For this reason, the level of violence involving the coalition will be a poor metric for success in 2009—regardless of whether we are winning or losing, the level of incidents will rise sharply. Rather, the key success metrics will be control over population centers and Afghan-on-Afghan violence.

Military commanders in the south and east must position their forces to control and protect major population centers (cities, towns and larger villages) while ensur-

ing freedom of access along key routes of communication. Areas that cannot be protected using coalition troops must be secured by the presence of special forces and advisory teams, working with local government and Afghan forces at the district level to raise and employ local security volunteers (in the nature of a neighborhood watch) and supported by quick-reaction forces in nearby major centers. This role should become the primary focus of special forces—much different from their principal "door-kicking" mission of today.

Inherent in providing security to population centers is a robust parallel effort to improve governance and extend development and reconstruction across key sectors. The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) concept has proven useful in this contested environment and should be expanded to district level through the fielding of District Reconstruction Detachments and Governance Transition Teams. Deploying PRTs down to district level will provide an implementing reality to the "bottom-up" approach and complement "top-down' reform in Kabul. In broad terms, civil-military integration and unity of effort in Kabul argues for a diplomatic-led, centralized approach; civil-military integration in the contested space across the COIN Zone argues for a military-led, decentralized effort until security can be returned to a more normal level (e.g., northern Afghanistan: the Stability Zone).

AREA OWNERSHIP: DELIVERING RESULTS

Military combat units in the COIN Zone must operate within a principle of "area ownership" where unit commanders "own" the primary responsibility for entire segments of territory—districts and even provinces—and lead a unified civil, military, and Afghan Government effort to ensure coherent, mutually supportive results within these areas. "Area Ownership" is a derivative of the New York City Police precinct approach of the 1990s, where precinct captains were held fully accountable for crime in their precinct—but were given all the tools and support to change the picture; this one person owning all resources and all outcomes is absent in today's approach and contributes to both fragmentation of effort and lack of accountability for results.

The new approach should be visibly Afghan-led and connected to the ANDS goals, but coalition military forces have an essential behind-the-scenes role to play: "leadership from the rear." Only by integrating all of these civil-military efforts under one commander will synergy and effectiveness be achieved. The coalition military commander must be partnered with his Afghan National Army counterpart and the local Afghan Governmental leader—be it provincial governor or district administrator. The disjointed approaches employed to date—dividing military and civil (and even Afghan) enterprises in the face of a resurgent enemy—have taken us to the point of failure. It is past time to make the bold shift required in order to assure success.

FROM MENTORING TO PARTNERSHIP

An essential shift in operational technique is also needed, away from today's mentoring-only approach (where small teams military personnel organized as Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLTs) or Embedded Training Teams (ETTs) are responsible to advise entire Afghan units) towards an approach that complements these teams by partnering entire Afghan military and police units with coalition counterparts.

At present, because of the security situation, our often under-manned coalition advisor teams can only be in a limited number of places and find it extremely difficult to observe and monitor the activity of their dispersed Afghan unit. Police and military units tend to operate on their own, with only limited coordination with each other and with coalition forces.

By contrast, experience in Iraq and in parts of Afghanistan (such as RC-East) where a partnering model has been used, suggests that partnering whole units in such a way that any patrol or operation, regardless of size, always includes a coalition military, Afghan military and Afghan police component (and ideally also an Afghan civil governance component), improves the performance of all three elements.

Coalition forces' performance improves because, since they always work closely with an Afghan partner unit, their level of local knowledge, language skill and situational awareness improves dramatically. This creates fewer civilian casualties than occur during unilateral operations, and allows for a subtler and less disruptive approach to the local population.

Afghan military units' performance improves, because they have a constant example and model of correct operational technique and appropriate military behavior constantly before their eyes, and because of the indirect fire, intelligence support, transportation and other enablers available to them through coalition forces.

Afghan police effectiveness improves because they are supported by military partners in the execution of law and order functions (rather than, as now, carrying alone the burden of COIN operations for which they are ill-trained and poorly equipped) and because the level of police corruption and abuse drops dramatically when coalition and Afghan military forces are present to independently monitor police behavior. Meanwhile the presence of police officers creates another whole category of ways to respond to security incidents, allowing arrest or questioning, instead of leaving military forces to respond with potentially lethal force.

This approach complements, but does not replace, the existing coalition advisory teams that perform an essential and irreplaceable function as "up close and personal" daily mentors to Afghan police and military leaders. It provides them with much greater scope to monitor, advise and assist their supported unit, since they are able to be in many places at once and can draw on greater coalition resources. These mentoring teams must be fully resourced immediately in order to deliver their full potential in an environment where their role becomes more vital every day.

ENHANCING COMMAND AND CONTROL: MILITARY UNITY OF EFFORT

Military forces too must be organized in ways to optimize rather than degrade their effectiveness in a fight for which there will never be adequate resources. Unity of effort between civil and military leadership cited above is one dimension. Equally important is the need to streamline and align the NATO and U.S. military commands to achieve maximum results. The NATO headquarters in Kabul today performs too many functions to be effective: de facto, it operates at the political-military, strategic, operational and tactical levels—a span of control and responsibility which violates military doctrine and which has proved largely ineffective. Serving all tasks allows it to perform none well. Division of responsibilities is overdue: a three-star U.S. headquarters whose commander is dual-hatted as a NATO deputy commander should be positioned at Kandahar and given the day-to-day COIN fight across the COIN Zone.

The COIN Zone 3-star headquarters should have selected multi-national composition, but only with long-serving staff members of at least 12 months tour duration. Its "battlespace" or assigned territory should include all of RC-South and RC-East, and both of those two-star RC divisional-level commanders should report to the three-star Commander of the COIN Zone.

In a much-needed change from today, the COIN Zone commander should have full command and control of all military forces operating in his domain; his U.S. command authority makes that possible. This should explicitly include Special Forces of all types and all Afghan National Army ETTs and OMLTs. Moreover, the COIN Zone commander should create a unified headquarters that fully includes ANA command and control capabilities into this single fight across southern Afghanistan—a missing component today.

The COIN Zone commander should be assigned a multi-national senior civil staff to facilitate the integration of the civil and military efforts across his zone. This civilian staff (and their counterparts at lower level) would not fall under the military command but would serve in what the military calls a "supporting-supported" role to the commander: he is "supported" by their efforts and they are "supporting" his. This arrangement parallels the de facto approach in U.S. PRTs today. At day's end however, the military commander is held to account for the integrated outcome of this fused effort across his battlespace; the same holds true for each of his subordinate commanders, each of whom should be assigned a similar small civil staff to oversee and integrate civilian efforts across their discrete areas of operation. The Embedded PRTs employed with excellent effect in Iraq during the surge could serve as a useful model here.

Of key importance, these commanders and their civil-military staffs must connect as equal partners with parallel Afghan Governmental and military leaders unified by oversight—"ownership"—of the same areas. This much different approach to unity of effort is a leap ahead from today's independent "stovepipes" of national and agency approaches; these often extend down to provinces from Kabul or even national capitols abroad with little regard for unified effect. Again, this military-led, civilian supported approach is only designed for high threat areas (i.e., the COIN Zone) and will revert to a more traditional civilian-led model once security is significantly improved.

CONTINUITY: BUILDING EQUITY IN THE OUTCOME

Finally, the new strategy for the COIN Zone (RCs South and East) must be co-developed by the military commander and his civil-military staff who will imple-

ment and be held accountable for the strategy's results. Area ownership also implies buy-in by those carrying out the mission, and vests great authority in subordinate commanders to modify the strategy as facts on the ground change. Arguably, these commanders and their headquarters in a sustained counterinsurgency campaign should anchor themselves in their areas for prolonged periods—the senior-most leaders for upwards of 2 years between rotations—to improve continuity and develop a "long view" beyond today's short term focus.

The time is also ripe for the U.S. to re-examine its combat headquarters assignments to Afghanistan to either "plant the flag" of two divisional and one corps-level headquarter to finish the fight (possibly on an individual rotation model); or to specialize perhaps three or four designated divisions with Afghanistan expertise and align them for all future rotations. To date, the U.S. Army has rotated five different two-star divisional level headquarters through Afghanistan in 7 years, with yet a sixth new headquarter arrival pending. Successful counterinsurgencies require relationship-building, deep cultural knowledge, and sustained focus—as commanders in RC-East have demonstrated, continuity is, in itself, an extremely important operational effect. Now is the time to reset this equation for the long haul.

PAKISTAN

Although describing a strategic approach to Pakistan is beyond the scope of this piece, ignoring the linkage between Afghanistan and Pakistan would be irresponsible.

Pakistan arguably presents the United States with its greatest strategic challenge in the region. The second largest Islamic country in the world armed with several dozen nuclear weapons demands our attention. That said, the conflict in Afghanistan is not simply a subset of a broader set of challenges in Pakistan. "Solving" Pakistan would not in and of itself "solve" Afghanistan. Afghan problems are as much internally driven (crime, corruption, narcotics; lack of governance, infrastructure, economics) as they are any result of the insurgents who operate from sanctuary in Pakistani border areas. Solving these internal problems requires creating the right conditions of security, but equally important requires adopting an effective development, economic and governance approach within Afghanistan itself.

Pakistan requires its own strategy and its own solutions as the U.S. assesses its requirements in the region. The U.S. must assist Pakistan in managing change—economically, militarily, perhaps even societally—as it deals with immense problems brought about by a deadly combination of both internal and external factors. The U.S. must partner with the Pakistani Government to develop a vision of a long-term strategic partnership between Pakistan and the United States—not one simply based upon today's transactional relationship anchored in fighting terrorists in the tribal areas. Much like the U.S. has evolved the idea of a long-term strategic partnership with India, commensurate effort must be invested into a parallel track with Pakistan—but not as a zero sum game.

As to Pakistan's relationship to the conflict in Afghanistan, U.S. success in reversing the decline in Afghanistan and achieving success would increase our leverage with Pakistan. Arguably, much of the schizophrenic Pakistani approach to the Afghan conflict today is based upon their expectation that the U.S. and our allies lack staying power—and will move rapidly for the exits if failure is imminent. Success in Afghanistan might reverse that perception and lend much greater credibility to U.S. statements of long-term commitment.

CONCLUSION

The international effort in Afghanistan is at a difficult and dangerous crossroads. A serious decline in security is mirrored by lack of good governance and a burgeoning illegal economy, fueling corruption at all levels. The population—buffeted by a series of downturns after the high hopes of mid-decade, are beginning to question both their own government and the presence of foreign forces—especially in light of civilian casualties and some offending tactics. Hope for a better future is diminishing—a clear danger signal. Without substantial and dramatic changes to our approach—leadership, strategy and resources—the risk of failure is great.

Losing in Afghanistan after more than 8 years of major international effort creates potentially horrific results: an insecure Pakistan; a return to deep sanctuary for Al Qaeda; increased regional instability across south and central Asia; a lack of confidence in American staying power and military prowess; and a fragmentation of NATO and the transatlantic alliance. Failure truly is not an option.

The arrival of the new U.S. administration is exactly the right moment to revisit our collective objectives in Afghanistan; to re-animate NATO's involvement; to re-

generate resource commitments; and to re-assert U.S. leadership—which more than any other single external factor is vital to success.

The war in Afghanistan can be won, but only through the concentrated application of strong leadership, beginning in Washington; a new, unified civil-military strategy, which must be implemented from the bottom-up on the ground; and the right mix of resources to enable a new set of dynamic leaders to fully implement the new plan. But we must clearly acknowledge that only the United States can be the engine that powers this train, and the only nation that can lead this renewed international effort.

The next several years will demand an increased military effort—indeed, the dangerous security situation across much of the country will require a military lead to enable the delivery of many civil effects. But ultimately, the war must be won by the Afghan people and their government. The role of the international community, while vital, simply creates the conditions—space, time, human capacity—to allow the Afghan people to prevail. But only a renewed approach which delivers focused U.S. leadership to an endeavor which is today is so clearly off-track can reverse the trend lines and set the stage for enduring success. This is eminently within our reach to achieve.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, General.

Ambassador Dobbins.

STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES DOBBINS, DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY CENTER, RAND CORPORATION

Ambassador DOBBINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The question before us is whether it's possible for the United States to turn around the situation in Afghanistan as we successfully did in Iraq in 2007 and 2008. I think there are reasons to be cautious in answering that question. Afghanistan is, after all, larger and more populous than Iraq, while American, allied, and Afghan forces are much smaller than those that we had in Iraq. Afghanistan is more isolated and inaccessible. It's far poorer and less developed, and it's been at civil war for 30 years.

Yet we still have several advantages in Afghanistan that we lacked in Iraq, given the nature of our entry. First of all, the American presence in Afghanistan remains more popular than it has ever been in Iraq. Second, President Karzai retains more popularity than any leader in Iraq has yet been able to secure. Third, we have far more international support for our efforts in Afghanistan than we ever did in Iraq. Fourth, all of Afghanistan's neighbors and near neighbors, with the partial exception of Pakistan, helped to form the Karzai Government and fully accept its legitimacy and wish to see it succeed. Finally, sectarian animosities in Afghanistan are less intense than Iraq.

These conditions are changing, however, and they're changing for the most part for the worst. Afghans are becoming increasingly critical of our presence. President Karzai is losing domestic and international support. Violence is increasing. Civilian casualties are climbing, threatening to generate new refugee flows and exacerbate tensions among these ethnic groups. Thus the shift in American attention and international attention, from Iraq to Afghanistan has come none too soon.

I'd like to use my remaining time to suggest a number of additional steps that could be taken to improve our prospects for succeeding in Afghanistan. By succeeding, I mean succeeding in turning around the negative security trends.

First, I think we need to unify the NATO and American military command chain. At the moment we have a division of forces in Afghanistan. Most of the forces in Afghanistan do not come under General Petraeus and U.S. Central Command. Most of them come under the Supreme Allied Commander, whose headquarters is in Belgium, another American general, General Craddock. The division in command goes down into the country as well, with Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and ISAF running two completely separate command chains.

Clearly we can continue to muddle through with this divided command structure, as we have for years. But I think if there's any chance of Ambassador Holbrooke and General Petraeus pulling off in Afghanistan what General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker were able to pull off in Iraq, that's only going to happen if General Petraeus is given full control over the military half of that relationship. At the moment he controls less than 50 percent of the forces in Afghanistan.

I think there's a fairly simple way of doing that, although it would require a political decision, and that is to make General Petraeus a major NATO commander. At present there are two major NATO commands, one in Mons, Belgium, Supreme Allied Command-Europe, and a second one in Norfolk, which is doing transformation. Now, transformation is yesterday's priority. It may be tomorrow's priority as well. But it's not today's. Today's is winning the war in Afghanistan, and therefore I would take all those NATO staffers from Norfolk and move them down to Tampa and create a major NATO command so that General Petraeus would have responsibility to the American President for the American part of this operation and responsibility to the NATO Council for the NATO part of this operation, and run that part of the operation through an integrated military command structure. I think this is the only way that we can unite the effort successfully.

I'd point out that since we invaded, along with the U.K., North Africa in 1942, that's the system we have used in all of our joint endeavors with the Europeans—the Cold War, Bosnia, Kosovo. Afghanistan is the first time where we've had divided command structures in NATO and allied operations.

Second, in my written testimony I offered a couple of suggestions about how we can improve and unify the command of the civilian assets, that is to say improve the relationship between the United States and its allies and provide more coherent leadership, for instance, to the provincial reconstruction team effort, which at the moment is completely—is completely unstructured. Twenty-two Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), the majority of them are in fact run not by the United States, but by allies. Each ally runs its own on their own standards and there is no practical oversight or commonality among the approaches of the civilian part of this counterinsurgency effort.

Third, I think that we need to bolster the quality and size, not only of the troop presence and for that matter the civilian presence in Afghanistan, but the quality of the staff that both our ambassador and our military commander there have. One of the reasons that Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus were successful in Iraq was that they had large, sophisticated staffs that were at-

tuned to the local situation and could conduct a very difficult and complex counterinsurgency operation successfully. I don't think we've put that richness of resources into Afghanistan yet. Ambassador Crocker, for instance, had half a dozen ambassadors working for him in subordinate positions, and General Petraeus had a very large staff, including a number of civilians who brought expertise that the military don't normally bring to a situation. So we need to bolster that aspect of the effort as well.

Fourth, as General Barno suggested, we need to combine our top-down approach in Afghanistan of building up the Afghan army and the Afghan Government with a bottom-up approach, something similar, under admittedly quite different circumstances, to the Sons of Iraq effort that we instituted in Iraq. I have some suggestions for that. I do think that in Iraq we essentially took 100,000 insurgents and put them on our payroll, and thereby turned around the security situation dramatically in the Sunni parts of the country. Exactly how we replicate that in Iraq and Afghanistan is going to depend on very different circumstances, but it does imply a willingness to talk to at least some of the Taliban and to accommodate at least some of their aspirations.

Fifth, I think we need to pay more attention to insurgent activities in the Pakistani province of Baluchistan. So far, all of our economic assistance and all of our Predator strikes have come into the Northwest Frontier Province, which is not odd since that's where al Qaeda tends to operate and it's also where the insurgent groups that were operating against American forces in the northern part of the country and eastern part of the country were located. However, that's not where the Taliban is headquartered. That's not where the Taliban is operating from. It's operating from Baluchistan. Its main council meets in Quetta. So I think we need to complement the attention that we've been paying to Northwest Frontier Province with a comparable level attention to the situation in Baluchistan.

Sixth, I think we need to support the upcoming Afghan elections while remaining scrupulously neutral among the possible candidates. Now, that sounds like a no-brainer and not too hard to do, but it'll in fact be very difficult. It will in practice limit the ability we have to criticize Karzai. The criticisms of Karzai and his government are largely legitimate. It has been penetrated by corruption, and Karzai is sometimes indecisive. But we need to avoid the appearance that we're trying to undermine that government or favor alternative candidates. So that's going to be a very difficult balance to maintain over the next year.

