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ADDRESSING U.S. STRATEGY IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN: BALANCING INTERESTS AND RESOURCES

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION

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FEBRUARY 12, 2009

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ADDRESSING U.S. STRATEGY IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN: BALANCING INTERESTS AND RESOURCES

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, Thursday, February 12, 2009.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:33 a.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ike Skelton (chairman of the committee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. IKE SKELTON, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM MISSOURI, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The CHAIRMAN. Good morning. Today the House Armed Services Committee meets to receive testimony on assessing U.S. strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan, balancing interests and resources.

Our witnesses for today's hearings: Dr. Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies; Stephen Biddle of the Council on Foreign Relations; General Jack Keane, former Vice Chief of Staff, United States Army; and Janet St. Laurent from the Government Accountability Office, GAO.

So we welcome all of you, and without any objection, any written statements you might have will be entered into the record.

The new Administration has made it clear that they are renewing the focus on America's other war in Afghanistan. Of course, I think it is about time. For too long our country has not paid sufficient attention to the war in Afghanistan, and it doesn't appear we are winning there. Casualties are on the rise. The Taliban is conducting more widespread attacks, including those this week on government buildings in Kabul, which cost at least 20 lives.

A new strategy was clearly articulated, and achievable goals are desperately needed. And I am pleased the Administration is undertaking that review.

At the same time, Iraq, which has been our major focus for the last five years, seems to be trending in the right direction. Violence is down significantly, and provincial elections have been conducted. This, of course, is a welcome change. But our commanders there tell us we are not over the hurdles yet, and the situation in Iraq remains potentially unstable and dangerous.

With the input from those commanders, the President is also considering the future of the U.S. presence in Iraq and how fast we can draw down our troop presence. This is the context from the hearing today. The President will hopefully in the near future announce new strategies for both Iraq and Afghanistan, and we on the House Armed Services Committee, together with some of our other colleagues, will be charged with evaluating those strategies.

Today's hearing is intended to raise those questions and issues that will help us do that job.

We must remember neither strategy can be taken in isolation. Troops in Iraq are not available for service in Afghanistan. Enablers like unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or combat engineers are desperately needed in both theaters, but we don't have enough to fully resource both, at least in the near future. The Administration and the Congress are going to have to balance our interests and risks in each theater and try their best to figure out how to spread these limited resources. It is my hope that the witnesses here today will suggest questions and raise issues that will help us accomplish this task.

I turn to my colleague and good friend, the Ranking Member, John McHugh for comments.

STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN M. MCHUGH, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM NEW YORK, RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. MCHUGH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If there is any greater signal as to the bipartisanship of this committee, it is your opening statement. Mine sounds much as yours does, so I will forego reading it formally and ask that it be submitted in its entirety in the record.

But let me say I certainly join you, Mr. Chairman, in welcoming our very distinguished panelists. And at the risk of stating the obvious, this is a critically important hearing. Balancing, it is a buzzword of late; it is in the title of the hearing today, as you noted, Mr. Chairman. It was also in the headline of Secretary Gates' recently published article in Foreign Affairs that we discussed here in his appearance just a while back, and it fairly characterizes the Pentagon's national defense strategy.

I would suggest the word "balancing" is easy, at least to say. And what I hope we can come away with here today, Mr. Chairman, is the opportunity to pierce the definition in the textbook of the word "balancing" and begin to cut through the ambiguity of the term and try to get through the tough strategic choices and trade-offs that come with that effort.

On Monday, as you and I discussed, Mr. Chairman, I returned from my tenth visit to Iraq, my fourth to Afghanistan. Let me state our men and women in uniform continue to demonstrate that they are the world's premier fighting force, but I left the two theaters with any number of concerns and questions.

In Iraq the violence, and the recent successful provincial elections, and the relatively smooth implementation of the so-called SOFA, the Status of Forces Agreement, have caused many to announce that the war, in their mind, is over.

Two weeks ago Secretary Gates testified that the successful Iraqi elections in June and those of 2009 substantially enhanced the prospects for what he called enduring domestic peace in Iraq. Virtually every military leader, including Ambassador Crocker, cautioned us about what they termed as "precipitous withdrawal." Their advice, I think, is important. It sounds to me like a prudent wait-and-see approach before we say the phrase "mission accomplished."

And I would note, too, Mr. Chairman, a host of accompanying questions need to be answered, including under what conditions can we reasonably reduce our footprint in Iraq? What type of residual presence will we need in Iraq after 2011 as the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) calls for our withdrawal? And how do we prevent al Qaeda from again making that nation a central focus on the war on terror? And lastly and most critically, how do we prevent Iran and the special groups from becoming a spoiler? We need answers to those variables and more as we attempt to balance, balance the interests in resources with Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan I saw firsthand the need for increased U.S. commitment, particularly in the south where we visited. Our forces, in my judgment, lack adequate capabilities, as you said, Mr. Chairman, such as Special Operations Forces; Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) assets; and Medical Evacuation (Medevac) resources.

In the coming year it is expected our commanders on the ground will finally have the capability to implement a counterinsurgency strategy that is tailored for that theater. Even if the key strategic questions are answered adequately, logistical issues are paramount in this discussion. Surging in Afghanistan from Iraq as we redeploy is fraught with challenges. Plans for an increased U.S. commitment in Afghanistan have already revealed its limited capacity to host added enablers and boots on the ground. These variables need to be understood as we adjust our strategic posture towards Afghanistan.

In my judgment, the message to Congress is clear. The pressures of an economic crisis and the need to find dollars for domestic spending should not come at a cost of our gains in Iraq or compromise our objectives in Afghanistan.

In closing, let me say, Mr. Chairman, I returned from Iraq and Afghanistan with five key lessons in hand. While the Iraqi war is going down in many ways, the fight in Afghanistan is just beginning. In my opinion, the scheduling of troop withdrawals in Iraq must be done on conditions on the ground, not political consideration. And with all due respect to then-Senator Obama, he was dramatically wrong on his opinion with respect to surge, and I would urge President Obama not to build on that mistake. And by that I mean very simply the surge, in the military definition of the term, is not the simple answer. We have to use the broadest range of tools available to us.

Lastly, the President should remember, as he rightfully acknowledged earlier this week, one of the key answers to the solution of the problem in Afghanistan is not found in Afghanistan, but rather in Pakistan. The Administration has been handed a list of tools, some known, some not, some on the record, some classified, that will allow him to more effectively deal with this challenge. In my opinion, he must deal and use every tool available to him.

Lastly, a final word of caution: Uncertainty does not breed security.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I will yield back, and I certainly look forward to our panelists' testimony.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman and appreciate your remarks this morning.

We are truly blessed to have with us the witnesses that we have addressing American strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan. We couldn't have a better panel, and we appreciate your being here so very, very much. And, Tony Cordesman, we lead off with you, sir.

Dr. CORDESMAN. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. I have already announced any written statements are already in the record, without objection.

STATEMENT OF DR. ANTHONY CORDESMAN, ARLEIGH A. BURKE CHAIR IN STRATEGY, CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Dr. CORDESMAN. I would like to take the few minutes I have from my oral statement——

The CHAIRMAN. Get a little closer, would you, to the microphone.

Dr. CORDESMAN. Surely, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. The acoustics are not all that good in here, at least up here, so get as close as you can.

Dr. CORDESMAN. I would like to take the few minutes I have for my oral statement to concentrate on Afghanistan. The point I would like to make is this war is winnable, and that we are losing largely because of the failures of the previous administration, the U.S. Congress, and indeed, to some extent, the lack of activity by the committees dealing with armed services to concentrate on providing the kind of resources that are necessary to win it.

I fully recognize these failures are scarcely ours alone. They are driven by the failures of the Afghan Government, the Pakistani military junta, and the divisions in Pakistan that exist today. They are driven by the failures of our North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)/International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) allies to remove the kinds of caveats that often make their forces and their aid personnel ineffective. They are driven by an incompetent and corrupt mix of national and international economic aid organizations which do not meet real-world needs, which do not have adequate measurements or management, and which do not really test their effectiveness. They are driven by duplicative and ineffective command structure and by a mix of coordinating committees in aid and other activities that undermine both efforts.

Let me bring responsibility home. We wouldn't be where we are in Afghanistan if we had accepted the fact that this is primarily our war, we had reacted to the growth of the threat, and we had provided the resources and leadership we need to win it.

We wouldn't be where we are if we had transparency in reporting on this war that described the build-up of the threat, the failures that were taking place, the problems in the way we have run this war, and how that has evolved over the last seven years. We wouldn't be where we are if commanders and ambassadors in Afghanistan had been given the resources that they requested when they requested them, and we were not constantly having to react to the growth of the threat rather than provide the forces that are needed. We wouldn't be where we are today if we had treated this as a war, rather than an exercise in postconflict reconstruction, and if we had recognized the fact we have to win that war before we can move forward toward any longer-term future for Afghanistan. We wouldn't be where we are if we had recognized the center of

gravity for al Qaeda and Islamic extremism and terrorism has been in Afghanistan and Pakistan, not in Iraq.

And that said, where do we go from here? I think one of the key messages for everyone here is if we cannot salvage this situation in 2009 and 2010, there isn't going to be a mid or long term in Afghanistan.

How do we do this? I think first you have to have transparency and honesty. You have to tell the American people what is really required and what is going on. You can't take a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) and bury it, to have it leak in the New York Times. You can't delay a Department of Defense report that has negative descriptions of what is happening in the war that is ready in October and issue it in January because you have a campaign season. You can't create a Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction and then not fund the office so at best the office will begin to function at the end of this calendar year.

The tools and instruments necessary to win require honesty, transparency and communication. The next thing is to focus on real-world war goals, not the theory of reconstruction or aid. We aren't going to be able to get to those goals unless we can provide the assets to really have a clear, hold and build strategy in the field and in the course of the next two years. If we can't stop a growth of the insurgency, which our map shows has been expanding 30 to 50 percent in area coverage per year since 2005, to talk about the Afghan compact is an exercise in theory.

We need to accept the fact that if the resources are going to come, they are going to be ours. We recruited our allies for a peacekeeping mission and postconflict reconstruction. They are not going to suddenly join us in a serious war at the levels we might like but we can't get.

And let me say by any standard asking for 30,000 more troops for all the tensions and problems that creates within the U.S. military and in dealing with Iraq is almost an absolute minimum of what it might take to provide any ability to deal with the threat in this area.

We need to make a serious, sustained, well-funded effort to create Afghan security forces, not have massive swings in funding. We need to stop trying to create a conventional police force in midwar and concentrate on creating forces that can actually win. We need to actually provide the kind of strength that is required in terms of U.S. advisors.

The latest reports indicate we will go through 2010 with less than 40 percent of the U.S. military trainers that are needed and less than 40 percent of the allied trainers. And the training situation for the police force will be substantially worse. We need to understand that we can't fix this through the Afghan central government. As in Iraq, we need to have people in Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) or Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Teams (EPRTs) who can deal with the local government that can deal with the provincial government in the absence of Afghan capabilities.

We need to address the fact that one of our key tools, the foreign aid program, has become corrupt and ineffective. No one has precise figures, because there are no audits, no measures of effective-

ness, no numbers anyone can trust. Afghans estimate that as much as 40 percent of the aid money does not really move into the Afghan economy. The U.N. effort is divided; it is repeating a pattern of ineffectiveness and corruption. I think this committee could obtain from the World Bank studies that show that none of the implementing U.N. agencies has performed a proper audit in its funds, much less measured its effectiveness.

There are far too many allied and NGO efforts which start things they can't finish. And when we look at our own effort, the key here are the PRTs. The latest Department of Defense report shows we have over 1,000 U.S. military in our PRTs and less than 40 qualified civilians. As long as that happens, to talk about smart or soft power is an exercise in theory for which there can't be substance.

We will have to use U.S. military as aid personnel, because they are the only people we can bring to the task and the only people who can protect themselves. And for many of our allies, it will be the same.

As you have already suggested, this war has to involve Pakistan; it has to involve pressure on the Pakistani Government. We have to, if we can, find ways to bring this Special Forces training teams into some kind of working relationship with the Pakistani military, something we have now been waiting on for three to four years.

Legislation that is pending to provide aid to Pakistan for the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Baluchi areas is potentially very rewarding, but if anyone can explain to me where the people are coming who can ensure that aid is used honestly, and who will provide the aid in the field, I will be much more reassured than I am at the present.

We need to treat counternarcotics in war terms. This is a noble goal after we have reversed the military situation. So far our counternarcotics efforts has done a superb job of moving narcotics south and funding the Taliban. The net result is to have no impact on street price and demand, and a major impact in aiding the enemy.

So let me close with these points. In my full testimony I make the point that one of the iron laws of governments is there are no good intentions, there are only successful actions. We have seven years of history of not taking those actions at the level we need to take them. I understand that the argument can be this is too hard in a Washington environment. Some of you who have been in Afghanistan may see it differently. Too hard here can be too dead in the field. And quite frankly, if the choice is one between bureaucracy and body bags, I would hope that we understand. You either provide the resources, or you don't. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Cordesman can be found in the Appendix on page 43.]

The CHAIRMAN. Stephen Biddle.

STATEMENT OF DR. STEPHEN BIDDLE, SENIOR FELLOW FOR DEFENSE POLICY, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Dr. BIDDLE. I would like to start by thanking the committee for the chance to speak to you on probably what is the single most important issue in U.S. strategy today, which is how we interrelate two ongoing wartime theaters. My sense is that there is pretty

widespread agreement that in the broad, withdrawals from Iraq and reinforcements for Afghanistan are the right way to go, but the relative pace of that movement, however, strikes me as much less a matter of agreement.

It seems to me this is probably the most important unresolved issue of the moment. I am going to spend my initial statement addressing mostly that. The written submission deals with a wider range of issues.

It seems to me that from the standpoint of stability and U.S. interests in both Iraq and in Afghanistan, slower may very well be better in terms of the pace of the transfer out of the Iraq and into Afghanistan. We have very important U.S. national strategic interests in both of these theaters, there were important and continuing challenges to our interests in both of those theaters, and both of these theaters have very important requirements for U.S. resources, and especially troops which cannot simultaneously be in both of these theaters.

What that taken together means is that something has to give. We cannot simultaneously get everything we want. We are going to have to sacrifice something that is important and something that is valuable. And it seems to me that the way to think about where, if we have to sacrifice something, is the least dangerous place to sacrifice, the issue is not just security trends in each of those theaters at the moment. I think there is general agreement that the trend is flat or up in Iraq, but clearly down and importantly so in Afghanistan. It seems to me that the key question that one has to resolve in assessing the relative pace of pulling troops out of Iraq and into Afghanistan is, in fact, the question of where the point of no return lies.

If we are going to have to give something up, in which of these two theaters for which pace of withdrawals do we give up something that we cannot recover from as opposed to giving up something that hurts us, but at the end of the day isn't fatal, or is less fatal relative to the risk posed in the other theater?

Now, I posed this question to the ISAF Command in Afghanistan in a recent trip there in November. I asked repeatedly, if the reinforcements don't come or come too slowly, what is the downside risk? What would happen? Not are they desirable. Of course they are. Not are they necessary in order to succeed. Of course they are. But if, because of demands in another theater, they were slower than we like, what would be the consequence? And the answer I got was stalemate. The assessment in the theater command was we would fail to make progress at the rate that we could. There are actually some people in the headquarters who believed that some rate of progress was possible through reforms, in several of the things, for example, that Dr. Cordesman was talking about, if reinforcements were slower than they would prefer.

Stalemate is not a good outcome. Many have suggested that insurgents win by not losing, which is another way of saying that stalemate hurts the government, and it hurts our side of the war, which clearly it does. Stalemate, on the other hand, is a different thing from defeat in the near term. And my sense is that the view in the theater is that the prospect of defeat in the near term is not as great as it might be. It can't be ruled out. The risk is not as

great as it might be, not because we are doing brilliantly well and, Heaven knows, because the Karzai government is doing brilliantly well, but because we are blessed by the fact of a very flawed enemy; that the Afghan population at large knows the Taliban pretty well at this point, and they don't like what they saw. Therefore, the Taliban is fighting, in a sense, uphill against the degree of drag from a public that doesn't want that form of government if they think there is a meaningful alternative available to them.

The Taliban is also not a unified military actor. They are a coalition that in some ways has equal or greater problems with divisiveness and lack of unity of command as those we encounter. They have a great deal of difficulty coordinating military activities, given the lack of unity of command among factions, warlords and other components of their alliance, that we do.

This combination of difficulties on the other side in the view of the theater limits their ability to exploit an opening that has been handed to them by misgovernance, especially on the part of the Karzai government and by an underresourced troop count in the theater at the moment. And what we have been seeing is a response in which frustration and in many cases anger with the corruption, the ineptitude, and the inability to deliver basic governmental services on the part of Karzai government is catalyzed by perceptions of reducing security to create an opening that the Taliban has managed to exploit, but that there are limits on how rapidly they can exploit it.

Perhaps more importantly what this suggests, however, is an opportunity for what David Kilcullen has called a political surge. We have serious constraints in our troop count global in our ability to transfer them from Iraq to Afghanistan without incurring costs in Iraq in the process. There are a variety of important things that we can do in the nearer term, however, in trying to reform governance within Afghanistan that do not necessarily impose the same opportunity costs on the resources we have committed and continue to require in Iraq.

If we convey to the Karzai government that our assistance is conditional, and if we insist on things like the removal and prosecution of corrupt government officials, it may be possible to, at least to a degree, address in the near term some of the causes for the precipitous decline in support for the Afghan Government that we have seen over the last year at a relatively modest cost in the prospects in Iraq.

Let me say just a brief word or two about the prospects in Iraq to set this situation in Afghanistan in context, and then I will stop. The situation we face in Iraq at the moment is, in an important sense, the early stages of a negotiated settlement to a very intense ethnosectarian civil war as had essentially set in in Iraq by 2006. The early stages of negotiated settlements to wars of this kind are notoriously unstable. Sometimes the peace holds, sometimes the peace does not. And in many cases the difference between holding and failing is the presence of an outside party; not one of the indigenous former combatants who tend to fear one another's intentions, bordering on the genocidal, but a party who may not be loved, but at least not suspected of genocidal intent, that can stabilize an initially unstable cease-fire relationship among former combatants

while their expectations of one another gradually begin to shift, and thus the situation comes to be less on a hair triggering than it is in the immediate aftermath of the cease fires that end the violence.

As expectations change, this outside presence can very often be thinned out and reduced without a return to violence. If it happens too quickly, on the other hand, the risk of a return to violence in Iraq on a 2006 scale or greater is quite significant. And for now the only outside party in any plausible position to perform this function is the United States. Although we may not be loved by Iraqis, we are generally not suspected to be a threat of genocide, as many of their internal rivals are seen to be.

That is the heart of the conflict between Iraq and Afghanistan with respect to resource levels. The importance to U.S. national security interests of having Iraq not lapse back into violence and create in the process the risk of destabilizing the Persian Gulf, a region terribly important to vital U.S. national security interests, inheres in our ability to maintain the stability of a cease-fire under conditions which in other places elsewhere have often proved to be hard to maintain. The presence of U.S. troops to act as peacekeepers is an important contribution to that. That is what poses the key trade-off with respect to Afghanistan.

My sense is that other things being equal, although we need to transfer resources, maintaining them in Iraq as long as we can, doing what we can in the near term politically in Afghanistan, in addition to relatively modest near-term reinforcement may be a better way to go than the alternative.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Dr. Biddle.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Biddle can be found in the Appendix on page 63.]

The CHAIRMAN. General Jack Keane.

STATEMENT OF GEN. JOHN M. KEANE, USA (RET.), FORMER VICE CHIEF OF STAFF, U.S. ARMY

General KEANE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Minority Member and members of the committee, for inviting me to testify. I have had an enduring relationship with the committee, and I always value the opportunity to share viewpoints on issues vital to the national security.

I am honored to be here with my distinguished colleagues, and I associate myself with much of what Steve Biddle just had to say. And I harken back to two-and-a-half years ago when the both of us were in the White House presenting an alternative strategy to the President of the United States on Iraq, and we both agreed then. So it is good to see you back talking the same language again.

Let me begin by discussing the key issues on achieving the right balance as we shift our priorities from Iraq to Afghanistan. And in doing so, I would like to focus my remarks around the following issues: sustaining the gains in Iraq, and what is needed to win in Afghanistan.

Sustaining the gains in Iraq. We just observed at the end of last month a seminal event, provincial elections in Iraq, which will for-

ever change the political landscape of Iraq and, as a result, will have profound impact on the future stability of the region.

After having won a hard-fought victory over two foreign interventions in Iraq, the al Qaeda, who, in my mind, have been operationally defeated for the last 12 months, and the Iranians, who suffered a major setback in March of 2008, and having defeated the mainstream Sunni insurgency, political reconciliation is unfolding right before our eyes.

After three years of a failed strategy in Iraq, from 2003 to 2006, we as a Nation finally recognized an undeniable fact: That security was a necessary precondition for political progress and economic development. As such, a counteroffensive was launched in 2007, which in 18 months stabilized the nation sufficiently to permit 17 of the 18 legislative benchmarks to pass the Iraqi Council of Representatives; amnesty to be granted the Sunni insurgents; an historic strategic framework to be achieved between the Government of Iraq and the United States Government; and a framework for district, provincial and national elections.

While the United States and Iraqi troops were critical to achieve the stability, they are as critical to maintain it. What is not understood very well is what a large role our forces play in assisting with not only security, but political stability and economic development. Our brigade combat teams are the glue that has held the political reconciliation process together, and they are needed in sufficient numbers to assist with the following in 2009: district and subdistrict elections, the disputed boundary issue regarding Kirkuk, a referendum on the Status of Forces Agreement, and national elections in December 2009. This is a very full plate in the political developments of Iraq.

Many of our commanders believe we can draw down troop brigades in 2009 from 14 to 12, with the possibility of a third if this momentum continues, followed by a more dramatic reduction in 2010, and then completing our reduction in 2011. It is our success in Iraq which is permitting units who were destined for Iraq to deploy to Afghanistan in 2009. It will take to 2011, in my view, to complete the shift in our priorities from Iraq to Afghanistan.

Can we shift our priorities to Afghanistan and win without squandering the gains we have made in Iraq? The answer is a resounding yes, if we have the patience to succeed in Iraq and the courage and wisdom to transition properly to Afghanistan.

What is needed to win in Afghanistan? I am not going to redefine the problems that we have in Afghanistan and which you are familiar with and why we have those problems. The essential reason is certainly that it has always been a secondary effort for the United States government. The primary effort has been Iraq. There are other reasons that have contributed to it, and Tony certainly outlined those, and I agree with those. I am not going to discuss regional issues here; I will focus right in on what we need to do to help turn this around.

First and foremost, and what caused us more setbacks in Iraq than any single thing, is to formulate the right strategy. This strategy for Afghanistan defines our objectives and end states, understands the nature and character of the war we are fighting, and sets the stage for the application of resources. Remember, we threw

resources at the problem for three years in Iraq with the wrong strategy, and we nearly lost. Our strategy is informed by our national interest in Afghanistan and the region, and it can run the full spectrum from total democratic nation building on one end to simply denying a terrorist sanctuary on the other.

Regardless of how comprehensive or limited our overall strategy is, we must recognize that we cannot limit proven counterinsurgency practices in our attempt to defeat the insurgency. We should not confuse the political and economic end state for Afghanistan, particularly if it is limited in scope with what is needed to defeat a complicated, entrenched insurgency.

Secondly, we need a campaign plan, which we do not currently have, to provide a much-needed unity of effort. This took many weeks to develop in Iraq, and I am certain with the added complexity of a NATO Command, it will take longer. This is very hard work because it must be comprehensive, and it involves tough choices which have profound consequences. The plan can only be formulated by General McKiernan's headquarters, which is significantly undermanned, to write the plan and to drive the execution. The staff should be augmented quickly.

The centerpiece of the campaign plan will be a counterinsurgency effort to defeat the insurgency. As we know, while the military effort receives most of the attention, the plan is largely nonmilitary, focusing on political and economic development as security begins to be achieved. Therefore, our civilian capacity is needed to match the military increase, particularly in provincial reconstruction teams, economic development and governance. Equally important, and I agree with what Tony Cordesman said, is that necessary financial support to sustain the efforts already mentioned.

An important point to be made is we should avoid the appeal of a shortcut solution by simply focusing on counterterrorist operations; that is, killing and capturing terrorist leaders and targeting terrorist networks, which we do. Failure to use counterinsurgency operations to protect the population will doom our efforts in Afghanistan. We tried the former in Iraq through 2006 with our Special Operations Forces in the lead against al Qaeda and 150,000 conventional troops in support, and despite killing Saddam Hussein's two sons, capturing Saddam Hussein, killing Zarqawi and hundreds of other leaders, and literally capturing thousands, we nearly lost. Finally, after applying counterinsurgency practices, we succeeded. This is the key to breaking the will of the insurgency.

Now, I am not suggesting that Afghanistan is Iraq. It is not. The insurgencies are quite different. But proven counterinsurgency practices applied to the uniqueness of Afghanistan is the answer. As we develop counterinsurgency practices, the obvious issue is we are fighting a rural insurgency versus the urban insurgency we had in Iraq, with less tolerance in Afghanistan for physical presence or occupation of towns, villages and cities. Nevertheless, we must protect the population by securing and serving the people. As General Petraeus phrases it, we become "good neighbors."

Once the population knows that allied Afghan forces are staying, it opens up the opportunity for more success against the insurgence, and as such, we pursue the enemy relentlessly, never giving them an opportunity to reset. Some will lose their will and want

to reconcile, and we must not only be open to it, but encouraging it.

Critical to the unity of effort of the counterinsurgency plan is an operational headquarters to coordinate and supervise the tactical operational fight. What is needed is a three-star operational headquarters, either a Corps headquarters from the Army or a three-star Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEF) headquarters from the Marines. This frees up General McKiernan's headquarters to focus on the nonmilitary line of operation so critical to success, as well as the training of the Afghan National Security Forces.

Of course, we must not only rely on our allies in Afghanistan, but particularly on the Afghan National Army, which should grow beyond the 130,000 planned, which I believe the command is considering, in my mind, to some 300,000. This requires more trainers; more embedded training teams; more military enablers to assist them, such as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance platforms, more military police, more engineers, logistics, and more Special Operations Forces and civil affairs units to defeat the insurgency.

I pause here as a reminder. In 2007 alone, we put 125,000 Iraqi soldiers on the streets adequately trained to deal with the counteroffensive that we were in the middle of. So when people say it is too hard, not true. We can do this with the trainers and also with the financial resources to assist.

We know the Karzai government is ineffective, deeply corrupt, and losing the support of the Afghan people. Elections will be held in August. It may be in our interest to encourage some significant alternative candidates, or, at a minimum, if we are reluctant to do that, in exchange for our continued support to insist that Karzai makes the necessary changes with our assistance. The status quo with this government is unacceptable. The thought of five more years with this government is intimidating.

The key is to develop local solutions that are connected to the central government, but not necessarily completely controlled by it. As I see it, we should spend 2009 getting our strategy right in Afghanistan, which must be vetted with our allies, then formulating a campaign plan based on that strategy, and then setting the conditions for a military counteroffensive in 2010 based on the above. I recognize that we are rushing some forces to Afghanistan in 2009, and I believe we will continue to put forces there in 2010 and in 2011, but we need to use the time now to set the proper conditions for the introduction of our forces, which will grow in size over the next two to three years.