Seventh and lastly, we need to intensify our engagement with Afghanistan's neighbors. Now, I think we all agree that includes most particularly Pakistan, which is the least helpful of the neighbors at the present. But it also means engaging Iran, which has by and large been benign on Afghanistan, but could be considerably more helpful, and continuing to work with Russia and India. All of these countries were our partners back in 2001 after the September 11 strike in overthrowing the Taliban and replacing it with a broadly-based government, and we need to reconstitute that consensus.

Let me conclude by saying a word about what our objectives should be in Afghanistan. I'm often asked, do we seek a secular de-

mocracy, a more developed economy, a strong centralized government, a fully self-sufficient state capable of securing its territory and populace? If so, how realistic are these aims and how long would they take? This it seems to me are not questions that we can or should try to answer definitively at this point. Democratization, development, capacity-building and diplomacy, fighting the insurgents, and negotiating with those that can be won over should all be viewed not as independent goals, but as components of an overall counterinsurgency strategy, the objective of which is to secure the population.

Our job is neither to defeat the Taliban nor to determine the future shape of Afghan society. The American and allied objective should be to reverse the current negative security trends and ensure that fewer innocent Afghans are killed next year than this year. In a counterinsurgency campaign, this is the difference between winning and losing: Are you successfully protecting the population or not? If, as a result of our efforts, the current rise of violence is reversed and the population made more secure, the Afghan people will be able to determine their own future through peaceful rather than violent competition of ideas, people, and political factions. This has begun to happen in Iraq and our objective should be to give the Afghans the same opportunity.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Dobbins follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR JAMES DOBBINS [1]

COUNTERINSURGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN [2]

In September 2001, the United States was attacked from Afghanistan by a global terrorist network that is now headquartered in Pakistan. American attention is now being redirected toward this region. It is not a day too soon.

For the first several years after the collapse of the Taliban regime the Bush administration ignored Afghanistan almost entirely. In Pakistan, its focus was almost entirely on al Qaeda, while it largely ignored the Pakistani regime's continuing ties to the extremist groups that were organizing to reclaim control of Afghanistan. In President Bush's second term this attitude began to change. For the past several years the United States has begun to put more resources into Afghanistan, and to pressure the Government in Islamabad to confront the enemy within. But these efforts have remained what the military call an economy of force exercise. As Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mullen acknowledged a little more than a year ago, "In Afghanistan we do what we can. In Iraq we do what we must."

Afghanistan is larger and more populous than Iraq. It is more isolated and inaccessible. It is far poorer and less developed. It has been in civil war for the past 30 years. Yet we still have several advantages in Afghanistan that we lacked in Iraq, given the nature of our entry. First of all, the American presence in Afghanistan remains more popular than it ever was in Iraq. Second, Karzai retains more popularity than any leader in Iraq has yet been able to secure. Third, we have far more international support for our efforts in Afghanistan than we ever did in Iraq. Fourth, all Afghanistan's neighbors and near neighbors, with the partial exception of Pakistan, helped form the Karzai Government, fully accept its legitimacy, and wish to see it succeed. Finally, sectarian animosities in Afghanistan are less intense than Iraq. Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks and the Shia all compete for wealth and power

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[2] This testimony is available for free download at http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT318/
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but none challenge the identity of Afghanistan as a multi-ethnic bilingual state, none seek to secede, or to drive others out.

It is also worth noting that our opponents in Afghanistan are as disunited as they were, and are in Iraq. We speak of the Taliban as if it were a united enemy, but it represents only one of a number of insurgent groups headquartered in Pakistan. They are united in seeking to drive us out of Afghanistan and topple the Government in Kabul, but otherwise have little in common.

These conditions are changing, and for the most part they are changing for the worse. Afghans are becoming increasingly critical of our presence. President Karzai is losing domestic and international support. Violence is increasing and civilian casualties climbing, threatening to generate new refugee flows and exacerbate tensions among ethnic groups. Thus the shift in attention from Iraq to Afghanistan has come none too soon.

Although the administration is still reviewing its Afghan policy, the broad outlines are apparent—an increase in American troop strength, pressure on Karzai to crack down on corruption, the appointment of Richard Holbrooke as special envoy for both Afghanistan and Pakistan and a recognition that stability in Afghanistan requires changes in Pakistan as well. There are several further steps the United States and its allies should consider.

First, unify the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and American military command chain.

Second, do the same for the civilian effort.

Third, bolster the military and civilian staffs in Afghanistan.

Fourth, institute a bottom up component to our counterinsurgency strategy to complement the top down approach we have followed to date.

Fifth, pay more attention to Afghan insurgent activities in the Pakistani province of Baluchistan.

Sixth, support the upcoming Afghan elections, while remaining scrupulously neutral among the possible candidates.

Seventh, intensify our engagement with Afghanistan's neighbors.

UNIFYING MILITARY COMMAND

Since 1942, when the U.S. and UK established a combined command for the invasion of North Africa, American and its European allies have operated together through a common military command structure, with a supreme commander responding both to the American President, and the leadership of the other allied governments. This is how we waged the Cold War, and conducted the post-Cold War interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo. Afghanistan is the first place where the American and NATO command chains have diverged.

At present the American and allied military effort in Afghanistan are divided between Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). There are American and allied troops in both command chains. Both chains report ultimately to American generals, one in Tampa, FL, and the other in Mons, Belgium. ISAF is presently the larger of the two forces, operating under General Bantz Craddock, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander. OEF, the smaller force, comes under General David Petraeus, head of the U.S. Central Command.

Within Afghanistan the command chain of these two forces converge under yet another American General, David McKiernan, before diverging toward Tampa and Mons. The two forces operate in generally distinct geographic areas, but some assets are necessarily employed in support of both, and some intermingling cannot be avoided. Divided command of this sort inevitably produces unnecessary friction, and is a standing invitation to misunderstanding, failure to render prompt assistance, and at the worst, fratricide. Of course we can continue to muddle through with this complex and confusing arrangement, as we have for the past several years, but there can be no hope that Petraeus and Holbrooke can pull off in Afghanistan the sort of reversal that Petraeus and Crocker managed to produce in Iraq in 2007 as long as Petraeus has control over less than half the American and allied forces in Iraq.

There is a simple solution to this problem. There are currently two major NATO commands, one in Mons, Belgium, and the other in Norfolk, VA. The Norfolk command is charged with "transformation", that is to say the modernization of allied militaries along common lines. This is yesterday's top priority, and perhaps tomorrow's, but it is certainly not today's. Why not transfer these responsibilities back to Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, in Mons, relieving that commander of responsibility for Afghanistan, while moving this second major NATO headquarters to Tampa, putting it under General Petraeus, and giving it and him undivided author-

ity for Afghanistan. Alternatively, NATO could create a third major command for Afghanistan in Tampa, while keeping the two it already has.

This move would allow OEF and ISAF to be combined into a single force under a unified command chain all the way up to the American president and the NATO Council. Some allies want to do only peacekeeping but not counterinsurgency, others only counterinsurgency but not counterterrorism. They might oppose combining OEF and ISAF fearing that their own missions might change. It should be possible to accommodate these limitations within the structure of a single force with several separable missions. Yet even if the OEF and ISAF command chains cannot be fully merged, the efficacy of both will be immensely enhanced if they run in parallel from top to bottom, rather than diverge as they do at present.

UNIFYING CIVIL RECONSTRUCTION

Successful counterinsurgency (COIN) requires the intense integration of civilian and military expertise and activity. This is very difficult, particularly when done on a multilateral basis. The civil COIN effort in Afghanistan is particularly fragmented due to the failure, going back to late 2001, to create a structure and appoint a single leader to pull these activities together.

Holbrooke's appointment puts a single official in charge of American non-military activities in Afghanistan, as well as Pakistan. Several European Governments have recently moved to create similar positions. It would be helpful if the Europeans could be encouraged to appoint a single individual, representing the European Union, to coordinate their national efforts and work with Holbrooke on a unified western approach to stabilization and reconstruction in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

We also need to give some greater coherence to provincial reconstruction efforts. There are currently 26 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan, of which the majority are run not by the United States, but by 13 other allied governments. There is no central structure overseeing these disparate efforts, setting common standards, establishing development priorities and otherwise supporting these teams. The U.S and the other governments fielding PRTs should establish a common administrative office in Kabul which would be responsible for developing a common doctrine, working with NATO, the U.N., the World Bank, the Afghan Government and other donors to set development goals and channel additional resources to these provincial teams.

BOLSTERING STAFF

Throughout the 16 month American occupation of Iraq, the Coalition Provision Authority was never more than 50 percent staffed. What is even more surprising, neither was CJTF–7, the top American military headquarters in Iraq. These staffing shortfalls go far in explaining deficiencies in American performance during that crucial period.

By 2007, these deficiencies had been largely corrected. The surge in troop strength was accompanied by a significant build up in both the quantity and quality of the civilian and military staffs in Baghdad. Crocker had half a dozen former Ambassadors working for him. Petraeus had the support not only of a very talented military staff, but of a number of civilians who came with expertise not normally found within the armed services. The State Department and AID were also able to fully staff and run 22 PRTs located throughout the country.

It was this pool of talent which allowed Petraeus and Crocker to manage the immensely complex and sophisticated strategies that divided our enemies in Iraq, brought former insurgents over to our side, deterred outside meddling and turned the security situation around.

Afghanistan now requires the same sort of surge in the quantity and above all the quality of civilian and military talent, both at the headquarters level and in the field. At present the American PRTs in Afghanistan are still run by the military, in contrast to Iraq. The U.S. will find additional troops for Afghanistan by moving them from Iraq. It may not be possible for State and AID to do likewise. Indeed the burden on our diplomats and aid officials in Iraq may grow as the military presence recedes. Congress should therefore help State and AID generate the resources to surge in Afghanistan even as they hold steady in Iraq.

BUILDING FROM THE BOTTOM UP

Among the elements which reversed Iraq's decent into civil war were a counterinsurgency strategy which gave priority to public security, not force protection, and the decision to organize, arm, and pay large elements of the population that had previously supported the insurgency.

Replicating the first of these effects in Afghanistan will be impossible with the American, allied and Afghan forces at our disposal. The Afghan population is larger than the Iraqi and much more dispersed. Afghan police and military forces are much smaller, as are American and allied troop numbers even after the planned U.S. reinforcement. American, allied and Afghan soldiers will be able to protect the populations in the contested areas only if elements of this population are also enlisted in the effort.

The initial American approach in Afghanistan was bottom up. The U.S. worked with a number of warlords, militia and tribal leaders, including the Northern Alliance and Hamid Karzai, to overthrow the Taliban. More recently the United States and its allies have adopted a largely top down strategy in Afghanistan, seeking to build up the capacity of the Government in Kabul to provide security, justice, education, health, electricity and other public services to its rural population. Progress has been too slow, in part because we wasted the first several years after the fall of the Taliban, but also because, unlike Iraq, Afghanistan has never had much of a central government.

Current circumstances require that we combine the top down and bottom up approaches. A counterinsurgency strategy emphasizing the delivery of security and other public services to the rural populations can only succeed if those populations are enlisted in the effort. The Afghan Government has pioneered some efforts in this regard, but more will be needed. This will prove quite controversial. The Afghan tribal structures are very distinct from those in Iraq, and any effort to replicate the "Sons of Iraq" will need to be adjusted considerably to suit local conditions. Many in the central government will fear that local empowerment will come at their expense. The Tajik, Uzbek and Shia leadership will fear that we are arming their enemies, the Pashtuns, just as the Shia and Kurdish leaders in Iraq looked at the Sunni Awakening skeptically. Wending our way through these minefields is precisely why our military and civilian staffs in Kabul, and the field need to be reinforced with real experts in the region, in counterinsurgency, and economic development.

FOCUSING ON BALUCHISTAN

Insofar as the United States has focused on the sanctuaries from which the Afghan rebels are operating, it has directed its aid, and its Predator strikes on the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) it. This is where the insurgent groups targeting American troops in eastern Afghanistan are headquartered, and also where al Qaeda leaders are located. But the Taliban operates predominantly in the south, not the east of Afghanistan, and does so from the Pakistani province of Baluchistan, not the NWFP. The Taliban Shura, or governing council is known to meet in the city of Quetta, the capital of Baluchistan. Many American reinforcements are slated to be heading to the south of Afghanistan, where they will thus be facing an enemy controlled from Baluchistan.

The utility of targeted killings employing Predator drones over Pakistan is debatable, but to the extent it is useful, there seems no good reason to limit the activity to the NWFP. The extension of American economic assistance and of effective Pakistani Government authority over the border region might actually be somewhat easier in Baluchistan, since unlike the FATA, this border area is at least juridically covered by Pakistani law, and fully within the country's political system.

SUPPORTING THE ELECTIONS

The presidential elections scheduled for later this year could be a major turning point, either enhancing public support for the country's leadership, or moving it further toward civil war. The United States will have a major stake in the outcome, but will need to remain scrupulously neutral if that outcome is to be regarded as legitimate.

This imperative will effectively limit the amount of pressure American officials can usefully put on President Karzai. In recent weeks the Afghan President has come under increasing criticism from Washington for tolerating corruption and failing to meet the aspirations of his people for peace and economic development. No doubt these criticisms are valid, but the administration and Congress should resist the temptation to blame Afghanistan's leadership for our failures. It is only necessary to recall back in 2007, when Congress was busy benchmarking the Iraqi Government, implicitly threatening to abandon them if they did not achieve certain legislative goals. Well, the Iraqi leadership have begun to meet many of those goals, but only after American and Iraqi forces created the security conditions in which mutual accommodation among rival factions became feasible.

A certain level of criticism of Karzai can actually enhance our bona fides as a genuinely neutral party in the contest, given that he is widely, if inaccurately, seen as something of an American creation. Taken too far, however, such pressure could begin to look like Washington was trying to jettison him in favor of another candidate. This could have disastrous consequences.

Whatever we do, Karzai stands a good chance of winning this election, if not on the first ballot, as he did last time, on the second. A far worse occurrence would be an inconclusive or contested result. At present everyone outside Afghanistan and very nearly everyone inside agrees that Hamid Karzai is the legitimate, freely elected President of Afghanistan. Our overriding objective, in how we approach this year's elections, must be to ensure that whoever wins enjoys at least the same degree of acceptance and support inside and outside that country.

ENGAGING THE NEIGHBORS

Afghanistan is a poor, desolate, isolated and inaccessible state surrounded by more powerful neighbors. It has never been fully self sufficient. Its internal peace has always depended upon the attitude of external parties. When its neighbors perceived a common interest in a peaceful Afghanistan, it was at peace. When they did not, it was at war.

In the aftermath of September 11, the United States worked closely with Afghanistan's neighbors and near neighbors to overthrow the Taliban and replace it with a broadly representative, democratically based regime. This unlikely set of partners consisted of Iran, India, and Russia, long-term backers of the Northern Alliance, and Pakistan, until then the patrons of the Taliban. Reconstituting this coalition should be the current objective of American diplomacy. Holbrooke and Petraeus should be encouraged to work closely not just with our European allies, but with all these regional governments, including Iran, with which the United States collaborated very effectively in late 2001.

At some point a new international conference, with participation similar to that which met in Bonn in November 2001 to establish the Karzai regime, might help advance this process. The product of such a conference might be an agreement:

- Among all parties to declare Afghanistan a permanently neutral country;
- By Afghanistan not to permit its territory to be used against the interests of any of its neighbors;
- By its neighbors and near neighbors not to allow their territory to be used against Afghanistan;
- By Afghanistan and Pakistan to recognize their common border;
- By all other parties to guarantee that border; and
- By the United States and its NATO allies to withdraw all forces from Afghanistan as soon as these other provisions have been implemented.

Such a package would give all the participants something of value. Pakistan would secure Afghan recognition of its border and assurances that India would not be allowed to use Afghan territory to pressure or destabilize Pakistan's own volatile border regions. Afghanistan would gain an end to cross border infiltration and attacks. Iran would get assurances that the American military presence on its eastern border would not be permanent.

The Afghan people desperately want peace. They continue to hope that their freely-elected government, the United States and NATO can bring it to them. American forces continue to be welcome in Afghanistan in a way they have never been in Iraq. But public support for Karzai, his government, and the American presence is diminishing. Additional American troops and more aid dollars may be able to reverse, or at least slow these negative trends, but in the long term Afghanistan will be at peace only if its neighbors want it to be. Building such a consensus must be the main objective of American diplomacy in the region.

LONG-TERM GOALS

I am often asked to suggest what our longer-term goals in Afghanistan should be. Do we seek a secular democracy, a more developed economy, a strong centralized government, a fully self sufficient state capable of securing its territory and populace? If so, how realistic are these aims? These, it seems to me, are not questions that we can or should try to answer definitively at this point. Democratization, development, capacity building and diplomacy, fighting the insurgents and negotiating with those that can be won over should all be viewed not as independent goals, but as components of an overall counterinsurgency strategy designed to secure the population.

Thus, our job is neither to "defeat the Taliban" nor to determine the future shape of Afghan society. The American and allied objective should be to reverse the cur-

rently negative security trends and ensure that fewer innocent Afghans are killed next year than this year. In a counterinsurgency campaign, this is the difference between winning and losing—are you successfully protecting the population or not. If, as a result of our efforts, the current rise in violence is reversed and the populace made more secure, the Afghan people will be able to determine their own future through the peaceful, rather than violent competition of ideas, people, and political factions. This has begun to happen in Iraq. Our objective should be to give the Afghans the same opportunity.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Ambassador, very much.

Dr. Strmecki.