A large part of our success depends on convincing the enemy and all of our stakeholders that we are dead serious about winning and are committed to see it through. Anything less encourages the enemy, weakens the resolve of our allies, to include Pakistan, and undermines the support of the American people.

Public support for our effort cannot be overstated, and protracted counterinsurgencies test the resolve of the most committed nations. As such, it is crucial that the President and national leaders communicate our strategy, why it is important, and in general what are our plans, and do that to the American people. We must educate and inform them on the nature of the war and why thousands

of insurgents who are lightly armed can challenge a larger, much better armed and trained force, and as such, why it takes as much time as it does to win.

Most insurgencies are, in fact, defeated, but almost all take considerable time. Steady progress, despite occasional setbacks, with forthright and frank assessments is key to our public support.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you so much.

[The prepared statement of General Keane can be found in the Appendix on page 80.]

The CHAIRMAN. Janet St. Laurent.

STATEMENT OF JANET ST. LAURENT, MANAGING DIRECTOR, DEFENSE CAPABILITIES AND MANAGEMENT, GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Ms. ST. LAURENT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity.

Mr. CHAIRMAN. Get a little closer.

Ms. ST. LAURENT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to be here today to talk about the Government Accountability Office's (GAO's) perspective on a number of operational considerations that will have to be factored into the development and execution of strategy for Iraq and Afghanistan.

As you know, GAO has done considerable work looking at the military operation in Iraq, and also Iraq reconstruction as well as Afghanistan reconstruction, and based on this work I would like to provide a few observations on strategy issues, but also then discuss several of the nuts-and-bolts operations issues that need to be considered in terms of the pace and timing of reposturing.

First, from our perspective, it is very important that improvements are needed to ensure that U.S. strategy for Iraq and Afghanistan is developed using a governmentwide approach that supports ongoing coordination. Our work in both countries continues to highlight situations in which the Department of Defense (DOD), the U.S. Department of State (State), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have not fully coordinated their efforts. For example, we have reported that DOD had not fully coordinated its effort to reconstruct roads in Afghanistan with USAID. Also, DOD and State have not developed a unified, comprehensive plan to guide U.S. efforts to develop the capacity of Afghan National Security Forces. Those are just a couple of examples from our work.

Second, revised strategies will need to balance the specific goals, measures and time frames with the available resources. This means that DOD will need to carefully consider the availability of forces, equipment and transportation assets when developing plans for Afghanistan, given the stress on the force during the past several years and DOD's large footprint in Iraq.

Third, attention will be needed to ensure that U.S. efforts are executed in a manner that places priority on using resources effectively and efficiently in order to minimize waste and mismanagement. Congress has appropriated over $800 billion for Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) to date, and billions more will be required to support a new strategy.

It will be especially important in light of competing demands on the Federal budget that DOD make a concerted effort to avoid numerous problems with contractors that have occurred in Iraq, and carefully screen urgent requirements for procuring new types of equipment that might be needed in Afghanistan given the different nature of the terrain.

Regarding Iraq, one major issue confronting the new Administration will be to determine whether the pace of the drawdown should be calendar driven in light of the terms of the new SOFA agreement, or based on achieving certain goals and conditions. Until now, the planning the DOD has done for a drawdown has been based on a conditions-based approach. However, until the new Administration unveils a new strategy, the way ahead is somewhat uncertain.

Second, developing plans to manage a potential drawdown of up to 140,000 military personnel, numerous contractors and vast stocks of equipment will be a daunting task. For example, closing up to 300 facilities in Iraq will be a complex, time-consuming and costly process, especially at places like Balad Air Force Base, which has over 24,000 people. Army officials estimate that a facility of that size might take about 18 months to turn over to the Iraqis or close.

DOD will also need to coordinate the movement and retrograde of hundreds of thousands of pieces of equipment and establish a clear chain of command to manage that effort. The pace of the drawdown will also be affected by the capacity of facilities in neighboring countries such as Kuwait, as well as by the limited availability of certain equipment such as heavy transports.

Finally, DOD will need a well-thought-out plan to manage the drawdown of up to 150,000 contractors. While DOD planners have begun to develop these plans, much work remains to be done, and some initial planing assumptions may need to be revisited depending on the new strategy.

In Afghanistan, U.S. strategists and DOD planners will need to consider a more wide-ranging set of factors given the austere state of Afghanistan's infrastructure and mountainous terrain. Regarding military forces' demands, certain types of skill sets and ranks, such as civil affairs, transportation, engineers, trainers, which require large numbers of midgrade officers and senior noncommissioned officers, will be challenging to fill given the already high pace of operations for these skills and ranks.

Equipment needs may also be difficult to fill quickly, given that DOD has the equivalent of 47 brigades' worth of equipment in Iraq as of last year and has already drawn on some prepositioned equipment. Unlike in Iraq, the Afghanistan theater of operation lacks large stocks of theater-provided equipment. This will make it more difficult to fully equip and transport new units deploying from the United States, many of which have significant equipment shortages. These issues can be addressed over time, but it is a matter of the pacing and considering the operation tempo of personnel.

Transportation using both air/land and overland supply routes, airlift and overland supply routes are also likely to pose a number of challenges with regard to both security issues, distance and access to neighboring countries.

Finally, DOD may also have to manage and build up a contract workforce in Afghanistan to help support a growing military presence and will need to adequately train military commanders to do effective contractor oversight.

So, in conclusion, planners will need to consider Afghanistan's unique nature, but apply lessons learned over the years from Iraq when appropriate. Also, U.S. strategies for both countries will need to be integrated and synchronized to ensure competing resources are prioritized effectively, and that DOD retains the residual capability to meet the needs of other combatant commanders. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. St. Laurent can be found in the Appendix on page 91.]

The CHAIRMAN. General Keane, in your statement you say the public support for our effort cannot be overstated, and projected counterinsurgencies test the resolve of most committed nations.

If we look back to 9/11, at that time we fully realized that the genesis of our problems stemmed from the al Qaeda in Afghanistan. You stressed the fact we need the support of the American people in this insurgency in Afghanistan.

Let us lay Iraq aside right now. How do we at this stage of the game, after these years, obviously with no successful strategic thought being given to that effort, how do we at this stage of the game get the full support of the American people that is needed?

General KEANE. I think that is a great question because it is so essential for success. There are many strategic reviews that are taking place right now. The White House, the National Security Council is involved in one, and certainly General Petraeus in the theater, and I'm sure special envoy Ambassador Richard Holbrooke is making an assessment.

I think what will come out of that is a strategy and decisions associated with that. And then I would hope that we will craft a campaign plan in support of that. But then once we decide on what the way ahead is in Afghanistan, with a new President here, it is an opportunity, a dramatic transition of power like this—it gives this President the opportunity to connect with the American people on this issue. And I think you communicate very directly to the American people about what the strategy is, what we are trying to accomplish, and the general sense of—without getting into specifics of our plans—but what the character of our operations are going to be like.

And I think this is the beginning of an education process that the President and other national leaders like yourselves stay in contact with the American people on this. We will have our setbacks. I think if you sort of report out to the American people on a regular basis, three or four times a year on the war and what is working and what is not working, and they get a sense of it, our credibility stays intact with the American people as national leaders. Because it is not always going to work. The enemy has a vote all the time in war. They will do some things and will have opportunities to expose some of our vulnerabilities, as they always do. And when that happens, we are just very forthright about it. We will miscalculate at times, and when it happens, let us be honest about it, but stay

focused on what we are trying to achieve. At times we will have to rheostat the mission a little bit. We will change because the enemy is changing and adjust and keep the American people informed.

I think continuous discussion about what the strategy is, what the results of it are in terms of our performance, what is working and not working, the adjustments we are making. We are not insulting the American people; the collective wisdom is extraordinary. And I think there is an opportunity for them to stay connected with us as a result as national leaders go forward and our forces and our effort goes forward.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, General.

Mr. McHugh.

Mr. MCHUGH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Editorial content, as I said, we just came back on Monday with respect to what General Keane said. The thing our commanders seem somewhat concerned about, understandably from their perspective, is that the American people had best be advised that when we add troops, and we go in, particularly in the south into the poppy-growing regions, there is going to be a damn tough war, and there will be casualties, and there will be losses. So I think it really underscores what General Keane said is that it is the responsibility of those of us across the spectrum, including here in Congress, to ensure that the American people understand the urgency of this fight. Editorial content to the questions.

I would like to read a passage from Dr. Cordesman's testimony that I had the opportunity to read last evening. And he is talking about some of the evaluation data that we are looking at with respect to Afghanistan, about increases in military clashes, direct fire incidences, et cetera. And in commenting on those data, he said, "Second"—second of a point he made—"they," the data, "show that...'post-conflict reconstruction' is little more than a sick joke. To get to the mid and long term, we have to survive and dominate the present. If we succeed, the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan will be so different by 2011 that we will have to reshape almost every aspect of our aid and development plans to set far more realistic and modest goals based on the art of the possible and Afghan and Pakistani desires, rather than our efforts to design model countries in our own image. If we fail, there will be no mid and long term in any sense that makes current plans even mildly relevant."

That is a pretty profound paragraph. Interestingly, it plays off what General McKiernan said to us when we talked about sustainability of the Afghan Government over the longer term. He said, "Well, to get to that point you have got to win the fight."

I would ask all four of you, how would you define winning in Afghanistan? And if you would like to contrast that to Iraq, of course please feel free to do so.

But I think that is the key challenge right now. What does success in Afghanistan look like, or hopefully what will it look like? And Dr. Cordesman, because I quoted you, I would ask you to kind of lead that off.

Dr. CORDESMAN. I think in Iraq the phrase is, "Is Iraq good enough?" And in Afghanistan and Pakistan it is, "Is Afghanistan and Pakistan good enough?"

We are not going to create model democratic governments. We are not going to move them toward sustained economic development. We are not going to restructure all of the cultural, tribal and—values that some people once saw as a goal. And I think Secretary Gates made this point quite validly for Afghanistan.

But what you do have to do is move toward a level of stability where you can begin to honestly talk about post-conflict reconstruction. You need to create successful Afghan and Pakistani forces which can take over the mission. You need to have aid that meets what people need, a country that is 70 percent agricultural and is getting about 14 percent of the aid flow into agricultural areas.

These are the kinds of things which we might be able to achieve over the next few years. But to get there, the real issue right now is to have stability and to reverse the trends.

And here I have to frankly disagree very flatly with Dr. Biddle and to some extent with General Keane. I haven't seen any of these trends that indicate we are headed toward a stalemate. What I have seen is just the reverse. In the NATO/ISAF data, the U.N. data, the data that I see come out of other groups assessing this is that we suffered major reversals throughout this year both in the rise in violence and in the loss of areas which are under Taliban, Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG), and Haqqani influence.

Now, one answer to your question is, whatever happens, we cannot emerge from this and call it victory if there are still al Qaeda, Taliban and extremist sanctuaries inside Pakistan. And we can't emerge out of this and call it "victory" if we win the kinetic events, as we tend to, but we see the area under Taliban and other influence increase by 30 to 50 percent a year, as we have continuously since 2005.

And if I may just briefly close, Mr. Chairman, it is interesting to talk about the Taliban being unpopular. There has been a major shift towards acceptance of the Taliban. And, in contrast, in a recent ABC poll—and I think it is borne out by U.N. and U.S. polls—the number of people who feel the United States has performed well in Afghanistan in Afghanistan has been cut in half in the last 3 years.

It has gone from 68 percent in 2005 to 32 percent now. The number of supporters of the NATO/ISAF mission in Afghanistan fell from 67 percent in 2006 to 37 percent this year. The number of people who justify attacks on NATO/ISAF forces in Afghanistan rose from 13 percent to 25 percent over that same period of time.

And when you look at the reaction to NATO's current force structure in Afghanistan, you see that because of the need to rely so much on air power, we can almost map by district where NATO is actually present and using air power in the unpopularity of NATO forces and NATO capabilities in the region.

The other last point I guess I should make: I am not sure we disagree that much about troop levels. But where I think we do need to focus much more is not on what General McKiernan is being given by way of total troops, but the fact that we don't have advisers; we are not having civilians put in the field, you have stopped

funding for many aspects of aid in the course of this year, and you have massively cut the amount of money going for Afghan force development. That isn't a matter of balance in troop levels; it is a matter of funding what you need to do in Afghanistan.

Mr. MCHUGH. Thank you, Doctor.

Dr. Biddle.

Dr. BIDDLE. Let me begin by responding to your question, and then if I may, I will respond briefly to Dr. Cordesman as well.

Mr. MCHUGH. I would appreciate that.

Dr. BIDDLE. Ultimately, war is about political aims. So defining whether or not you win or lose is in reference to the aims for which you are fighting. And I think there is some degree of consensus that there are two really central U.S. aims in Afghanistan: that Afghanistan not become a haven for al Qaeda, as it was prior to 2001; but also—and I would argue, more importantly—that Afghanistan not become a haven for destabilizing Pakistan. Because the objective threat to U.S. national interests in Pakistan is in many ways much greater than it is in Afghanistan.

Al Qaeda has many potential havens. Afghanistan is one. It is not necessarily even the best. In many ways, Pakistan is a much more serious problem, but it is a problem over which we have very limited leverage. If we have a serious problem which there are limited things we can do to improve—there are some and we should do them and we haven't been, but at the end of the day, our leverage in Pakistan is not what it is in some other places.

Arguably, we should at least obey the Hippocratic Oath and do no harm. And should Afghanistan collapse into chaos or return to Taliban rule, it would then become an important haven for destabilizing Pakistan. Those are our two primary interests.

Given that, the way that I would define "victory" is, we have secured those two interests. At the end of the process, Afghanistan is not a plausible terrorist haven for attacks on the continental United States, and it is not a plausible threat to the stability of its neighbor across the border.

The kind of government domestically in Kabul that achieves those two ends I am quite agnostic with respect to. Other things being equal, I would prefer for Afghanistan the things I would prefer for any Nation in the world: a degree of representative government, prosperity, liberty, many, many other things; and surely at some level we should seek those for Afghanistan. I am not willing to wage war for all of the things that I would like to see in Afghanistan.

In terms of the waging of war and the U.S. vital national interests at stake that should guide the definition of victory and defeat in the conduct of a war, I would limit those to the presence of base camps and the threat to its neighbor.

I suspect at the end of the day that some degree of legitimacy in Kabul or somewhere within the Government of Pakistan will be necessary in order to achieve those ends. But I tend to view the question of how Afghanistan should be governed as a means and not an end. Any form of government in Afghanistan that at the end of the day is sufficient to deny its use as a haven I am prepared to settle for. And I suspect that something a good deal less Jeffersonian in Kabul will probably suffice to that end.

Let me now turn briefly to the question of prognosis, if you will, in Afghanistan. And heaven knows, I would have no disagreement with the gravity of the situation and the negative nature of current trends. I think there is universal agreement that the war has not been going well. The question is not what the current trend is and what has happened over the last year. The question is the projection forward from that trend; and this is a much, much dicier business on which available evidence gives us a weaker basis.

If we had the ability to devote now the entirety of the resources that will ultimately be required to secure those two strategic interests I mentioned a moment ago, of course we should, and we take risks by not doing that. The problem is, of course we can't. We have other demands for the same resources. And given that, you have to make a choice not about what you would like to do, but about how much disadvantage, in which of these two theaters you think you can survive.

And especially given another point of agreement that I have with Dr. Cordesman, which is the importance of nontroop contributions to both the decline in our fortunes in Afghanistan recently and the requirements there to improve, many of which we have less requirement for in Iraq, I would like to see a political surge, a more well-coordinated, all-of-government approach to dealing with the problem in Afghanistan, a more systematic integration of our aid effort with a political strategy with a military strategy that I agree needs substantial development. All of that can be done much more quickly and can help reduce the odds—it can never eliminate them, but can help reduce the odds—that we get so deeply into failure and lack of progress in Afghanistan that we cannot then dig ourselves out, once we develop the ability to transfer the troops to add the military piece of the puzzle that is stabilizing the country.

Mr. MCHUGH. General.

General KEANE. Yes. I also agree that our number one national interest in the region is Pakistan. And the relationship of Afghanistan to Pakistan is significant, so what we are trying to do in Afghanistan is very important to the future stability of Pakistan.

That said, in my own mind our strategy and goals should be somewhat limited in terms of an end state in Afghanistan. And by that I mean, we clearly—to win and what does it look like, we have to defeat the insurgency.

Now, when is an insurgency defeated? Well, it leaves the battlefield and chooses not to engage is one form of defeat. Or, as in Iraq, which is the best of all answers, it comes into the political process because it has some desire and some expectation that this political process will reward them, though they will not be able to seek those rewards using guns, because that failed.

So that is the way that would manifest itself. And I would think it would be the latter in Afghanistan, as it is in Iraq. Reconcilables will come into the political process; irreconcilables will not, and they will go away.

Secondly, the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Security Forces themselves must have the capacity to provide for their own internal security. And we can measure that, as we are measuring it in Iraq. So that is another indicator of what is taking place. And some form of representative government that has to

connect to the people at the local level with some form of control, but not completely control in those outcomes.

And I don't think we need to be prescriptive about this. I think we should try to guide it so the—and guide away from the significant amount of corruption we now have with this very weak, inept central government.

But some of the things on the margin here, just trying to be honest about this: It is a relatively uneducated class in Afghanistan and high illiteracy rates. It is a significantly impoverished nation that depends on an opium trade to help it survive. Twenty years from now most of those conditions will still be there; we have to be honest about this. And how far, how far do we extend American lives to change those major challenges?

I don't think we extend them to that distance. I think we do what we said: We take the threat away, the insurgency. And we have the means to do that; we know how to do this. And we can stand up a military that is capable of protecting its people. And I think we can influence a government to be better than what it currently is. This will take resources, and most importantly, this will take time. And, of course, it will take the blood of our troops as well to achieve this.

Another point, and I said this in the statement, and it is an important point for me because I think we fall prey to this. If we are going to have a limited strategic objective, say close to something Steve and I have discussed, that doesn't mean that you limit the resources that you are applying to achieve that limited objective. Quite the contrary, if we are going to defeat the insurgency, it has to be all in with political resources, with governance resources, and with economic resources in addition to the obvious, a sufficient amount of troops to be able to do that.

So I think this will have an appeal to some if we are going to limit the strategy and outcomes; therefore, we don't have to pay as much of a price even to get a limited outcome. And we should be very careful about that because defeating an insurgency does require a significant price.

Mr. MCHUGH. Ms. St. Laurent.

Ms. ST. LAURENT. Our work speaks generally to the kinds of key elements that will need to be included in a broad, comprehensive strategy, that being an integrated approach that does reflect the contributions of civilians and AID and State, as well as DOD, and the identification of the kinds of resources that are going to be required and, also, measures to assess progress along the way.

Having said that, I think clearly elements of those plans that are likely to be developed by the new Administration will need to focus on ways to improve security—certainly, an additional emphasis on training up of Afghan security forces, and then an emphasis on an absence of terrorist safe havens in the region.

But one key thing, as we continue to do work in Afghanistan, that we will be focusing on and looking at is whether or not, again, these resources are being applied effectively. And to date, we have seen a number of problems in those areas. For example, in terms of control over weapons, we have a report that will be coming out this morning that focuses on weapons being given to Afghan security forces that DOD has not maintained adequate control and ac-

counting for those weapons. And we certainly don't want to create conditions in which problems could emerge by the failure to sort of administer any additional assistance that we are providing effectively.

And also, with regard to the Afghan security forces, I think a key issue for DOD is going to be how to come up with the additional forces to do that training and assistance to develop those units. DOD does not have the existing force structure where we have these training units. We put them together for Iraq, and now the demands to do that in Afghanistan are most likely going to increase.

So I think it is an issue that perhaps will need to be examined in the upcoming Quadrennial Defense Review, and as the Administration again develops its strategy for Afghanistan.

Mr. MCHUGH. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, I started on an editorial comment; let me please end with one. And I apologize for taking so much time.

Let me first say that I couldn't agree with General Keane more. Because we redefine success in Afghanistan in somewhat a more modest way, a different way than Iraq, that doesn't mean we can do it in a way that is less taxing, less expensive, and less burdensome across the spectrum.

The second thing I would say is a word of caution. And with respect to Ms. St. Laurent's comments, we can't do this alone. This is a NATO mission. This is not officially a U.S. mission, and we have to rely upon our NATO partners, whether it is the carabiniere or whoever, who did a very admirable job in Iraq training up the national police and stepping forward. And I think the American people must be advised as well.

In my judgment, at the end of the day, after we create a sufficient Afghan National Police, a sufficient Afghan National Army, and security forces across the board that can do the things we want to have done in that theater, it is unlikely the Afghan national economy can support that.

We are going to have to make a very long-term commitment to this. There is no way to do it on the cheap. And I just think in the spirit of what several of you said of being open and honest to the American people, it should be said here as well.

Thank you all for being here.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

We are now under the five-minute rule. Mr. Taylor.

Mr. TAYLOR. I want to thank our panel for being here.

I think it is accurate to say that the surge worked. It is also accurate to say that simultaneous to the surge, the Marines in Anbar came to the conclusion that they could pay the Sheiks to pay their tribesmen to not only stop shooting at Americans, but to start protecting Americans.

In the beginning it was American money that made this accommodation work. Now I am told that Iraqi oil money, through a power-sharing agreement that looks, in my opinion, more like the Magna Carta than a Jeffersonian democracy, is taking place, but at least it appears that some sort of a power-sharing agreement

with the Sheiks has been made, and they are shooting at a lot fewer Americans. I consider that a good thing.

Using that model and using what General Keane just said about—I am told the Afghans refer to Karzai as "The American Bull," mockingly—that really is a tribal society.

General, is it your opinion that our military is now trying to focus more on an accommodation with the different tribal warlords than trying to create some sort of a central government?

I am not of the opinion that there ever was a strong central government in Kabul, and I really don't see how the American presence can create something that has never really existed in that country. Maybe our goals, as you said, we ought to be shooting for a little bit higher standard. But I am just—again, I am hearing—I am in agreement with what I am hearing from you. I am just curious if the American military is going to step to, which is a direct accommodation with the different tribal leaders around that country.

General KEANE. Yes. I think one of the things that should inform us, and some things that happened in Iraq, you know, at least can help educate us where there are some similarities. And there are some similarities here.

But one of the things I learned in being intimately involved in the situation in Iraq is, to change behavior, you have to break the will of your opponent. And—Sun Tzu always said this, and it reminded me of what we did in Iraq again.

I can remember one of the Sheiks who was also an insurgent leader. We talked to many of them. He said, You know, after America occupied Baghdad—and I never thought of it in that way, but from his perspective it is true—we knew we couldn't win. So what he was doing then is negotiating with us for the best deal he could get. Initially it started out to be financial for the Sons of Iraq program, but then he is in the political process now, which is fascinating.

So we have to deal with that issue first. You can't sit down with the Taliban now and reconcile. Why would they reconcile? They are winning.

Mr. TAYLOR. General, if I may, it is my understanding that—I am separating the tribal warlords from the Taliban. I don't think they are one and the same.

General KEANE. I understand.

Mr. TAYLOR. Correct me if I am wrong.

General KEANE. Tribal leaders and Taliban, particularly in the south, a lot of that is one and the same, much as it was in Iraq. You are talking to a Sheik, an insurgent leader in Iraq, you are also—they are one and the same.

In the south, it is not unanimous, but you are dealing with the same kinds of people. So we have to change that behavior. Many of them, I think, are reconcilable, but that takes time for them to recognize they cannot achieve their goals in the manner that they are currently trying to achieve them and that there are opportunities for them.

But that is not going to be done overnight, and certainly it is not the power of persuasion that does that at all. It is the harsh realities on the ground that do that.

But the people are a major factor in this as well. I mean, they really do have influence. It is not just the leaders themselves.

Mr. TAYLOR. How do you fund it? In Iraq you had oil to fund everything. How do you fund it in Afghanistan?

General KEANE. In Afghanistan it will have to be largely our resources and NATO resources. I mean, that is one of the problems we are dealing with here. There is no wealth to speak of. And the funding, as Congressman—the ranking minority mentioned, Congressman McHugh—one of the reluctances, one of the reasons why we are sitting at 80,000 Afghan National Security Forces now, and going to 130,000 when we should be at least twice all of that, is because of the sustainment costs for that.

We would have to provide the sustainment costs, which is not true in Iraq. They are paying for it themselves. And that is why we are at the numbers we are at now. And out of the 80,000, probably 40-, 50,000 is what is really effective. So we have to get over this in terms of resources or we are going to protract our stay, and then eventually we will walk away; and that is not the answer.

But to get back to your point, I am convinced in my own mind that there is much that could be done with the tribal leaders, less so with these warlords that are well known. I do think we will continue to have a weak central government even if we have a new leader. But the important thing is some representation at the local level that is connected to the people and understands their needs, at least so that resources can be funneled to them and there is a connection there. I think we can assist with some of this.

We can't remake their whole governance issue in Afghanistan, nor should we try, as I have said before. But I think we can make some reasonable progress here.

Mr. TAYLOR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank the gentleman.

Mr. Bartlett.

Mr. BARTLETT. Thank you very much.

I hope that you can help me frame an answer to a question for which I do not have a good answer.

I understand that when the Soviets were going into Afghanistan they were asked if they had seen all those rocks in Afghanistan. Yes. Well, have you noticed all the British blood on those rocks in Afghanistan? If you would like Soviet blood on those rocks in Afghanistan, just try to do what the British could not do.

I know that one may argue that this is different because now we are not fighting against the central government, we are fighting with the central government. But then the response is, Gee, the central government is just terribly weak. The areas where the bad guys are the federal government has very little control. And if, in fact, we are able to do, they ask me, what the Soviets and the British could not do, and stabilize Afghanistan so that the bad guys are no longer there, they will just have gone across the border into Pakistan, where they are not unwelcomed.

So the question is, why are we not engaged in an exercise in futility?

Dr. CORDESMAN. If I may make a first stab at this, Congressman, I think that if we were to repeat the Russian or the British experience, we would have an exercise in futility. But I think, as there

is some agreement in this panel, if the focus is to create successful Afghan security forces, if it is to move from what has been sort of tactical clashes to a, "clear, hold, build," strategy where you are also developing capabilities for local governance and stability in the fields which are Afghan rather than ours, then I think it isn't an exercise in futility. And I think we would be much further along in demonstrating that, much less dependent on U.S. troops, if we had recognized this and funded it early on.

Right now, we have 1,000 of the 3,000 U.S. advisers, all of whom are not trained, necessary to deal with the Afghan Army. NATO has less than a third of its teams. When it comes down to the Afghan police, which is a critical aspect of substituting for us, we have all of 800 of the 2,400 people to deal with the current force. And where the Congress once peaked this effort at $7.3 billion in fiscal 2007, you are funding it at two billion this year; and you have just nearly doubled the goal for the Afghan Army.

So it isn't an exercise in futility if you provide the resources. But this is not just troop levels. And one thing we have to do is start talking numbers and hard facts and real options, not concepts.

Mr. BARTLETT. Sir, but then they tell me, So what? Even if we are able to accomplish this, and the bad guys have simply gone across the border into Pakistan, where they are not unwelcome, what have we accomplished with the enormous investment of American blood and treasure?

Dr. CORDESMAN. I think if you are talking the bad guys in very limited numbers pushed across the border, if you are talking the kind of programs I have seen to provide aid to Pakistan, if we were able to implement—and it is hard to get into details here—options for using Special Operations Forces to help train the Pakistanis, who ultimately are not going to allow these bad guys to stay there indefinitely because they threaten Pakistan, not just Afghanistan, you have options.

Can anybody promise success? I don't think anybody can.