STATEMENT OF MARIN J. STRMECKI, PH.D., SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS, SMITH RICHARDSON FOUNDATION

Dr. STRMECKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to share my views with the committee about the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan and to address your questions.

The debate about the Obama administration's policy toward the region has really focused on the wisdom of sending the additional 17,000 troops to Afghanistan. My view is that the situation in Afghanistan had deteriorated to the point that more troops were necessary. However, just as important as sending more forces is the question of what other conditions are necessary to ensure when these forces are sent they can move us toward our objective. I would like to touch on a handful of those conditions.

The first involves the role of Pakistan. A first order priority for the Obama administration must be to undertake a clear-eyed assessment about whether the Pakistani military establishment is doing all that it can to eliminate the sanctuaries on its territory. If it is not doing so—and I do not believe it is—then the task for American diplomacy must be to find a way to address the motivations that are driving Pakistani policies—their geopolitical motivations, their fears, their interests—so that one can move them to a position where they make a strategic choice to fully exert themselves against the problem in the sanctuaries.

Second, the United States, other NATO countries, and the Afghan Government must develop a campaign plan based on classic counterinsurgency principles. We should place central priority on creating security for the Afghan population. This means above all creating persistent presence for security forces, primarily Afghan forces, at the local level, to give the people the confidence that they can share intelligence with us about the enemy without fear of retaliation when our forces are not there.

Third, to support this counterinsurgency campaign, the United States should work with the Afghan Government to dramatically escalate the size and capabilities of Afghan national security forces. This probably means building an Afghan National Army (ANA) to 250,000 troops and an Afghan National Police Force of more than 100,000 personnel. This will be expensive, but it is still the most cost-effective way to secure Afghanistan because deploying an international soldier costs 50 to 100 times more than deploying an Afghan soldier.

Fourth, the United States should work with those Afghans who are seeking to improve governance in their country, reducing corruption and strengthening the civil administration. We are right to

be critical of the Karzai Government in this regard. It has underperformed. But we shouldn't lose hope because there have been achievements—the building of the ANA, promoting rural development and health through Afghan-led national programs, starting the process of appointing better officials to provincial and local levels, and appointing a reform-oriented minister of interior. We can be critical of the Afghans, but we should build on the progress that we are starting to see.

Fifth, the United States and other supporters of Afghanistan must work with its government to bring into balance the military and nonmilitary elements of the strategy. There's a tried and true formula that proper counterinsurgency is 80 percent nonmilitary and 20 percent military. But our efforts, if one looks at budgets and resources and personnel, are the converse.

We need to find ways to build on effective Afghan-led development programs, as well as to create enterprise funds and other mechanisms to stimulate growth.

I'd like to make one final point. In the public debate there have been calls from many circles to define downward our goals in Afghanistan, to abandon the objective of building a stable, effective, and democratic state that would be our ally in the war on terror, and instead to focus simply on the narrow and primarily military objective of preventing Afghan territory from becoming a safe haven for terrorists. Defining our goal downward in this respect would be a terrible mistake. It might be possible or even advisable if the threat in the region had disappeared or was diminishing. But it's a proximate threat and it's a growing threat and located in western Pakistan. It's a threat to us, it's a threat to Afghanistan, it's a threat to stability in Pakistan. We need to work against that problem from the west in Afghanistan, from the east in Pakistan, and in working to the heart of the problem in the border regions.

Afghanistan looks like a very difficult task and it certainly is. But if the Obama administration makes the big decisions early I believe it has the ability to turn the situation around in its first term.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Strmecki follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY DR. MARIN STRMECKI

Mr. Chairman, Senator McCain, and distinguished members of the committee: My name is Marin Strmecki. I am the Senior Vice President and Director of Programs at the Smith Richardson Foundation, a private foundation that supports public policy research and analysis. I appreciate the opportunity to give you my views on the situation in Afghanistan. I have followed events in that country closely for more than 20 years. I served from 2003 to 2005 as a policy coordinator and special advisor on Afghanistan in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and undertook a factfinding trip to the country for the Secretary of Defense in 2006. Though I am currently a member of the Defense Policy Board, the views I present today do not reflect any discussions or deliberations by the board.

In light of the opportunity and challenge that Afghanistan presents to the Obama administration, the committee's hearings are very timely. Today, I want to make five major points.

1. During the past 3 years, the situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated, particularly in terms of security. The vast majority of Afghans oppose the Taliban, but local communities cannot defend themselves from insurgent intimidation and attacks. Reversing the negative trends requires rededicated U.S. leadership, greater resources, and an improved strategy and campaign

plan. The fact that the Obama administration is undertaking a wide-ranging strategic review is an encouraging sign.

2. In this review, it would be a mistake to revise our goals downward, giving up the current objective of enabling Afghans to establish an effective and representative government aligned with us in the war against terror. The United States needs an Afghan state capable of policing its territory to prevent the reestablishment of a terrorist safe haven. Helping the Afghan people succeed politically and economically will produce a significant positive demonstration effect in the wider region, thereby contributing to the war of ideas against extremism. Success will end the cycle of proxy warfare that has cost more than a million Afghan lives during the 1980s and 1990s. It will also open a route to global markets for the Central Asia states and create an economic zone that can be the basis for greater prosperity in Central and South Asia.

3. The focus of our policy should be to defeat a real and growing threat arising from a set of violent extremist groups based in western Pakistan and their supporters in Pakistan. The necessary conditions for success include the stabilization of Afghanistan, as well as strengthening elements in Pakistan opposed to extremism and finding ways progressively to narrow the areas in Pakistan in which the extremists can operate until these organizations have in effect been smothered.

4. A key task is to induce elements of the Government of Pakistan that have historic ties to the Taliban and other groups to make a strategic choice to cooperate fully in eliminating extremist sanctuaries. This requires the United States to undertake sustained diplomacy that is cognizant of the motivations and interests that might underlie Pakistan's policies and that is designed to create a regional context conducive to the stabilization of Afghanistan. The Obama administration's appointment of Ambassador Richard Holbrooke as a special envoy presents this opportunity.

5. U.S. efforts to "harden" Afghanistan against the insurgent threat operating out of the sanctuaries can succeed. To do so will require changes in our current approach, including development of a more robust political and state-building effort, shifting to a classic counterinsurgency strategy focused primarily on providing security to the population, and integrating Afghan and international civilian and military efforts in a phased campaign to secure contested areas.

As we approach this challenge, it is vital to understand what conditions produced stability in Afghanistan in recent history and what dynamics underlie the instability of recent decades. Too often, commentators mistakenly take the view that Afghanistan has been either ungovernable throughout history or has lacked a central government whose reach extended throughout its territory. In fact, until the late 1970s, Afghanistan had been a relatively stable developing country for much of the twentieth century. It was a poor country, to be sure, but one with a state that carried out basic governmental functions and that enabled gradual political and economic progress.

At the simplest level, three factors were essential to stability. First, the Afghan people broadly viewed the government as legitimate, particularly during the rule of King Zahir Shah. The monarchy was rooted in the Pushtun community, but Afghan leaders understood the need to provide for participation by other ethnic and social groups. The monarchy ruled on the basis of a flexible compact between the central government and local tribal and social leaders, providing policing and civil administration as a means to strengthen political cohesion and allegiance. Second, Afghan security institutions were sufficiently strong to prevent subversion, encroachment, or aggression by ambitious neighboring powers. For example, when externally sponsored Islamist extremists sought to infiltrate the country in the early 1970s, they were policed up rapidly, with the cooperation of local leaders and communities. Third, a tacit agreement existed among regional rivals that Afghanistan should be a buffer state, not dominated by any of its neighbors but instead open to political, economic, and social influences by every power at a level that would not threaten the others. As long as those conditions persisted, Afghanistan enjoyed stability and "worked" as a country.

The tragedy of Afghanistan was triggered when this system collapsed. It began with the coup that brought the Afghan Communist party to power in 1978 and the subsequent invasion by the Soviet Union in 1979. Once Moscow imposed its proxy regime in Kabul, the Afghan people mounted a national resistance. In this period, Pakistan and Iran mobilized and armed proxies among the resistance groups, with the United States in effect supporting Pakistan's effort with financing, arms, and supplies. After the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 and the eventual collapse of Moscow's

client state in 1991, a three-way civil war broke out between proxies supported by Pakistan, Iran, and Russia. By 1996, the Taliban, a proxy group backed by Pakistan, won control of Kabul. However, it continued to fight an inconclusive war against factions that joined together in the Northern Alliance, a proxy supported by Russia, Iran, and India. Throughout this period of conflict, all of these client regimes lacked national legitimacy: these groups were instruments of foreign states with limited popular support, typically rooted in narrow factions or one ethnic group or region. As a result, none could establish a state that was capable of extending its reach throughout Afghan territory or precluding armed subversion by adversarial neighbors. This pattern of competition—fighting among internal Afghan factions backed by rival external powers—resulted in a quarter century of violence.

The promise of the Bonn Process, sponsored by the U.N. and supported by the United States as military operations were undertaken against the Taliban regime in 2001, lied in the fact that it sought to establish a post-war order through a renewed version of Afghanistan's traditional formula for stability. Internally, it involved all anti-Taliban factions in a political process that step by step gave greater political weight to the preferences of the Afghan people, culminating in national elections in the presidential election 2004 and parliamentary election in 2005. This vehicle enabled the establishment of an inclusive, broad-based state, with the Afghan people ultimately serving as the arbiters of who would rule in Kabul. The Bonn Process also provided for external support, principally from countries outside of the region, to rebuild effective Afghan security institutions. At the same time, all of Afghanistan's neighbors were players in the Bonn Process, providing them with transparency and a measure of influence and allowing for participation in Afghanistan's reconstruction.

The Bonn Process—and the underlying formula for restoring Afghanistan's stability—produced significant results in terms of political stability and state-building. Most significantly, in the months following the Afghan presidential election in October 2004, the level of security incidents in Afghanistan fell to negligible levels. This offers proof of principal that a dual process—building political legitimacy and using regional diplomatic engagement to prevent destabilizing interventions—could produce a path to stability and progress in Afghanistan.

During the past 3 years, the stability won by the Bonn Process has been largely lost. The core of the problem has been the regrouping of a set of violent extremist forces in sanctuaries in Pakistan, some seeking to carry out terrorist attacks on the United States, others undertaking cross border attacks on Afghanistan, and still others attempting to radicalize and destabilize Pakistan.

In Afghanistan, rising insecurity has been driven by an escalation in cross-border infiltration and attacks by the Taliban, the Haqqani group, and the Hezbe-Islami of Hekmatyar Gulbiddin. This activity increased incrementally in late 2005. It escalated dramatically in 2006, including operations by larger-unit formations against the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) units assuming command in the south. Enemy operations expanded geographically in 2007 and 2008, increasing the scope of contested areas even as enemy tactics returned predominantly to small-unit and terrorist actions.

An enabling condition for successes by the Taliban and other extremists has been the underperformance of the Afghan Government and its consequent loss of popular support. This is not to deny significant Afghan achievements of building the Afghan National Army, instituting effective Afghan-led national programs in rural development and health, and other areas. However, following the elections of 2004 and 2005, President Karzai disappointed the expectations of the Afghan people that their government would systematically improve provincial and local governance, by deploying honest and effective officials and delivering basic services. In too many areas, weak, corrupt, or nonexistent government was the reality. As Afghans often say, "The problem is not that the Taliban are so strong—it is that the government is too weak."

This combination—violent extremists operating out of a neighboring country and eroding legitimacy at home—has produced the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan today. Reversing this trend requires a two-pronged effort to eliminate enemy sanctuaries in Pakistan and to "harden" Afghanistan against the insurgency of the Taliban and other extremists. I will take up each of these in turn.

Uprooting the sanctuaries will require a broad-based political strategy. A first order question that the Obama administration will face is assessing the role of the Government of Pakistan in the insurgency in Afghanistan. President Zardari's election provides a willing partner to help stabilize Afghanistan, but power is divided in Islamabad. Key elements of the military establishment—particularly Inter-Services Intelligence—have longstanding ties to extremist groups operating against Af-

ghanistan. I believe that these elements, at a minimum, have not made a strategic choice to cooperate fully with the effort to stabilize Afghanistan.

Press reports and analysts have long noted that, in the past 7 years, Pakistan's security services have helped capture hundreds of al Qaida leaders and operatives but only a handful of those of the Taliban. They have also observed that the Taliban operates openly in Quetta, the capital city of Baluchistan province where ample Pakistani police and other security forces are available. More troubling is the reporting of David Sanger in his recent book The Inheritance: the World Obama Confronts and the Challenges to American Power. He states that in a conversation with former Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell, a Pakistani general admitted that his military was supporting the Taliban. Sanger also writes that McConnell asked for an assessment by the Intelligence Community of Pakistan's relations with the Taliban. He states that the resulting report indicated that the Pakistani Government regularly gave the Taliban and other militant groups "weapons and support to go into Afghanistan to attack Afghan and coalition forces." I am not aware that any U.S. official has disputed this account. If it is accurate, it raises troubling questions about the activities of Pakistan's military and intelligence services in Afghanistan.

If elements in Pakistan's military and intelligence establishment are adversarial to our efforts in Afghanistan, the starting point in trying to change their orientation is to understand the underlying reasons for their actions. In my view, there are at least five potential motivations:

- The first is the fear that Pakistan's regional rivals—particularly India—will secure undue influence in the Government of Afghanistan. On this topic, Pakistani officials offer a litany of complaints, starting with President Karzai's close ties to India, continuing with prominent roles of former Northern Alliance figures in key security institutions, and including accusations that anti-Pakistan intelligence and political activities are orchestrated from Indian consulates and road building companies in eastern and southern Afghanistan.
- The second is a belief that the United States, as well as NATO, lacks staying power and will abandon Afghanistan. This, in turn, will lead to the failure of the Afghan Government and a reprise of the proxy competition among regional rivals of the 1990s. If this scenario is likely, it follows that now is the time to field effective proxy forces to gain positional advantage in the fight to come.
- The third is the fear that a successful Afghanistan will exert a dangerous political appeal to ethnic Pashtuns who live in Pakistan. The unresolved legal status of the Durand Line and the history of tensions with Afghanistan over the Pushtunistan issue exacerbate this concern.
- The fourth is the strategic aspiration of some in Islamabad to project Pakistani influence into Central Asia through Afghanistan.
- The fifth is the belief that the United States will only remain engaged with Pakistan—and provide military and economic assistance—if security threats draw us into the region. This leads to the view that Pakistan's interests lie in acting as a "strategic rentier state," perpetuating a degree of insecurity in order to be paid to reduce it.

As Ambassador Holbrooke engages with Afghan and Pakistani leaders, a key objective should be to draw out from Pakistani military and intelligence leaders what are their strategic concerns and to advance discussion between the two sides about how these might be addressed in a manner consistent with a strong and stable Afghanistan. At a minimum this should include discussion of a package containing five initiatives:

- Create a system of redlines governing the activities in Afghanistan of all regional powers, including both Pakistan and India, to allay concerns that one rival is gaining unilateral advantage and to provide a transparent system for monitoring compliance.
- Craft credible commitments on the part of the United States to remain the principal external power engaged in state-building in Afghanistan, particularly regarding security institutions, and to take Pakistani security concerns into account in formulating its policies.
- Mediate discussions between Afghan and Pakistani leaders to arrive at a common understanding of the border regime and use relations between the Pushtun communities in both countries to foster constructive social and economic ties.
- Make commitments to plan, jointly with Kabul and Islamabad, and to finance the construction of the infrastructure (e.g., roads, rail, pipelines, com-

munications) to connect Central Asia through Afghanistan to Pakistan, thereby enabling expansion of trade and cultural and political ties.

• Develop a major package—on the order of U.S. assistance to Egypt—to support the economic and social development in Pakistan, including support to improve the educational system, to stimulate growth of private enterprise, and to build needed infrastructure, in order to demonstrate the United States values a long-term relationship with Pakistan for its own sake not just as a tactical necessity in the war on terror.

These initiatives, among others, can address the motivations that might lie behind the apparent reluctance of elements in Pakistan to make a strategic choice to support efforts to bring stability to Afghanistan, as well as isolate those who might sympathize with the ideology of the extremists. It is imperative to recognize that the inducements needed to "flip" their policies must be significant. Current assistance, including coalition support funds and bilateral aid, creates a foundation for leverage. However, the increments of additional assistance will need to be large in order to be commensurate with the stakes involved.

At the same time, for a package containing these initiatives to be effective, the benefits should flow only on a "pay for performance" basis. If U.S.-sponsored mediation leads to a meeting of minds on these issues, bestowing the benefits should begin only when the security situation in southern and eastern Afghanistan has stabilized—only when the sanctuaries have been closed down.

Together, these actions could create the basis for a transformation of the Afghan-Pakistan relationship. As I noted, the Zardari Government is already a willing partner. However, I believe that, since the attacks of September 11, U.S. policymakers have underestimated the sensitivity of Pakistan's military establishment to the evolution of post-Taliban Afghanistan. The issue is not whether those fears or beliefs are grounded in fact or paranoia. Instead, the issue is to find ways that Afghanistan and the United States can allay or address whatever concerns might be driving Pakistan conduct without compromising our interests or values.

If all elements in Pakistan fully cooperate to eliminate extremist sanctuaries, the task of hardening Afghanistan against the residual insurgency would be an order of magnitude less difficult than the challenges we face today. Yet, even if the Pakistan-based insurgency remains at current levels, it can be done.

The principal reason for my conviction is that the legitimacy of the Afghan Government can be renewed. The overwhelming majority of the Afghan people, as measured in polling and shown by anecdotal evidence, oppose the Taliban. Large majorities want the new democratic political order to succeed. What has been missing on the part of the Afghan Government, the United States, and other friends of Afghanistan is a fully resourced counterinsurgency strategy and campaign plan to mobilize and vindicate this latent support.