Mr. BARTLETT. Does Pakistan have any more control over these border areas or have much more control than Afghanistan does? They are fairly autonomous, are they not?

Dr. CORDESMAN. Well, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas are not autonomous at all. What they are is under control of the Pakistani military, because they have never been fully integrated into the Pakistani Government structure. If the Pakistani military chooses to deal with that region, it is completely different from having an episodic Pakistani presence, where often you have divisions within the Pakistani military.

We have not pressured them hard. In the Baluchi area we have the same problem.

Mr. BARTLETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank the gentleman.

Dr. Snyder, please.

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate this discussion today. The phrase "exercise in futility," I would say our discussion today is an exercise in realism. And I appreciate you-all's contribution to that kind of discussion as we look forward.

I have two questions, one for you, General Keane, and then one for Dr. Cordesman, which means you have got to answer in about two minutes, General Keane, so I can get on to my second question with Dr. Cordesman.

On page five of your written statement you say the following, quote, "Can we shift our priorities to Afghanistan and win without squandering the gains we have made in Iraq? The answer is a resounding 'yes,' if we have the patience to succeed in Iraq and the courage and wisdom to transition properly to Afghanistan." That is a quote from your written statement.

You retired in December of 2003. If we go back to mid-2002 and I phrased that question differently and said, "Now," mid-2002, in the run-up to the invasion in Iraq, "can we shift our priorities to Iraq and win without squandering the gains we have made in Afghanistan?" I think today we would conclude—this is no longer your quote—that the answer turns out to have been a resounding "no," that as we shifted our focus and priorities and personnel, we did squander the gains we had made in Afghanistan.

How can you so solidly say today that the answer is a resounding "yes"? And also did that kind of discussion occur in 2002? Was that question you asked so well, eloquently there today, was that question discussed in 2002?

General KEANE. That is hard to answer in two minutes. But I was there when this issue arose. There were some of us who expressed concern about moving away from Afghanistan and putting the priority on Iraq, particularly at this time. The first time that issue arose was around Thanksgiving, December of 2001, so weeks after we toppled the Taliban.

Dr. SNYDER. You mean the first time the issue——

General KEANE. The issue of Iraq arose as an objective.

And our concerns were, at that time, Why, why would we do that now, given the fact that we have just brought the Taliban down, we have the al Qaeda on the run, we have got to stay after these guys?

After all, we went there for two reasons. One is the host, the Taliban, for the sanctuary, we had to take the host away, and we also had to eliminate the sanctuary, which was al Qaeda. So now we were after the sanctuary, and we were running after them. And we had Special Operations doing it, and we had lots of platforms doing it, and we had a limited amount of forces doing it. We should have had a lot more doing it. We lost that argument as well. So—yes, that is true.

And clearly, the priorities in Iraq enabled the resurgence—we did eliminate the sanctuary. It did go away. But it did permit the reemergence of the Taliban. And I also think it caused the Pakistanis—and this is crucial. It caused Musharraf himself—I believe when we made the overture to NATO and asked them to come in and take over in Afghanistan, I think Musharraf believed at that moment the U.S. was not committed to Afghanistan, and he started working both sides of this issue as a hedge against the possible return of the Taliban in the future. And it is the reason why those sanctuaries are still there today. And I am talking about the Afghan sanctuary in Pakistan.

Dr. SNYDER. I am going to interrupt you, General Keane, but I appreciate what you have outlined, because what you are saying is, we are older and wiser now, and we have learned from that experience and what can happen.

Dr. Cordesman, I want to read a statement from your written statement. I don't understand the sentence very well. I think there is a whole lot on page 13.

You say, quote, "The State Department, AID, and Department of Defense have failed to develop an integrated aid plan, budget request, and provide the personnel and funding needed for urgent warfighting needs." Then you say, "This needs to be forced upon the executive branch, and the senior officials involved need to be held personally accountable on a regular basis."

I am not sure what you are saying there. Are you saying, I take it the State Department needs to provide the personnel and funding needed for urgent warfighting needs? I don't think the State Department sees that as their goal. Are you saying they need an integrated budget request, that we should just have one glob of money, the State Department, Department of Defense together?

I just don't understand that sentence or what you are trying to get at there.

Dr. CORDESMAN. First, we have a vast amount of U.S. money going in there that never gets into the field, into the districts, where it is vital to providing governance, economic stability, the "build" side of "clear and hold." And that basically is the function, that there is no one really in charge of the various aid programs that tie together things like Commanders' Emergency Response Program (CERP), what comes out of the PRTs, and the overall aid program.

AID is not in charge of aid, the State Department doesn't provide a coherent plan, the Department of Defense doesn't integrate its aid activities; and as a result, the money flows in very interesting ways, but doesn't get out into the field.

It is also, I think, very clear when we talk about one basic metric. It is nice to call for civilians for the aid program, but after seven years, you have got over 1,000 U.S. military in the PRTs, and 40, less than 40, U.S. civilians, according to a Department of Defense report issued this month.

So when you talk about the sheer lack of any coherent effort, it is critical.

Dr. SNYDER. I agree. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Randy Forbes.

Mr. FORBES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the chairman and ranking member for having this hearing, and thank all of you for being here.

In the five minutes I have, General Keane, I would like to ask you a question. It is based on the testimony that I have heard today.

You have indicated that it is important that we sustain the gains that we have in Iraq and that we win in Afghanistan. I heard Dr. Cordesman talk about one of the reasons that we are not winning is because this committee and Congress and previous administration has not put the resources forward that we needed to win. I

heard Dr. Biddle talk about the need to move in transferring assets slower rather than more rapidly from Iraq to Afghanistan. And I also heard the words from Dr. Cordesman about transparency.

Sometimes actions that we take have ripple effects that keep us from taking actions down the road. In about 24 hours, we are going to vote on this stimulus package that many of us have not had an opportunity to fully read and look at—not a lot of transparency.

But assuming it is fine, assuming it is the direction we are going to go, in my estimation, voting for that stimulus package is just as surely voting to reduce defense expenditures down the road as the vote we will take when that comes around for this reason. Just the interest carry on the bailouts that we have done so far and this stimulus package, just the interest carry alone would cover the full budgets for NASA, the National Science Foundation, Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, including the FBI, the Army Corps of Engineers, all the operations of the White House, all the operations of Congress, and the Department of Transportation combined.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out, when we go to do those budgets and we have lost expenditures on all these budgets, we are going to have to cut costs somewhere. And my question to you is, do you think that a reduced defense budget will support what we need to do in Afghanistan and Iraq? And can we achieve victory if we have significant reductions to defense spending?

General KEANE. Well, having spent a lot of time with that budget as the vice chief of staff and all the vagaries in it, I think the answer for us is, I don't believe—it is not so much the Defense budget as—what we have tried to lay out here is what are our goals and objectives and the strategy and support of that, and then apply the resources that are necessary.

If you set a goal and an objective to have a positive outcome—I like to use the words that are important, like "win," words that American people can understand, and what does that mean—then the resources have to go with that. That mission then is given to the Department of Defense, and they have choices that they have to make with the amount of money that is going to be available to them.

And having been involved in a lot of that myself, I think the resources for the operational requirements where troops are on the line, those resources will be met, particularly with the energy of a new President behind the strategy and goals he wants to achieve, assuming that is there.

The choices will be this. They will not—I don't believe operational dollars will get cut, what we call "operational maintenance"; and I think the money in the supplement to support those activities, I would believe would be funded.

Where the rub will come from for Secretary Gates is, and where he has discretion—he has discretion in operational accounts, as we are describing; I don't think he would cut them, because we are fighting two wars. The other discretion he has is in his investment capital accounts, which is where all the programs are for the new equipment and the modernization programs; and I believe that is where they will go to live within the budget that is assigned, given

the economic crisis that we are in. And then they will make the choices within there and make the best possible choices they can.

It would make no sense to set a goal to win in Afghanistan with a new strategy in support of it, even if it is a limited one, and then not provide the resources to accomplish that goal. I mean, that would be obvious to any of the execution people that those resources aren't there for them.

Mr. FORBES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. McHugh.

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Chairman, I have two documents that the gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. Wilson, asked, without objection, be placed in the record.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, they are.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 119.]

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Andrews.

Mr. ANDREWS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the witnesses very much.

General Keane, I think you made an incredibly penetrating point a few minutes ago. Correct me if I misphrase it. One of the proximate causes of the resurgence of the Taliban in the FATA and in Afghanistan was that General Musharraf hedged his bets as a result of his perception that we might be deemphasizing our emphasis on Afghanistan in the 2002–2003 window. Did I state your point correctly?

If that is the case—I agree with it completely—what signal could we send to the Pakistani leadership today that would tell them that we are reaffirming an unshakeable commitment to victory in Afghanistan over the radical elements who attacked us on 9/11? What would be the remedy that would say to the present Pakistani leadership, we are lethally serious about being successful here?

General KEANE. It is a critical point, as I tried to say in the statement, that our commitment is truly an issue here if we are going to have a favorable outcome. And it is sort of an "all-in" proposition in terms of commitment.

The enemy will look at this, and if we are not committed, they will read weaknesses and they will be encouraged by it. And all the stakeholders—the people in the region are stakeholders in this, and the most serious stakeholder certainly in the region is Pakistan. And they have to clearly understand—and they will judge us by what we are doing and less by what we are saying. I mean, we will have the rhetoric to back it up, but what will they look at?

Mr. ANDREWS. Right. What are the actions?

General KEANE. They are going to look at level of force increase.

Mr. ANDREWS. What do you think that——

Mr. MCKEON. Number of forces.

Mr. ANDREWS. What do you think it ought to be?

General KEANE. I don't know what it should be because I haven't done the detailed analysis to tell you that. But our commanders will know what that is.

Mr. ANDREWS. What is the second element?

General KEANE. So the level of that commitment is number one.

And then the other is the resource package it takes to sustain this effort. Some of that is largely financial.

Mr. ANDREWS. Right.

General KEANE. Because we have to pay for the Afghan National Army's growth, which must be significant.

Mr. ANDREWS. Right.

General KEANE. Then they have to see the resources that Tony has tried to point out that are so necessary. It is not just money to grow an army.

Mr. ANDREWS. Right.

General KEANE. We need the trainers to grow that army, and we are not putting them in there.

They will look at all of that. And many of the people that are advising that new government in Pakistan are military professionals themselves. They will be able to make adequate judgments about our level of commitment based on the resources that we are providing, and also, you know, the rhetoric in support of that and the political risk, I think, that national leaders are taking associated with that decision.

Mr. ANDREWS. Let me ask a related question, which goes to something you said, General, and Dr. Biddle said, and Dr. Cordesman said also.

Are we dancing with the right partner in Afghanistan? I think one of the reasons that Iraq had some success in Anbar clearly was that we did business with the tribal leaders in Anbar, as Mr. Taylor talked about earlier, not with the central government in Baghdad. And the alliance that led to the victory in Anbar was the alliance between the sheik leaders in Anbar and us.

There is a range of options here. We could try to strike similar regional accords with tribal leaders throughout Afghanistan. We could reject such accords and deal only with the central government. We could do something in between.

What should we do? Who should we be trying to ally with here to create the kind of legitimacy and stability in Afghanistan that is necessary?

Dr. CORDESMAN. Could I, Congressman?

There was an auxiliary Afghan National Police. It had about 100 percent desertion rate, and virtually all of its weapons can't be accounted for.

What I think we are trying do in the field is create local security forces tied to advisers—again, "clear, hold and build"—which can then be related to the provincial government and related to the central government, but really are supported and advised from the outside.

There aren't tribal confederations in Afghanistan. I have seen some of the detailed mapping of tribal differences by valley and area. You can work with them, but there is no solid base, as you had for the Sons of Iraq. And so I think what we are trying to do, and General McKiernan and others are trying to do, is the right approach, but it still relies on the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police.

Dr. BIDDLE. We have to get better performance out of the government in Kabul, but I think the issue is less who the person is than how we deal with them. The next person, if Karzai is replaced with

someone else, will face a lot of the same structural incentives that Karzai does. My guess is those incentives will shape similar behavior unless we change behavior. And I think, centrally we have to think about using leverage to get the change in behavior that we need; and one of our central forms of leverage is conditionality.

We cannot write blank checks. We have to make it clear that the assistance they need is conditioned on the behavior that we need.

Mr. ANDREWS. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

It is a pleasure to call upon Mr. Hunter.

Mr. HUNTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, panel.

First thing, Mr. Cordesman said that the approval rating of the U.S., NATO mission is at 37 percent. And I would note that that is higher than this Congress's approval rating. I don't know what that says about them or us.

I am glad to hear you all concur that we have success in Iraq. I think that is important. I served two tours over there as a U.S. Marine, and I appreciate that. It is a tenuous victory, but it is a victory; and if we can hold that, that is important. And I hope that this Congress, this committee, and you will let that be known, that we do have victory; and the men and women that have served have achieved that for us.

Going on to Mr. McHugh's note that a rise in violence does not necessarily mean that we are losing, is there conflict in that in this panel, meaning, as we send in Marines, we are going to see the violence go up? Because in RC–South we had had ISAF there; they didn't do anything. We can all agree that ISAF is relatively not—it is not worthless, but it is not going to do that hard-hitting combat role that the Marines will do. And as we send Marines in, we are going to see more violence, just like we did in the Iraqi surge. Violence spiked and then went down.

Dr. CORDESMAN. Well, Congressman, I think you can have access to maps very similar to what I think you saw in Iraq, which were maps not simply of kinetic violence, but areas of influence for al Qaeda and for the threat from the Mahdi Army.

The problem you have is, if you look only at the NATO/ISAF maps of kinetic events or violence, you see one pattern. If you look at the areas of increased Taliban, Haqqani and HIG support area—areas of influence and presence, those areas have expanded much more quickly in Afghanistan than the NATO/ISAF maps of the areas of violence, although the NATO/ISAF maps have been revised rather strikingly upwards in terms of levels of violence and location, in area of violence in the last 3 months.

General KEANE. Congressman, I think you are absolutely right. In military terms, the Taliban and their supporters have offensive momentum, and we are on the defensive. And what the command will do is put together a counteroffensive, much as Normandy was a counteroffensive, the island-hopping campaign in the Pacific during World War II, Inchon in Korea, and countless others in Vietnam that no one remembers the numbers of, and also the counteroffensive that just took place in Iraq.

In all of those cases, because of the nature of that, the enemy is on the offense and you are trying to take it away from them. And there is an offensive clash in doing that: casualties go up, violence

goes up. And that is what we have to be very clear to the American people about, that these casualties will go up for American forces, as they will for NATO forces who are in the fight.

But—and we had this discussion with the President of the United States over the counteroffensive in Iraq—if we have it right, then the casualties can come down rather dramatically and the net overall, in time, will be less casualties, not more, despite the spike—that is, if it works according to our plan in terms of what the commanders will put together.

Mr. HUNTER. Okay. Thank you.

And switching now, we talked about Congress here—Dr. Cordesman did—being partly responsible for what is going on right now in Afghanistan. I would ask you if the warfighter is asking for the right things and Congress is trying to provide them with the right things. Is the choke point not in the Department of Defense and Secretary Gates, not this Congress and not the warfighter, but that choke point in between?

Dr. CORDESMAN. We have four major threats in this problem: the Taliban, the Haqqani network, Hekmatyar, and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). And I think if you were to look at requests made to OMB versus the flow out of OMB, you would see that commanders have had two problems. They haven't gotten what they wanted; neither have the ambassadors. And they have taken the position that at least on the funding levels, their requests have to be limited to what they think they can get.

General KEANE. I think clearly most of this is largely due to the priority of effort that Iraq required, not just in terms of resources, but in terms of intellectual capital, in terms of people's energy, their time.

The entire effort was focused on that reality, and now we are shifting priorities. Right before our eyes it is taking place where this is becoming the priority. And I think it will get a spotlight, it will get examined, it will get looked at.

Let's get all the requirements on the table; there will be leaders saying that. Let's make sure we get this right this time. We know we have been half-stepping here for a number of years because of the problems and challenges we had in Iraq.

Those requests will be made, and I am hopeful that the requirements will get put on the table so that we can get after this thing the way it should be.

Ms. ST. LAURENT. If I could just add a comment on that point also.

My comment would be that the discussion has been largely around the numbers of forces that might be required, whereas I think there clearly needs to be a detailed examination and discussion about the types of capabilities that are needed. I mean, we have talked about some of those today—the trainers, the specific civil affairs and other skills that might be needed, and certainly some combat forces. But also, in talking about numbers, you have to figure in the whole logistics tail and additional support capabilities that you are going to need there to manage a large, overall military presence.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Davis, please.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for being here. I am sure the chairman would remember as well, I think we sat here with Admiral Mullen when he said, "In Afghanistan we do what we can, and in Iraq we do what we must." And that was, I think, one of the first statements, after a lot of prying from up here, about how this is going.

I wonder if you could just switch talking about NATO and NATO's role and how we can, I think, either articulate or reach out better. I happened to return with a few colleagues recently, just a few days ago, talking with folks in Brussels about the Afghanistan mission. And it is clear that people talk about a civilian surge there, but it is also not clear that we have the coordination. We have tried to build that; it is obviously not working.

What do you think it is going to take? And what is the message that you would suggest to President Obama as he goes to Munich and works and tries to bring more of the NATO countries in? We understand their public opinion is worse than ours when it comes to how we can engage this mission. What are your thoughts?

Dr. BIDDLE. Well, I think a key underlying issue here is a common understanding of the purpose of the undertaking. Many Europeans do not believe that this is a war. And they also believe that if it is a war, they don't want any part of it. They don't see it as a war worth waging.

General McKiernan makes it a point regularly in his interactions with NATO officials to use the word "counterinsurgency," which had not until fairly recently been part of the vocabulary of the conversation about this undertaking in NATO.

If there are significant parts of the NATO alliance that view this as essentially an armed humanitarian undertaking rather than a war against a resourceful and violent enemy, even if they provide more resources, they are going to be resources that can't be integrated into the larger plan in a sensible way. We end up with, you know, parts of the country doing things that are at loggerheads with what we are trying to do elsewhere and are very poorly coordinated.

So I think the underlying political requirement vis-à-vis NATO is to forge some degree of common understanding about what our purpose there is; and the heart of that, I think, has to be making the point that this is indeed now, for better or worse, a war.

Dr. CORDESMAN. I think if I may add a point, we need to identify and perhaps make public the level of national caveats. We keep using the word "NATO," but most of the problems lie with individual countries.

I will leave it to General Keane to talk about how many three-stars we really need in the NATO chain of command and whether they really at this point are effective. You will hear a lot of reactions out there about them.

But I think the other key point is, in all honesty you are not going to get that many more troops. You may lose some. And you are not going to get that many more civilians.

One of the things you have to understand is, we will come away from that meeting without getting anything like what we want. What we might be able to do is free up forces from a few countries to be more flexible. We might get PRTs from some of those countries to stop staying in a narrow area of access, where they are pro-

tected by troops doing demo projects, to actually start functioning on a broader level.

But the honest answer, Congresswoman, is we are not going to get much from here.

Mrs. DAVIS. General Keane.

General KEANE. I echo that. We have a fundamental problem with many of the NATO countries; and it lies on the fact that many of their national leaders can no longer ask their people to sacrifice.

And fortunately, here in the United States we can, because of our global interests and the American people understand how vital those are so those national leaders are very challenged. But I also believe this, if NATO is going to live on, it has to succeed in Afghanistan. It cannot fail this test, if there is going to continue to be a NATO, maybe there is not. But I think we have to be smart about how we can look for them to succeed here within some of the limitations that they have.

Mrs. DAVIS. Do you believe that there is any risk in the size of our footprint as we go into Afghanistan that sends a different message to NATO that we are going to send in 30,000 troops and it is okay, we don't need any help anymore?

General KEANE. Frankly, I believe they don't want to lose in Afghanistan because they made a contribution whether it is a training contribution or a combat contribution, I think they will more than welcome the United States making a sizable commitment to see this thing through to success. It is in their interest. But I also think that we should not give up on these NATO countries. We do have an opportunity here with the transition of leadership to try to get more trainers, to try to get more resources.

There is going to be limits on combat troops, that is for sure. But there is plenty of our things that we need and I think we should not give up fighting for those.

The CHAIRMAN. Before I ask Mr. Wittman, let me ask the General again, in your opinion, unless there is success in Afghanistan, NATO is in real trouble?

General KEANE. Well, this is the first excursion of NATO outside of Europe. I think they put a lot of their credibility on the line here in doing this. There is a lot of discussion right now about the weaknesses of NATO itself. And certainly, any failure in Afghanistan would be partially attributed to that organization, that is for sure, as it rightfully should be. So I think it would certainly weaken it, rather significantly, whether it actually is a catalyst for its change in its role completely, I can't say. But I would say that it would be detrimental to it for sure.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Mr. Wittman.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to members of the panel for being here.

General Keane, in your testimony, you eloquently lay out what you think it will take to win Afghanistan all the way from making sure we have a clear strategy to a robust counterinsurgency effort to make sure there is strong governance there for public support.

Can you though drill down and talk about what you think would be the goals of those eight elements that you outlined? And then what you think the resources might be needed in order to be successful along those lines?

General KEANE. Well, the fundamental goal that I tried to lay out deals with something we have already said and that is we do not want a sanctuary in Afghanistan and we want to contribute to the stability of Pakistan. And some form of a representative government and that is connected to a people and with an Afghan national Army that is capable or an Afghan national security forces that is capable of providing internal security to do that, to fundamentally do that we have to defeat the insurgency.

Central to the campaign plan would be using counterinsurgency doctrine and practices to do that. So some of that is taking place now in the south on a limited scale. This will take place on a much more dramatic scale as we are able to put more combat troops in.

There is an interesting dimension in Afghanistan dealing with the people themselves. While the Iraqis had very high toleration for the war being fought in urban centers while they are living there, in some cases had catastrophic affects to them and their families, the Afghans do not. This pressure not to occupy, not to be present and certainly not to fight in those towns, villages and cities. All that said, they are still the issue, those people. So we have to be very clever in terms of how we deal with their concerns, but also, meet our military concerns. The Afghan National Army and their security forces are part of that solution. And it is not always the Afghan National Army is the solution, because to be quite frank about it, we can absorb the heat a little bit better, given who we are as outsiders than that Army can.

I am just speaking about Afghanistan now, I am not trying to compare it to Iraq. So the application of a counterinsurgency on the ground in Afghanistan will be dramatically different than what it was in Iraq for sure. Nonetheless, the key issue protecting the people and isolating the insurgents themselves or the Taliban who are not a homogenous group, as you well know. And then we go after them relentlessly and tenaciously to get them. And we know how to do this. Those things have to be done simultaneously. And then we must do something about the sanctuaries themselves in Pakistan. We cannot continue to let them operate out of there with impunity.

I can't tell you how many brigades that would take. I haven't done the detailed analysis. I don't have a good sense of the enemy situation. If I had a clarity on the enemy situation better than I do, I would be able to do an analysis similar to what we did in Iraq to determine what the forces are. But look at—we have a completely different problem here in Afghanistan. We don't have military leaders in Afghanistan who are whetted to an old strategy. They are welcoming new thinking, their minds are open. They want to succeed here. And they have a wide aperture. So we don't have this inflexibility and rigidness and whetted to the past policies. We have people who are intellectually engaged.

Look, we have the preeminent counterinsurgency general in the military overseeing this, Dave Petraeus. We have the best guy in the world who does this kind of work. He has his head on this and he is focused on this. I am absolutely confident that they will come up with the necessary campaign plan. Not he, but McKiernan, an assisted coach as delicately as we can say it here, so that the necessary tools will be there.

Most of this, remember, is not just resources. We threw lots of resources at the problem in Iraq. Our resources are crucial, I am not diminishing them, but it is how we use the resources and how we employ the troops. We had 150,000 troops and we were employing them the wrong way in Iraq, that is why for three years we were failing. So once we changed their employment and gave them more resources, we got a completely different result. I am convinced that will happen here and we have the leaders here that understand that, they know what to do. And they'll need some resources to do it that they do not have.

But most importantly when they get a plan put together that gives them unity of effort. Military people talk about this a lot, because in any complex situation like fighting a war, you cannot succeed unless you have the unity of effort. You have to get everybody on the same page. What does that for you? A campaign plan. And then you hold people accountable for their portion of it. Everybody gets by and then you have oversight and you assess performance and you get the whole team moving together. We don't have that. We have got to get it and they know they have got to get it and they are going to do it.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Mr. Rooney.

Mr. ROONEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the good news is I am the low man on the totem pole as I sit down here at the kids' table for Thanksgiving dinner. It is good to sit this close, because I have been paying attention for a long time to what you have been saying and somebody who got off active duty four years ago, General, it is an honor to sit here and listen to you speak. I really appreciate your leadership, especially when it comes to your commitment and your optimism.

However, that being said, I recently read a book by a guy named Marcus Luttrell, who was a Navy SEAL in Afghanistan, called *Lone Survivor*. Had he a little advice for those of us who work up here in D.C., this I don't think I will ever forget. It was basically that we should never send our men and women to fight in wars if we are not willing to do whenever it takes to win.

And with regard to the funding issue, Dr. Cordesman, and even General Keane, I am not getting sort of the sense that right now we are willing to do whatever it takes to win, but since we have heard that, I am just curious what Ms. St. Laurent's opinion is on that after reading your testimony. In your opinion, first of all, is Marcus Luttrell, right? And second of all, in your opinion, do you think that we are going to do whatever it takes to win with regard to resources in Afghanistan?

Ms. ST. LAURENT. Thank you very much. First of all, I think the point is we need to see when the key strategy is and what the goals are. I think the key point of my statement is the ends, ways and means have to be balanced. And certainly the whole economic environment will be a factor that will determine how well and whether both the Administration and Congress and the amount of funds they will put forward toward the strategy.

The first piece really does depend on what the goals are and the mix of those goals between the Department of Defense and the other civilian agencies. We said almost a year ago now we don't have an updated campaign plan for Iraq. We clearly need one for

Afghanistan as well. There will be, I think, costs associated with the drawdown that are not been talked about explicitly at this point just to manage that very significant effort that will be associated with pulling all that equipment and forces out there, as well as continuing to support operations there.

We have been funding a lot of those costs through supplemental budget requests that come up, and that may continue to happen for a while and that may also be a way to deal with some of the another term costs associated with the strategy for Afghanistan. But I think the long-term pressure is on the defense budget are going to be there. I agree with the assessment that what may happen is putting more pressure on the investment accounts. And hopefully, there will be the appropriate funding that will much up with whenever the new goals are that are going to be established.

General KEANE. Just going down the line, first of all, Congressman, thank you for your service and also thank you for continuing to provide public service. It is nice to have someone like you who has had some experience in the military serving in this great institution.

These are difficult choices that are about to be made by the President of the United States. He will be presented with a range of options in front of him. And I am convinced when he selects the strategy to move forward, he will believe in his mind that he is selecting the strategy to win, just as President Bush was selecting a strategy after the invasion, when he was being briefed on it and told what we were going to do. I am convinced for all those three years that we had the wrong strategy, there is no doubt in my mind that President Bush wanted to win. He thought he had the team in place to give him that victory and he thought he had the plans in place to do it. But we found out over time that that was not the case. Some knew it almost immediately, I was not one of those by the way. It took me a while to understand how wrong the strategy was.

So these choices that we make, and we are about to make here in the next number of weeks about the strategy and what going forward means and what is winning is crucial, make no mistake about it. But out of that, I am convinced that the President will make a decision that he believes is going to give him that definition of win in terms of our goals and objectives. But he may find out, as President Bush did, as we go down the road that we have got to adjust this thing. When we see it, we have to have that kind of institutional flexibility to make adjustments if it is not right. Or if we miscalculated the resources. And we need to do more of it. We may need to ask more sacrifice to make that kind of adjustment.

I hope we have that kind of flexibility. The things that drives that is very honest and objective oversight of what we are doing. So we really have the granularity and truth of what is taking place. I think it is crucial. So we don't let years go by before we make the necessary adjustments. I make no mistake about it, I think the President will make the decision that he believes is going to give him his definition of win. But it may turn out that that is not exactly working to the degree that we want it to work. And then we have to make the necessary adjustments to it. That is because we are dealing with war. As much as we try to be predict-

able, organize it, the enemy has a vote here. And they can still exploit our weaknesses and we have them.

The CHAIRMAN. Anyone else? Anyone else care to answer Mr. Rooney?

Thank you very, very much. To the panel, we express deep appreciation. This has been an excellent hearing and it is certainly good of you to share your thoughts with us. It is one of the best hearings I believe we have had. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 12:47 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

FEBRUARY 12, 2009

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

FEBRUARY 12, 2009

CSIS | CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Statement before the House Armed Services Committee

"THE CRISIS IN AFGHANISTAN"

A Statement by

Dr. Anthony Cordesman

CSIS Burke Chair in Strategy

Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)

February 12, 2009

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The Crisis in Afghanistan: Testimony by Anthony H. Cordesman to the House Armed Services Committee, February 12, 2009

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Let me begin by delivering two unpleasant messages. The first is that we are losing the war in Afghanistan and Pakistan and we have at most two years in which to decisively reverse this situation. The second is that we are losing largely because of the failures of the previous Administration, the US Congress. And yes, to some extent this Committee – although I recognize that its Chairman deserves credit for being among the first to focus on these problems.

They Aren't Winning; We Have Been Losing

I suspect that the core of the first message already is all too familiar. but it is important to note that the full scale of the problems we face are far less clear. Seven years after what once appeared to be a decisive victory against the Taliban and Al Qa'ida, we still do not have credible public metrics to show what is happening in either Afghanistan and Pakistan. It also is far from clear that our intelligence community and policymakers have developed the full range of information they need at any level.

For far too long, we concentrated on Iraq as the expense of Afghanistan. From 2002 onwards, we failed to communicate the scale of the steady decay in our situation in Afghanistan. We tried try to spin tactical victories into a success story, downplayed the decline in our position, and failed to provide the resources needed to win.

There was some excellent testimony by senior officials and officers who served in the field, and good reporting by bodies like the GAO. The Administration did not present the kind of weekly State Department reporting on this war that we provided on Iraq. It did not provide the same quarterly Department of Defense reporting on the war it provided on Iraq until June 2008 – seven years after the war began – and that was a semi-annual report. That initial report provided little detail on the fighting or the expansion of Taliban, Hekmatyer, and Haqqani influence and the rebirth of Al Qa'ida in Pakistan.

Then, as the situation steadily grew worse during 2008, the Administration prepared an NIE whose negative and frightening conclusions were slowly leaked, but never made public in an unclassified warning. The Administration did prepare a more comprehensive Department of Defense report, but it was not released until after the campaign and a new President came to office.

The Warning from Summary Metrics

Even today, one has to turn to leaked data, NATO/ISAF reporting, UN reporting embedded in reports issued for other purposes, and opinion polls to begin to understand the current situation in Afghanistan. The historical patterns are complex and one has to look at many different indictors over the period from 2001 to the present to get a clear picture. At the same time, many key trends in the violence are clear even if one only looks at the key trends for 2008:

- 33% increase in military clashes. Insurgent initiated attacks also increased 33% percent.
- Direct fire incidents increased 40 percent and indirect fire incidents increased 27 percent.
- Insurgent violence increased by 40% in the spring and summer of 2008.
- IED attacks increased by 27% over the course of the year -- although so did the number discovered and pre-detonated.
- Attacks along the major highway in Afghanistan, the Ring Road rose 37 percent from 2007 to 2008.
- Surface-to-air fire increased 67 percent.

(A detailed report with maps and graphs these trends, "The Afghan-Pakistan War: The Rising Threat, 2002-2008" is available on the CSIS web site at http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/090129_afghanwar.pdf. I request that this report be entered into the record.)

The Need to Focus on Warfighting in 2009 and 2010

Let me make two quick points about these data on the trends in combat. First, they show that we must focus decisively on warfighting in 2009 and 2010, and give our commanders and country teams the resources they need to win.

Second, they show that term "post-conflict reconstruction" is little more than a sick joke. To get to the mid and long term, we have to survive and dominate the present. If we succeed, the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan will be so different by 2011 that we will have to reshape almost every aspect of our aid and development plans to set far more realistic and modest goals based on the art of the possible and Afghan and Pakistani desires, rather than our efforts to design model countries in our own image. If we fail, there will be no mid and long term in any sense that makes current plans even mildly relevant.

The Broader Trends That Really Shape the War

More generally, however, I am deeply disturbed that the briefings I have had on this war have not yet shown that our intelligence community and planners fully understand that kinetic indicators can only measure tactical events and their outcome:

- They do not measure the growth of Taliban, Hekmatyer, and Haqqani influence and control in the countryside, and the growing Afghan fears that the Taliban will return and that only some form of coalition with the Taliban can bring stability.
- They do not measure the failure to govern at virtually every level; the scale of permeating level of corruption where government is present; and the growing size of many districts where it is not.
- They do not measure loss of government, US, and NATO/ISAF influence and popularity.
- They do not measures the adequacy of US, NATO/ISAF forces and aid personnel in the field; the nature and impact of each country's caveats on military and aid activity; the impact of the problems in the US and NATO command structure; and the matching – if not far worse – problems in the structure and coordination of the UN aid effort.
- They do not measure failures in governance; they do not measure the lack of a rule of law.
- They do not measure the growth of organized crime and the impact of our counternarcotics program in financing our enemies.
- They do not measure the corruption, irrelevance, and incompetence of most of the economic aid provided to Afghanistan and Pakistan; the lack of focus on using aid in combat and high threat areas; the acute limits to our PRTs and aid teams in the field, and the lack of meaningful accounting and measures of effectiveness for US, UN, international, and NCO aid activity.
- They do not deal with economics in terms of the distribution of income; pressures that drive people into slums or narcotics, and that empower our enemies.
- They decouple the situation in Pakistan – and particularly in the FATA and Baluchi areas – almost entirely from the situation in Afghanistan. As a result, the most we have are scattered indicators in US reporting and Pakistani claims and denials. This is one war and no competent or honest US officer, official, or leader of the intelligence community can issue summary report on the war that does not take full account of this fact.

Losing the War of Perceptions

No one who was in government at the time of Vietnam can avoid a grim feeling of déjà vu. I am constantly reminded of an exchange the late Colonel Harry Summers said that he had with a North Vietnamese officer after the collapse of South Vietnamese. They were discussing the fighting and Summers pointed out that US forces and the ARVN had won virtually every clash. The Vietnamese officer smiled and said, "Yes, but that was irrelevant."

A recent poll by ABC, which is the latest result of years of steadily more refined polling efforts in Afghanistan, provides part of the missing picture, and shows just how urgent it is to look beyond the kinetic or tactical aspects of the war, and to shape US efforts to react to Afghan perceptions – and the broader ideological, political, and economic aspects of the war.

This poll was released on Monday, February 9th, and the summary prepared by Gary Langer and the ABC polling unit provides warnings that every American concerned with Afghanistan should take to heart:

Declining Support for the US and NATO/ISAF

- There has been a significant drop in the number of Afghans who call the U.S.-led invasion and overthrow of the Taliban a good thing for their country – 69%, still a substantial majority but well below the 88% who said so in 2006. And while 63% still support the presence of the U.S. military in Afghanistan, that's down from 78% in 2006, with "strong" support for the U.S. presence down from 30% then to just 12% now. (It's similar now for NATO/ISAF forces. ISAF stands for International Security Assistance Force, the U.N.-mandated, NATO-led multinational force in Afghanistan.)

- In 2005, 83% of Afghans expressed a favorable opinion of the United States Today just 47% still hold that view, down 36 points, accelerating with an 18-point drop in approval of the US in 2008. For the first time slightly more Afghans see the United States unfavorably than favorably.

- The number who say the United States has performed well in Afghanistan has been more than halved in the last three years, from 68% in 2005 to 32% now.

- Ratings of NATO/ISAF forces are no better. Just 37% of Afghans say most people in their area support Western forces; it was 67% in 2006. And 25% now say attacks on U.S. or NATO/ISAF forces can be justified, double the level, 13%, in 2006.

- The election of Barack Obama does not hold much promise in the eyes of the Afghan public: While 20% think he'll make things better for their country, nearly as many think he'll make things worse. The rest either expect no change – or are waiting to see.

- Just 18% say the number of U.S. and NATO/ISAF forces in Afghanistan should be increased. Far more, 44% want the opposite – a decrease in the level of these forces.

- Far fewer Afghans than in past years say Western forces have a strong presence in their area (34%, down from 57% in 2006), or – crucially – see them as effective in providing security (42%, down from 67%).

The Taliban is Still Seen as the Key Threat, But As Growing Stronger and Becoming More Popular

- 58% of Afghans see the Taliban as the biggest danger to the country, measured against local warlords, drug traffickers or the U.S. or Afghan governments. And 43% say the Taliban have grown stronger in the past year, well more than the 24% who think the movement has weakened.

- Notably more in the Southeast and Southwest – 55% – say the Taliban have grown stronger. And again in Helmand province, the heart of the opium trade that's said to finance the group, 63% say the Taliban have gained strength.

- The Taliban are far from achieving popular support – across a range of measures the group still is shunned by vast majorities of Afghans. But 22% say it has at least some support in their area, and this soars to 57% in the Southwest overall, including 64% in its home base, Kandahar. That's up sharply from 44% in the Southwest last year, and up from 41% in Kandahar.

- There's also evidence the Taliban have made some progress rebranding themselves. Twenty-four% of Afghans say it's their impression the Taliban "have changed and become more moderate" – far from a majority, but one in four. And that view spikes in some provinces – most notably, to 58% in Wardak and 53% in Nangarhar, bordering Kabul to the west and east, respectively.

- Another result indicates a possible change in tactics. Twenty-six% of Afghans report bombings by the Taliban in their area; that's down from 43% in 2006. Thirty-two% report murders by the

Taliban – down by 10 points from 2006 (though level with 2007). Reports of Taliban engagements with government or foreign troops is down by 12 points; arson attacks on school or government buildings, down by 18 points from the 2006 peak.

- 64% of Afghans say the government should negotiate a settlement with the Taliban in which they're allowed to hold political offices if they agree to stop fighting. But among those who support negotiations, most by far, seven in 10, say talks should occur only if the Taliban stop fighting first.

- 33% of Afghans think the government will defeat the Taliban outright with foreign support. Another 33% expect a negotiated settlement; 19% expect continued fighting; 8% foresee an outright Taliban victory.

***But,* Afghan Views of Their Own Security in Indicate that NATO/ISAF and the US Are Joining the Taliban in Being Perceived as the Threat**

- The number of Afghans who rate their own security positively has dropped from 72% in 2005 to 55% today – and it goes far lower in high-conflict provinces. In the country's beleaguered Southwest (Helmand, Kandahar, Nimroz, Uruzgan and Zabul provinces). Only 26% feel secure from crime and violence. In Helmand alone, just 14% feel safe.

- 25% report car bombs or suicide attacks in their area in the past year; three in 10, kidnappings for ransom. 38% report civilian casualties in the past year, *attributed about equally either to U.S./NATO/ISAF forces or to anti-government forces*, and somewhat less so to Afghan government forces.

- There's been a 9-point drop in the number of Afghans who mainly blame the Taliban for the country's violence, to 27%. More, now 36%, mostly blame U.S., Afghan or NATO forces, or their governments, for the violence in Afghanistan, up by 10 points in 2008.

- Civilian casualties in U.S. or NATO/ISAF air strikes are a key irritant. Seventy-seven% of Afghans call such strikes unacceptable, saying the risk to civilians outweighs the value of these raids in fighting the Taliban. Forty-one% chiefly blame U.S. or NATO/ISAF forces for poor targeting, vs. 28% who mainly blame the insurgents for concealing themselves among civilians.

- All told, one in six Afghans reports bombing or shelling by U.S. or NATO/ISAF forces in their area within the past year, but with an enormous range, peaking at nearly half in the Southwest and nearly four in 10 in the East (Nuristan, Kunar, Laghman and Nangarhar), bordering part of Pakistan's Taliban-associated tribal areas.

- Among people who report coalition bombing or shelling in their area, support for the presence of U.S. forces drops to 46%, vs. 70% among those who report no such bombardment.

- While 25% of all Afghans say violence against U.S. or other Western forces can be justified, that jumps, to 44%, among those who report coalition bombing or shelling in their area, and to 38% in the top five high-conflict provinces (Helmand, Ghazni, Kandahar, Paktia and Khost). It's 18%, by contrast, where no bombing or shelling has occurred, and 15% in the provinces where conflict has been lowest, roughly the northern half of the country.

- Germany's favorability rating is high at 61%; but its NATO/ISAF troops in Afghanistan have been in the North, away from the heaviest fighting. Favorable views of Great Britain are much lower, 39%; ratings of United States have dropped steadily to 47%, from a high of 83% in 2005.

- 91% of Afghans have an unfavorable opinion of Pakistan (up 11 points from last year), and 86% say Pakistan is playing a negative role in Afghanistan.

- 74% of Afghans see India favorably. Fewer but a majority, 57%, also have a favorable view of Iran, Afghanistan's neighbor to the west.

Afghan Views of Their Government, and Current Hopes for the Future

- In 2005, in the full flush of celebration over the Taliban's ouster, 83% of Afghans approved of the work of President Karzai and 80% approved of the national government overall. Today those have slid to 52 and 49% respectively. (Karzai's expected to run for re-election in August.) Fewer than half rate their provincial government positively.

- 59% still think the Afghan government is making progress in providing a better life for Afghans, 75% express confidence in its ability to provide security and stability, as many express confidence in their local police, and nearly as many in their provincial government.

- 57% of Afghans rate the performance of the police positively, and ditto for the Afghan Army – not overwhelmingly positive measures, but the best out there. (Again as noted, just 32 rate the performance of the United States positively; 33%, NATO/ISAF forces.) Given Afghan institutions' support, it could prove more popular to put their imprint – rather than a Western face – on anti-insurgent efforts.

- Anywhere from 63% to 66% report support for these entities among people in their area. And even though support for the central government has declined from 81% in 2007 to 65% now, these levels remain far higher than support for other players – U.S. or NATO/ISAF forces (as reported above, 37%), local commanders, 17%; foreign jihadis, 14%; the Taliban, 9%; and drug traffickers, 7%.

- Among people who say the central government has a strong presence in their area, 58% rate it positively; where its presence us seen as weak, that drops to 31%. Provincial governments are rated positively by 57% where they are seen as strong vs. 22% where weak. And the United States is rated positively by 46% among those who see U.S. or NATO/ISAF forces as strong in their area – vs. 25% where those forces are seen as weak.

- The number of Afghans who expect their lives to improve in the year ahead has dropped from a peak of 67% in 2005 to 51% today. 47%, expect a better life for their children, hardly a ringing endorsement of Afghanistan's future prospects.

- Anger against official corruption has swelled; 85% of Afghans call it a problem and 63% call it a big problem – the latter up from 45% last year. And half say corruption has increased in the past year, more than twice as many as say it's subsided.

- Ratings for the Afghan government, and Karzai personally, run anywhere from 9 to 15 points lower among people who call corruption a major problem, compared with those who call it a moderate or less serious concern.

Afghan Views of Their Economy, Aid, Drugs, and Hopes for the Future

- While 62% of Afghans rate their basic living conditions positively, that's declined steadily from 83% in 2005. And just 29% say there's a good supply of jobs or economic opportunities in their area. The number who characterize their economic opportunities as "very bad" has doubled since 2006 – from 17% then to 33% now, one in three Afghans.

- 55% have no electricity whatsoever in their homes; just one in 20 has power all day. More than half report incomes less than the equivalent of $100 a month; 93%, under $300. Fifty-nine% have no formal education. Forty-eight% cannot read.

- The affordability of food is worsening: 63% of Afghans say they cannot afford to buy all or even "some but not all" of the food they need, up 9 points. And while 63% report adequate availability of food (regardless of affordability), that's down from 82% in 2006.

- Fuel prices, likewise, are a major problem; 68% say they can't afford the fuel they need for cooking or heat, a serious issue in the cold Afghan winter.

- After electricity supply – steadily the single biggest complaint – economic opportunity and prices, another poorly rated area is support for agriculture, such as the availability of seed, fertilizer and farm equipment, a central concern in a country that's three-quarters rural, with food prices so problematic.

- In other areas, barely over half rate their access to medical care positively. Just under half positively rate their protection from the Taliban and other armed groups. While 61% say they can move about safely, that's down 10 points from 2007, and leaves four in 10 without such freedom of movement. And beyond food and fuel, in terms of prices overall, 58% report difficulty being able to afford things they want and need.

- 72% of Afghans say schools have been rebuilt or reopened in their area in the past five years (up 7 points from 2007); 53%, mosques; 47%, roads (up 12 points); 45%, health clinics (up 8 points); and 44%, police stations.

- Fewer than half, 42%, say they have good roads, bridges and other infrastructure in their area, that's up sharply from 24% in 2005. Seventy-seven% rate their local schools positively; 65% say they have clean water, up 12 points compared with 2007 and a new high. And 73% support the presence of foreign aid organizations in Afghanistan.

- Nonetheless, 51% say foreign aid groups are making progress in providing a better life for Afghans. And fewer still, 30% of Afghans, say foreign development aid has benefited them personally. (Nearly three-quarters are worried about the impact of the global financial crisis on aid to their country.)

- 63 % of Afghans call raising opium poppy "unacceptable in all cases." But in the six top-producing provinces that drops to 31 % – and in Helmand, source of two-thirds of Afghanistan's opium poppy, to just 12%. Even nationally, few Afghans, just 13%, support spraying pesticides as a way to eradicate the crop.

While I am focusing today on Afghanistan, it is important to note that such polls provide an even clear and more dramatic picture of how badly the US is dealing with the war of perceptions in Pakistan.

Mandating and Enforcing Realism and Transparency

So, let me make my first recommendation to this Committee: We need realism and transparency. We need honest, detailed reporting on what is happening, what is needed to fix the situation, and progress using real measures of effectiveness. We need to stop lying to ourselves and others, and to start asking for patience and sacrifice.

If you in the Congress do not change the current situation, we will continue to fly blind in terms of public policy, in validating our future plans and strategy; in developing the ability to know if the resources we provide are adequate, in knowing the level of risk we

imposed the men and women we put in danger in the field, and in establishing the level of sacrifice we need to ask from the American people.

If the past is any prologue to the future, this will not come from within the Executive branch. If you do not mandate such efforts, and hold the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Staff personally accountable for honest and comprehensive reporting that meets its deadlines, we will have the same problems in the future that we have had for the last seven years.

Empty Strategies and Inadequate Budgets and Resources

Our problems, however, are far more serious than a failure to properly characterize the situation and communicate it to the American people. We have never had an effective strategy for wining the war in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and we have never provided the resources that have been needed to win.

US officials have talked about strategies in broad terms for years. However, as is the case with virtually every other aspect of national security strategy in recent years – these "strategies" have never been tied this to detailed implementation plans, credible budgets and force levels, and meaningful milestones and measures of effectiveness.

The US government has failed to integrate its civil and military efforts into an effective future year program budget and plan. It has budgeted by annual supplemental, and in ways that tried to fund "victory" in the coming fiscal year, rather than fund and implement sustained, meaningful efforts.

Much of the open reporting on these budgets has also lumped together much of the budget requests and reporting on the war in Afghanistan (which seems to omit the cost of some efforts in Pakistan), with the war in Iraq, and the "war on terrorism." Budget data have been grouped in largely dysfunctional categories that are not tied to meaningful program or military activity, and are not tied useful measures of progress and effectiveness.

The end result has been that the Administration failed to provide the resources necessary to win, and then had to react in inadequate annual increments. This chronic underresourcing of the war makes a sharp contrast with Iraq, and its scale becomes all too clear when one makes a more detailed study of the patterns in expenditures and deployment of military forces over the last eight years.

Even a glancing look at the funding profile for military and civil aid in the Department of Defense report issued in January 2009, reveals the scale of the problems. There was no real effort to create Afghan forces in FY2002 and FY2003. Funding suddenly rose to levels around $1 billion in FY2004 and FY2005 as the Taliban scored increasing gains. It doubles to $2,0 billion in FY2006, leaped to $4.8 billion in FY2007, then drooped to $2.8 billion in FY2008 and $2.0 billion in FY2009 – in spite of the fact that the goal for the end strength of the Afghan Army nearly doubled in mid-2008. The fnding for

democracy/governance aid, development aid, and counternarcotics was similarly erratic – although in different years, and will "crash" between FY2008 and FY2009 ($3.3 billion to $0.9 billion)

(A report detailing the history and scale of these problems, entitled Follow the Money: Why the US is Losing the War in Afghanistan", is available on the CSIS web site at :http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/080919_afghanwarcosts.pdf. I request that report this be entered into the record.)

The Administration finally did seem to focus on the need for more tangible strategies and more resources in early 2008, but it either failed to produce meaningful results or they were too embarrassing to make public in an election year. What happened to the Lute strategy exercise? Where are the plans from Chairman Mullen? Why did we have to wait for General Petraeus's appointment to USCENTCOM to hear of a realistic strategy exercise? Why has there never been a meaningful strategy, plans, and set of effectiveness measures for the overall economic aid effort emerging from the State Department?

Supporting Our Field Commanders and Personnel in the Field

We need to take decisive and immediate action to reverse this situation. We also need to understand we have very little time in which to act, and there are often long lead times into transforming plans into action in the field. Let me reiterate a point I began with. We either turn defeat into victory during 2009 and 2010, or we will lose. We must focus on short-term warfighting, and this imposes several realities:

- We either empower our commanders and country teams in the field, and provide the resources they need to implement them, or we lose the war. We don't have time to reinvent the wheel from the outside.
- We must provide the budgets, military forces, and aid personnel necessary to compensate for years of inadequate effort and underresourcing. This is not the time to be "cost-effective" at the margins, or to avoid making commitments to funding efforts long enough to work. We must stop the process of reacting to enemy gains and provide the resources necessary to win the initiative.
- This does not mean providing a blank check or ignoring the consequences of such efforts. Congress must ensure that there are fully credible plans and progress, and verify as well as trust. Our entire military history is one that warns that we cannot trust our own national security apparatus in wartime unless we verify its actions. Our recent military history is even more of a warning.

A Shift to "Clear, Hold, and Build?"

The good news is that we do seem to have the military leadership we need, we are addressing the gaps in our civilian leadership in the field, and we seem to be prepared to make the changes in strategy, tactics and resources that over real hope of progress.

It may be premature to judge the outcome of current US efforts to reshape our strategy and posture in Afghanistan, but they seem likely to emphasize a focused effort to replace kinetic or tactical operations out of bases with some version of the "clear, hold, and

build" tactics used in Iraq. There also seem to be plans to adopt a variation on these effort in Pakistan where embedded US advisors could quietly help Pakistani security forces develop the counterinsurgency skills they now lack, and "tied" economic aid would help provide "hold and build" capabilities in parts of FATA and the Baluchi border areas.

Such a shift to "clear, hold, and build" that links tactical action to providing a lasting security presence in the field and building support through aid in jobs, economics, and governance has already shown promise in the limited areas where it has been attempted. It could potentially reverse many of the problems and failures that empower the Taliban and Al Qa'ida over the last seven years.

But, this shift cannot be done slowly or on the cheap. In fact, it is far better to rush in the necessary mix of military and civilian personnel, and additional spending now – even at the cost of some waste and overspending – than delay and be forced to react to more enemy gains. We need to ensure that commanders and country teams will ask for and get what they need – rather than only ask for as much as they think they can get or OMB and other outsider feel they should have.

Setting Well Defined and Realistic Goals for Action in 2009 and 2010

We will also need to show the same strategic patience we showed in Iraq. In the real world, it will take at least two years of patient and consistent effort to reverse the current situation. During this period, the US must focus on realistic goals that deal with the urgent needs of warfighting, and not post-conflict reconstruction in mid conflict and transforming Afghan society or the society and culture of the border areas in Pakistan.

We will also need to set more modest and more realistic goals for those medium and long-term aid activities that do continue. We are not going to transform Afghanistan or Pakistan any more than we did Iraq. Unrealistic dreams of mid and long-term development can waste resources that could be of major value in implementing more modest programs, and hurt rather than help.

Provide the US Resources Necessary to Win: Stop Trying to Export Responsibility and the Burden

We need to be forceful and persuasive developing a coordinated approach with our allies and the Afghan and Pakistani governments, and seeking the most outside aid we can get. At the same time, we must accept the reality that US resources must be used to make virtually all of the key increases in forces and spending that our commanders and country teams recommend.

We need to make NATO/ISAF work as well as we can. *But.* we cannot expect NATO and our allies to fight our war. We recruited allies for a police action and nation building and then let an insurgency grow through under-resourcing and neglect – roughly one-fifth of the US effort in Iraq.

This means we must provide most of the additional US troops, advisors, and resources necessary to reverse the situation or we will lose. It may well be the case that the current proposals for 30,000 more US troops are the bare minimum necessary to shift from tactical victories to the kind of "clear, hold, build" strategy that had success in Iraq. Whatever happen, we cannot afford to under resource the military effort.

Provide Effective Unity of Effort

At the same time, the chain of command in Afghanistan, and the overall effort in Afghanistan and Pakistan, must have clear US character and be able to function effectively. It may or may not be possible to put one officer formally in charge in Afghanistan. If NATO/ISAF cannot be fixed, however, the US must develop a parallel command and act.

It is not enough to appoint a US envoy to deal with both Afghanistan and Iraq. There must be an integrated US effort that manages the war as one war and integrates the efforts of the country teams.

Make Developing Afghan Forces the Core of Any Additional Military Build-Up and Focus on Immediate Warfighting Needs

We can almost certainly create larger and more effective Afghan forces, and help develop Pakistani counterinsurgency capabilities if Pakistan will let us. The immediate focus should be on building up the Afghan National Army, paramilitary elements of the police, and local security forces. We need to provide the money, advisors, embeds and other support necessary to make the Afghan Army effective and large enough to perform its mission, and to eventually eliminate the need for large US forces.

We do not have the resources, quality of Afghan governance, or time, however, to do everything at once. We need to carefully reexamine efforts to create the Afghan National Police. We may have to stop trying to create conventional police in mid-war and when the foreign advisors, governance, and rule of law necessary to support them are not available. We almost certainly will have take the risk of creating local security forces to ensure that "clear, hold, and build" tactics can work. This will scarcely be risk free, but much can be done to have them funded and report through the government, and not through warlords or tribal leaders.

Look Beyond the Afghan Central Government and Develop Governance and Services at the Provincial and District Level.