The hard core of the enemy is a cadre composed of Afghan and (increasingly) foreign fighters who operate out of cross-border sanctuaries. According to polls, the Taliban also appears to have the support of about 5 percent of the people. In addition, there are "soft" layers of coerced, tacit, or expedient supporters. In light of the inability of Afghan or NATO forces to protect local populations, many Afghans believe they have no choice but to submit to Taliban threats and demands. Sometimes, ineffective or corrupt officials demoralize local communities to an extent that they have no preference between the Taliban and the Afghan Government. In other instances, tribal rivalry results in disadvantaged groups seeking tactical alliances with the Taliban. It is likely that military mistakes or civilian casualties in NATO operations have turned communities against the Afghan Government. In still other cases, some individuals have become "terrorists for a day" to make money.

The logic of classic counterinsurgency doctrine provides the template for peeling away the soft outer layers of the insurgency and for defeating the hard core. It begins with the recognition that the center of gravity is the people. They are the key because the enemy moves among them—they know who in their areas is linked to the enemy. If the people provide this intelligence, rooting out the enemy can be done surgically, even by police actions. To obtain this information, the challenge is to win the "hearts and minds" of the people. Winning the mind of an average Afghan involves persuading him that the Afghan and NATO forces are going to win the war and that these forces will protect him from retaliation if he takes the risk of providing intelligence on the insurgents. Winning the Afghan's heart entails persuading him that he will benefit, in terms of improved governance and economic development, as the Afghan Government prevails. Winning hearts and minds cannot be done without persistent presence of security forces at the local level—this visibly gives the assurance of protection against retaliation and provides the basic security needed to deliver services to the people. There is no short around the hard work of providing security for the population. It is the foundation of all other measures.

From late 2003 through mid-2005, coalition forces shifted to a population security-based campaign plan. Coalition and Afghan forces were deployed permanently into contested areas, instead of launching cordon and search operations that left no enduring security presence. Though the threat and troops levels in this period were lower than those of today, this approach succeeded in winning cooperation from local communities and increasing stability in the south and east. However, as the Taliban and other extremist forces escalated attacks in late 2005 and 2006, U.S. and other NATO forces gradually moved away from the population security paradigm and toward an emphasis on maneuver operations, firepower, and raids by Special Operations Forces (SOFs). In the current paradigm, Afghan, U.S., and NATO forces withdraw shortly after clearing an area of the enemy, which allows him to reenter and results in no enduring gains. It is not surprising that some polls show that, while Afghans support the continuing presence of international forces, they are losing confidence that these forces can deliver security.

To implement a counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan entails making a commitment to success, strengthening the legitimacy of the Afghan Government, establishing security at the local level, and the fielding of effective governance and development. It requires ten principal actions:

1. Recommit to a definition of success that includes the improvement of the lives of average Afghans: Loose talk about diminishing U.S. goals or expectations demoralizes our Afghan allies. If an Afghan villager doubts our staying power, he will not risk his life and the lives of his family members to provide intelligence on the enemy. If he believes that we are solely pursuing a parochial mission of hunting down terrorists, he will become cynical and indifferent to our success. If we operate in partnership with the Afghans—and if we credibly recommit to success—this action alone will reduce counterproductive hedging and result in popular mobilization to support the common cause.

2. Align the United States with popular aspirations for reform: In the coming election in Afghanistan, the United States should announce that it hopes that Afghans will seize the opportunity to achieve a political breakthrough for reform, bringing to office leaders for whom reducing corruption and the taking on narcotics industry as primary missions. It is for Afghan political figures to compete for popular support in terms of these and other issues. The key for the United States is position itself to support the better aspirations of the Afghan people.

3. Resolve issues through collaborative problem solving: Diplomacy based on angry demarches seldom work with Afghan leaders. Assigning all blame to President Karzai for failures in governance is unfair and counterproductive. There have been instances when he sought to move against a corrupt minister or a criminal figure but was persuaded to desist by U.S. officials and military officers. President Karzai has been an effective leader when he is confident in his relationship with the United States, when he has a strong team of reformist officials around him, and when his main U.S. interlocutor works with him to arrive at a common definition of the problem, an agreed action plan with responsibilities allocated among the Afghan Government and the international community, and a system for working through challenges in implementation. As the United States has moved away from this kind of time-consuming but productive engagement, Karzai's leadership suffered, to the detriment of our common efforts. We should return to the successful model based on close collaboration to get the most out of the Afghan Government.

4. Avoid actions or statements that shift the United States toward the role of an occupying force: In addition, loose comments about bypassing Kabul to work with provincial, local, or tribal leaders can be harmful. U.S. forces and agencies already undertake constructive work at the grassroots level. However, if a shift in rhetoric or policy appears to diminish the elected Afghan Government, the United States will take a step down a path that could result in our being viewed as occupiers. The best approach is to work from the bottom up as well as the top down to achieve immediate effects while improving the functionality of linkages between levels of government. This model was used to great effect in the CORDS program in Vietnam.

5. Develop an integrated population security-based counterinsurgency campaign plan jointly with the Afghan Government: Since our forces and those of our Afghan and NATO allies are limited, we should first secure major population centers and then progressively expand secured areas district by district and province by province as more Afghan or NATO forces become available. Also, too often, the United States and its NATO allies de-

velop military plans and bring them to the Afghan side for formalistic approval. Sometimes, actions are taken without any consultation. Going forward, this should change. Afghan security forces are the largest component of the coalition, and the Afghans can provide valuable local knowledge needed to build out the plan. Moreover, an integrated campaign should bring to bear Afghan-led governance and development programs immediately in the wake of military operations. These include the Focused District Development program (which upgrades training of police personnel for an entire district), the Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) (which evaluates and replaces provincial and district officials if necessary), the National Solidarity Program (which provides small grants to carry out projects selected by village-level development councils and already operates nationwide), and others. The Afghan Public Protection Force concept—a program in the pilot stage—is designed to provide village-level security thought vetted and trained recruits, under the authority of the Ministry of Interior (MoI).

6. Bring all SOFs active in Afghanistan under NATO command: Press reports, as well as speeches by Department of Defense officials, have noted a major expansion in actions by SOF. In Afghanistan, the highest and best use of SOF is partnering and mentoring ANA and Afghan National Police (ANP) forces. There is no better way to move Afghan forces up the learning curve and thereby to increase our capacity to fill contested areas. However, there are indications that direct action is the dominant SOF mission. Senior Afghan officials believe that SOF raids are a principal cause of excessive civilian casualties and are disaffecting the Afghan people. We should take this concern seriously. It is encouraging that NATO is concluding a military technical agreement with the Afghan Government that may cover this issue. Specific SOF operations should be measured against the standard of whether they advance the population security campaign. This approach would result in greater emphasis on the mentoring mission and less on direct action.

7. Field a major expansion of the training, partnering, and mentoring capacity for Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF): Though the Bush administration's decision to increase in the planned end strength of the ANA from 70,000 to 132,000 deserves praise, the Obama administration should increase the target to 250,000, as well as increase ANP end strength above 100,000. In light of the current level of the threat, it is only when the ANSF reaches those numbers that the ratio of security personnel to population will achieve the level necessary for success in counterinsurgency. More precise estimates of needed ANSF force levels will be possible as the campaign plan demonstrates how much area or population can be secured by particular numbers and mixes of the ANSF. This will require a major expansion of training capacity—at least a doubling—but the experience in Iraq shows that this is possible without loss of quality. While it will be expensive, there is no more cost effective approach to secure Afghanistan than to build up the ANSF dramatically.

8. Accelerate support to the MoI: President Karzai's appointment of a new, reform-oriented minister in October 2008 created a major opportunity to improve the performance of the institution in charge of civil administration and police. A major U.S.-supported program to reform the ministry is underway, but the United States should spare nothing in ensuring that the new minister has what he needs to advance these changes. The Afghan-led IDLG has show that the appointment of high-quality local and provincial leaders can have transformative effects. A reformed MoI, supported by the experience garnered through the IDLG, creates the needed mechanism to systematically improve governance beyond Kabul.

9. Adopt the national program model for service delivery and development: Afghan-led national programs in rural development and health have been significant successes. The National Solidarity Program has created 23,000 Community Development Councils and through them has implemented more than 45,000 locally selected reconstruction projects across the country, at a fraction of the cost of those undertaken by western nongovernmental organizations or contractors. Improvements in the national health infrastructure, led by Ministry of Health and supported by a wide variety of donors, have started to move health indicators such as child mortality in a positive direction. The model is based on using an Afghan ministry as the vehicle to receive donor funds and to carry out donor programs. If the ministry lacks capacity—in strategic planning, procurement, auditing, or

other functions—it contracts foreign specialists to work within the ministry, side by side with its personnel. The ministry also either delivers the services itself or enters direct contracts with providers, thus avoiding western overhead rates and reducing inefficient subcontracting. This model should be applied to other program areas and should be adapted to accelerate development of Afghan capacity in economic sectors, such as agriculture, food processing, and construction. It should be complemented by an enterprise fund to support small and medium-sized enterprises and joint ventures and by a greater use of instruments such as Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

10. Reconcile the reconcilable elements of the insurgency as the counterinsurgency campaign unfolds: A population security-based campaign will naturally peel off the "soft" layers of the insurgency. Providing enduring security to vulnerable communities will reduce the level of coerced support. Improved governance will win over disaffected communities that opted to sit on the fence between the insurgents and the government. Effective governors and district administrators, who historically have mediated tribal or communal conflicts, can prevent the insurgents from exploiting local conflicts to gain support. Effective counterinsurgency should entail far less kinetic strikes, reducing the numbers of enemies produced by mistakes or civilian casualties. As economic growth takes hold in secured areas, the relative attraction of payments to carry out insurgent actions will diminish. Improvements in the lives of average Afghan citizens may also win over some of those who report sympathy for the Taliban in polls. If all these groups are reconciled, the next final step is whether any elements can be split off from the hard core.

These 10 measures create the needed balance between providing security on the one hand and taking advantage of improved security to take the political, governance, and economic actions to strengthen the legitimacy of the Afghan Government and to enable Afghanistan to stand its own feet. It is a tried and true statement that effective counterinsurgency entails 80 percent civil actions and 20 percent military measures. A properly executed population security-based campaign supported by a fully resourced state-building and economic development program should meet that standard.

In closing, I would again urge us not to reduce downward our goals. If the United States does so, it will diminish its ability to win the hearts and minds of the Afghan people—and thus the intelligence they can provide—for they will know that their aspirations are excluded from the definition of success. Such a reduction in our goals would also wave a red cape in front of regional powers already doubtful of our staying power and could prompt them to take actions that will further destabilize Afghanistan. Moreover, even if the United States were to remain engaged with a narrow military mission of preventing a renewed terrorist safe haven, it would become a mission of indefinite duration. An Afghan Government with sufficient capacity to police its own territory is the path to a drawdown of NATO forces.

The example of South Korea should be the model. After the end of the fighting in the mid-1950s, South Korea was worse off by most social, economic, and political indicators than Afghanistan after fall of the Taliban. Yet, a robust and well-designed state-building and economic development program, led by excellent South Korean leaders and supported by the United States, produced an Asia Tiger within 25 years. Even though we retain a defense commitment and forward deployed forces, the overwhelming burden of defending the peninsula is carried by South Korea. In the cold war competition in East Asia, the peninsula was vital terrain. The same is true for Afghanistan in the struggle against extremism and terrorism. The South Korean case shows what can be achieved by resolute American commitment and effective partnership with local leaders. The Obama administration should carry those lessons over to Afghanistan.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Dr. Strmecki.

Let's try a 6-minute first round. I think there's a vote that's going to begin at 10:30 a.m. It's my hope we can work right through that vote.

In his recent statement to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Dennis Blair said that "No improvement in security in Afghanistan is possible without progress in Pakistan" and no improvement in Afghanistan is possible without Pakistan taking con-

trol of its border areas and improving governance, creating economic and educational opportunities throughout the country."

As I indicated, it obviously would be very, very helpful if Pakistan was able to improve the border situation and take control of it and do the other things which Dennis Blair talked about.

But would you agree with me that that statement is simply too unqualified, that there can be no improvement in Afghan security unless the situation in Pakistan is improved in the way that's indicated? Why don't we start off with you, Dr. Strmecki. Very quickly, would you agree with that statement that it's too unconditional?

Dr. STRMECKI. I would agree with you, Mr. Chairman. I think it's an issue of costs. If one got cooperation of the kind that he discussed in his point, an order of magnitude reduction in cost in terms of stabilizing Afghanistan would I think be possible. But one can harden Afghanistan against the insurgency if one puts in the resources and approaches the task mobilizing Afghan capability at the right levels.

Chairman LEVIN. Ambassador Dobbins?

Ambassador DOBBINS. I agree that it's an overstatement in the sense that I do think it's possible to reverse the currently negative trends. But I don't think it's possible to eliminate the threat or create an entirely self-sustaining Afghan capability of protecting its population unless Pakistan is playing a much more benign role. Afghanistan is simply too poor, and too isolated, to ever be able to secure its territory and its population unless its neighbors cooperate in that effort.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

General Barno?

General BARNO. I would agree as well, Mr. Chairman. I think in fact as I look at Afghanistan that probably half of the problems that we were dealing with were not related to the Taliban; they were related to internal factors trying to pull the country apart—corruption, crime, poverty, lack of education, lack of health care. Those factors are not directly impacted by activities inside of the tribal areas of Pakistan.

Chairman LEVIN. I think each of you has commented on the additional forces which the President has now indicated are going to be going to Afghanistan, but why don't we have it in one place in the record. Very briefly, do you support the President's decision to send an additional 17,000 troops to Afghanistan over the next 6 months or so? General? Briefly, why? Do you support it and briefly why?

General BARNO. I absolutely support it, Mr. Chairman. Having just been out there a month ago, it was clear in RC-South, where the bulk of those forces are going, that they are tremendously under-resourced with boots-on-the-ground right now, and if we're going to secure the population we're going to require a much different force structure than what's available there today.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Ambassador Dobbins?

Ambassador DOBBINS. I support the reinforcement and expect that probably more are going to be necessary over the next year.

Chairman LEVIN. Do you want to say briefly why? I know you did in your testimony, but still very quickly tell us, summarize why you think the additional forces are needed and appropriate.

Ambassador DOBBINS. I think the core of any successful counter-insurgency strategy is making the populace feel that they're safer if you're there than if you're not and providing them pervasive—or not so much pervasive as persistent security, so that you don't lose control of the villages at night and they come in and murder everybody who cooperated with you in the daytime.

Now, given the dispersed nature of the Afghan population and the size of the Afghan population, there's probably no conceivable American increase that's going to fully meet that. So it is going to have to be met by, as you've suggested, significantly increasing the size of the Afghan forces and contributions from allies. But most particularly, in addition I think we have to empower the local communities in the threatened areas to contribute to their own security and look on the central government's and our own forces as quick reaction forces that can come when they're threatened. Creating that kind of structure for local security, I think, has to be one of our priorities.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Dr. Strmecki?

Dr. STRMECKI. I also support the reinforcement of our forces. One reason, as has been discussed, is that a proper counterinsurgency plan focused on protecting the population will require more people. But also, if we're going to escalate the numbers of Afghan forces, that key mentoring and partnering role will require additional forces.

Chairman LEVIN. I'd like to ask you about the border issue. It's obviously a huge problem and we keep saying to Pakistan: We need you to control your border. Down in the Baluchistan area, what that's going to mean is basically taking on the forces there that so far they've been unwilling to take on, including the Taliban leaders that are there, that openly—or if not openly, at least have meetings in Quetta and support forces going across that border into Afghanistan.

What I have argued is that the strongest security force in Afghanistan is their army and it is a weak force that is now along the border, where they rely on the border police to do the patrolling and the controlling, and yet there has been a history of corruption there and weakness.

Could you comment on my suggestion that the strongest Afghan security force should at least in part be moved to that border to provide a deterrent for those cross-border incursions and that we should not rely as heavily on Pakistan to stop those incursions from occurring?

Why don't we go right to left. Dr. Strmecki?

Dr. STRMECKI. I think keeping some kind of screens, whether it's our forces together with ANA forces or ANA forces alone, is important. However, it has to be complemented by the population security campaign. It needs to be in balance. But the screen would be helpful, and certainly the ANA forces are the most effective ones on the Afghan side.

I think the real pay dirt in terms of Pakistan is conduct and getting Pakistan on side in this effort is going to be diplomatic. If Ambassador Holbrooke can get to the root of why Pakistan is conducting itself the way it is, then we can work the issues. Is it fear of India getting too much influence in Afghanistan? Is it fear that we're going to leave and there will be a proxy competition afterward, and so forth. There are other motivations that may be behind the Pakistani conduct. If we can get to those and find ways to address them that do not compromise our interests in Afghanistan, but allay fears or take interests into account on the Pakistani side, I think you could see a flip in the Pakistani policy.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Ambassador Dobbins?

Ambassador DOBBINS. I'll defer to General Barno on the feasibility of controlling that long, difficult border. I'm skeptical that it would be the optimal use of available and limited forces.

I do agree with Marin that part of the solution is diplomatic. We're in this odd situation and the Afghans are in this odd situation of insisting that Pakistan control a border that Afghanistan doesn't recognize. The border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is contested and it's contested because the Afghans don't recognize it and, frankly, many of them harbor aspirations to taking over large parts of Pakistan, the parts that are currently inhabited by Pashtuns.

I think at some stage we might want to try to reconstitute the kind of meeting we had in Bonn in 2001 which set up the Karzai Government, this one to try to negotiate a pact among Afghanistan, its neighbors, and near neighbors, the components of which might include all of the parties declaring Afghanistan to be permanently neutral, Afghanistan agreeing not to permit its territory to be used against the interests of other neighbors, its neighbors agreeing not to allow their territory to be used against Afghanistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan finally recognizing their common border, all of the parties guaranteeing that border, and the United States and its NATO allies agreeing that they will eventually withdraw once all of these other provisions have been fulfilled.

So I do think this is not something you can do overnight, but I think that kind of objective for Holbrooke's diplomacy would be worth considering.

Chairman LEVIN. Very quickly, General, because my time is up.

General BARNO. I would be very cautious about moving forces to the border. It's a 1,500 mile border, the distance from Washington, DC, to Denver, CO.

Chairman LEVIN. I'm talking Baluchistan mainly here.

General BARNO. Even on the Baluchistan side, Mr. Chairman, I think that the ability to actually try and shut down border crossings because of the size and the complexity and the terrain there and the history of that being a very porous area is going to be very tough. I think there's more that can be done, but I would be against moving military forces there to do that. I don't think that would be productive.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Senator McCain.

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I thank the witnesses. General McKiernan has said that 17,000 additional forces are at best two-thirds of what his requirement would be. Would you agree, pending, obviously, the development and implementation of an overall strategy? General?

General BARNO. I think he best knows what his requirement is, Senator. So clearly he understands what he's trying to achieve with those forces, which is the ultimate question, what are the forces going there to implement on the ground and is that the right number to implement the strategy which we all now think is the correct strategy. So we have a couple questions we have to know the answer to before we can say this is the right resources to apply.

Senator MCCAIN. But very likely it's not sufficient?

General BARNO. I think from my own brief visit out here recently, I think that, depending on how the strategy lies out, that the total security force requirement could be substantially more than that, and that'll include lots of Afghan forces as well.

Senator MCCAIN. Ambassador Dobbins?

Ambassador DOBBINS. I agree with that.

Senator MCCAIN. Dr. Strmecki?

Dr. STRMECKI. I agree as well.

Senator MCCAIN. Are we in danger in our exhaustion and frustration and weariness of developing a counterterrorism strategy in Afghanistan, as opposed to a counterinsurgency strategy, General?

General BARNO. I've always viewed the counterterrorism component, which I should shorthand as calling strike operations, as a subset of a broader counterinsurgency strategy.

Senator MCCAIN. They alone didn't work in Iraq.

General BARNO. No, they can't work by themselves. It's simply a way of buying time. In some ways, as I watched while I was out there, some of those strikes obviously counter our strategic objectives. They may be tactical successes by killing the individuals we're looking for, but when they kill civilians the strategic impact is——

Senator MCCAIN. It alienates both Afghan and Pakistani populations?

General BARNO. I think clearly in Afghanistan we have options to operate with our ground forces in ways that we don't across the border. So our choices are much more limited inside of Pakistan, which requires us to work closely with the Pakistanis. In Afghanistan we have a series of different things we can do than simply conduct strikes from the air, which we're doing some of there as well.

Ambassador DOBBINS. I generally agree. I've stressed that the objective, our objective there, has to be not defeating the Taliban or even killing terrorists; it's reducing the number of civilian casualties. If we do that we're winning, and if we're winning then many things will become possible that are not possible when you're losing, which is what we're doing at the moment.

Dr. STRMECKI. I'm very concerned in terms of what we see in Special Operations Forces raids and air strikes that are not linked to a population security campaign. I think they are alienating——

Senator MCCAIN. That partially can be addressed by integration of command.

Dr. STRMECKI. That's right, that's right. But on the Afghan side they're seeing civilian casualties from these things, but no returns in terms of increasing security. So I think that is why you're seeing trends in the Afghan population that they're losing confidence in us to be able to deliver the result of security.

Senator MCCAIN. General, I assume you agree that in 2003 and 2005 we were going in the right direction, since you were there.

General BARNO. That's a loaded question, I think, Senator.

Senator MCCAIN. Without personalizing it, what happened? What caused what was really a promising situation to deteriorate to a now almost universal opinion that we are not winning, therefore we are losing?

General BARNO. One of the things we've done in Afghanistan, and it still is in play today, is a continuous rotation of people. Ambassador Khalilzad and I got there within a few weeks of each other in the fall of 2003 and because of basically our personnel system we rotated out within a few weeks of each other 19 months later. Since 2001 in Afghanistan we've had six different U.S. military commanders, seven different NATO ISAF commanders, six different chiefs of our embassy, and four different U.N. senior representatives, all in the space of less than 8½ years.

That's probably not a recipe for sustaining a good program and I think that was a big contributor.

Ambassador DOBBINS. I think that what Ambassador Khalilzad and General Barno did was abandon the counterterrorism strategy, move to a more sophisticated counterinsurgency model, began to provide more resources, both military and civilian. However, that was not enough to turn around the situation. The situation continued to deteriorate through that period. So they were doing the right things, but they were doing it with inadequate resources.

Dr. STRMECKI. I'd differ a little bit about the end of the period. If you look at late 2004, early 2005, the security incidents in Afghanistan were almost negligible. The most important thing that I believe happened is that there was an escalation by the enemy starting in mid, late 2005, and then dramatically so in early 2006.

I think that the response was no counter-escalation. We essentially went along the glide path that we'd been on, rather than understanding that the enemy has voted and now we have to respond with a counter-escalation.

At the same time, there was a drift in President Karzai's leadership. The Afghan people had great hope after his election in October 2004 and they were expecting that they'd see a kind of a housecleaning of bad governance. But instead there was drift and maybe marginal improvements here, marginal improvements there, but not the transformation they were expecting.

Senator MCCAIN. Certainly an increase in corruption.

Dr. STRMECKI. That's right. They were calculating: We'll run risks for our government, but only if there's a return, that we see improvement. Gradually, in parts of the country that had poor governance you see people becoming indifferent as between the enemy and the government.

Senator MCCAIN. Should the Karzai Government talk to the Taliban? General?

General BARNO. The Karzai Government, even during my time there, was always in low-level dialogue with various Taliban leaders. The advantage that the government and the coalition had then was that we were winning, we were perceived as winning, and there didn't appear to be any future in being in the Taliban. We have the reverse situation today, which makes it, I think, much more difficult, much more problematic to even enter into any talks.

They think they're winning, the enemy, and therefore they have no incentives to have any discussions at all.

Ambassador DOBBINS. The Karzai Government is talking to the Taliban in negotiations that are talks that are being sponsored by Saudi Arabia. Karzai's brother, among others, is participating in these talks.

It's not clear how serious these are on either side. I think it's quite possible that Karzai thinks it's simply good presidential politics to show that he's willing to negotiate, that he's a man of peace, and that it's the other side that's unwilling to make concessions. At some point this might become productive.

Senator MCCAIN. Dictated by the realities on the battlefield?

Ambassador DOBBINS. Partially, and as you had in Anbar Province, at some point it's not impossible that the Taliban will decide that they no longer want to ally themselves with al Qaeda, that they're prepared to cut those ties. Some have said that they're ready now. I've heard people who are much more expert than I am say that the Taliban are willing to offer that deal.

I think that would have to be tested. But if the point comes where the Taliban is actually willing to do what the insurgents in Anbar Province were willing to do, which is turn against the Arab extremists in their society, then I think you would need to reevaluate the utility of those talks.

Dr. STRMECKI. The Karzai Government since 2004 has had a program and it's called Peace Through Strength, that allows Taliban commanders and fighters to come in out of the cold, and a good number of middle- and low-level commanders and fighters have done so.

I think of the nature of the enemy as a hard core in terms of the two shuras, the Peshawar Shura and the Quetta Shura, and then soft layers surrounding them, which might be disaffected communities that have seen bad governance or a minority tribe in an area that makes a tactical alliance with the Taliban or people who are terrorists for a day because of a desire for economic compensation. If you do COIN right, counterinsurgency campaign right, you will see the soft layers fall away, until a point that you're just up against the hard core, and that's the point where you'll see whether the hard core is going to fragment and some part of them will be willing to come in out of the cold.

Senator MCCAIN. I thank the witnesses.

Senator Udall.

Senator UDALL. Thank you, Senator McCain.

Let me also add my voice to those here today in the committee who appreciate the good work you've all done. The documents you've produced are worthy of further digestion. I look forward to reading them in great detail.

I followed Senator McCain's line of questioning and your answers with great interest when it comes to the Taliban and do they have political aims, how do you negotiate with them, how do you peel away the various factions. It's certainly worth additional effort and attention.

General Barno, If I might, I'd like to turn to the question that you did discuss in your remarks. It's this question of caveats and working in the NATO structure. I heard quite a great deal about it a year ago when I was in Afghanistan. I wonder if you might comment on ideas you would have to work effectively within that structure. The panel has talked a great deal, as did the chairman and the ranking member, about this is a test for NATO, this may have historical ramifications if, in fact, NATO is successful; on the other hand, if we fall short then what does that say about NATO's future?

General BARNO. Thank you, Senator. I think caveats remain a problem in Afghanistan and will remain a problem as long as NATO is in Afghanistan. The likelihood of nations dropping their caveats in Afghanistan, regardless of how much pressure, how much persuasion the United States does with them, I think is next to zero. I don't think they will grow necessarily, but I also am keenly aware from my visit out there to the south—and I visited the Brits, the Canadians, as well as American forces, the Dutch commander at RC-South—it's very clear that the caveats are linked to the political support at home for these nations, and the political support at home is not moving in a more robust direction. It's definitely fraying at the edges, and in many of the countries, particularly those in the northern part of Afghanistan—the Germans, the Italians, the Spanish—the political will at home in my estimation was only for a peacekeeping operation in the first place. So the idea that somehow those nations would remove their caveats, come to the south, and take up weapons and a counterinsurgency fight, I think, is highly unlikely.

So to what the chairman noted this morning, I think our line of approach with NATO realistically is going to take us down the road to ask them what we think they can and will provide. That's driven as much by political support as it's driven by military capability.

Senator UDALL. So in effect you're talking about, as we often do, three centers of gravity, the Afghan people being the primary center of gravity, the various military leadership representatives in the country, the sense the military has that the fight is worthwhile, and then the people of those various countries and they're an additional center of gravity, and our diplomacy and our outreach from the administration could play an important role in at least stiffening that support in places like Germany and the Netherlands and the U.K. Is that what I hear you saying?

General BARNO. I think that's a fair assessment. I was at the Munich security conference here about 3 weeks ago and it was very clear, listening to the various nations talk about Afghanistan—and most of the participants were in the political elements of the nations' legislatures and what-not—that they are absolutely on a daily basis having to convince their populations that this mission is still worthwhile. They need our support and our clear reasoning behind that to help them with that, with that argument.

That said, though, I'm hopeful, but I'm not optimistic, that we're going to see any substantial change in the support levels from those countries. I am a bit concerned about those that are in the south because they've been taking the brunt of the casualties of all the countries save the United States here over the last 3 years. There's not a lot of relief in sight for them right now.

Senator UDALL. Thank you, General.

Dr. Strmecki, you talk in your analysis about an area I think it is very important to further understand, and that's the Pakistani Government and the Pakistani people's motivation and approach to the conflict in Afghanistan. I want to first just commend you for the five insights you've provided us, and I wonder if you would talk a little bit more in depth about working with the Pakistani Government. Sometimes in this region of the world what's up is actually down, what seems logical and rational to us is exactly the opposite impression that people in that part of the world have.

But would you talk a bit more about some creative and insightful ways we could work with the Pakistani Government to have success in Afghanistan as well as the FATA and the border regions?

Dr. STRMECKI. The key is to look at their motivations behind their conduct if one is assuming they're not doing everything that they can. Afghanistan historically has been an area where regional powers have contested for influence. When Afghanistan has been neutral among the governments around it and able to defend itself, then there's been relative stability in the region. But in the last 20 years when that broke down, you had a series of proxy civil wars, where you had a client inside Afghanistan supported by a regional power on the outside. When one was in, the others mobilized a client against it, and so forth.

The Bonn process brought that to a stop for a time. But what you've seen is Pakistan essentially defecting from the Bonn process and allowing its territory to be used as a sanctuary for the kind of forces that are attacking the Afghan Government and our forces. If you ask why they're doing that, I'd offer five potential reasons.

The first is that Pakistan, rightly or wrongly, fears that rivals, particularly India, are gaining influence in Afghanistan. So when you talk with Pakistani officials, they talk about Karzai's links to India, they talk about Northern Alliance officials who have been their opponents when they were supporting the Taliban. They will talk about Indian activities in the east, out of consulates and out of road-building companies. So there is either a paranoia or a belief that they're seeing something and they're reacting.

The second belief is that they don't believe that NATO and the United States have the staying power and therefore it is in their interest to be ready for the proxy competition that would follow.

A third reason——

Senator UDALL. Dr. Strmecki, if I could interrupt you, and I apologize. I understand my time has expired. I did want to thank again the panel for your great insights and important insights, and I'll yield back the time I don't have remaining to the chairman. Thank you again.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Udall. Like all the other questions which we might have to interrupt for various purposes,

it would be good if you could complete your answer for the record. I know Senator Udall also would appreciate that.

We will make that answer of yours, the complete answer, in the record at the time that you were making the answer, so we'll have it in the right place. Thank you.

[The information referred to follows:]

A third reason is the fear that a successful Afghanistan will exert a dangerous political appeal to ethnic Pushtuns who live in Pakistan—a revival of the Pushtunistan Issue that troubled Afghanistan-Pakistan relations in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.

A fourth reason is the strategic aspiration of many in Pakistan to project Pakistani influence into Central Asia.

A fifth reason is that instability in the region leads the United States to remain engaged with Pakistan—and to provide Pakistan with military and economic benefits.

The key is whether we can use creative diplomacy to deal with these potential motivations. This would entail allaying concerns about Indian influence, convincing Pakistani leaders of the firmness of our commitment to success, mediating differences between Afghanistan and Pakistan, helping build economic connections across Afghanistan that connect Pakistan to Central Asia, and developing a vision and program for a future U.S.-Pakistani relationship based on positive goals, not just security threats.

Chairman LEVIN. Senator Ben Nelson.

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Each of you has suggested that there are conditions, there are points that we ought to insist on in terms of our capabilities, and to determine whether or not there's the support that we need both internally and externally to continue the challenge in Afghanistan.

When we were faced in Iraq with the questions about how are we doing in Iraq, there were people looking at the same set of facts, one group saying we're winning, another group saying we're losing. It seemed to me and I pushed for benchmarks as a way of getting some metric to measure progress, to move away from talking about whether we're winning or losing, to look more toward whether we're making progress in certain areas.

Do you think it would be appropriate for us to codify, without law, strategy with conditions or benchmarks and then at various points along the way measure how we are doing in achieving those benchmarks, how the Afghan Government is achieving the benchmarks, so that the American people can look at the mosaic and begin to understand what the picture is, because I think for most folks today, including those of us in Congress, it's a muddle. We know we're not doing very well. It's going sideways, it's not achieving the objectives that we had hoped to achieve. But I don't think people know what the objectives are ultimately, other than to beat the Taliban.

So I guess each of you I would ask that question: Do you think that we can or that we should and can we establish benchmarks, conditions, or something where we can measure progress? Let's start with you, General.

General BARNO. I think there's some merit in that, Senator. I think it proved to be fairly useful in Iraq, as you noted, much to everyone's surprise. In fact the benchmarks, I think, if I remember correctly, all but one are now——

Senator BEN NELSON. We were opposed when we tried to come up with the idea as it wouldn't work. But I think it did work.

General BARNO. I think, and that alone gives it some merit for consideration in Afghanistan. But lack of information about a lot of the overall effort in Afghanistan is rather striking in comparison to Iraq. Tony Cordesman at the Center for Strategic and International Studies has noted how little information statistically is available in any dimension of this. So there may be some utility in that idea. I don't think that's a bad thought.

Senator BEN NELSON. Ambassador Dobbins?

Ambassador DOBBINS. I'm a little skeptical. I have to say that I tended to regard our effort to benchmark the Iraqis back in 2007 more as an effort to transfer responsibility for failure from us to them. Now, they did finally meet the benchmarks, but they met the benchmarks only after we established security conditions which allowed them to move from a survival mode to a more normal political wheeling and dealing mode.

Senator BEN NELSON. I think we would hope that that would be the case here as well, where our security and their security works to help them from the top down and the bottom up to match, so that they will be secure and they will think the future is brighter for them.

Ambassador DOBBINS. I'm not completely hostile to the idea, but I do think that the key benchmark is the one I've suggested, which is how many Afghans are getting killed. If the number's going up, you're losing. If the number's going down, you're winning. It's as simple as that.

For the first 3 years in Iraq, our military refused to count civilian casualties. They were under orders not to count civilian casualties. Whenever they were asked how many civilians were getting killed, they said they didn't know and they were telling the truth because they weren't counting them.

When General Petraeus came back and testified to Congress, his only criteria for success that he presented was that less Iraqis were getting killed this year than last year, and he was right. That was the right metric. So I think it's fine to keep track of what they're doing in other sectors as a way of benchmarking our own progress, but that's the metric that I would put front and center.

Senator BEN NELSON. Dr. Strmecki.

Dr. STRMECKI. I think a set of benchmarks would be very productive as long as they are benchmarks about partnership with the Afghan Government. I think that's where you're coming from. A properly structured counterinsurgency campaign would give forth very obvious benchmarks: ambient security in district after district after district. The information for that exists because there are sufficient forces to know what the situation is province by province, district by district.

There can be an assessment of the quality of the local governance. When you go to PRTs, they know whether this district administrator is good, this one's bad. The U.N. knows that. There's a lot of ways we could pool information and then constructively say, here, this province is the one we have to work on because the governance is lacking. Then also some basic measures of economic activity could be undertaken.