We must also deal with the reality that the Afghan government cannot be fixed in time to serve as the necessary instrument of victory. We must continue efforts at reforming and aiding the central government, but we also need parallel efforts to create effective governance in key urban areas, provinces, and districts. These should be structured to rely on the central government, and have as many ties to it as possible, but we must stop

relying on a top down approach. We need to do more to build-up from the bottom in key urban areas and districts, and strengthen the "middle" at the provincial level

We need to adapt techniques that had considerable success in Iraq. This means resourcing and using US/NATO/ISAF troops and PRTs to provide the core of such services in conflict and in high threat districts until Afghan capabilities can be brought on line and civilian aid workers can be more secure.

Come to Grips with the Massive Problems in the Economic Aid Effort

Economic aid is a weapon, and some of our most successful efforts in Iraq occurred in the field when we substituted dollars for bullets. We do, however, need to stop talking vacuously about "soft" and "smart power" in Washington and actually provide it in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

We will still have to use US and allied military forces as aid personnel for at least several more years. The latest report on US participation in the PRTS, issued in January 2009, indicates that they now have 1,021 serving military but only 11 DOS, 12 USAID, and 11 USDA civilians. There is no prospect of getting enough civilians, and particularly civilians that can operate in high threat or combat areas. As in Iraq, a civil-military and aid role for the military will be critical.

But, we need operational civilian partners for the military, and reversing the present course of the fighting will mean such civilian partner could be needed for a decade to come. Our military efforts – whether combat or civil -- need to be matched by training and deploying more civilian advisors. They also need to be supported by funding an economic aid effort based on coherent multi-year plans rather than supplementals and short-term fixes. There will be a medium and long-term, and there are other critical needs than warfighting.

What we can do far more quickly is to make a comprehensive and immediate effort to address the corruption, incompetence, and irrelevance of much of the present foreign aid effort in Afghanistan. As is the case with NATO/ISAF, this will require more hardnosed realism in dealing with our allies. Unlike Iraq, many of the most serious problems lie in allied, international, and NGO efforts. The charges that the Afghan government is corrupt may true, but so is much of the aid effort. Afghan experts claim that some 40% of aid passes through without impacting on the country, and virtually all experts claim the effort is not properly integrated, that agricultural aid is far too limited, and that aid does not focus on the areas where the Taliban threat is growing.

We need equally realism in determining whether parts of the UN effort are divided, corrupt, and focused on longer-term, post-conflict needs. The same is true of the complaints of Afghan and other aid workers that far too many allied and NGO efforts are wasteful or exercises in symbolism. More broadly, both some aid workers and military officers complain that such current aid efforts put far too few resources into critical war-related needs and lack meaningful priorities, auditing, and measures of effectiveness.

It is even more important, however, to clean up our own aid efforts. We need to start acting on an iron law of government: *There are no good intentions, there are only successful actions*. The State Department, AID, and Department of Defense have failed to develop an integrated aid plan, budget request, and provide the personnel and funding needed for urgent war fighting needs. This needs to be forced upon the Executive Branch, and the senior officials involved need to be held personally accountable on a regular basis.

Congress can play a key role in forcing such changes. Hearings, legislation, and use of the GAO can be key tools in forcing such changes. The Congress has also created a Special Inspector General for Reconstruction in Afghanistan (SIGAR), but not properly funded the effort. The mandate also does not focus on warfighting problems, or call for an integrated review and analysis of aid to Afghanistan and Pakistan and US and non-US efforts. This should be changed immediately, particularly if new US aid efforts are to be directed at the FATA and Baluchi areas in Pakistan – where the problems in ensuring aid is used honestly and effectively may be even greater than in most of Afghanistan.

Mandate that All US Government Plans, Budgets, and Reporting Cover the War in both Afghanistan and Pakistan

The ultimate center of gravity in this war is not Afghanistan. It is the threat posed by the creation of Al Qa'ida and extremist sanctuaries in Pakistan, and the risk of destabilizing a major, nuclear-armed, regional power.

The US must treat Pakistan as an integral part of its war effort, and systematically raise the level of incentives and pressures to try to make Pakistan act. It must understand that Pakistan has other priorities, is divided, and requires both economic and military aid to act. Use tied military and economic aid as both incentive and pressure.

At the same time, the US cannot simply have its military forces stand aside from the threat in Pakistan and wait of Pakistan to take military action. President Obama is correct in continuing UAV strikes and keeping up the pressure. This, however means we need as much dialog with Pakistan as possible and to add more "carrots" to any "sticks."

Pending legislation to provide aid to the Fatah and Baluchi areas is a key potential tool – *if* the US ensures such aid flows are tied to audits and measures of effectiveness, and *if* the US or Pakistani personnel are in place to use such aid funds effectively. The US also has every reason to keep up military aid as long as Pakistan is active against the threat and to revitalize efforts to expand the rule of US Special Forces to train Pakistani forces and provide embedded support.

Treat Counternarcotics as Part of Warfighting.

There are many other areas where detailed action is needed, but one last area where we need to make major adjustments in failed policies is counter narcotics.

Our focus should be on winning the war, not finding new ways to lose it. The US should defer broad eradication efforts until there is major progress in the "build" side of "clear, hold, build," and creating a viable agricultural sector. It should focus on the threat drugs now present as a key source of Taliban financing. It should avoid focusing on the countryside, and attack senior drug lords and traffickers as a key source of corruption.

A mid-war crisis is no time for interesting social and economic experiments. Members of Congress and the Administration should not attempt new experiments in eradication -- or in providing untested incentives not to grow drugs or crop substitutes -- in mid conflict. The US should focus on getting aid to the farmer, particularly in the high threat/high drug areas in the south. The priority is to deal with immediate economic needs now, and move on to more comprehensive efforts once (and if) the trends in the fighting are reversed.

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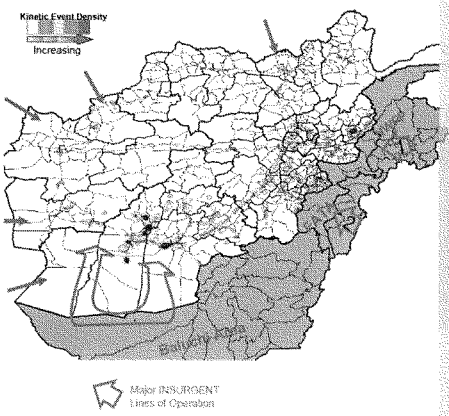
NATO/ISAF Security Summary 2008



2008

24% Afghans perceive improvement, 19% perceive worsening (Sep 08 poll)

70% of kinetic events continue to occur in 10% of the districts

33% increase in Kinetic Events

IED events up 27%....single largest cause of casualties

119% more attacks on GIRoA
5% less Suicide Attacks
50% more Kidnappings/Assassinations

ISAF/OEF Deaths: up 35%
Civilian Deaths: up 40% - 46%*

Building Host Nation Capacity:
ANA: 13 more Kandak BNs formed
46 Kandaks capable of BN Ops

ANP: 52 districts undergoing FDD
13 of 20 Civil Order Police BNs fielded

DATA DERIVED FROM NATO-JOINS DATABASE

Source: NATO – ISAF "Metrics Brief 2007-2008"

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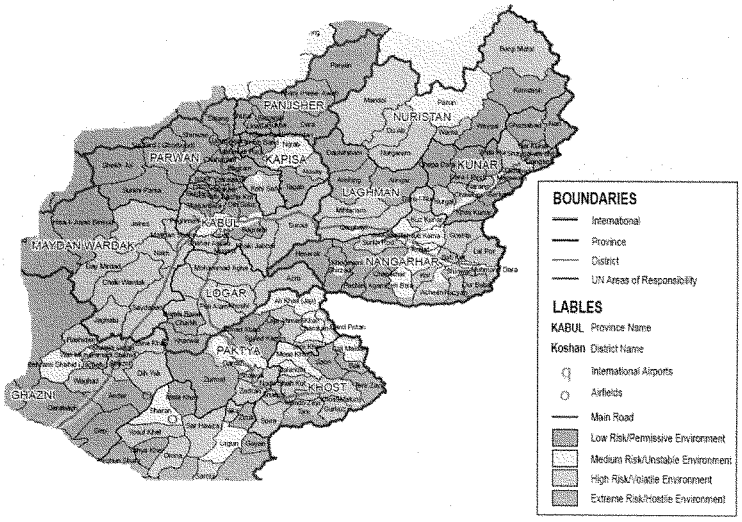
UN Accessibility Map 2008: East Afghanistan



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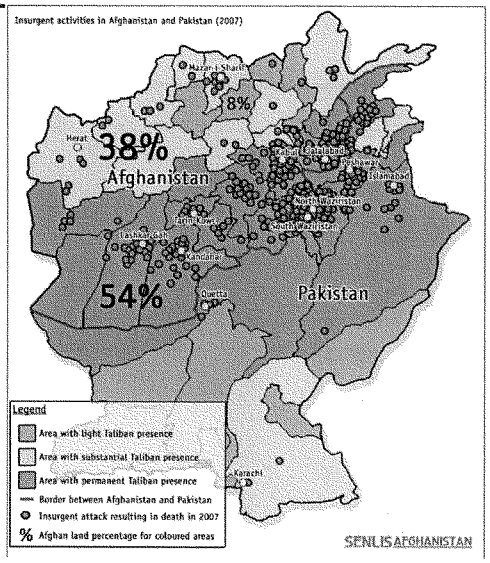
Senlis Estimate of Rise in Fatal Attacks in 2007



Senlis Afghanistan, Decision Point 2008, London, 2008, p. 17

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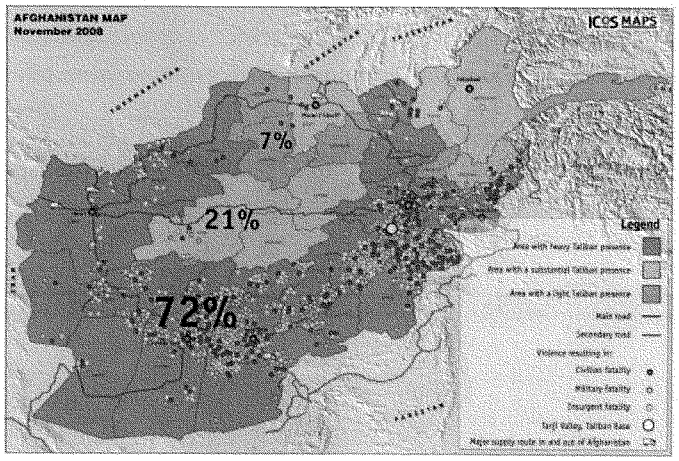
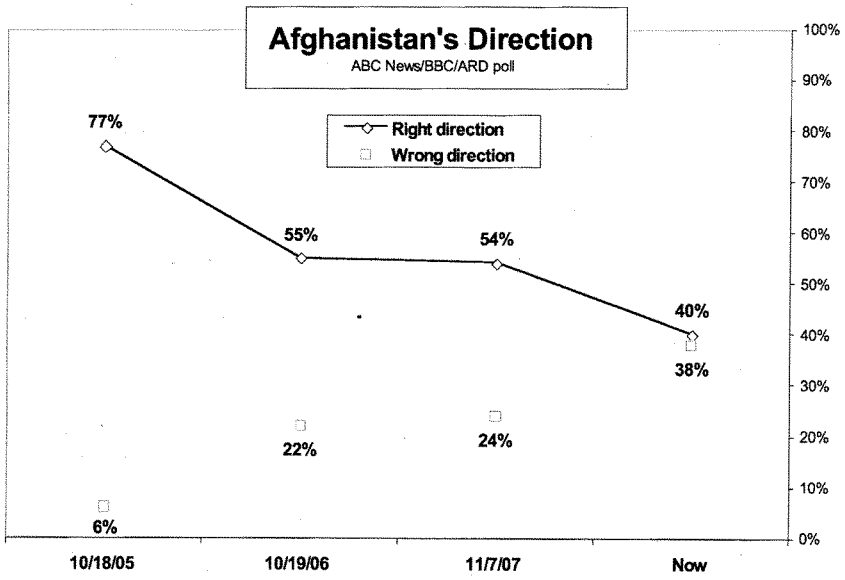
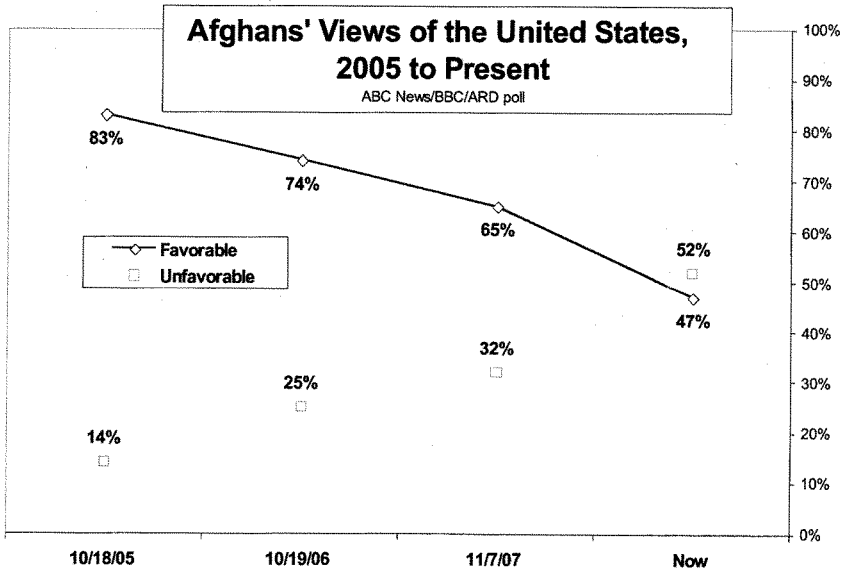
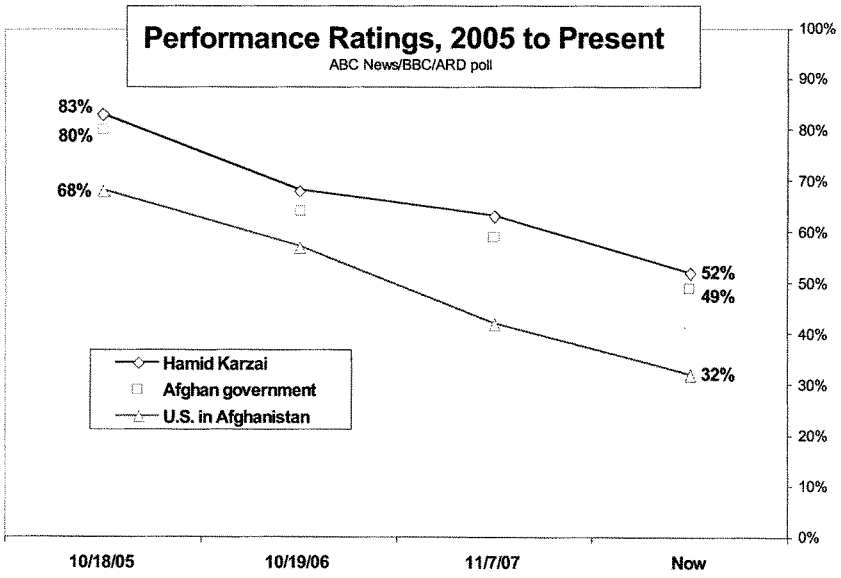
Taliban Presence in November 2008



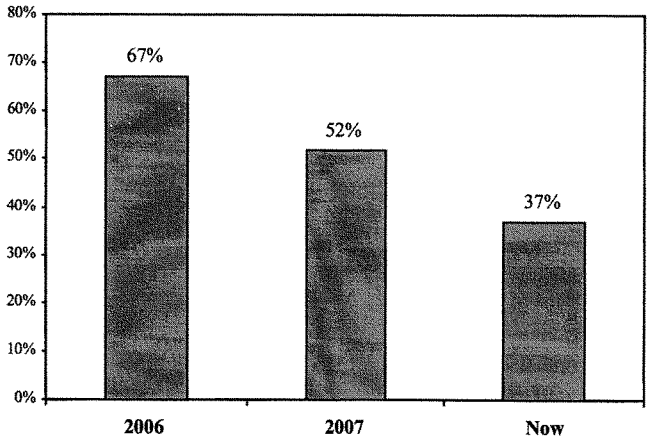
Source: ICOS, The Struggle for Kabul: The Taliban Advance", December 2008, p.9.

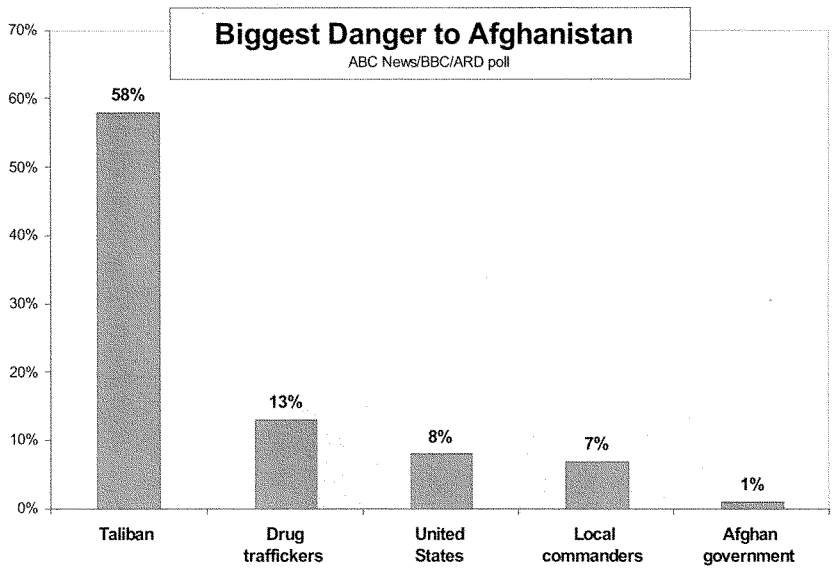

Afghanistan's Direction
ABC News/BBC/ARD poll
Right direction
Wrong direction
77%
55%
54%
40%
38%
22%
24%
6%
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
10/18/05
10/19/06
11/7/07
Now

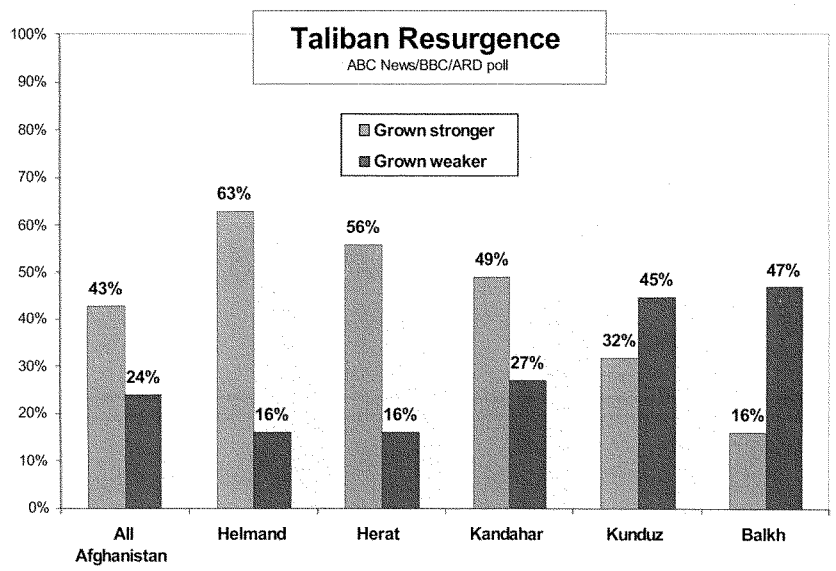

Afghans' Views of the United States, 2005 to Present
ABC News/BBC/ARD poll
Favorable
Unfavorable
83%
74%
65%
47%
52%
32%
25%
14%
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
10/18/05
10/19/06
11/7/07
Now



Support in Your Area for U.S./NATO/ISAF Force
ABC News/BBC/ARD poll




Biggest Danger to Afghanistan
ABC News/BBC/ARD poll
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
58%
13%
8%
7%
1%
Taliban
Drug traffickers
United States
Local commanders
Afghan government


Taliban Resurgence
ABC News/BBC/ARD poll
Grown stronger
Grown weaker
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
43%
24%
63%
16%
56%
16%
49%
27%
32%
45%
16%
47%
All Afghanistan
Helmand
Herat
Kandahar
Kunduz
Balkh

Afghanistan, Iraq, and US Strategy in 2009

Statement by
Dr. Stephen Biddle
Senior Fellow for Defense Policy
Council on Foreign Relations

Before the
Committee on Armed Services
United States House of Representatives
First Session, 111th Congress

12 February 2009

A time traveler from 2007 would be shocked by the degree of consensus in today's defense debate. Just two years ago, a bitter partisan split over Iraq dominated American politics and fueled a major Republican defeat in midterm elections. Today, by contrast, the basic outlines of US policy for both Iraq and Afghanistan are matters of substantial bipartisan consensus. Most Democrats, most Republicans, and the military all agree that there should be withdrawals from Iraq, reinforcements for Afghanistan, a buildup of indigenous Afghan security forces, an application of classical counterinsurgency (COIN) methods for US forces in Afghanistan, and pressure on Islamabad to counter Taliban safe havens in northwest Pakistan. Likewise, most now agree that the Bush Administration's ambitions for modern, centralized democracy in Afghanistan were over-optimistic and will need to be scaled back at least for a long time; that negotiations with elements of the Taliban coalition could be useful in shrinking the opposition by inducing key components to stand down; and that progress in such negotiations will be limited until reinforcements turn the military tide. A number of official strategy reviews are ongoing, but the broad directions of the US war effort are thus matters of widespread agreement already, and are unlikely to be challenged fundamentally by any of the reviews now underway.

For now, the debate is mostly over the details. And some of these details are very important. In particular, the *pace* of withdrawals from Iraq and buildups in Afghanistan is contested, and could strongly affect outcomes in either theater. There are also a number of key elements of the emerging consensus policy for Afghanistan that have been understudied and deserve closer scrutiny than they have yet received, including the sustainability of a larger Afghan security force; the integration of military and political strategies; tribal outreach; and the role of economic development assistance.

The biggest questions, however, lie on the horizon. A small but growing minority is calling for withdrawing US troops from Afghanistan rather than reinforcing them. Comparisons between Afghanistan and Vietnam are becoming more common, as are references to quagmires, Russian defeats, or British failures. Newsweek's February 9 cover is headlined "Obama's Vietnam."[1] If security trends in Afghanistan improve

[1] Note, though, that the subtitle reads "How to Salvage Afghanistan:" *Newsweek*, Vol. CLIII, No. 6. Note also, however, that the inside subtitle reads "Quagmire in the Making," without a question mark: p. 5.

quickly, this nascent antiwar movement will remain small. But violence in Afghanistan is likely to get worse in the near term, not better. Indeed, a reinforced US posture employing classical COIN techniques is likely to increase near term casualties on both sides, much as it did in Iraq in 2007. Classical COIN trades higher losses in the short run for stability and decreased violence in the longer run; where it works, this is a good bargain. But even when it works, it looks bad early. And this will promote a growing debate over the wisdom of the US commitment to Afghanistan and thus a dispute over more fundamental issues than those in play today.

Given this, my testimony is intended to serve two purposes. I begin with the fundamental debate to come: is the war in Afghanistan worth waging? I argue that the antiwar position has merit, but that the case for reinforcement is stronger. I then turn to the largest of the questions now under active debate: how quickly should resources be transferred from Iraq to Afghanistan? Here I argue that slow is best – that gradual transfers make sense, but rapid ones risk more than they promise. And the most important near term improvement we could make in Afghanistan could well be a "political surge" with an emphasis on pressuring the Karzai government to reduce its corruption and reform its administration, but without requiring near-term troop counts that will be hard to provide without undermining the prospects for stability in Iraq. Success in Afghanistan is worth pursuing and will eventually require larger reinforcements, but in the near term it may be necessary to make do with smaller forces than we would like while working much harder to compel real political reform in Kabul.

I. Is the War in Afghanistan Worth Waging?

The first question – is the war in Afghanistan worth waging – rests on three sub-issues: what is at stake, what will it cost to pursue those stakes, and what is the likelihood that the pursuit will succeed?

The Stakes

The stakes in Afghanistan are high, but not unlimited. The United States has two primary national interests in this conflict: that Afghanistan not become a haven for terrorism against the United States, and that chaos in Afghanistan not destabilize its neighbors, especially Pakistan.

We invaded Afghanistan in the first place to destroy the al Qaeda safe haven there, and its use in the 9-11 attacks clearly justified this. But al Qaeda central is no longer based in Afghanistan, nor has it been since early 2002. Bin Laden and his core operation are, by all accounts, now based across the border in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The Taliban movement in Afghanistan is clearly linked with al Qaeda and sympathetic to it, but there is little evidence of al Qaeda infrastructure within Afghanistan today that could threaten the U.S. homeland in any direct way. If today's Afghan government collapsed, if it were replaced with a neo-Taliban regime, or if the Taliban were able to secure real political control over some major contiguous fraction of Afghan territory then perhaps al Qaeda could re-establish a real haven there. But this risk

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The issue's reporting focuses on means of avoiding failure, but the context is growing concern with the prospect of failure.

is shared with a wide range of other weak states in many parts of the world, from Yemen to Somalia to Djibouti to Eritrea to Sudan to the Philippines to Uzbekistan or even parts of Southeast Asia, Latin America, or central, west, or North Africa, among other possibilities. And of course Iraq and Pakistan fit the description of weak states whose failure could provide havens for al Qaeda. Many of these – and especially Iraq and Pakistan – offer bin Laden prospects superior in important ways to Afghanistan's. Iraq and Pakistan, for example, are richer and far better connected to the outside world than is primitive, land-locked Afghanistan with its minimal communications and transportation systems. Iraq is an Arab state in the very heart of the Middle East. Pakistan, of course, is a nuclear power. Afghanistan does enjoy a historical connection with al Qaeda, familiarity to bin Laden, and proximity to his current base in the FATA, and it is important to deny al Qaeda sanctuary on the Afghan side of the Durand Line. But its intrinsic importance is no greater than many other potential havens – and probably smaller than many. We clearly cannot afford to wage protracted warfare with multiple brigades of American ground forces simply to deny al Qaeda potential safe havens; we would run out of brigades long before bin Laden ran out of prospective sanctuaries.

The more important U.S. interest in Afghanistan is indirect: to prevent Afghan chaos from destabilizing its Pakistani neighbor. With a population of 173 million (five times Afghanistan's), a GDP of over $160 billion (over ten times Afghanistan's) and an actual, existing, functional nuclear arsenal of perhaps 20-50 warheads, Pakistan is a much more dangerous prospective sanctuary for al Qaeda, and one where the likelihood of government collapse enabling such a sanctuary may be in the same ballpark as Afghanistan, at least in the medium to long term.[2] Pakistan is already at war with internal Islamist insurgents allied to al Qaeda, and by most measures that war is not going well. Should the Pakistani insurgency succeed in collapsing the state or toppling the government, the risk of nuclear weapons falling into al Qaeda's hands would be grave indeed. In fact, given the difficulties terrorists face in acquiring usable nuclear weapons, Pakistani state collapse is by far the likeliest scenario for a nuclear-armed al Qaeda.

Pakistani state collapse, moreover, is a danger over which the United States has limited influence. The United States is now so unpopular in Pakistan that we have no meaningful prospect of deploying major ground forces there to assist the government in counterinsurgency. U.S. air strikes can harass insurgents and terrorists within Pakistan, but the inevitable collateral damage arouses harsh public opposition that could itself threaten the weak government's stability. U.S. aid is easily – and routinely – diverted to purposes remote from countering Islamist insurgents, such as the maintenance of military counterweights to India, graft and patronage, or even support for Islamist groups seen by Pakistani authorities as potential allies against their Indian neighbor. U.S. assistance can – and should – be made conditional on progress in countering insurgents, but harsh conditionality can induce rejection of the terms, and the aid, by the Pakistanis, removing our leverage in the process. The net result is a major threat over which we have very limited influence.

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[2] On the size of the Pakistani nuclear arsenal, see Federation of American Scientists, Pakistan Nuclear Weapons, http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/pakistan/nuke/ (accessed 7 February 2009). It is widely believed that Pakistan's nuclear weapons are stored in a disassembled condition, but that the components can be reassembled into working weapons quickly.

If we have few ways to make Pakistan any better, we should at least avoid making it any worse. With so little actual leverage, we cannot afford to make the problem any harder than it already is. And failure in Afghanistan would make the problem in Pakistan much harder.

The Taliban are a transnational Pashtun movement that is active on either side of the Durand Line and sympathetic to other Pakistani Islamist insurgents. Their presence within Pakistan is thus already an important threat to the regime in Islamabad. But if the Taliban regained control of the Afghan state, their ability to use a state's resources as a base to destabilize secular government in Pakistan would enable a major increase in the risk of state collapse there. Much has been made of the threat Pakistani base camps pose to Afghan government stability, but this danger works both ways: instability in Afghanistan poses a serious threat to secular civilian government in Pakistan. And this is the single greatest stake the United States has in Afghanistan: to prevent it from aggravating Pakistan's internal problems and magnifying the danger of an al Qaeda nuclear sanctuary there.

These stakes are thus important. But they do not merit infinite cost to secure. Afghanistan is just one of many possible al Qaeda sanctuaries. And Afghanistan's influence over Pakistan's future is important, but incomplete and indirect. A Taliban Afghanistan is a real possibility in the long run absent U.S. action, and makes Pakistani collapse more likely, but it does not guarantee it. Nor would success in Afghanistan guarantee success in Pakistan: there is a chance that we could struggle our way to stability in Afghanistan at great cost and sacrifice only to see Pakistan collapse anyway under the weight of its own errors and internal divisions.

The Cost

What will it cost to defeat the Taliban? No one really knows; war is an uncertain business. But it is very hard to succeed at COIN on the cheap. Current U.S. Army doctrine is very clear on this:

> [M]aintaining security in an unstable environment requires vast resources, whether host nation, U.S., or multinational. In contrast, a small number of highly motivated insurgents with simple weapons, good operations security, and even limited mobility can undermine security over a large area. Thus, successful COIN operations often require a high ratio of security forces to the protected population. For that reason, protracted COIN operations are hard to sustain. The effort requires a firm political will and substantial patience by the government, its people, and the countries providing support.[3]
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> Insurgencies are protracted by nature. Thus, COIN operations always demand considerable expenditures of time and resources.[4]

In fact, the doctrinal norm for troop requirements in COIN is around one security provider per fifty civilians in the population to be secured.[5] Applied to the population of

[3] *The U.S. Army-Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), (republication of: Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency*), p. 4.

[4] Ibid., p. 43.

Afghanistan, this would imply a need for around 650,000 trained soldiers and police. Not all parts of Afghanistan are equally threatened; it is widely believed that the north and west of the country are much safer than the south and east. Even if one assumes that only half the country requires active counterinsurgency operations, however, this still implies a need for something around 300,000 counterinsurgents. Ideally most of these would be indigenous Afghans. But there is reason to doubt that the Afghan government will ever be able to afford the necessary number of troops; if any significant fraction of this total must be American then the resources needed will be very large.[6] And the commitment could be very long: successful counterinsurgency campaigns commonly last ten to fifteen years or more.[7]

At least initially, the casualties to be expected from such an effort would also be heavy. In Iraq, a force of 130,000-160,000 U.S. troops averaged over 90 fatalities per month during the most intense period of COIN operations in January to August of 2007. Depending on the troop strength ultimately deployed and the intensity of the fighting, it is not implausible to suppose that casualty rates in Afghanistan could reach comparable levels. And it may well take longer for those losses to reverse and decline in Afghanistan than in Iraq; it would be prudent to assume that fatality rates of perhaps 50-100 per month could persist for many months, if not years.[8]

The Odds of Success

In general, the historical record of great power success in COIN is not encouraging. The political scientists Jason Lyall of Princeton and Isaiah Wilson of West Point estimate that since 1975, the success rate of government counterinsurgents has been just 25 percent.[9] Given the costs of trying, this success rate offers a sobering context.

Moreover, the surge's recent success in reducing Iraqi violence does not imply that similar methods will necessarily yield similar results in Afghanistan. As many have noted, Afghanistan and Iraq are very different military, political, and economic environments.[10] The nature of the underlying conflict is also very different: Iraq had been

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[5] Ibid., p. 23.

[6] See Barnett Rubin and Ahmed Rashid, "From Great Game to Grand Bargain: Ending Chaos in Afghanistan and Pakistan," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 87, No. 6 (November/December 2008), pp. 30-44.

[7] Seth Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, (Washington, DC: RAND, 2008), p. 10.

[8] The financial costs are also likely to be large. The Congressional Research Service estimates that the war in Afghanistan cost $34 billion in FY 2008, and projects that this figure will increase in coming years: Amy Belasco, *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan and other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, October 15, 2008), RL33110, pp. 6, 19.

[9] Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson, "Rage Against the Machines: Explaining Outcomes in Counterinsurgency Wars," *International Organization*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (Winter 2009), pp. 67-106 at 69-71. For all counterinsurgencies since 1900, they find a government success rate of 40 percent; hence the odds have been getting worse over time. See also Ivan Arreguin-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict," *International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 93-128, and Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), which finds "strong actors" winning only 45 of 100 asymmetric conflicts between 1950 and 1998: p. 97 .

[10] See, e.g., GEN David Petraeus, remarks at the US Institute of Peace, January 8, 2009; reported by Armed Forces Press Service, January 9, http://www.defenselink.mil/News/newsarticle.aspx?id=52604; GEN

an ethno-sectarian civil war of identity with secondary factional, tribal, or ideological elements; Afghanistan has been chiefly an ideological and factional war with secondary ethnic elements. Methods that work in identity wars do not necessarily make sense in ideological conflicts, and vice versa.[11] Perhaps most important, the surge, while *necessary* for success in Iraq, was not *sufficient* to bring this about. Its effects were due in large part to a powerful interaction between a new U.S. approach and a major change in Sunni alignment stemming from their defeat in Baghdad's sectarian warfare over the course of 2006. This realignment would have failed without the surge's protection, but without the realignment the surge would never have been enough to suffocate the insurgency on its own. Taken together, the surge and the Sunni realignment powerfully reinforced one another's effects. But the surge without the Sunnis' 2006 Baghdad defeat – which we did not cause – would probably not have worked.[12] The surge's dependence on the particulars of Iraq's 2007 strategic landscape thus counsels great caution in extrapolating from its success in 2007 in Iraq to Afghanistan in 2009 and beyond: the experience in Iraq does not prove that we have now discovered a universal key to unlocking counterinsurgency problems in all places and times. There are thus important grounds for caution and concern about the prognosis in Afghanistan.

Nor are current conditions in Afghanistan encouraging. Orthodox COIN theory puts host government legitimacy at the heart of success and failure, yet the Karzai government is widely seen as corrupt, inept, inefficient, and en route to losing the support of its population. Ultimate economic and political development prospects are constrained by Afghanistan's forbidding geography, tribal social structure, lack of infrastructure, and political history. The Taliban enjoy a cross-border sanctuary in the FATA that the Pakistani government seems unwilling or unable to eliminate. Violence is up, perceptions of security are down, casualties are increasing, and the Taliban is widely believed to be increasing its freedom of movement and access to the population. And only some of these challenges are things we can affect directly: we can increase security by deploying more U.S. troops, we can bolster the economy to a degree with U.S. economic aid, and we can pressure Karzai to reform, but only the Afghans can create a legitimate government, and only the Pakistanis can shut down the safe havens in the FATA. We can influence these choices, and we must do so – to a much greater degree than we have so far. But we cannot guarantee reform ourselves, and to date neither ally seems ready to do what it takes.

But this does not make failure inevitable. The poor track record for COIN generally is due partly to the inherent difficulty of the undertaking, but most see poor strategic choices by many counterinsurgents as a major contributor to failure. Strategies and methods can be changed – it is possible to learn from experience. And the U.S. military

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David McKiernan, DoD News Briefing at the Pentagon, October 1, 2008, http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4297.

[11] See Stephen Biddle, "Seeing Baghdad, Thinking Saigon: The Perils of Refighting Vietnam in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 2 (March/April 2006), pp. 2-14.

[12] For a more detailed analysis, see Stephen Biddle, "Iraq After the Surge," statement before the House Armed Services Committee, 110th Congress (2nd Session), January 23, 2008; also Linda Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq*, PublicAffairs (New York: Perseus, 2008).

has learned a great deal about COIN in recent years. The new Army/Marine counterinsurgency doctrine is the product of a nearly unprecedented degree of internal debate, external vetting, historical analysis, and direct recent combat experience.[13] None of this makes it a magic silver bullet for COIN success, and in important ways it makes underlying assumptions about the nature of counterinsurgency that made it an awkward fit for conditions in Iraq.[14] But those same assumptions make it a much stronger fit for Afghanistan, which is precisely the kind of war the manual was built around.

One of the doctrine's remaining shortcomings, moreover, is a problem the new Administration seems likely to address. The new doctrine assumes a very close alignment of interests between the United States and its host government: the manual assumes that our role is to enable the host to realize its own best interest by making itself into a legitimate defender of all its citizens' wellbeing, and that the host will see it this way, too.[15] In many ways, the previous Administration shared this view, offering assistance with few conditions or strings on the assumption that developing our allies' capacity for good governance was all that would be needed to realize better performance. In fact, though, many allies – notably including Hamid Karzai and Pervez Musharraf, have had much more complex motives that have led them to misdirect our aid and fall short of our hopes for their popular legitimacy. Some students of counterinsurgency have thus emphasized the need for conditionality in our assistance to reduce this problem of moral hazard: we should not assume that allies share all our interests, and we should impose conditions and combine carrots with sticks in order to push reluctant hosts toward behavior that could better realize our hopes for their broader legitimacy and thereby damp insurgencies.[16] The incoming Administration has made it very clear that they intend to combine bigger carrots with real sticks in the form of prospective aid withdrawals should the recipients fail to adopt needed reforms. This is an important step forward in our ability to compete for hearts and minds with effective host governance.

The forces implementing that doctrine are also much improved over their ancestors in Vietnam, or even their immediate predecessors in Iraq in 2003-4. In fact, the U.S. military of 2009 has adapted into an unusually proficient counterinsurgency force. No large human organization is perfect, and there is important room for improvement. But relative to many great power counterinsurgents, the current U.S. military combines stronger doctrine with unusually extensive COIN combat experience, unusually systematic training, and resources for equipment and materiel that would dwarf most historical antecedents'.

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[13] On the vetting and development process, see *U.S. Army-Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual,* pp. xlvii-xlviii.

[14] In particular, the doctrine presumes an ideological struggle for the allegiance of an uncommitted public, rather than a highly mobilized ethno-sectarian war of identity, as Iraq has been: for details, see Jeffrey Isaac, editor, "The New U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual as Political Science and Political Praxis," *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (June 2008), pp. 347-50 at 349-50.

[15] See, for example, *U.S. Army-Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, pp. 7-8, 25, 35, 37-39, 47 (e.g., paragraph 1-147: "Support the Host Nation").

[16] For a more extensive discussion, see, esp., Daniel Byman, "Friends Like These: Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism," *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Fall 2006), pp. 79-115.

Perhaps most important, we are blessed with deeply flawed enemies in Afghanistan. Afghans know the Taliban; they know what life was like under their rule. And polling has consistently suggested that few Afghans want to return to the medieval theocracy they endured before. Most Afghans want education for their daughters; they want access to media and ideas from abroad; they want freedom from thugs enforcing fundamentalism for all under the aegis of a Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. Of course, these preferences are secondary to the need for security. And many are secondary to the desire for basic services such as courts free of corruption or police who enforce the laws without demanding bribes first. But because most Afghans oppose Taliban rule, we enjoy a strong presumption in favor of the government as long as that government can be made to provide at least basic services competently. The Taliban face an inherently uphill battle to secure compliance with their policies that a reasonably proficient government does not. And in a struggle for hearts and minds this is an important advantage.

The Taliban, moreover, are far from a unified opposition group. By contrast with the Viet Cong of 1964, for example, where a common ideology bound the leadership together and linked it to its fighters, the neo-Taliban of 2009 are a much looser, much more heterogeneous, much more divided coalition of often fractious and very independent actors. There is a hard core of committed Islamist ideologues, centered on Mullah Omar and based in Quetta. But by all accounts much of the Taliban's actual combat strength is provided by an array of warlords and other factions with often much more secular motivations, who side with the Taliban for reasons of profit, prestige, or convenience, and who may or may not follow orders from the Quetta Shura leadership. We often lament the challenges to unity of effort that flow from a divided NATO command structure, but the Taliban face difficulties on this score at least as severe as ours and potentially much worse: no NATO member is going to change sides and fight for the Taliban, but the Taliban need to be constantly alert lest one or more of their component factions leave the alliance for the government side. And this makes it very difficult for the Taliban to mount large-scale, coordinated offensives of the kind that would be needed to conquer a defended city, for example – such efforts would be very hard for any one faction or any one commander to accomplish without closely-coordinated assistance from others, yet such coordination can be very hard to achieve in such a decentralized, factionalized leadership structure.

The Taliban also face major constraints in extending their influence beyond their ethnic base in southern and eastern Afghanistan. The Taliban is an explicitly Pashtun movement. Yet Pashtuns make up less than 45 percent of Afghanistan's population overall, and constitute only a tiny fraction of the population outside the south and east. Afghanistan is not primarily an ethno-sectarian war of identity, as Iraq has been – most Taliban are Pashtuns, but most Pashtuns are not Taliban (in fact the government is itself run by Pashtuns such as Hamid Karzai). Afghanistan is a war fought over the Taliban's ideology for governing, not the hope for a Pashtun government. But whereas the government has members from many ethnic groups and a presumptive claim to the loyalty of all citizens, the Taliban has a much more exclusivist identity and is radically unpopular and unwelcome outside its regional ethnic base. This in turn will make it hard for them to conquer the north and west of the country, and acts as a limiter on their expansion in the near term. (It is worth noting that even in their first rule, the Taliban

never completely secured the north – it was the unconquered "Northern Alliance's" hold over contiguous territory in that part of Afghanistan that provided allies, a base, and a jump-off point for the American Special Forces who teamed with them to topple the Taliban in 2001.)

This combination of a proficient U.S. military and a Taliban enemy with important weaknesses and vulnerabilities gives us an important *possibility* for successful counterinsurgency. This is obviously not a guarantee. There are major obstacles in Afghanistan, and even if there weren't, social science cannot offer that kind of certainty. If anyone thinks the new doctrine is an infallible cookbook for COIN success then they are mistaken. But neither is defeat in Afghanistan inevitable. Great powers do not always fail in COIN; the U.S. is an unusually experienced counterinsurgent force today; the Taliban have serious problems of their own; and astute strategic choices can make an important difference.

Assessment

The stakes, costs, and odds here make Afghanistan a closer call on the merits than some would assume. Reasonable people could argue that a combination of an uncertain prospect of victory with high costs and a limited ability to secure the real stake – a stable Pakistan – make COIN in Afghanistan too unpromising to expend the lives and dollars needed. Ultimately any such calculation is a value judgment: analysis can clarify the costs and the benefits, but rarely can the analytical merits predetermine whether the expected risk to human life is worth the chance of securing a stake.

But in making that value judgment it is important to keep in mind the gravity of the ultimate stake in Afghanistan. A nuclear al Qaeda is a truly cataclysmic prospect. And Pakistani state collapse is a perhaps uniquely dangerous pathway to this. COIN in Afghanistan is indeed an indirect and imperfect means of preventing this. If we had better levers to mitigate this risk, then an expensive, difficult, protracted Afghan COIN campaign might be less necessary: we could compensate for the perils of cross-border destabilization from a Taliban Afghanistan in some other way. But there are very few other ways. War in Afghanistan is an unattractive option, but so is the alternative. Given this, counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, with all its warts and perils, may nevertheless be the strongest means at our disposal to affect the risk of Pakistani nuclear weapons falling into al Qaeda hands.

II. How quickly should resources be transferred from Iraq to Afghanistan?

To wage war effectively in Afghanistan will require troops and equipment now committed to Iraq. How quickly can they be shifted from the latter to the former?

There are several constraints here. Logistics, for example, is a potential limiter: the current basing and transportation infrastructure in Afghanistan cannot immediately accommodate a large increase in U.S. troops. Some months will be needed to build the facilities needed for a sustained deployment in such an austere, remote theater.

The most important constraint, however, is the competing demand for U.S. troops in Iraq. To resolve these demands requires answers to three key questions: how important are the relative interests at stake in the two theaters; how sensitive are outcomes in each

theater to U.S. resource investments; and how volatile is the situation in each theater – how quickly could events turn for the worse or the better if resources were provided or withheld?

The relative importance of Iraq and Afghanistan

It is sometimes argued that Iraq, as a war of choice, is less central to U.S. interests than Afghanistan, where bin Laden organized the 9-11 attacks. This may well have been true in 2001 or 2003. But the situation is very different today. As noted above, al Qaeda central is now based in Pakistan, not Afghanistan, and the latter's influence on the former, while important, is indirect and incomplete. And our invasion of Iraq destabilized the country – and potentially the region – creating several major threats to U.S. interests in the process that did not exist to nearly the same degree prior to the invasion, but which now loom large for U.S. strategy.

In particular, the U.S. retains two primary interests in Iraq in 2009. The first is humanitarian. Having launched a war of choice in Iraq, we thus bear a heavy responsibility for the loss of innocent life that may follow from that decision. In Afghanistan, war was forced upon us by Osama bin Laden; in Iraq we may (or may not) have been justified in our choice to wage war in 2003, but we had a wider range of meaningful alternative options at our disposal than we did in 2001. And as such, our responsibility for using our resources in ways that reduce the conflict's humanitarian costs is greater than in Afghanistan. Of course we should always conduct operations in ways that limit collateral damage and the loss of innocent life, whatever the theater. In Iraq, however, there is an unusually strong normative case for expending resources and bearing burdens we might not in other places if by doing so we can limit the damage of a war for which we bear more than usual responsibility.

The second primary U.S. stake in Iraq is that the war not spread beyond Iraq's borders. Iraq by 2006 had become an unusually intense ethno-sectarian civil war. Such wars create many problems, but one of the most dangerous is contagion: they have a strong tendency to spread, drawing in their neighbors to an expanded conflict that can dramatically increase the war's damage and loss of life. Of the 142 civil wars fought between 1944 and 1999, for example, fully 48 saw major military interventions by neighbors.[17] This is always tragic, but for Iraq it could be disastrous: a war engulfing Iraq's neighbors could plunge one of the world's most important energy producing regions into chaos.

Today, Iraq is in the early stages of a negotiated settlement to its civil war in which the former Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias are observing ceasefires (and in which al Qaeda in Iraq has been marginalized and restricted to a handful of remaining sanctuaries). The continuation of this settlement, and its maturation into real stability, is the best possible insurance against the danger of a wider war in the Persian Gulf. Such settlements, however, are notoriously fragile early on: of 23 such ceasefires between

[17] Stephen Biddle, Jeffrey Friedman and Stephen Long, "Civil War Intervention and the Problem of Iraq," manuscript and supporting dataset. (Note that these data code as a "civil war" any internal conflict with at least 200 battle deaths; other coding rules with other criteria will imply other, often smaller, counts of wars but similar counts of interventions. Hence the intervention rate cited above is best regarded as lower bound.)

1940 and 1992, 10 collapsed into renewed warfare within five years of the settlement.[18] Failure is not inevitable, but the fact of a ceasefire in most of Iraq today is no guarantee of enduring peace.

And if Iraq should return to violence, the risk of a re-ignited Iraqi conflict spreading may be greater than in most such wars. Each of Iraq's neighbors has vital interests in Iraq, and the threats to those interests posed by Iraqi civil warfare grow over time. Left to their own devices, civil wars such as Iraq's can take a decade or more to burn themselves out. With some luck, Iraq's war could do this without spreading. But it is also distinctly possible that an increasingly virulent combination of refugee flows into neighboring states; the internal destabilization created by ill-housed, ill-fed, dispossessed and politically radicalized refugee populations; fears of regional domination by Iranian-supported Shiism; cross-border terrorism by Iraqi factions (especially the Kurds); and growing military capacity for intervention fueled by an ongoing regional arms race could eventually produce irresistible pressures for Syrian, Jordanian, Saudi, Turkish, or Iranian state entry into the war. And if one of these states intervened, the resulting change in the military balance within Iraq would increase the pressures on the others to send troops across the border as well. The result could be a region wide version of the Iran-Iraq War sometime in the next decade, but with some of the combatants (especially Iran) having probable access to weapons of mass destruction by that time.

Of course nothing about Iraq is a certainty, and the probability of regionalization is not 1.0. But neither can it safely be excluded. If one considers the entire available empirical record of civil wars and outside interventions since 1944, controls for the unique features of the Iraqi case, and projects to possible restarted civil war durations of five to ten years, the best available estimates of the probability that the war spreads to two or more of Iraq's neighbors could be as high as 25 to 60 percent.[19] Averting such a gamble is perhaps the most important – and continuing – U.S. strategic interest in Iraq.

How sensitive are outcomes to U.S. resource investments?

More U.S. resources for Afghanistan are *insufficient* to realize our primary interest there – the stability of Pakistan – but they may be *necessary* for this. Certainly a failed Afghanistan or a Taliban reconquest would make Pakistani stability much less likely. And to avert failure in Afghanistan will eventually require, *inter alia*, much more substantial U.S. investments there, including more troops. It may be possible to buy time through Afghan political reforms achieved via focused U.S. pressure on the Karzai government without a large near-term military reinforcement (see below). And near-term defeat in Afghanistan seems unlikely even without an immediate troop buildup (see below). But in the long run, the prognosis is poor without much larger security forces in

[18] Barbara F. Walter, *Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil Wars*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

[19] Biddle, Friedman, and Long, "Civil War Intervention and the Problem of Iraq." The lower figure assumes five years of post-reignition civil warfare in Iraq; the higher figure assumes ten years. The results are derived from a probit analysis of 142 civil wars fought between 1944 and 1999; the computed probit coefficients were then used to perform a monte carlo simulation of potential interventions in Iraq given the specific values on the probit model's independent variables for Iraq and each of its neighbors. For a complete discussion of the method, data, and findings see ibid.

Afghanistan, many of which will have to be American. Afghanistan could fail even with U.S. reinforcement, and more than just troops will be needed for a decent chance at success. But without additional U.S. resources, the Karzai government's ability to control its borders, control its territory, and prevent infiltration of Taliban and other Islamist fighters into Pakistan would be very limited, with potentially very dangerous consequences across the border.

Iraq, too, has important and continuing needs for U.S. troops. But those needs are very different in nature. Whereas U.S. troops' role in Afghanistan would be counterinsurgency warfighting, their role in Iraq is increasingly that of peacekeepers.

Negotiated civil war settlements such as Iraq's often fail, but where they do not, it is often due to the presence of outside peacekeepers. Ethno-sectarian identity wars aggravate deep seated inter-group fears and distrust; even when the shooting stops it can take years for rivals' expectations of one another to change and for retaliatory incentives to fade. Left to their own devices, spoiler violence can easily lead to escalatory spirals as groups who fear for their security at the hands of rivals take action themselves in self-defense. Indigenous government security forces can help, but they can also make matters worse where one group feels threatened by government forces under the control of their rivals – in Iraq, for example, many former Sunni insurgents remain deeply distrustful of Iraqi security forces under the command of a Shiite-led government. In such settings, outside peacekeepers reassure the parties that their rivals will not exploit them if they let their guard down or delay retaliation. Even if widely disliked themselves, outsiders are rarely seen as prospective genocide threats (as internal rivals often are); this enables outsiders to play a transitional stabilizing role that internal actors can find difficult to perform without stimulating fear of oppression.

In Iraq today, the only prospective peacekeeping force is the U.S. military. We may not be loved, but we are tolerated well enough to act as stabilizers where needed. And in fact, most of the activities of U.S. ground forces in Iraq today amount, in effect, to peacekeeping: enforcing ceasefire terms, damping escalatory spirals, reassuring wary former combatants that their willingness to stand down will not be exploited by their erstwhile enemies.

Peacekeeping of this kind can be labor intensive. In fact, the troop levels normally preferred for such missions are little different from those sought for COIN warfighting: about one peacekeeper per 50 civilians, or far more troops than we now have in Iraq. But such missions have sometimes been accomplished with much smaller forces. In Liberia, for example, 15,000 UN troops stabilized a ceasefire in a country of three and a half million; in Sierra Leone, 18,000 UN troops sufficed in a country of 6 million.[20] It would be a mistake to assume that such small forces can always succeed in a potentially very demanding mission, and more is always better. But it would also be a mistake to assume that only an impossibly large force will suffice.

The ideal duration of such missions can be long. But rarely are initial, relatively large, peacekeeping deployments maintained at that level for their entirety. As inter-

[20] For Liberia, see the UNMIL website: http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unmil/facts.html . For Sierra Leone, see the UNAMSIL website: http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unamsil/facts.html

group tensions and expectations of hostility recede, peacekeeping deployments can often be thinned gradually and progressively without reigniting violence. In the Balkans, for example, large early peacekeeping deployments were reduced slowly to levels of less than half their initial strength within four years of the ceasefires in Bosnia and Kosovo without a return to warfare.[21] This Balkan analogy would imply a safe peacekeeping drawdown trajectory for Iraq that would leave around 60,000 U.S. troops in the country by 2011.

A U.S. troop presence of 60,000 through 2011 would create obvious tension with the terms of the recent status of forces agreement negotiated with Iraq. Perhaps conditions in the country by 2011 will enable deeper drawdowns – or even the complete withdrawal of all U.S. forces as called for in the agreement – without a significant danger of renewed violence. And either way, Iraq is a sovereign nation; if they ask us to leave then we should and we must. But from the standpoint of stability alone, experience elsewhere suggests that a longer presence by a larger U.S. force than now foreseen in the status of forces agreement would offer useful insurance against a renewal of violence and the risk that this violence eventually crosses Iraq's borders.

As in COIN, there are no guarantees in peacekeeping – this is an insurance policy that sometimes fails. In Angola and Rwanda, for example, outside peacekeeping forces failed to prevent renewed warfare. Conversely, there is no certainty that even a precipitous U.S. withdrawal would spur a return to civil war. But on balance it seems reasonable to conclude that stability in Iraq remains sensitive to the presence of U.S. forces, and is likely to continue to be for at least several years to come.

How volatile are the situations in Afghanistan and Iraq?

If both Afghanistan and Iraq are important and if both demand substantial U.S. deployments, then something important and valuable will have to be sacrificed; we do not have the forces to do everything we would like to do simultaneously. This places a premium on our assessment of the relative volatility of the respective situations: can we survive increased risk in the short term in one theater while meeting the other's demands, or is one situation or the other so close to failure that near term sacrifices would be fatal? Both theaters face some risk of near term failure, but where is this danger greater?