One of the great things about the Bonn process is that it had milestones, constitutions, loya jirgas, and so forth, and it was an

organizing principle and kind of a forced march for Afghan, U.N., the U.S. efforts. So I think that properly designed benchmarks can create common and shared expectations for a productive partnership with the Afghans.

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you.

I'll yield back my time. Thank you, gentlemen.

Chairman LEVIN. Senator Bayh.

Senator BAYH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you for your time today. It's a very important hearing and you've been very enlightening in your comments.

I'd like to start with a couple of comments based upon some of the things you've said. Mr. Barno, I think you indicated that the Taliban largely come and go unimpeded by the Pakistani border police. This is an amazing state of affairs. Based upon published reports, when some U.S. forces strayed across the line in pursuit of militants they were fired on by the Pakistani authorities. So we have a situation where our allies are not impeding our adversaries, but firing on us. How can this be?

Second, we pay them billions of dollars every year in a variety of forms of assistance and as best I can tell we get in return, once again according to published reports, the ability to perhaps launch a few Predator strikes in the tribal areas and to have supplies go through their territory to help with the situation in Afghanistan, a conflict which through their behavior they help to perpetuate. That seems to be a relatively low return on our investment and it's a problematic relationship. I think we need to have a very hardheaded reassessment of our relationship with Pakistan. It's a complex one, I understand, but one we need to focus on. So that's just some frustration I feel, given their behavior that has been less than helpful in some pretty important respects.

Now my questions. Dr. Strmecki, to you first. I think you've put your finger right on it with regard to Pakistan. Until their government—and I'll just append that by saying the military and their intelligence services—make a strategic decision that a more robust effort to combat militancy and the insurgency based in their territories is in their interest, in their strategic interest, it's unlikely to get much better. They'll do some things on the margins to placate us, but they won't really do all that they can do or as effectively as they should do until they change their calculus about that effort being in their regard. I think that's primarily their standing with the Pakistani people.

What can we do to convince them that it's in their strategic interest to do that?

Dr. STRMECKI. I think there are some things that they fear and some things that they could benefit from. I've talked about their fear of regional rivals getting a foothold in Afghanistan and that could be dealt with by what Ambassador Dobbins spoke about in terms of——

Senator BAYH. You mean the Indians?

Dr. STRMECKI. That's right.

Some red lines that are monitored, and that there's a forum in which to discuss and clarify whether bad behavior is taking place by any party.

But one should also be looking to find win-win kinds of situations. The Pakistanis would like to project influence, economic and political, into Central Asia. We could help jointly plan and finance the infrastructure to create the roads, rails, telecommunications, other kinds of infrastructure that connect Central Asia to Pakistan and world ports through Afghanistan, to privilege that route.

Senator BAYH. So we help allay their fears vis-a-vis encirclement by India and help foster or abide their ambitions in Central Asia?

Dr. STRMECKI. That's right, in the sense of giving a peaceful way to achieve them.

Senator BAYH. That, in your view, would be enough? Part of their fear of India doesn't seem to be—there's a long history there, but it tends to be somewhat irrational from time to time.

Dr. STRMECKI. It will be a mediation and it won't be one moment in time when they'll flip. You'll have to work through the problems, look at every issue that they raise, and they have a laundry list, and either allay them by proving that they're not true or, if there are issues, then work it back with the Afghan side.

Senator BAYH. It's worth a shot. It may take some time, as you say, but better than the current state of affairs. Thank you.

General, a couple questions for you. The time line once again you laid out for the transition phase, was that 2015 to 2025 or 2020 to 2025?

General BARNO. The time line would have started for transition in my phase here from 2015 to 2025. Some of that actually begins——

Senator BAYH. Transitioning over, starting in 6 years, going possibly as long as 16 years.

General BARNO. That would be for primarily the south. In the north the transition could start next year.

Senator BAYH. This is a long time, 6 to 16 years. A lot of blood and treasure. We have other national security challenges. Is there anything we can do to expedite that process? The key is upgrading the capabilities of the Afghanis to control their own territory. We consistently overestimated our ability to do that in Iraq. What can we do to expedite that process realistically in Afghanistan?

General BARNO. I spent a half day with our embedded training teams that work with the Afghan army in Kandahar and I have since met with their commander, who is back in the States, and they all tell me that they can accelerate—in their view, that the ANA could be built up much more rapidly, but the long pole in the tent, the thing that will prevent that from happening, is not enough Afghan troops, it's lack of equipment to give these troops machine guns, vehicles, various radio systems—the basics that ultimately will come from the United States in most cases. That's preventing them in their view from being able to grow the force at the rate they think that the Afghans are capable of growing it.

Senator BAYH. So that's the major stumbling block, a lack of——

General BARNO. In the view of the people out there on the ground. It's a problem with them today even with their current forces.

Senator BAYH. We certainly ought to be able to provide that in something less than 6 to 16 years.

General BARNO. We should, but our system in that arena is still very much of a constipated peacetime system. It was a problem when I was in Afghanistan in 2003 to 2005 and it's not a problem that's gotten any better since then, candidly.

Senator BAYH. Mr. Chairman, that is certainly something we ought to be in a position to expedite. If that truly is holding up the transition phase, which ultimately is the answer to this—well, we need to do better than that.

My final question, I think, General—Ambassador, I hope you won't feel neglected—has to do with you once again. Or, Ambassador, feel free to jump in if you would like. The Pakistanis seem to have a different view of these published reports about the Predator strikes. They seem to think that it's having the effect of destabilizing the rest of Pakistan. Published reports indicate that our intelligence people feel that it's having a very salutary effect in terms of keeping al Qaeda destabilized, on the run, removing key operatives, et cetera, et cetera.

How do we reconcile those two different opinions of these published reports about those kinds of activities?

General BARNO. It's a difficult question, especially in an open forum. I've been to Pakistan about two dozen times and I see Pakistanis every week here in Washington typically. Their overriding concern that I think animates all of their decisionmaking is two: fear of India, as Marin noted; and fear of the day the United States leaves. They're expecting that to occur, and that creates a calculus inside their government that takes them in places we don't want them to go.

With regard to these strikes, I think they are having an effect on the enemy and I think they are the only serious pressure that the enemy is worried about every single day in that part of the world. So I think that that is the reason why the United States, to include the new administration, has continued our approach over there in this regard, as best we can tell from reading the newspaper.

The Pakistanis have a different view in the sense that some of that has to be driven by their internal politics of how they react to this inside their own country, how that plays in their own press. I think we have to take that into account.

Senator BAYH. My time has expired. But it gets back to my initial question to the doctor, which is how do we convince them that it's in their strategic interests to step up and do a better job of dealing with this. That won't be easy and it involves dealing with the India issue, but it's something we have to get on with here if it's going to be good for Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, and the entire region, and ultimately obviously for us.

Thank you, chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Bayh.

In terms of the long pole in the tent issue being radios and trucks, this is something we have not heard before. We've been told consistently it's lack of trainers; plenty of recruits to speed up the size of the army. In any event, what we will do, Senator Bayh, is we will ask General Petraeus if that is, in fact, the long pole. That is something we can correct, should be able to correct, very, very quickly.

As my staff pointed out, that would be good news if that's the long pole in the tent. But thank you for that testimony. We will take up that line of inquiry.

I owe not only Senator Sessions an apology because he should have been next, but will make up for that. If another Republican comes before you, Senator Hagan, we're going to have to go twice to my left.

Senator Sessions.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for a very good panel and the leadership you provide to this committee.

I want to share the concerns I think expressed by Senator Bayh. With regard to Pakistan, perhaps I'm in error, but I've been somewhat more understanding of their difficulties than some have been who've been quick to criticize them. Is it not true—maybe, Ambassador, I'll ask you briefly—that a lot of these areas, tribal areas, have never been controlled by the central government? Some of them contain terrorist type violent people who, if energized, could indeed threaten the stability of the Pakistan Government if they undertake an aggressive action. Can we be somewhat understanding of their reluctance to undertake some of these activities that we'd like them to undertake?

Ambassador DOBBINS. The Federally Administered Tribal Areas are a historic artifact of the British Empire. They have never been governed. They, in fact, formally don't come under Pakistani law. They come under tribal regulations that were imposed by the British and remain in effect today. They're not, for instance, allowed to participate fully in the Pakistani elections or democratic process. In general, these border areas are the worst served in Pakistan. They not only have the worst security, they have the worst schools, the worst electricity, the worst roads, the worst clinics.

A counterinsurgency or nation-building effort, whatever you want to call it, in these regions will consist not just of projecting security into those regions, but projecting all those other services into them. Pakistan isn't going to take money from the Punjab and put it into those regions after 100 years of neglect. So it's going to take a fairly substantial international effort to empower the Pakistanis and encourage them to begin to integrate those areas in their national society, and that's not going to be easy.

Now, I do think that Senator Lugar, Senator Biden, and now Senator Kerry and Senator Lugar have introduced an approach to assistance to Pakistan that's designed to incentivize them and provide them long-term resources for that kind of effort, and I think that's probably the right way to go.

Senator SESSIONS. Seeking areas of mutual interest, as Senator Bayh said, seems to me to be the way we need to work it. But it's difficult to ask a sovereign nation to do something in our interest if they don't think it's in their interest. It's just a difficult situation.

I also am concerned, General Barno, when we're talking about 2025. This is a major decision for Congress. I'm sure that most of us have known we're coming to a point where we're going to have to make such a decision as this, but I want to be convinced. I'm prepared to be supportive of this effort, but I'm uneasy about it. I'm uneasy about sending another 17,000 troops there. The Ambas-

sador says that's going to be more. Will it be 100,000 18 months from now committed in Afghanistan?

I just see Ralph Peters—I didn't agree with everything in his article, but he leads off 2 days ago in USA Today: "Instead of concentrating on the critical mission of keeping Islamist terrorists on the defensive, we've mired ourselves by attempting to modernize a society that doesn't want to be and cannot be transformed." I won't say it cannot be transformed, but it's not easy to transform this society. We know that.

We know that Kabul has never controlled in any really effective way the entire area of Afghanistan. So let's just talk about some of these things.

Ambassador, you mentioned that there was some potential in some areas, you thought, to accommodate with the Taliban. I'll ask all of you. Dr. Strmecki, you said it would be a mistake to revise downward our goals. But in this hearing a few weeks ago when Secretary Gates was here, I asked him. He was emphatic: Our first goal is to protect the United States from further attacks, to not allow a base to be set up there. It was pretty clear to me that he's asking some tough questions about how many more goals can we have for this country.

So I guess I would like to ask—General Barno, it seems to me—Senator Levin and I were in Iraq before the surge and I guess twice. A lot of progress got made quickly in Iraq in Al Anbar before the surge really took place, as a result of working with local people disconnected to Baghdad. So are we as a matter of policy in Afghanistan so committed to a central government ideal that we're not prepared to work with regional and city and community militias or people who could maintain order in that area, but not be under the direct control of the central government? Could that help us reduce our military commitment?

There was a lot to that, wasn't it.

General BARNO. Let me first qualify my remarks a bit on these dates and these times. The transition phase actually is going to begin in the north and the west of the country, the transition to Afghan full control, next year in 2010. In the northern half of the country, there's many areas where we could be moving in that direction today. So this is not something that's way over the horizon here.

I think in the southern half of the country this year is going to be a whole year and next year is going to be a regain-the-initiative year. Then by 2011, 2012 timeframe you're going to have areas there where you can start this transition. So we're not—even though I have a 2025 marker way out there, there's a lot of this that's going to happen in the next 3 to 5 years.

We actually clearly have to turn the direction in the southern half of the country in the next 2 to 3 years. So I think most of what I'm talking about is going to occur, Senator, inside of a 5-year timeframe. Then there's a continuous handoff of capabilities to the Afghans. So it shouldn't be viewed that we have large chunks of time and we don't have any transition until 2015.

Senator SESSIONS. Talking about our goals, is it to have every one of these areas under the direct control of Kabul and we expect

them all to salute and send taxes and send representatives up there like we do?

General BARNO. They have a decentralized system and they've had that for generations. What we have today is both local control, we have provincial councils, we have representatives from the province and districts back in the parliament in Kabul, and we have a relationship between the center and the states that's still fairly decentralized.

Now, American units work out there at the local level every day, but they work with officials that have——

Senator SESSIONS. Let me just interrupt you. You know what happened in al Anbar. You're not ignorant about that. We worked with local people. We funded the local people. They ran al Qaeda out. We funded them and I guess Baghdad didn't know anything about it. Some of them weren't happy. But it worked.

That's what turned it around, was it not?

General BARNO. That was the start of some major turn-around in Iraq, I think there's no question.

Senator SESSIONS. Yes, it was.

Ambassador, would you share this idea of whether we ratchet what our goals should be? Don't we need to be real clear about what our goals should be?

Ambassador DOBBINS. I tend to think we should focus less on end states and focus more on direction and pace. We're still in Kosovo today. You probably haven't had a hearing on that for 7 years, because the numbers, our numbers, are going down, the place is peaceful, it's off the front pages, things are getting better. They may not be getting better as quickly as we like, but they're getting better.

We stayed 10 years in Bosnia. After the first 2 or 3 years, numbers came down quickly; people were satisfied.

If we can turn the situation around in Afghanistan as we did in Iraq, then how quickly we get out, how long our commitment is for, is going to become much less pressing.

I think you're right and everybody's right to note that you have to be modest about what kind of societal changes you can facilitate in Afghanistan. I think you're also right that we need a bottom-up strategy to complement the top-down strategy. They're not necessarily in conflict, but you need to be doing both simultaneously, as we've done in Iraq and as I think we're going to try to start doing in Afghanistan.

Senator SESSIONS. Doctor, just a brief comment?

Dr. STRMECKI. I think there are some promising ways to work at the local level, and even the Afghan Government is seeking to do that. There's a new program, the Afghan Public Protection Force, that's seeking to recruit people from the village to protect the village. So I think that is a positive thing.

But there's no reason it can't be linked with the government, which has the support of the people overall. They want it to perform better, but they want this government to succeed. So I'd just hit that one point, and I'd say if you want to prevent a safe haven for terrorists in the long term so that we don't have to be there, we have to have some kind of Afghan state that helps police that.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Sessions.

Senator Hagan.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank all the witnesses here for your excellent testimony.

In Afghanistan, I think most of us know that it's probably the largest world producer of opium. I know that the drug trade I would think is being used to fund the Taliban and al Qaeda. I was wondering if you believe that you can stabilize Afghanistan without bringing this production of opium under control, and what can we do to address that issue? If all of you could speak on that. General, you want to go first?

General BARNO. I was down in Helmand Province during my visit here in January, clearly the centerpiece of narcotics production in Afghanistan. But on a positive side of the ledger, the number of provinces in Afghanistan and districts that are producing poppy has gone down dramatically. It's more found today in the unsecure areas of the country, where the Taliban have a strong presence, no doubt related to some of the funding advantage the Taliban get from that.

I was heartened to see that there is a plan to begin doing quite a bit more on counternarcotics in southern Afghanistan starting this year. The military has some additional authorities and has some additional directions working against counternarcotics traffickers and those that are connected to terrorism and the insurgency that they had not had in the past. So it'll be very interesting to watch how that authority gets used this year, but I think that's important.

The Afghan Government's made some fairly good progress locally on counternarcotics and it's been done by good leadership by governors out there. Particularly Nangarhar Province comes to mind, where they had a huge poppy problem just a few years ago and last year was declared generally poppy-free. So there are some good things going on out there, but it's going to take a connection of good leadership by the Afghan Government at the province level and I think a much stronger system of attack, not on the farmers, but on the traffickers and the producers who benefit from the crop.

Ambassador DOBBINS. There's clearly a connection between narcotics production and security or insecurity, but it seems dominantly to be one in which insecurity creates a framework for poppy production, rather than the reverse. As General Barno has indicated, in those provinces where security is reasonably established, poppy production has largely ceased, and it is now focused on the areas that are contested.

So if you look at the components of a counternarcotics strategy, I think there is a general view among experts that eradication of crops has very limited utility and some counterproductive aspects; aerial eradication probably shouldn't be tried; that interdiction should be strengthened, interdiction of drug traffickers, and particularly of the heroin trade. The actual poppies is a bulk product, but as it's refined down and then shipped out that's the point at which interrupting the stream will hurt the traffickers, but not the farmers. Finally, the ultimate key is alternate development, that is giving them actually alternative sources of livelihood that reasonably compete with what they can make in poppy trafficking.

Dr. STRMECKI. I agree with both of those comments and I just add one last point, that in a properly designed counterinsurgency plan, where you're securing district after district in these contested areas where there's a lot of opium production, that's when the "build" part of clear, hold, and build needs to include a major agricultural component: bringing in the inputs, agricultural credit, a little technical assistance, and helping product get to market.

Thank you.

Senator HAGAN. Obviously, I think if you can give the farmers something else to grow and actually bring in a little bit of money it would help them in the short term and long term.

I had one other question dealing with Pakistan and that is, we have talked some about the U.S. aid to Pakistan and I was just wondering your comments on whether that should be larger, smaller, more weighted towards economic and social development, and just what your thoughts are on that issue? Dr. Strmecki, you want to start this time?

Dr. STRMECKI. I think that if Pakistan moved into a fully cooperative posture vis a vis Afghanistan, we should be prepared to put on the table Egypt-level assistance over the long term to build Pakistan's educational infrastructure, its economy, and to prove that the United States has an interest in Pakistan, not because it's going to help us on the war on terror, but for Pakistan's own sake. But I think it's important that that come only after Pakistan has become fully cooperative in our relationship.

Ambassador DOBBINS. I would favor conditioning the military assistance and assistance we give that's used to support the military to ensure that it's used for the purposes that we intend. I do think that we probably should be providing a good deal of assistance in the nonmilitary areas, in education and in other areas, including in trying to provide better government services, better public services to the populations along the border regions.

I don't know that I would necessarily condition that assistance on the performance of the Afghan army.

Senator HAGAN. Pakistan.

General BARNO. I do think that sustained robust assistance for Pakistan's going to be very important for us to help maintain stability in that country, and I think part of looking at the internal stability is ensuring the population has an advancing economic capacity and an advancing political representation in the state to do the internal things that we do in many other countries. I think a very limited amount of our aid has gone in that direction in the past. There are some proposals out there clearly to increase that dramatically. I think that would be very helpful in the environment that Pakistan finds itself in today.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Hagan.

Senator Reed.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I thank you, gentlemen, for your testimony, but also I've benefited from your thoughtful advice over many years individually and collectively, and thank you for that very, very much.

A lot has been said today about unity of command and I want to just drill down if I could. We have currently in Afghanistan, RC-

East is an American operation, 101st. RC-South is a Dutch operation at the moment. I've heard, in fact I think in our discussions, General Barno, an alternate approach might be to bring in another division headquarters, American division headquarters, and essentially have a unity of command across the Pakistan border, with an American division headquarters, multinational units, but at the division level.

Another aspect of this is that our division headquarters are much more robust in terms of the staff, in terms of access to intelligence assets, access to civil-military relations. I think that's the case. If not, please correct me.

But can you comment upon that, changes that we might make on the ground to enhance unity of command and coherence of our strategy?

General BARNO. We talked a bit on this before, as you noted, Senator. The American division headquarters is a very, very capable organization and the 101st Airborne in Bagram——

Senator REED. Soon to be replaced by the 82nd.

General BARNO.—soon to be replaced by the mighty 82nd Airborne, that's right. Thank you very much, absolutely. I have served in that division before, as have you.

The divisional level in the United States brings a tremendous wealth of capabilities. American units at the brigade level, but beneath the division, are used to plugging into those capabilities. So that's a very important contribution we have going in the east for us, really a very, very robustly resourced effort.

In the South, I spent a good bit of time with the RC-South headquarters. Unlike our American division headquarters, there's only three people in RC-South that I could find that were there for 1-year tours. The remaining—and that was the three most senior people, the two-star commander and his two one-star deputies. Virtually the entire remaining staff are there for 3-month tours, 4-month tours, or 6-month tours.

They're an ad hoc organization that wasn't built on a headquarters corps. So their abilities to work together and to have all the capabilities an American division brings into the fight are simply absent, through no fault of their own. That's just the way that they were organized and the way that they're manned by these various countries.

So I think there'd be a lot of strength in having a full-time, at least 1-year duration divisional headquarters in southern Afghanistan. An American headquarters would bring a tremendous wealth of capabilities. It would also bring the long-term manning and the ability to command a much larger number of American units that are going to be in the south from this point forward.

We've also talked a bit about whether there might be a need to have an interim headquarters in between the four-star headquarters in Kabul that oversees the entire country of Afghanistan and this more robust fight in the southern part of the country in Afghanistan. Today the ISAF headquarters does everything from political-military activities all the way down to tactics. For any organization, that's extraordinarily difficult, to span that breadth of responsibility.

So I think that there's some benefit in thinking about this idea of whether there shouldn't be something like what we have in Iraq, where we've had a four-star headquarters that did the political-military and strategy, but we had a very important three-star headquarters, the Multi-National Corps-Iraq, that did all the tactical fighting and the integration of that whole counterinsurgency. That was a very important part I think of our success in Iraq.

Senator REED. Thank you.

Ambassador Dobbins, I want you to respond to this issue, but in your comments you also talk about at the higher NATO level, a reorganization, moving their headquarters in Virginia down to Tampa. I have a sense too, frankly, in our travels there that NATO is sincerely committed to the operations, but their organizational structure there—the deputy is in Mons and it's remote control more than direct control.

But please go ahead, Mr. Ambassador.

Ambassador DOBBINS. I think that's right. Our command in Afghanistan is divided below General McKiernan and above General McKiernan. General Barno has focused on the below General McKiernan types of changes, and ideally combining OEF and ISAF would be a step in the right direction. My proposal has been combining the structures above General McKiernan, which I think is independently desirable, whatever you do at the lower.

We may not get a lot more troops out of the Europeans, but I think if we could set up a command structure that was optimized for conducting this where that itself would be a signal that they're taking it seriously.

Senator REED. Dr. Strmecki, your comments?

Dr. STRMECKI. I agree with General Barno's prescription. I'd just add that it would create a natural point of collaboration of the three-star headquarters with our embassy to be able to integrate civilian effects into the military plan. But I also think it's important to move toward a full integration of the Afghan side in strategy, operational planning, and execution. They are already the largest force, the ANA, in the theater, and if we pursue the right policies they will become the dominant force. So having them integrated into the planning is important.

Senator REED. Thank you very much. My time has expired.

Chairman LEVIN. Senator Collins.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

One of the reasons that we are seeing some success in Iraq is not just the addition of more troops, but rather a change in strategy that accompanied the addition of more troops. In that regard, I have a lot of concern about sending more troops to Afghanistan prior to the administration completing its review of what the strategy should be.

Ambassador, I'd like to start with you, to ask you to comment on whether there is a risk of putting 17,000 additional troops into Afghanistan before the new administration has decided what changes in strategy should accompany that insertion of additional troops?

Ambassador DOBBINS. Senator, it would obviously be desirable to do the two simultaneously and I'm sure the administration would have preferred to, but felt that the situation was too urgent. I'd say first of all that the Bush administration in its latter years was al-

ready altering the strategy in Afghanistan toward the model that had been established in Iraq, although they hadn't completely embraced it. So some of the changes toward a counterinsurgency strategy as opposed to a counterterrorism strategy were already put in place.

But to execute that kind of strategy, to execute the kind of strategy we did execute in Iraq, you do need more troops. You're going to need the troops to execute a strategy that is centered around protecting the population, and therefore I think sending the troops makes sense.

So I agree in principle that you're right that it would be desirable to do both at the same time. My sense is that the administration will probably complete its review on Afghanistan and announce the results before most of those troops get there.

Senator COLLINS. General Barno?

General BARNO. I would generally agree with the Ambassador's comments. Being out there and seeing what the demands were on the current level of troops in the south and knowing this election is coming up here in August, there is—I think a very practical decision was made, which is we know we have to get more troops in to help set conditions for a successful election; we'll begin that flow and we'll begin putting the logistics and the other requirements in place to ensure that they're capable of being bedded down where we need to put them—in a very austere area, by the way—without having the complete strategy approach finished.

I think it was just a very practical call to make, and knowing that the strategy is in its final stages right now and seeing where that would probably lead them. But I think the election was one of the key drivers on that, a date that's fixed, that's not going to go away, that we're going to need those troops for.

Senator COLLINS. Dr. Strmecki?

Dr. STRMECKI. I would agree with the thrust of your comments, that if you send forces without the right strategy you're certainly not going to get the optimal result, and you may not get—you can even have a counterproductive effect if they were put into play in service of a poor strategy.

I think that a decision to flow the forces had to be made now in order to have them available at the time that the strategic review would be done. But I think that puts Congress and others in a place to really push for the right strategy, because the combination of the two can turn the situation around.

Senator COLLINS. My related concern is that we're putting an American face on the effort. It is evident that, despite the heroic efforts of Secretary Gates, that most of the NATO nations are still very reluctant to step up the number of troops that they are sending to Afghanistan. We don't see something equivalent to the Anbar Awakening occurring in Afghanistan.

General, is there a danger that this is too much of an American operation rather than an Afghan-NATO operation, and thus will be more resisted by the Afghan people?

General BARNO. I have the opposite experience. My experience with the Afghans during my time there and in my many dealings with them since is that they have great confidence in American military forces. If they have a choice, they want Americans in their

districts and their provinces working with them out there, because in part the amount of resources that the United States brings and in part because of the relationships that we've built there.

I think the reality is as we look at the very demanding requirements ahead of us, that the United States is going to have to take a bigger role, that the United States is going to have to take a stronger leadership position, and that much more of what we do there to help fuse this very disparate effort that we have been able to put together over the last several years is going to have to be fused by American leadership.

So I think that that's a positive, and I think the Afghan people will have a lot of positive reaction to that. I used to describe it that when we began this NATO transition that brand NATO didn't have any recognition in Afghanistan, brand USA had a lot of recognition. Now, that's less true today, but it's still I think fairly true.

Senator COLLINS. But this is a country with such a history of resistance to outside powers. It just seems to me that it's imperative that we build up the Afghan army as quickly as possible so that the Afghans are taking a lead.

Ambassador Dobbins?

Ambassador DOBBINS. I quite agree. We need to put not so much a NATO face on this as an Afghan face. The Bush administration decided last year to double the size of the Afghan army, but it's still probably an inadequate number and it probably will have to be increased further. The Afghans will never be able to afford to pay for that army, and therefore implicit in the decision to further increase its size is a long-term commitment to support a military structure at that level as long as necessary. But I think that's probably a far better alternative than envisaging a longer-term American military presence.

Senator COLLINS. Dr. Strmecki?

Dr. STRMECKI. In my experience the Afghans still want a robust American presence. The greater fear is that they're going to be abandoned and that the regional powers will again return to fight a sort of proxy war in their country. They have a very positive feeling toward us for the support we delivered to help them fight the Soviets in the 1980s. But you're right in the sense that we have to think of the forces we're sending as a bridging force until we can ramp up the Afghan forces.

The first call on new forces in my view should be in the mentoring, embedded trainer role, so that we can get that Afghan force building its size and capability as fast as possible.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Collins.

We have word that, Ambassador Dobbins, you might have to leave at 11:30 a.m. If that is the case, we understand it. But we would like to have a second round for those of us that are here, for those of you who can stay.

I want to get back to the size of the Afghan army. It's now at apparently about 65,000. The goal is to now double that by 2011. It originally had been 2013 and I talked to some of the Afghans yesterday and some of those who are advising us on the size of the army who are U.S. people, that it has to be much larger than

130,000, which is the new goal, perhaps, as I think the Afghan Defense Minister Wardak suggested, maybe 250,000.

Dr. Strmecki, you mentioned 250,000. Without getting into the question of how much larger, I think all three of you would want to see that expedited, would want to see a much larger, better equipped Afghan army, and we're going to try to check the long poles and see what they are. Again, my understanding has been that it's lack of trainers, a significant lack of trainers, as a matter of fact a shortfall I believe of 4,000 minimum, according to General McKiernan's estimate at least 4,000 trainers short.

The cost of the army increase is relatively small. If you assume $2,000 a year, which is more than the average pay of a soldier, an Afghan soldier, if you added 100,000 additional above the 130,000 which is our new goal, in terms of pay you're talking less than $200 million. Now, that doesn't get to equipment, but compared to the other costs it's still fairly relatively minimal.

One of you used a figure that it was at certain times more expensive to have an American soldier there than an Afghan soldier. One of you used that this morning. Was it you, Dr. Strmecki?

Dr. STRMECKI. 50 to 100 times.

Chairman LEVIN. 50 to 100 times. So the cost should clearly not be the long pole in the tent. Whether it's equipment or whether or not it's trainers or something else, it should not be cost, given how much we're spending to have American troops in Afghanistan. Would you all agree with that, that cost should not be a long pole in that tent? Very briefly, would you just agree with that?

General BARNO. Absolutely.

Chairman LEVIN. Mr. Ambassador?

Ambassador DOBBINS. Yes, but I do think that to the extent we can succeed in turning some of the populations in the contested regions and bringing them over to our side and empowering them to provide local security, we may actually limit the burden that we'll be putting on national forces. So the total numbers may not be just the numbers for the permanent full-time army, but rather the security forces, which might be complemented by these other elements.

Chairman LEVIN. Dr. Strmecki?

Dr. STRMECKI. I would agree that cost shouldn't be the factor.

Chairman LEVIN. All right. Now, getting to your point, Ambassador Dobbins—I think others have made it as well—there's a new initiative that's been begun called the Afghan Public Protection Program. It works through community councils, which select local members of the Afghan Public Protection Force who will serve neighborhood watch-like functions in their home communities, and essentially be paying local folks to maintain security in their communities, which is along the Sons of Iraq model.

Is that model that I've just described the right model, to try to get people paid locally to provide their own protection, to bypass the central government and the army? If so, what's the reaction of the Afghan National Government to the Afghan Public Protection Program? Is that a joint program? Is it our program? Is it an Afghan program? What is it?

Dr. Strmecki?

Dr. STRMECKI. It's a program that is run by the Ministry of Interior, so it is one that the national government is fully vested in.

There's a pilot program that's taking place in Wardak Province, six districts relatively near Kabul. I think it's a good model, because when you look at what we did in Iraq, where we operated separate from the Iraqi Government—and that was necessary at that time—then came the question of how do you integrate this back and how do you vet the people who had been in many cases in the enemy camp to join the forces of the Iraqi Government?

Here the vetting takes place through the local community. So it's people that they trust that will have the arms put in their hands to defend their communities. So I think you've leapfrogged the kind of problem that the Sons of Iraq might have at the integration stage.

Chairman LEVIN. Ambassador?

Ambassador DOBBINS. I think that I wouldn't see this so much as bypassing the army and the central government. I think there has to be relationships established that make everybody comfortable with this. For instance, these local forces are going to be quickly overrun unless they can be rapidly reinforced by either American, NATO, or ideally Afghan regular army units.

We've been using the Afghan police as a counterinsurgency force and they're not suited for that and they're getting killed in large numbers, and we need to move to a better model.

This will create some suspicion on the part, for instance, of the northern populations, the Tajiks and the Uzbeks and others. They'll see this as essentially a program for arming Pashtuns. So that particular dynamic—just like the Shia were suspicious about our arming the Sunnis—is going to have to be managed.

Chairman LEVIN. Even when it's local people?

Ambassador DOBBINS. Well, they're local Pashtuns.

Chairman LEVIN. They're suspicious of local Pashtuns in Pashtun areas?

Ambassador DOBBINS. Yes, not to the same degree as the Sunni and Shia are, but yes. So that aspect of it will have to be managed as well.

But I think it's a step in the right direction. The economics of it are pretty clear. If you put 50,000 American troops in, you get 10,000 boots-on-the-ground and the rest are staff and support. If you recruited 50,000 local Afghans in these regions, your net is not just 50,000; it's 100,000 because you've taken 50,000 Taliban recruits and essentially recruited them into your own force. So the economics of it are very attractive.

Chairman LEVIN. General?

General BARNO. I think it has some merit. It's good to see as an experimental program, a pilot, and see what successes come from it. But I think there's a risk and there's concern out there that it doesn't become a rearming of warlord militias in its next incarnation. So I think we have to be very careful on how to transition into something beyond this.

The other thing I think we have to be cautious about is that we don't inadvertently take resources away from the police training program to do this program. I suspect we're going to be doing both as complements to each other, but if there's a finite set of resources I think we ought to be careful we don't undercut the other important programs we have going.

Chairman LEVIN. I'm going to come back to that police training program on my next round.

Senator Hagan.

Senator HAGAN. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I'll be brief because I have to preside in a little while.

But I do have a question on the upcoming elections. From what I understand, President Karzai's term ends May 21 and the constitution calls for an election 30 to 60 days before May 21. But evidently the country's upland areas will be snowbound for several months, which somebody said that maybe when the constitution was drafted that wasn't taken into consideration in 2003.

The election commission has recently ruled that, due to the logistical and security problems, they've postponed that until August 20; and that something I was reading today said that Karzai might hold a snap election on April 21.

My question is what are your thoughts about the upcoming election and specifically what that would mean to our troops, and the security reasons?

Ambassador DOBBINS. I do think that this will be a pivotal event. If it goes well, I think it could be seen as the beginning of a turnaround. If it goes badly, particularly if an election is essentially indecisive, in which the results are hotly contested, then it could be a serious setback.

Dr. STRMECKI. I think the Afghans and the international community are going to be able to work through the question of timing. In other big events, the loya jirgas and so forth, there was a little give and take in terms of scheduling as was required by political circumstances or other things. I don't think a snap election is in the cards because the logistics are so challenging. General Barno is the expert on that in that he ran the security and other aspects of the 2004 election in concert with the U.N. and others. So I don't think there is such a thing as a snap election in Afghanistan.

General BARNO. I would agree with that, but I do think that there is potential for some degree of internal crisis in Afghanistan over this particular event. There is great debate inside the country right now on who is going to be the president of Afghanistan after 21 May, because by the constitution it can't be President Karzai. Who inherits that, what does that mean, what is the impatience for the upcoming election in August?

So this is a very contentious and potentially explosive issue that the international community has—I've gone to a couple conferences on the election in the last 6 months and there's been a feeling that this is the Afghans' election, the international community doesn't have a central role, as it did in the 2004 and the 2005 election, I think that has taken us into some potentially dangerous territory here.

So I think we're going to have to be very alert to the potential for some internal strife if some of these issues that Dr. Strmecki pointed out don't get resolved.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Hagan.

Just a few more questions. You talked about, General, the importance of not weakening the effort to strengthen the national police with the program called Public Protection Program. I want to get

to the police question. Just how realistic are the prospects for developing a noncorrupt, competent police force in Afghanistan?

General BARNO. There's a very good program under way now called the Focused District Development Program, that takes local police out, substitutes them with national police for a period of time while the local police are taken away to be trained to a higher standard, and then the local police are brought back, they're given mentors and the national police are sent on to other locations.

That was launched I think about 18 months ago and it's had a lot of success as it marches around the country. The key to the sustained success of the program appears to be keeping those mentors with those retrained police for a prolonged period of time. There's some question whether the actual system will support that or not. In the places where that has not happened, the police have gone right back to their old ways. So I think that program is showing a lot of prospects for success and needs to be reinforced as perhaps a nationwide model. It may be under way, but I know that it's being implemented in slightly different ways in different parts of the country.