The key issue here is not whether security trends are up or down in either theater. Everyone agrees that the trend today is up or steady in Iraq but down in Afghanistan. Rather, the real question is *how quickly could an uncertain situation reach a point of no return* if near-term troop levels were smaller than ideal, and how likely is this? In the longer term, an improving situation in Iraq should enable gradual shifts without great risk; the problem is the short run, where both Iraq and Afghanistan would ideally need the same troops, and the key issue is to assess the risk that shorting one theater or the other would create a problem from which we could not recover in the longer term.

Today, many would probably see Afghanistan as the greater risk of near-term failure. Some believe that the Afghan campaign is now teetering on the brink of defeat, whereas the situation in Iraq seems relatively stable in the near term. If so, then the safer

[21] http://www.nato.int/sfor/docu/d981116a.htm

course would be to fight the near-term fire in Afghanistan as soon as possible and take risks as necessary with the slower-moving situation in Iraq.

Imminent defeat cannot be ruled out in Afghanistan; certainly the war there is going badly and getting worse. But quick defeat is nevertheless unlikely in Afghanistan. By contrast, Iraq is more volatile than sometimes assumed. And whereas the U.S. could probably recover from some continuation of today's downward trends in Afghanistan, a turn for the worse in Iraq could well be unrecoverable at this point.

I base this assessment partly on the views of the theater command in Afghanistan, partly on the importance of political frustration for adverse near-term trends there, and partly on an analysis of the nature of ongoing security risks in Iraq.

As for the first of these points, in a recent visit to Afghanistan in November 2008, I posed this question – how quickly could the situation there reach a point of no return if reinforcements were smaller or slower than ideal – to the ISAF senior leadership and staff in Kabul. None believed that defeat was imminent or would result from a delay in the preferred reinforcements. All argued that success required larger forces (among other needs). But none saw defeat as a realistic outcome in the next year or two regardless. In fact, the most pessimistic assessment I could solicit was a projection of stalemate; some actually argued that improvement was possible without additional forces if ISAF strategy and policy coordination were reformed.

Their view was based largely on the perceived weakness of the Taliban opposition. Poor governance by the Karzai regime and insufficient troop levels had created an opportunity for the insurgency, and the Taliban had proved strong enough to exploit this opportunity to reduce security in the country. But the Taliban's unpopular ideology, inconsistent motives and interests, restrictive ethnic identity, and inability to coordinate efforts made them, in GEN McKiernan's words, "less than the sum of their parts" and limited their ability to achieve theater success any time soon.[22]

Moreover, there is reason to suspect that the Karzai regime's poor civil governance may be so central to the recent downturn that a near term "political surge" (to borrow David Kilcullen's phrase) could buy valuable time even before larger-scale military reinforcements become available, reducing the sensitivity of outcomes there to U.S. troop counts per se for a time. In fact, political change may be the most urgent piece of the politico-military improvements needed – and either way it can be undertaken without the kind of near-term opportunity cost against the Iraq effort that troop increases create.

In objective terms, violence in Afghanistan, though increasing, is still very low by the standards of most such conflicts. In Iraq, for example, civilian deaths per hundred thousand members of the population had already reached 30 by 2004, just one year into the war; in Afghanistan, the death count for 2008 was under six per hundred thousand, or less than one-fifth as great.[23] Malaya is commonly cited as an example of an insurgency

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[22] See Catherine Dale, *War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Military Operations, and Issues for Congress* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, January 23, 2009), pp. 20-21, which reports on the same series of interviews.

[23] Data from the Brookings Institute Iraq Index; civilian fatalities are for insurgent violence only and exclude estimated deaths from criminal activity: http://www.brookings.edu/saban/iraq-index.aspx

turned around by successful government strategy; one year into the Malayan Emergency, the civilian death toll had already reached nine per hundred thousand, a rate 50 percent higher than Afghanistan's today; two years later the Malayan insurgents killed 20 civilians per hundred thousand, or a rate three times Afghanistan's today.[24] Vietnam, of course, was hardly a COIN success, but it certainly featured a much higher death rate than Afghanistan's to date: the Viet Cong in 1966 inflicted about 180 civilian deaths per hundred thousand, or about 27 times the Taliban's current rate.[25] In fact, the overwhelming majority of Afghans, when surveyed, report feeling safe in their neighborhoods today. Parts of Afghanistan are very violent, but much of it is not.

Yet support for the government is plummeting, even in relatively peaceful areas, creating an important opening that the Taliban have been exploiting. The reason may well be that perceptions of violence elsewhere in the country are catalyzing frustration with incompetent and massively corrupt governance to create anger with the regime – and its foreign supporters – creating an opening for the Taliban, notwithstanding its limited intrinsic appeal and military shortcomings. Reducing the violence will be necessary to create real stability and defeat the insurgency, and this will require more troops. But in the near term, even sizeable reinforcements that do not reform Afghan governance are unlikely to reverse the government's loss of political support. And we can, in principle, be much more effective in compelling reform from the Karzai government than we have been heretofore even without massive near term military reinforcement. This will require real political pressure on Karzai that combines promises of support and aid with threats to deny them in the absence of reform and demands that Karzai remove known offenders from his government. Nominal security conditions in the country are not yet so grave as to make such a program for better governance impossible in the absence of more troops – and more troops without such a program will do little to reduce public frustration with official corruption and incompetence.

This is not to say that a "political surge" in the absence of much larger military reinforcements can avert stalemate; real success in Afghanistan requires both governance reform and security improvements, and the latter will be hard to provide without more troops. Stalemate, rather than success, is likely to be the best that can be accomplished pending major reinforcement. Nor would stalemate or unnecessarily slow progress would be cost-free in Afghanistan. Either would increase the cost in lives and treasure needed for eventual success, and either one would increase the risk of failure in the longer term. It is sometimes said that insurgencies win simply by avoiding defeat – which is to say that stalemate favors the insurgent – and there is much truth to this. The worse the situation at the time of reinforcement, the harder it will be to turn the situation around when that day comes.

But costlier success or diminished long-term odds are not the same as near-term failure. The latter is, in the view of the theater command, beyond the Taliban's capacity

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[24] Data from Michael Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts: A Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1500-2000* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2002), p. 682.

[25] Data from Ronald J. Cima, ed., *Vietnam: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1987); and assuming a South Vietnamese population of 19 million in 1966.

to bring about, and it may be possible to lower the odds further with a political surge even before an eventual major troop buildup.

In Iraq, by contrast, we would have very little ability to rescue the situation if current trends reversed and violence returned. It is hard to imagine much public tolerance in the United States for a "second surge" in the event that the first one proved insufficient to keep Iraq stable. Nor is it easy to see this succeeding even if tried. The first surge was heavily dependent on several favorable preconditions for success – and especially the strategic effects of Sunni defeat at Shiite hands in the 2006 Battle of Baghdad and the ensuing growth of the Sunni Awakening movement.[26] If large scale violence returned after a major U.S. drawdown, this would imply that the Battle of Baghdad's effects had atrophied or been overtaken by events; the odds of a comparable piece of serendipity on this scale enabling a new surge to succeed in 2010 or 2011 would be long.

Potential stimuli for such a turn for the worse in Iraq are ubiquitous. Today's ceasefire rests in large part on a tremendously disaggregate series of around 200 bilateral agreements, mostly between Sunni Sons of Iraq (SOI) groups and the U.S. military. This creates a wide array of opportunities for individual SOI leaders to see what they can get away with in stretching the terms of their agreements, or for innocent errors to be misinterpreted as hostile acts, or for government crackdowns on miscreants to be interpreted by others as the beginning of a broader campaign of sectarian repression, or for an opportunistic government to exploit divisions among its opponents to try to crush partisan rivals by force. Any such event could give rise to violence which could become catalytic and create an escalatory spiral if not responded to promptly and even-handedly by a disinterested party. Iraq's provincial and national elections are opportunities for progress, but they are also potential flashpoints for violence if the losers fail to accept their defeat or if perceptions of vote-rigging or intimidation spread. Kirkuk poses a whole series of risks in the form of unresolved conflicts of interest between Kurds, Arabs, and Turkomen. The return of potentially millions of Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons involves a tremendous risk of instability as mostly-Sunni dispossessed return to homes and properties now destroyed or occupied by mostly-Shiite squatters and find little or no government capacity to adjudicate their claims, make good their loss, or even house, feed, or care for them. "Crises of rising expectations" in which early progress in economic or political development create demands for faster improvement than immature governments can meet are common in recovering societies, and can easily lead to frustration even where there is progress in service delivery if that progress is too slow; service delivery in Iraq has never been very impressive, and could easily fall short of the expectations of an impatient public.

Some of these flashpoints, such as Kirkuk, could lead to open warfare at unpredictable times or places should Kurdish Pesh Merga militia, for example, clash with government forces seeking to enforce edicts rejected by Kurds. Many others, however, would be likelier to take a subtler turn in which alienated groups quietly reopen the door to bomb making cells and covert insurgents, enabling al Qaeda in Iraq, for example, to return to parts of central and western Iraq from which it is now effectively banished, or enabling Jaish al Mahdi elements to operate once more under Shiite protection in the

[26] See references in note 12 above.

south. Even subtle, covert returns to violence, however, could quickly put Iraq back on a slippery – and steep – slope back to intense civil warfare as victims retaliate and fears return. Such a process is exactly how Iraq descended into intense civil war the first time around in 2004-6. The reestablishment of trust after civil warfare is a slow and fragile process; it is much easier to destroy than to restore once lost. If such a process is allowed to proceed very far unchecked it can place Iraq on a trajectory from which it would be very hard to recover, and this process could begin almost any time, and certainly very soon if U.S. forces were not in a position to respond while in its early stages.

Either Iraq or Afghanistan could thus clearly get worse in the absence of sufficient U.S. troops. But whereas we can probably recover from a degree of continued decline in Afghanistan, a failure to respond quickly to catalytic violence in Iraq could put the country on a trajectory from which recovery at this point would be very difficult. To an important degree, Iraq – though less violent than Afghanistan today – is thus probably more volatile.

Assessment

There are thus risks on all sides in shifting forces from Iraq to Afghanistan; no policy is without danger. On balance, however, the odds are that we can afford to wait in Afghanistan, whereas we may not be able to afford the consequences for U.S. interests if we withdraw too rapidly from Iraq.

How rapidly is too rapidly for Iraq, and how long must we wait for reinforcement in Afghanistan? Modest reductions in Iraq and reinforcements for Afghanistan are already ongoing, and can probably be tolerated without destabilizing effects for Iraq. Withdrawals much below the 10-12 brigade range in Iraq, however, should ideally await the aftermath of next year's national elections. As noted above, an analogy to the Balkans would suggest a safe withdrawal rate of something roughly on the order of 50 percent of the initial force over about four years from the time of ceasefire. Such a drawdown trajectory would make possible substantial reinforcements beyond the scale of those already announced for arrival in Afghanistan over the course of 2010 and 2011. Again, such plans are contingent on Iraqi approval for a slower withdrawal than the Status of Forces Agreement now foresees; this approval may not be forthcoming, in which case faster drawdowns will be required. But while this would be necessary under such conditions, it would not be conducive to stability. On balance, slower is thus better if it can be negotiated.

House Armed Services Committee

Testimony

By

Gen. John M. Keane, USA (Ret)

12 February 09

1000 a.m.

Rayburn Office Building, Room 2118

Washington, DC

House Armed Services Committee
Testimony
12 February
1000 hrs

Thank you Mr. Chairman, ranking minority member, and members of the committee for inviting me to testify. I have an enduring relationship with the committee and I always value the opportunity to share viewpoints on issues vital to security.

Let me begin by discussing the key issues on achieving the right balance as we shift our priorities from Iraq to Afghanistan. In doing so, I would like to focus my remarks around the following issues:

- Sustaining the gains in Iraq
- What is needed to win in Afghanistan

SUSTAINING THE GAINS IN IRAQ

We just observed at the end of last month a seminal event, provincial elections in Iraq, which will forever change the political landscape of Iraq and, as a result, will have profound impact on the future stability of the region.

After having won a hard fought victory over two foreign interventions in Iraq, the Al Qaeda, who have been operationally defeated for the last 12 months, and the Iranians, who suffered a major setback in March 2008, and having defeated the main stream Sunni insurgency --- political reconciliation is unfolding before our very eyes. After 3 years of a failed strategy in Iraq from 2003 to 2006, we as a nation finally recognized an undeniable fact: that security was a necessary pre-condition for political progress and economic development. As such, a counter offensive was launched in 2007 which in 18 months stabilized the nation sufficiently to permit 17 of 18 legislative benchmarks to pass the Iraqi council of representatives, amnesty to be granted to Sunni insurgents, an historic strategic framework to be achieved between the government of Iraq and the U.S. government and a framework for provincial, district and national elections.

While U.S. and Iraqi troops were critical to achieve this stability they are as critical for us to maintain it. What is not understood very well is what a large role our forces play in assisting with, not only security, but political stability and economic development. Our brigade combat teams are the glue that has held this political reconciliation process together and they are needed in sufficient numbers to assist with the following in 2009: district /

sub-district elections, disputed boundary issue involving Kirkuk, a referendum on the SOFA and national elections in Dec 2009. This is a very full plate in the political developments of Iraq. Our commanders believe we can draw down 2 brigades in 2009 from 14 to 12 with the possibility of a 3rd if this momentum continues followed by a dramatic reduction in 2010 and completing our force reduction in 2011. It is our success in Iraq which is permitting units who were destined for Iraq to deploy to Afghanistan in 2009. It will take to 2011 , in my view, to complete the shift in our priorities from Iraq to Afghanistan.

Before shifting to Afghanistan let me summarize what we are achieving in Iraq:

- A Shia dominated government, elected by the people, is sharing power with Kurds and Sunnis. And in the Sunni case, many who are now in the political process were once trying to overthrow the government.
- Al Qaeda is defeated in Iraq and its priority is Pakistan.
- A major setback for Iran whose surrogates, the Sadirists and special groups, were defeated in 2008 and whose political

surrogates were defeated in the provincial elections 2 weeks ago. In fact, Iran is a big loser in Iraq.

- Political reconciliation is being achieved, the facts are undeniable, and those who fail to understand it are the same skeptics who believed this was a hopeless Sunni – Shia civil war that was not winnable. Failure to understand the Iraqis, their motivations, aspirations, character and fears is at the center of these previous and present miscalculations.
- Economic development is improving but slowly with the foreign investments finally beginning.

Can we shift our priorities to Afghanistan and win without squandering the gains we have made in Iraq. The answer is a resounding, yes, if we have the patience to succeed in Iraq and the courage and wisdom to transition properly to Afghanistan.

WHAT IS NEEDED TO WIN IN AFGHANISTAN

1. Strategy

First and foremost, and what caused us more setbacks in Iraq than any single thing, is to formulate the right strategy. This strategy for Afghanistan

defines our objectives and end states, understands the nature and character of the war we are fighting, and sets the stage for the application of resources. Remember, we threw resources at the problem for 3 years in Iraq with the wrong strategy and we nearly lost. Our strategy is informed by our national interests in Afghanistan and the region and it can run the full spectrum from total democratic nation building on one end to simply denying a terrorist sanctuary on the other. Regardless of how comprehensive or limited our overall strategy is we must recognize that we cannot limit proven counterinsurgency practices in our attempt to defeat the insurgency. We should not confuse the political and economic end state for Afghanistan (if limited in scope) with what is needed to defeat a complicated entrenched insurgency.

2. Campaign Plan

Secondly, we need a campaign plan, which we do not currently have, to provide a much needed unity of effort. This took many weeks to develop in Iraq and am certain with the added complexity of a NATO command it will take longer. This is very hard work because it must be comprehensive and it involves tough choices which have profound consequences. The plan can only be formulated by Gen. McKiernan's headquarters, which is

significantly undermanned to write the plan and to drive the execution. The staff should be augmented quickly.

3. Counterinsurgency

The centerpiece of the campaign plan will be a counterinsurgency effort to defeat the insurgency. And as we know, while the military effort receives most of the attention, the plan is largely non-military focusing on political and economic development as security begins to be achieved. Therefore, our civilian capacity is needed to match the military increase particularly in provincial reconstruction teams, economic development and governance. Equally important is the necessary financial support to sustain the efforts already mentioned.

An important point to be made is, we should avoid the appeal of a short-cut solution by focusing on counter terrorist operations, that is, killing and capturing terrorist leaders and targeting terrorist networks. Failure to use counterinsurgency operations, to protect the population, <u>will doom our efforts in Afghanistan</u>. We tried the former in Iraq up through 2006 with our SOF forces in the lead against Al Qaeda and 150,000 conventional troops in support and, despite killing Saddam Hussein's 2 sons, capturing Saddam

Hussein, killing Zarqawi, killing hundreds of other leaders and capturing thousands, we nearly lost. Finally, after applying proven counterinsurgency practices, we succeeded. This is the key to breaking the will of the insurgency.

I am not suggesting Afghanistan is Iraq, it is not, the insurgencies are quite different, but proven counterinsurgency practices applied to the uniqueness of Afghanistan is the answer. As we develop counterinsurgency practices the obvious issue is we are fighting a rural insurgency (vs an urban insurgency in Iraq) with less tolerance in Afghanistan for physical presence or occupation of towns, villages and cities. Nonetheless, we must protect the population, by securing and serving the people. As Gen. Petraeus phrases it, we become "good neighbors". Once the population knows that allied / Afghan forces are staying, it opens up the opportunity for more success against the insurgents. And as such, we pursue the enemy relentlessly, never giving them opportunity to reset. Some will lose their will and want to reconcile and we must not only be open to this but encouraging it.

4. Operational Headquarters

Critical to the unity of effort of the counterinsurgency plan is an operational headquarters to coordinate and supervise the tactical and operational fight. What is needed is a 3 star operational HQ's, either a Corps HQ's from the Army or a MEF HQ's from the Marines. This frees up Gen. McKiernan's HQ's to focus on the non-military line of operations so critical to success as well as the training of Afghan National Security forces.

5. Afghan National Army

Of course, we must not only rely on our allies in Afghanistan, but particularly on the Afghan National Army which should grow beyond the 130,000 planned, which I believe the command is considering, to some 300,000. This requires more trainers, more embedded training teams, more military enablers to assist them such as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance platforms, more military police, engineers, logistics, and more SOF and civil affairs units to defeat the insurgency.

6. Governance

We know the Karzai government is ineffective, deeply corrupt and losing the support of the Afghan people. Elections will be held in August. It may

be in our interests to encourage alternative candidates or at a minimum in exchange for our support to insist that Karzai make the necessary changes with our assistance. The key is to develop local solutions that are connected to the central government but not necessarily completely controlled by it.

7. Committed

As I see it, we should spend 2009 getting our strategy right in Afghanistan, which must be vetted with our allies, formulating a campaign plan based on that strategy and then setting the conditions for a military counter offensive in 2010 based on the above. I recognize that some forces will begin to move to Afghanistan in 2009 but I believe we will be continuing that increase in 2010 and well into 2011 before we can begin to see tangible results. A large part of our success depends on convincing the enemy, and all our stakeholders, that we are dead serious about winning and are committed to see it through. Anything less, encourages the enemy, weakens the resolve of our allies to include Pakistan and undermines the support of the American people.

8. Public Support

Public support for our effort cannot be overstated and protracted counter insurgencies test the resolve of the most committed nations. As such, it is crucial that the President and national leaders communicate our strategy, why it is important, and in general, what our plans are to the American people. We must educate and inform them on the nature of the war and why thousands of insurgents, who are lightly armed, can challenge a larger force much better armed and trained. And as such, why it takes as much time as it does to win. Most insurgencies are defeated, but almost all take considerable time. Steady progress, despite occasional setbacks, with very forthright and frank assessments is key to our public support.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

United States Government Accountability Office

GAO

Testimony before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

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IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

Availability of Forces, Equipment, and Infrastructure Should Be Considered in Developing U.S. Strategy and Plans

Statement of Janet St. Laurent, Managing Director
Defense Capabilities and Management

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Highlights

Highlights of GAO-09-380T, a testimony before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

Availability of Forces, Equipment, and Infrastructure Should be Considered in Developing U.S. Strategy and Plans

Why GAO Did This Study

The United States is in the process of developing its strategy for operations in Afghanistan, as well as for the drawdown and continued operations of forces in Iraq. As of December 2008, approximately 32,500 U.S. troops were deployed in Afghanistan. Moreover, DOD may add an additional 30,000 troops in Afghanistan. Since 2001, the war in Afghanistan changed from a violent struggle against al Qaeda and its Taliban supporters to a multi-faceted counterinsurgency effort. As of December 2008, U.S. troops in Iraq numbered approximately 148,500. DOD also had about 162,400 contractors in Iraq as of mid-2008.

Today's testimony addresses (1) key observations regarding the development of U.S. strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan; (2) factors that should be considered as the United States refines its strategy for Iraq and plans to draw down forces; and (3) factors that should be considered as the United States develops a strategy for Afghanistan and plans for increasing forces.

This statement is based on GAO reports and testimonies on Iraq and Afghanistan.

What GAO Found

Lessons learned from GAO's past work indicate that U.S. strategy for Iraq and Afghanistan should reflect a governmentwide approach and contain a number of key elements, including clear roles, responsibilities, and coordination mechanisms among government agencies, as well as specific goals, performance measures, and time frames that take into account available resources. Given the heavy commitment of U.S. forces to ongoing operations over the past several years, the availability of forces, equipment, and infrastructure will need to be closely examined in developing plans to reposture military forces. Finally, in light of future demands on the federal budget, attention will be needed to ensure that U.S. plans are developed and executed in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Clearly, strong oversight by the Congress and senior decision makers will be needed to minimize past problems such as contract mismanagement and insufficient attention to overseeing contractors.

In refining its strategy and plans for the drawdown of forces in Iraq, senior leaders will need to consider several operational factors. For example, DOD will need to develop plans to efficiently and effectively relocate thousands of personnel and billions of dollars worth of equipment out of Iraq; close hundreds of facilities; and determine the role of contractors. Furthermore, the capacity of facilities in Kuwait and other neighboring countries may limit the speed at which equipment and materiel can be moved out of Iraq.

With regard to Afghanistan, DOD will likely face an array of potential challenges related to people, equipment and infrastructure. For example, the availability and training of personnel will be critical considerations as the force is already significantly stressed from ongoing operations and current training capacity has been primarily focused on operations in Iraq. Additionally, the availability of equipment may be limited because the Army and Marine Corps have already deployed much of their equipment to Iraq and much of the prepositioned assets also have been withdrawn to support ongoing operations. Similarly, DOD will need to assess its requirements for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities given its current allocation of these assets to support ongoing operations in Iraq. Further, the ability to transport personnel and equipment into Afghanistan will be challenged by the limited infrastructure and topography of Afghanistan. Moreover, the extent to which contractors will be used to support deployed U.S. forces must be considered as well as how oversight of these contractors will be ensured. Given all of these factors, sound planning based on a well-developed strategy is critical to ensure lessons learned over the years from Iraq are incorporated in Afghanistan and that competing resources are prioritized effectively between both operations.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on GAO-09-380T. For more information, contact Janet St. Laurent, 202-512-4400, stlaurentj@gao.gov.

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United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to be here today to discuss issues for consideration as the United States develops its strategy and plans for the future with regard to operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. As conditions in Iraq have improved, the war in Afghanistan has now entered its eighth year with a deteriorating security situation. As such, the new administration is in the process of reviewing and revising U.S. strategy. Also, the Department of Defense (DOD) has begun planning for a reallocation of forces, which includes beginning to draw down U.S forces in Iraq while increasing the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan. According to DOD, these plans may include an increase of up to 30,000 troops in Afghanistan. Since September 11, 2001, Congress has provided about $808 billion to DOD for the Global War on Terrorism, which includes operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Operation Iraqi Freedom began in March 2003, and since that time the United States has maintained a sizeable presence in Iraq, rotating forces into and out of the country in support of ongoing operations. After the U.S. military surge of five additional brigades peaked in June 2007, those additional brigades began withdrawing in September 2007. In his April 2008 *Report to Congress on the Situation in Iraq*, the Commander, Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I), recommended that the drawdown of brigade combat teams continue to pre-surge levels and that an assessment then be performed to examine the conditions on the ground and, over time, determine when he could make a recommendation for further reductions. In the meantime, the November 2008 Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between the United States and the Republic of Iraq that took effect January 1, 2009, specifies in detail and with specific dates the requirements for future drawdown of U.S. forces from Iraq. As of July 2008, there were approximately 162,400 DOD contractors and, as of December 1, 2008, approximately 148,500 U.S. troops in Iraq.

Since 2001, the character of the war in Afghanistan has evolved from a violent struggle against al Qaeda and its Taliban supporters to a multifaceted counterinsurgency effort. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States launched Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in order to end the ability of the Taliban regime to provide safe haven to al Qaeda and to put a stop to al Qaeda's use of

Afghanistan territory as a base of operations for terrorist activities.[1] After the fall of the Taliban, the character of the war shifted to a counterinsurgency effort. As of December 1, 2008, approximately 32,500 U.S. troops were deployed in Afghanistan–19,900 as part of OEF and 12,600 as part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). ISAF operates under United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1833 and is comprised of about 50,000 military personnel from 41 nations. ISAF forces concentrate on stability and reconstruction operations, including command of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). ISAF forces do not have a mandate to perform any police training, but both OEF and ISAF forces train and mentor the Afghan National Army. OEF is a smaller multinational force that also pursues a more aggressive counterterrorism role.

Afghanistan is a unique country with characteristics that will continue to have distinct impacts on military operations there. For example, it is slightly smaller than Texas but about a third larger than Iraq. Afghanistan is a mountainous, arid, land-locked country with limited natural resources. Its population, estimated at over 31 million, is ethnically and linguistically diverse, with many regions populated by multiple ethnic groups speaking over 30 languages. The population is largely rural and mostly uneducated. Afghanistan is one of the world's poorest countries and ranks near the bottom of virtually every development indicator category. Afghanistan has a poorly developed infrastructure with few roads and little household access to electricity and running water. According to the Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook, Afghanistan has only 4 airports with runways over approximately 3,000 meters. By way of comparison, Iraq has 19 airports with runways over approximately 3,000 meters. Additionally, while Iraq has about 38,000 kilometers of paved roads, Afghanistan has only about 12,000 kilometers of paved roads.

As you requested, my testimony will focus on the U. S. government's efforts to develop a strategy for both Iraq and Afghanistan, and factors DOD should consider as it develops and implements that strategy. Specifically, I will address (1) key observations regarding the development of U.S. strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan, (2) factors that should be considered as the United States refines its strategy for Iraq and plans to

[1]Congressional Research Service, *War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Military Operations, and Issues for Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 23, 2009).

draw down forces, and (3) factors that should be considered as the United States develops a strategy for Afghanistan and plans for increasing forces.