So I think there's high prospects, but we have to get the police fixed in Afghanistan. There's not going to be an ANA soldier on every corner in Afghanistan, but there should be an Afghan policeman on every corner in Afghanistan, and that needs to be a trained individual that can do both rule of law, but also be able to react if he has Taliban come into his area. The Afghan police have not been brought up to that standard yet.

Chairman LEVIN. Ambassador, how confident are you we can reform the police in Afghanistan? How important is it?

Ambassador DOBBINS. I think within limits we've been successful in police training programs in a number of places. But you have to have reasonable expectations and it's a resource and time-intensive process.

I do think that the police in Afghanistan have to some degree been misused. We need to focus the police on law and order type activities and look to other institutions and other solutions for counterinsurgency roles in isolated roles, situations in which the police will be too rapidly overcome if they're left out there on their own.

Chairman LEVIN. Dr. Strmecki, do you have any thoughts about the police? Can we reform them?

Dr. STRMECKI. The police program has been a challenge from day one in Afghanistan. Certainly the stories of the corruption and abuses in police forces are largely true. Also we should recognize that there are good elements in the police and that the police have suffered probably the highest casualty rates in engagements with the insurgents.

I am hopeful, because we're having a bringing together of two factors, good leadership in the Ministry of Interior and a robust program to support police, development of the police. Earlier we had a good minister in 2003 and 2004, but our program was underdeveloped. Then in 2005 until 2008 we had a poor minister, but a stronger program. Recently President Karzai has appointed a very good new Minister of Interior.

They control the police, and coupled with the robust program, now I think the combination of the two gives us some prospects for optimism, provided that we can do the kind of partnering and mentoring that my colleagues have talked about.

Again, that brings us back to the question of what's the first call on additional forces that we send to Afghanistan, and I think the first call on those should be in the mentoring and partnering role, not just with the ANA, but also with the police.

Chairman LEVIN. My final question relates to the Afghan NSP. Are you familiar with this community-based development approach? As I indicated in my opening remarks, I'm personally familiar with at least one example of it, which seemed to be a very great success. We heard good things about it from other folks in Afghanistan. Are you all familiar with it? If so, would you tell us what your assessment is of it?

There's a new program that attempts to create links between the local and the national levels in this area which is called the Afghanistan Social Outreach Program. If you're familiar with that program, do you believe that it's intended to be a substitute for the Afghan NSP?

So what do you know about NSP? Is it a good program? Is it working? Should it be expanded, continued? Is that other new program, Afghanistan Social Outreach Program, something which works along with it or is it threat to it, assuming that NSP is a good program?

Anyone of you, are you familiar with it? Dr. Strmecki?

Dr. STRMECKI. Afghan NSP I think is one of the great successes in Afghanistan. It's an Afghan-led program out of the Ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development, that created 23,000 community development councils. So these are small councils in villages that determine what reconstruction priorities they have or development priorities they have.

Those are then channeled up to the ministry and then a grant is made to enable the local community to carry it out. So it really shows that an Afghan institution can deliver results for the people.

Chairman LEVIN. Again, let me interrupt. These are small grants.

Dr. STRMECKI. That's right.

Chairman LEVIN. $16,000 or something like that.

Dr. STRMECKI. Exactly. They've carried out more than 35,000 projects across the country. So it's a tremendous success, given the environment, given the underdeveloped nature of the Afghan state. It really shows if you take that model, that national program model, you could apply it in other areas.

Now, the Afghan Social Outreach Program I have to confess I haven't heard of it. So I will have to take that and discover its nature and get back to you.

[The information referred to follows:]

The Afghan Social Outreach Program is an Afghan-led program to mobilize local communities and connect them to their government. The problem that the program seeks to solve is that, at the district level, the Afghan Government does not have a political body to engage and to cooperate with at the local level. The program involves the organization of broadly representative community councils at the district level, which will be phased out and replaced by elected district councils in 2010. The stated goal for these councils is to foster community solidarity to prevent infiltration

by anti-government elements, to provide a mechanism for conflict resolution, and to provide an organized channel for local communities to communicate and engage with the Afghan Government, particularly its police and security services. The councils will not implement or manage funds for development projects—a task that will remain with the development councils created under the National Solidarity Program (NSP). To directly answer your question, the Afghan Social Outreach Program should not be viewed as a threat to the NSP.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Ambassador Dobbins?

Ambassador DOBBINS. The NSP certainly gets good marks from everybody I've talked to. I do think that we talked about creating local, village-based defense forces controlled by local village councils. I think the important thing is to link these different programs and to ensure that you're not only empowering the local representatives in the security area, but also to be providing resources through these other programs, so that they're not only taking responsibility for their own security, but for deciding what development programs are to be instituted and then actually delivering the resources for those deployment programs.

I think our PRTs and our military can play a strong role in ensuring that the efforts to provide those kinds of resources are adequately secured, so they actually show up and are used.

Chairman LEVIN. General?

General BARNO. I would agree with Dr. Strmecki on the overall benefit of the program. The Social Outreach Program, I'm not sure if that's synonymous with what's called the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), which I have heard is a competitor at times with the Afghan NSP. The IDLG is a program that President Karzai has set up to really connect him more directly to the local governance and work at the local area, in effect somewhat independently of some of the structures of government, that's had some success, but I don't have a great knowledge of how the details of that are being implemented.

Chairman LEVIN. I promised that would be the last question, but there is one that I overlooked. Predator strikes—we've talked about these—in Pakistan. There are plusses—they hit some of their targets—it misses targets, hits innocents at times. They're going to continue, apparently. So there's up sides and down sides to those strikes.

The Government of Pakistan attacks them and that creates a very negative public perception of us, and by some accounts it becomes a recruiting tool for future terrorists and people who violently attack us.

Are they worth it overall, General, in Pakistan?

General BARNO. My sense is they are having a major impact on the enemy. In open session I think that's as far as I would go with that.

Chairman LEVIN. That's fine.

Ambassador Dobbins?

Ambassador DOBBINS. I think it's a difficult balance between the political impacts they have on Pakistan and the specific tactical victories. I don't have a basis to challenge either this or the last administration's judgment that on balance it's something that we should be doing. But clearly it's something that we should be continually reevaluating.

Chairman LEVIN. Dr. Strmecki?

Dr. STRMECKI. I work primarily from open sources in following Afghanistan, so I can't adequately judge the return in terms of degrading the enemy. I've spoken to Afghans, senior Afghan officials, who believe that it is degrading.

Chairman LEVIN. You're talking about Pakistan?

Dr. STRMECKI. But I've spoken to Afghan senior officials who said those attacks are degrading some elements of the cross-border capability. But that's not direct evidence that I have.

Chairman LEVIN. Shouldn't we at least expect that Pakistan not vehemently attack something that we're doing, that they've been informed about, according to Secretary Gates? Shouldn't we at a minimum expect the Pakistan Government—we understand the politics of it, that they want to disassociate themselves from the innocents who are killed. But shouldn't we expect that they can disassociate themselves without the vehement attacks on them, publicly calling for them to end, which they have? At the same time there's some suspicion that they may not want them to end, that they at a minimum acquiesce in them, know about them?

So that's my question. If they politically need to disassociate themselves, even criticize the loss of innocent lives, isn't the vehemence of their criticism beyond what we should expect the Pakistan Government to be doing? Anyone want to comment on that?

General BARNO. The only comment I think I'd make, Mr. Chairman, is that this is still a very new government and they are still finding their footing. The nation hasn't been governed by a civil leadership in many, many, many years, and this government is still trying to discover how it connects to its population, what its role is, how it should look at these issues.

I think that over time as they grow in maturity that this outward manifestation of how they feel about this may change a bit.

Chairman LEVIN. Anyone else want to comment on that?

Ambassador DOBBINS. I tend to think that rhetorical protestations are probably the least we can expect. The Pakistanis could be taking steps to make it more difficult for us, which they're not. They could be inhibiting our transit rights, overflight rights. They're not. So as a practical matter they are acquiescing in this behavior.

They are paying some political price domestically for acquiescing in it. If they were actually to stop their rhetorical protests, they would be paying an even higher domestic price. I don't know whether it's in our interest to have them do that.

Chairman LEVIN. I'm talking about the extreme nature of it, the vehemence of the protest, not just the fact of it. Maybe I'm being too fine-tuned in my thought.

Dr. Strmecki?

Dr. STRMECKI. I think I share your dissatisfaction with their posture, and I'd suggest that an engagement with them over time that goes to what General Barno said earlier, about what is the positive vision that our relationship will have for Pakistan's sake over the long term, is critical, so that then this aspect of the relationship can be put into a wider context, and together the Pakistani Government and us can engage the public to say, we're here for the long haul for Pakistan's sake, these are the things that we're doing to

improve the Pakistan economy, the educational system, universities and so forth, but we together have to deal with this dangerous extremist threat, that's a threat to both Pakistan and to the United States.

So getting the relationship to that footing, I think, is the solution to this unsatisfactory current situation.

Chairman LEVIN. I promised that that was the last question. Senator Reed came just in time.

Senator REED. Mr. Chairman, I would never undercut your commitment.

Chairman LEVIN. No, no.

Senator REED. No, these gentlemen have been very generous with their time, and I just again want to thank them.

Chairman LEVIN. Senator Webb has asked that a U.S. News article by Andrew Basovich called "Afghanistan Surge Is Not Worth The Cost in Blood and Treasure" be inserted in the record. It will be at this point.

[The information referred to follows:]

AFGHANISTAN SURGE IS NOT WORTH THE COST IN BLOOD AND TREASURE

by Andrew Bacevich, USNews.com, February 23, 2009

More than 7 years after September 11, the global war on terrorism—in Pentagon parlance, the Long War—is entering a new phase. Attention is now shifting back to Afghanistan, with President Obama seemingly intent on redeeming an ill-advised campaign pledge to increase the U.S. troop commitment to that theater of operations. Yet as the conflict continues, the correlation between American actions and America's interests is becoming increasingly difficult to discern. The fundamental incoherence of U.S. strategy becomes ever more apparent. Worst of all, there is no end in sight.

Almost forgotten now, the theme of the Long War's first phase was shock and awe. Starting with its invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, the Bush administration set out to demonstrate America's military supremacy. With a series of crushing defeats of its enemies, the United States would eliminate conditions that fostered and sustained jihadist activity, thereby "draining the swamp." From military victories would come political reformation.

U.S. successes in overthrowing the Taliban and then toppling Saddam Hussein lent to these expectations a superficial plausibility. No sooner had President Bush declared "Mission Accomplished" in Iraq, however, than things began to unravel. Military campaigns expected to be brief and economical became protracted and costly.

As hopes of transforming the greater Middle East dimmed, the war on terrorism entered its second phase. On July 1, 2003, Bush himself expressed its central theme: "Bring 'em on." In a conflict commonly described as global, Iraq and Afghanistan now absorbed the lion's share of attention. In Iraq, the Bush administration remained intent on achieving decisive victory. By winning there, the entire project of transformation might still be salvaged.

Yet efforts to achieve a military solution yielded not decision but escalating levels of violence. Confident chatter of ending tyranny and liberalizing the Islamic world ceased. The strategic focus narrowed further: In common parlance, "the war" no longer meant the larger struggle against terrorism; it meant Iraq. There, U.S. commanders had willy-nilly adopted a strategy of attrition, which produced frustration on the battlefield and backlash on the home front. When the November 2006 elections installed a Democratic majority in both Houses of Congress, Bush pulled the plug on Phase 2, sacking his Defense Secretary and announcing plans to change course.

Phase 3 of the Long War commenced when Bush appointed Robert Gates as Defense Secretary and General David Petraeus as his fourth commander in Baghdad. On one key point, Gates and Petraeus concurred: Iraq was unwinnable in strictly military terms. Events had shredded any expectations of the United States coercing Muslims into embracing liberal values. From the Green Zone, Petraeus launched what was in effect a salvage operation. The emphasis shifted from chasing insurgents to protecting the Iraqi people. Under what was styled as the Sunni Awak-

ening, the United States offered money and arms to militants who promised to cease attacking coalition forces. Thanks to this "surge," the level of violence in Iraq diminished appreciably. Although Petraeus by no means solved the Iraqi conundrum, he pulled that country back from the precipice of disintegration.

This limited success did not suffice to redeem the presidential hopes of Senator John McCain, who made his support for the surge the centerpiece of his campaign. Barack Obama, a consistent critic of the war, beat McCain handily. Yet if Obama's supporters read his win as a repudiation of Bush's Iraq policies, the election's outcome had a second effect, paradoxically serving to ensure the Long War's continuation. Even as Petraeus was tamping down the level of carnage in Iraq, conditions in perennially neglected Afghanistan had eroded. In 2008, the Taliban returned to the offensive. Allied casualties increased. Fighting spilled across the border into Pakistan, which became the Long War's de facto third front. Obama, the candidate who vowed to get out of Iraq but needed to protect himself from the charge of being weak on national security, promised if elected to up the ante in Afghanistan.

So Obama's inauguration finds the Long War in transition to a new fourth phase. In Iraq, the surge has reached its ambiguous conclusion: Petraeus has moved on, leaving to his successor the problem of extricating the 140,000 U.S. troops still there without destabilizing the country. More important, Afghanistan, now coupled with Pakistan, has returned to the front burner. In effect, the Long War that began in Central Asia in 2001 and then shifted to the Persian Gulf in 2003 is now seesawing back to Central Asia.

What has been lost along the way, in addition to over 4,000 U.S. troops and enormous sums of money, is any clear sense of purpose. No serious person believes any longer that the United States possesses the capacity to transform the Islamic world. Our efforts to drain the swamp have succeeded mostly in exacerbating the anti-Americanism on which the jihadists feed. Testifying before a Senate committee recently, Gates mocked the idea of converting Afghanistan into "some sort of a Central Asian Valhalla." Using a now familiar Pentagon mantra, he declared, "There is no purely military solution in Afghanistan."

At a time of trillion-dollar deficits and grave economic crisis at home, the questions must be asked: What will the Long War accomplish? How long will it last? What will it cost? Who will pay? The time to address these questions is now. Obama's freedom of action will never be greater than it is today. Should he dodge these issues and plunge more deeply into Afghanistan, the Long War will very soon become Obama's war. He will richly deserve the obloquy to be heaped on his head as a consequence.

Chairman LEVIN. You have been terrific witnesses. It's been a very valuable hearing and we're grateful for your attendance. We will stand adjourned.

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DANIEL K. AKAKA

EXIT STRATEGY

1. Senator AKAKA. General Barno, one of the issues I had in the beginning of the Iraq war was the lack of a definitive exit strategy. Secretary Gates recently stated, "the goals we did have for Afghanistan are too broad and too far into the future." He went on to say, "we need more concrete goals that can be achieved realistically within 3 to 5 years." To what extent do you believe that the Department of Defense has developed a clear, definitive exit strategy in Afghanistan?

General BARNO. Senator, I do not have specific information on the degree to which the Defense Department has developed a clear and definitive exit strategy for Afghanistan. That said, I also believe that any public strategy which identifies "exit" as an objective in effect imbeds within such strategy the seeds of its own destruction. In the case of Afghanistan, a primary theme of the Taliban has been: "The Americans have all the wristwatches but we, the Taliban, have all the time." The Taliban strategy is simply to run out the clock and convince the population and their fighters that the United States has no resolve for winning this fight; history tends to support their case. Our exit strategy must be predicated on "success"—creating a nation and region stabilized in the political, economic, and security realms to the extent that U.S. forces are no longer needed.

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2. Senator AKAKA. General Barno, President Obama recently committed an additional 17,000 military troops to Afghanistan in an effort to stabilize what has become a deteriorating situation. However, it is my firm belief that there is no pure military solution to the challenges we face in Afghanistan. What immediate steps do you think we should take from a political and economic standpoint as part of a more comprehensive effort to stabilize the current situation in Afghanistan?

General BARNO. Additional military forces are necessary, but as you point out, not in and of themselves sufficient to assure the outcome. On the political front, our most important objective this year—and one in which the military must play an enabling role—is to set conditions for a free, fair, and secure Afghan presidential election in August. This event will become the "strategic report card" on the entire international enterprise. On the economic front, I believe that a wholesale major effort must be taken to reform and reinvigorate the Afghan agricultural sector. Nearly 80 percent of the Afghan economy is connected to agriculture, yet to date the international community has done little to even return Afghanistan to the functioning agricultural state that it was in the 1960s and 1970s. This is a crucial component in any economic development program, and one which lacks coherence today.

3. Senator AKAKA. Ambassador Dobbins, the people of Afghanistan must be able to secure its borders and deny cross-border mobility to insurgents and drug traffickers. Pakistan made a truce with Taliban forces that many feel creates a safe haven for terrorists. In your 2007 testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, you stated "U.S. and NATO troops will be required indefinitely as long as the Taliban and the other insurgents groups are able to recruit, train, raise funds, and organize their operations in Pakistan." This recent truce further complicates this situation. Do you still feel that this is an accurate assessment of future troop requirements in the region?

Ambassador DOBBINS. Afghanistan cannot be fully stabilized until the threat from insurgent groups operating out of Pakistan is brought under control, and that task will have to be performed principally by the Pakistani Government. Until that occurs, Afghan forces alone are unlikely to be sufficient to secure Afghan territory and population. Reliance upon American and NATO troops can be reduced, however, as Afghan national and local forces become more proficient, and the Afghan administration becomes more effective in providing public services to the populations in the contested regions.

As I said in my February 26 testimony, we should worry less about end states, and more about the direction and pace of change, particularly as regards public security. If we can reverse, over the next year or 2, the current negative trends in public security, the need for a large scale presence of foreign forces can be reduced, if not eliminated altogether.

[Whereupon, at 12:00 p.m., the committee adjourned.]