My statement is based on our extensive body of work examining Iraq and Afghanistan issues. A list of selected GAO reports and testimonies is provided at the end of this testimony. This work was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Summary

U.S. strategy for Iraq and Afghanistan should be comprehensive and contain a number of key elements, including clear roles, responsibilities, and coordination mechanisms among government agencies and other sectors, as well as specific goals, objectives, performance measures, and time frames for achieving the goals, taking into account available resources. In refining its strategy and plans for the drawdown of forces in Iraq and an increase of forces in Afghanistan, there are several operational factors that DOD must consider to ensure a successful approach. For example, with regard to an Iraq drawdown, DOD's plans will need to consider the fact that some early planning assumptions about the conditions and timing of redeployments may no longer be applicable in light of the SOFA and evolving U.S. strategy. For example, DOD's plans assume that redeployments would be based on assessments of security and other conditions in Iraq. In addition, the effectiveness and efficiency of DOD's redeployment efforts from Iraq will depend on the extent to which it develops plans that address challenges such as efficiently and effectively moving thousands of personnel and billions of dollars worth of equipment out of Iraq. DOD's ability to move equipment and materiel from Iraq may be constrained, impacting its ability to quickly deploy these resources in Afghanistan or elsewhere. Specifically, the availability of facilities in Kuwait and other neighboring countries may limit the speed at which equipment and materiel can be moved out of Iraq. With regard to a military build-up in Afghanistan, some of the same challenges encountered during operations in Iraq may also apply to that operation, but there will likely be several new challenges as well. For example, the availability and training of personnel will be critical considerations as the force is already significantly stressed from ongoing operations and current training capacity has been primarily focused on operations in Iraq. Additionally, the availability of equipment may be limited because the Army and Marine

Corps have already deployed much of their equipment to Iraq and much of their prepositioned assets also have been withdrawn to support ongoing operations. Similarly, DOD will need to assess its requirements for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities to support increased force levels in Afghanistan, given its current allocation of assets to support ongoing operations in Iraq. Further, the ability to transport personnel and equipment into Afghanistan will likely be constrained due to the limited infrastructure and topography of Afghanistan. Moreover, the extent to which contractors will be used to support deployed U.S. forces must be considered as well as how oversight of these contractors will be ensured. Given all of these factors, sound planning based on a well-developed strategy is critical to ensure lessons learned over the years from Iraq are incorporated in Afghanistan and that competing resources are prioritized effectively between both operations.

Establishing a Comprehensive U.S. Strategy Is an Essential First Step in Planning for Future Military Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan

We have identified several key elements of an effective national strategy that should be considered by the new administration in developing national strategies for Iraq and Afghanistan to guide the way forward. [2]

- First, our work shows that new strategies for both countries should reflect a comprehensive governmentwide approach and clearly delineate U.S. government roles, responsibilities, and coordination mechanisms. [3] Not only should the strategy identify the specific U.S. federal departments, agencies, or offices involved, but also the responsibilities of the private and international sectors, and specific processes for coordination and collaboration among the entities. In particular, our work in Iraq has shown problems in these areas. For example, in July 2006, we reported that the National Strategy for Victory in Iraq (NSVI) did not clearly identify the roles and

[2]In July 2008, we recommended that DOD and State, in conjunction with relevant U.S. agencies, develop an updated strategy for Iraq that defines U.S. goals and objectives after July 2008 and addresses the long-term goal of achieving an Iraq that can govern, defend, and sustain itself. See GAO, *Securing, Stabilizing, And Rebuilding Iraq: Progress Report: Some Gains Made, Updated Strategy Needed*, GAO-08-1021T (Washington, D.C.: July 23, 2008).

[3]This is one of GAO's six desirable characteristics of an effective strategy: (1) purpose, scope, and methodology; (2) detailed discussion of problems, risks, and threats; (3) the desired goal, objectives, activities, and outcome-related performance measures; (4) description of future costs and resources needed; (5) delineation of U.S. government roles, responsibilities, and coordination mechanisms; and (6) a description of the strategy's integration among and with other entities.

responsibilities of specific federal agencies for achieving the strategy's objectives, or how disputes among them will be resolved.[4] Later, in March 2008 we noted that U.S. efforts to build the capacity of the Iraqi government have been hindered by multiple U.S. agencies pursuing individual efforts without overarching direction.[5] We further noted that no single agency was in charge of leading U.S. development efforts, and that the U.S. State Department, DOD, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) all led separate efforts with little or no coordination.

As the United States considers increasing its presence in Afghanistan, it will be even more important that roles and responsibilities of the various U.S. agencies are clearly identified and their programs and activities are coordinated. For example, DOD's Commanders' Emergency Response Program (CERP) and other funding have been used to a great extent for building roads. At the same time, USAID has also invested funds in constructing roads. In July 2008, we reported that coordination between DOD and USAID on road projects was problematic because information was not being shared among the agencies. As DOD expands its CERP program, and other agencies expand their respective programs, it will be important that their efforts be coordinated as part of an overall development plan to identify priorities and maximize resources.

- Second, national strategies should include specific goals, objectives, performance measures, and time frames for achieving the goals. Regarding Iraq, one major issue that will need to be addressed is to determine to what extent a drawdown of U. S. forces will be determined based on the achievement of goals or conditions in light of the specific time frames for withdrawal included in the November 2008 SOFA between Iraq and the United States that took effect in January 2009. Adopting a withdrawal timetable marks a major change from the prior U.S. approach of withdrawing forces based on security, political, economic, and diplomatic conditions in Iraq. The SOFA sets a two-phase timetable—but no conditions—for withdrawing U.S. combat forces from Iraq by the end of 2011. The President recently called for the implementation of a responsible drawdown of U.S. forces in Iraq. A

[4]See GAO, *Rebuilding Iraq: More Comprehensive National Strategy Needed to Help Achieve U.S. Goals*, GAO-06-788 (Washington, D.C.: July 11, 2006).

[5]See GAO, Stabilizing and *Rebuilding Iraq: Actions Needed to Address Inadequate Accountability over U.S. Efforts and Investments*, GAO-08-568T (Washington, D.C.: March 11, 2008).

new U.S. strategy and campaign plan for Iraq will need to clarify how a responsible withdrawal of U.S. forces will be carried out consistent with the SOFA timeframe.

Furthermore, as the administration develops strategies for both countries and plans to adjust force levels, it will need to closely examine the availability of resources, given the heavy commitment of U.S. forces to ongoing operations over the past several years. The high pace of operations, particularly for ground forces personnel, and heavy wear and tear on equipment have taken a toll on the overall readiness of the U.S. military. These factors, coupled with the likelihood of competing demands for certain capabilities to support the drawdown of forces in one location and increase in forces in another, such as strategic airlift, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets, and support forces, will need to be considered in assessing the feasibility of various strategy options.

- Third, in light of future demands on the federal budget, attention will be needed to ensure that U.S. efforts are executed in a manner that maximizes the use of available resources and includes mechanisms for oversight. From this perspective, it will be important that the U.S. government make a concerted effort to avoid some of the problems that occurred in Iraq which, in some cases, created numerous opportunities for waste, fraud and mismanagement, particularly with respect to the oversight and management of contractors. Another area warranting attention is in DOD's approach to developing requirements for equipment and other critical items to support operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan. As such, it will be important for DOD to carefully screen and validate requirements and use cost-effective approaches to acquiring items. Clearly, strong oversight on the part of the Congress and senior decision makers within DOD will also be a critical element to protecting the taxpayers' interest and resources.

Operational Factors Should Be Considered in Developing Plans to Draw Down U.S. Forces in Iraq

It is unclear how the timeline in the SOFA and growing operations in Afghanistan will affect DOD plans for redeploying U.S. forces and equipment from Iraq. As of September 2008, DOD's redeployment plans for Iraq were based on three key assumptions that may no longer be applicable in light of the SOFA and evolving U.S. strategy. These assumptions were that

- any redeployment will be based on MNF-I and Department of State assessments of security and other conditions in Iraq;

- there will be sufficient lead time to refine redeployment plans once an order with a specific timetable and force posture in Iraq is issued; and

- the redeployment of forces will be deliberate and gradual, predicated on a 180-day process for units leaving Iraq and an estimated flow of no more than 2.5 brigades' worth of equipment and materiel out of Iraq primarily through Kuwait each month.

Based on discussions with DOD officials and an analysis of planning efforts, we found that the effectiveness and efficiency of DOD's redeployment efforts from Iraq will depend on the extent to which it develops plans that address several issues such as the following[6]:

- Although the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) has designated an executive agent to coordinate the retrograde of materiel and equipment from the Iraqi theater of operations, no unified structure exists to coordinate the teams and units engaged in efforts to manage and execute the return of materiel and equipment. This results in confusion and a lack of clarity on the ways those teams should be utilized. Joint doctrine states that an unambiguous chain of command and clear responsibilities and authorities are necessary for any such effort. We have recommended, therefore, that DOD take steps to clarify a unified or coordinated chain of command over logistical operations to support this effort. While DOD has taken some actions to clarify certain aspects of the command and control structure, we believe additional steps are still needed to improve the efficiency of the retrograde process.

- Closing or handing over U.S. installations in Iraq will be time-consuming and costly. As of November 2008, there were 286 U.S. installations in Iraq that will need to be closed or turned over to the Iraqi forces during a U.S. redeployment, depending on its scope. According to U.S. Army officials, experience has shown it takes 1 to 2 months to close the smallest platoon- or company-size installations, which contain from 16 to 200 combat soldiers or marines. However, MNF-I has never closed large, complex installations—such as Balad Air Force Base, which contains about 24,000 inhabitants and has matured over 5 years—making it difficult to accurately predict the time it will take to close them. U.S. Army officials estimate it could take longer than 18 months to close a base of that size.

[6]See GAO, *Operation Iraqi Freedom: Actions Needed to Enhance DOD Planning for Reposturing of U.S. Forces from Iraq*, GAO-08-930 (Washington, D.C.: September 10, 2008).

- Maintaining accountability for and managing the disposition of U.S. government property under the control of contractors may present challenges to redeploying U.S. forces from Iraq. According to Defense Contract Management Agency officials, there is at least $3.5 billion worth of contractor-managed government-owned property in Iraq. From late 2007 through July 2008, planning for the redeployment of U.S. forces in Iraq did not include a theaterwide plan for contractors.

- The pace at which units can be redeployed and equipment and materiel returned to the United States from Iraq will be governed by the capacity of facilities in neighboring countries as well as restrictions on the use of those facilities. According to DOD officials, Kuwait is the main point of exit for all personnel, equipment, and materiel in Iraq.[7] At present there are three U.S. bases and five Kuwait facilities that the United States is using to support operations in Iraq, and the U.S.-Kuwait Defense Cooperation Agreement governs the use of these facilities. According to DOD officials, any redeployment must take into consideration the terms of this agreement, particularly given that in their view, the government of Kuwait desires to limit the size of the U.S. footprint in Kuwait.

- The availability in theater of military-owned and operated heavy equipment transports and convoy security assets, combined with limits on the primary supply route, could inhibit the flow of materiel out of Iraq. According to DOD officials, two types of heavy equipment transports support U.S. forces in the Iraqi theater of operations: commercially contracted unarmored transports and armored military transports with military crews. Any increase in the number of civilian transports without a corresponding increase in the number of military transports, they maintain, increases the risk of accidents. However, DOD officials have reported shortages of military transports in theater.[8]

[7] GAO-08-930.

[8] According to DOD officials, although it is possible to self-deploy vehicles from Iraq to Kuwait (i.e., drive them out under their own power), the resulting wear and tear on a vehicle makes this an unattractive alternative. Hence, when possible, vehicles are transported out of Iraq on heavy equipment transports.

Several Operational Concerns Need to Be Considered as DOD Refines Its Strategy and Plans for Afghanistan

Based on our work examining current and past military operations, there are several operational issues that must be considered as the United States refines its strategy and plans for using military forces in Afghanistan. We have identified several issues in the following five key areas that warrant consideration by DOD planners as they develop strategies and plans for these operations: availability of forces, training of personnel, availability of equipment, transportation of equipment and personnel, and management and oversight of contractors.

Availability of Forces

Given the range of likely forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, DOD may continue to face near-term challenges in providing personnel for operations in both locations. For the past several years, demands on DOD's forces have been extremely high as the department has rotated personnel in and out of Iraq and Afghanistan. As of December 1, 2008, more than 180,000 service members were deployed in the two countries. Demands have been particularly high within certain ranks and occupational specialties. For example, officers and senior noncommissioned officers are in high demand due to increased requirements within deployed headquarters organizations, and requirements for transition teams to train Iraqi and Afghan forces. These teams do not exist in any of the services' force structures, and the demand for these leaders creates challenges because the leaders are generally pulled from units or commands, which are then left to perform their missions while undermanned. The ongoing operations have challenged DOD's ability to provide sufficient numbers of forces for certain specialized capabilities including engineering, civil affairs, transportation, and military police.

As operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have continued, DOD has used a number of different approaches to meet the ongoing requirements. For example, it has adjusted the length and frequency of deployments and reserve component mobilizations; moved personnel between units to support deployments of units that were short of personnel; and used Navy and Air Force personnel to fill some CENTCOM requirements that would otherwise have exceeded the Army's capability to supply personnel. While these approaches have helped DOD fill its ongoing requirements, they have also created a number of challenges. For example, many service members have experienced deployment and mobilization rates in excess of DOD's stated goals. These goals generally call for active component personnel to be deployed for 1 of every 3 years and reserve component personnel involuntarily mobilized 1 of 6 years. In addition, the use of Navy

and Air Force personnel has presented challenges in meeting other service mission requirements.

Faced with these challenges, DOD developed a global force management process that among other things was designed to prioritize requirements, identify the most appropriate forces to meet combatant command requirements, and provide predictability. The portion of the global force management process that is being used to fill stable, recurring world-wide requirements provides predictability and the time necessary to consider a full range of options for meeting the combatant commander requirements. However, a significant portion of emerging requirements, including many of the Afghanistan requirements, are being filled under a "request for forces" process that involves shorter time lines. Within the shorter time lines, DOD may not have a full range of options available to meet its requirements. For example, reserve component forces may not be an option to meet some immediate requirements because reserve forces train part-time and thus require longer lead times to accomplish the same amount of training and preparation when compared to full-time active component forces. If emerging requirements for Afghanistan include many of the high demand support skills that are resident in the reserve components, including military police, engineers, and civil affairs units, DOD is likely to continue to need to use its alternate approaches for filling requirements—such as moving people between units, or using Navy and Air Force personnel to fill traditional Army roles—rather than using longer term options such as growing the force. These near-term challenges could be exacerbated because many of these support forces may also be needed to support the drawdown of forces in Iraq.

Adjustments in Training

To meet mission requirements in CENTCOM, the services, particularly the ground forces, have focused their unit training on counterinsurgency tasks rather than full-spectrum operations. For example, since 2004, all combat training rotations conducted at the Army's National Training Center have been mission rehearsal exercises to prepare units for deployments, primarily to Iraq and Afghanistan.

While DOD has invested heavily in training for particular mission sets related to requirements in Iraq and Afghanistan, the majority of that effort has been directed at preparing for missions in Iraq, which has had about five times as many U.S. forces as Afghanistan. As the number of forces decreases in Iraq and increases in Afghanistan, it will take time to adjust DOD's training capacity from one type of mission or theater to another. For example, DOD has designed extensive training areas to mimic Iraqi

urban settings, has incorporated Arabic speakers (the language spoken in much of Iraq) into training exercises, and focused on weapons and tactics useful in densely populated areas, such as training for escorting large armored convoys and using short-barreled weapons in high-density population areas. In contrast, training in Afghanistan has to take into consideration the more austere operating environment, myriad mix of languages and cultures, and lack of major infrastructure, such as paved roads. In addition, to support ongoing operations, the Army has done an admirable job of enlisting personnel returning from deployment to train next-deployers. While DOD has some training infrastructure and combat-tested veterans to support training for the Afghanistan mission, its training base is not currently configured to support a large increase of forces deploying to Afghanistan, and adjustments may need to be made to provide the necessary capacity. Thus, it would be a risk to assume that units that were preparing for deployments to Iraq could be easily rerouted for deployments to Afghanistan with no changes in preparation, equipping, or training.

Availability of Equipment

Our previous work has shown that as of May 2008, DOD had the equivalent of 47 brigades' worth of materiel and equipment in Iraq spread out over some 311 installations of varying size.[9] The majority of this materiel and equipment, some 80 percent according to DOD officials, is theater-provided equipment which includes approximately 582,000 pieces of equipment such as up-armored High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles, Mine Resistant Armored Program (MRAP) vehicles, and other wheeled and tracked vehicles. Although much of this equipment has remained in Iraq as units rotate in and out, significant amounts will be brought back to the United States if and when there is a decrease in size of U.S. forces in Iraq. Upon returning from operations, equipment is reset in preparation for future operations. The services have also relied on prepositioned equipment stored at land sites around the world as well as ships afloat. As we have previously reported, the Army has withdrawn prepositioned equipment at various stages throughout operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and removed equipment from its prepositioned ships in December 2006 to accelerate creation of two additional brigade combat

[9]GAO-08-930.

teams.[10] The Army plans to reconstitute its prepositioned stocks by 2015; the Marine Corps plans to reconstitute its prepositioned stocks by 2012.

The harsh operating environment and prolonged length of operations have placed tremendous stress on deployed equipment. At the onset of operations in Iraq in 2003, the Army and Marine Corps deployed with equipment that in some cases was already more than 20 years old. The services continue to operate equipment at a pace well in excess of peacetime operations. In response to those challenges, the Army and Marine Corps developed initiatives to retain large amounts of equipment in theater and provide enhanced maintenance over and above the unit level to sustain major equipment items such as High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles and other tracked and wheeled vehicles. In-theater maintenance consists of field-level maintenance in Iraq and some depot-level repair and upgrade capabilities at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait. There are also limited maintenance facilities in Afghanistan. The Army and Marine Corps have developed rotation plans that allow equipment to be sent back to the United States for depot-level maintenance cycles which essentially rebuilds equipment and extends its service life.

Equipment availability may pose challenges depending on equipment requirements for operations in Afghanistan. Army and Marine Corps officials stated that they are in the process of determining equipment requirements for Afghanistan; however, final equipment needs will be based on several factors such as the type of operations, force structure, and capabilities needed. For example, Army and Marine Corps officials recently stated that operations in Afghanistan may require lighter body armor and lighter MRAP vehicles. In addition, geographic and environmental factors also play a role in determining equipment requirements for Afghanistan. For example, heavy brigade combat teams, which include tanks, may not be well suited for the Afghanistan terrain. As a result, the Army is currently developing a lighter version of the MRAP vehicle better suited for the difficult terrain of Afghanistan. Also, given the fact that, since 2006, there have been about 4,800 Army, Marine Corps, and joint urgent needs requests processed to date for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is likely that the number of urgent needs requests will

[10]GAO, *Defense Logistics: Army Has Not Fully Planned or Budgeted for the Reconstitution of Its Afloat Prepositioned Stocks*, GAO-08-257R (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 8, 2008).

increase in the future as DOD continues to build up its forces in Afghanistan.

In addition to ground equipment, DOD will need to assess its requirements for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities to support increased force levels in Afghanistan, given its current allocation of assets to support ongoing operations in Iraq. Although DOD has experienced a high level of mission success with ISR, our work has shown that DOD continues to face challenges in maximizing the use of these assets, including unmanned aerial systems.[11] ISR assets have proven especially useful in counter-insurgency operations and counter-terrorism, enabling the identification of improvised explosive devices and the enemy forces who planted them. In Iraq and Afghanistan, DOD has employed military ISR collection assets from each of the services, as well as national ISR collection assets. As a result of operational successes, the demand for and use of ISR assets continues to grow.

However, military commanders have also experienced numerous challenges that should be considered as DOD considers its options for adjusting force levels in Iraq to Afghanistan. During Operation Iraqi Freedom, difficulties in airborne ISR assets' abilities to provide strategic, operational, and tactical users with timely, accurate, and actionable intelligence were reported. In addition, our previous work has shown that DOD has faced challenges in optimizing the use of these assets, including unmanned aerial systems. For example, DOD continues to experience problems related to interoperability, availability of communications bandwidths, and airspace integration. Some unmanned aerial systems components cannot easily exchange and transmit data with ground forces because they were not designed to interoperable standards. In addition, stove-piped ISR allocation and tasking systems do not allow consideration of the capabilities of all available ISR assets in determining how best to meet the warfighters' needs. Commanders at the theater level do not have information on how assets controlled by tactical units are being employed, and tactical units do not have information on how theater-level assets or assets controlled by other tactical units are being used. Furthermore, DOD is still in the process of developing metrics to measure the performance of these assets. As we have recommended, improving visibility of all available ISR capabilities and establishing performance metrics would help DOD

[11]See GAO, *Unmanned Aircraft Systems: Advance Coordination and Increased Visibility Needed to Optimize Capabilities*, GAO-07-836, (Washington, D.C.: July 11, 2007).

identify needs, make decisions about priorities, and optimize the use of available assets.

The Report of the Joint Defense Science Board Intelligence Science Board Task Force on Integrating Sensor-Collected Intelligence stated in 2008 that the number of images and signal intercepts being captured by ISR assets is beyond the capacity of the current ISR infrastructure so there are backlogs of data waiting for translators or image interpreters. The Task Force made recommendations to improve integration of data from different types of ISR assets and ensure that information is visible and widely available to users. We are currently assessing DOD's processes for analyzing, using, and disseminating intelligence information and expect to report on these issues this summer.

Factors Affecting Transportation

Transportation issues should be a key factor in developing a strategy for Afghanistan and continue to be a challenge for commanders. Changes in regional staging base options, stresses on the limited military and commercial air fleets, and underdeveloped infrastructure in landlocked Afghanistan are only a few of the challenges that could exacerbate already difficult transportation into and around the country.

As noted by military officials, operations in landlocked Afghanistan depend on difficult and uncertain overland supply routes from neighboring countries. This makes airlift very important, but Afghanistan operations do not have the benefit of a nearby Kuwait-like environment where staging and reception occur. Kuwait affords the commanders in Iraq both air facilities and a seaport capable of handling ships. To support air operations, commanders in Afghanistan depend on access to bases such as Manas, Kyrgyzstan, which is still a distance from Afghanistan. However, this access may not continue and any strategy developed for operations in Afghanistan may have to consider a regional approach. To this end, the Commander, U.S. Transportation Command, has recently made efforts to secure other options supporting movement into Afghanistan. Land routes, such as the Khyber Pass, are also problematic. We have previously reported the lack of a transloading operation for materiel shipped into Afghanistan, similar to the one at the port of Kuwait for materiel going to Iraq, is a limiting factor. Currently, items being shipped by sea to Afghanistan enter through the port of Karachi, Pakistan, since Afghanistan is landlocked. Officials told us that establishing a transloading operation in Pakistan would be difficult.

U.S. strategy will have to consider the degree to which potentially overlapping operations, the increase in U.S. forces in Afghanistan and decrease of U.S. forces in Iraq, could stress U.S. strategic transportation assets, both military and commercial. The U.S. military primarily depends on commercial aircraft for strategic movement of military personnel (93 percent of DOD personnel during a crisis) and, to a lesser extent, for movement of equipment in a crisis or contingency. Military-contracted commercial aircraft currently do not enter either Iraq or Afghanistan, and military personnel and contractors must transfer to U.S. military aircraft to reach their final destinations. The Afghanistan situation differs from Iraq in that military aircraft moving passengers into Afghanistan must travel greater distances than those arriving in Iraq, and operations tempo and aircraft utilization will reflect these increased demands. Also, U.S. commercial aircraft do not deliver critical equipment into Afghanistan, and essential systems, like MRAPs, arrive via contracted Russian aircraft.

Limited existing facilities currently complicate arrival and onward movement of forces and equipment and, as we increase force levels, may have strategy implications for the near future. Ramp space and fuel availability have been improved since operations began, but infrastructure is limited and may influence the rate that forces can be received and moved forward. For example, the way fuel is obtained and distributed can potentially limit operations. In Afghanistan, Bagram is the hub for fuel distribution, and distribution within the country is difficult. In November 2008, the United States had over 100 forward deployed locations in Afghanistan. Most fuel deliveries are made to forward operating bases using commercial contractors, and we have found through our work that fuel contractors strike often, delay delivery of fuel, or arrive at destinations with fuel missing. Security issues include attacks and threats on fuel convoys, and DOD officials have told us that in June 2008, 44 trucks and 220,000 gallons of fuel were lost in such events. It is unclear how the increased number of troops will impact these issues.

Management and Oversight of Contractors

In Iraq and Afghanistan, DOD relies heavily on contractors to not only provide traditional logistical support—such as base operations support (e.g. food and housing) and the maintenance of weapons systems—but also intelligence analysis and interpreters who accompany military patrols. DOD officials have stated that without a significant increase in its civilian and military workforce, the department is likely to continue to rely on contractors in support of future deployments.

Our body of work has identified several long-standing and systemic problems that continue to hinder DOD's management and oversight of contractors at deployed locations, which have led to negative financial and operational impacts. Although we have made a number of recommendations aimed at addressing these challenges, DOD has made limited progress in implementing these recommendations. The key problems we have identified include the following:

- **Lack of adequate numbers of contract oversight personnel:** Having the right people with the right skills to oversee contractor performance is crucial to ensuring the efficient and effective use of contractors. However, most of the contract oversight personnel we have met with in conducting work at deployed locations have told us DOD does not have adequate personnel at those locations. We have found several cases in Iraq where too few contract oversight personnel limited DOD's ability to identify savings, monitor contractor performance, or resolve contractor performance issues. While these personnel shortfalls are a DOD-wide problem, the more demanding contracting environment at deployed locations creates unique difficulties for contract oversight personnel. Although the Army is taking steps to increase its acquisition workforce, this will take several years, and in the interim, the problems posed by personnel shortages in Iraq and elsewhere are likely to become more significant in Afghanistan as we increase the number of forces and the contractors who support them there.

- **Failure to systemically collect and distribute lessons learned:** DOD has made few efforts to leverage its institutional knowledge and experiences using contractors to support deployed forces, despite years of experience using contractors to support deployed forces in the Balkans, Southwest Asia, Iraq, and Afghanistan. As a result, many of the management and oversight problems we identified in earlier operations have recurred in current operations. For example, we found that a guidebook developed by U.S. Army, Europe on the use of a logistical support contract in the Balkans was not made available to military commanders in Iraq until 2006, limiting their ability to build on efficiencies the Army had previously identified. We have also found a failure to share best practices and lessons learned between units as one redeploys and the other deploys to replace it. Given these challenges, we have concerns that lessons learned from the experience of using contractors to support forces deployed in Iraq may not be shared with forces deploying to Afghanistan and many of the contractor-related issues in Iraq may therefore recur in Afghanistan.

- **Inadequate training of military commanders and contract oversight personnel:** We have issued multiple reports regarding the need for better pre-deployment training of military commanders and contract oversight personnel on the use of contractor support at deployed locations. Limited or no pre-deployment training on the use of contractor support can hinder the ability of military commanders to adequately plan for the use of contractors and cause confusion. Several commanders of combat units that deployed to Iraq told us that limited or no pre-deployment training on services contractors would limit their ability to integrate the need to provide on-base escorts for third country and host country nationals, convoy security, and other force protection support to contractors into their planning efforts. As a result, the commanders were surprised by the substantial portion of their personnel they had to allocate to fulfill these missions — personnel they had expected to be available to perform other functions. Lack of training also hinders the ability of contract oversight personnel, such as contracting officer's representatives, to effectively manage and oversee contractors, creating a variety of problems including concerns about the quality of services being provided and difficulties reviewing contractor performance. Although DOD has taken steps to improve the contractor-related training of military commanders and contract oversight personnel, it is likely that training-related problems will continue to affect the management and oversight of contractors in Afghanistan.

- **Background screening of host nation and third country contractor personnel:** While contractor employees can provide significant benefits to U.S. forces, they can also pose a security risk to U.S. troops, particularly when U.S. forces are involved in a military operation against an insurgency, as they are in Iraq. DOD and contractors, however, have difficulty conducting background screenings of host nation and third country national contractor employees because of a lack of reliable information. Recognizing the limitations of data, military officials responsible for security at installations in Iraq and elsewhere told us that they take steps such as searching contractors and escorting contractors on base to mitigate the risks contractors, particularly non-U.S. contractors, pose. U.S. forces in Afghanistan currently work with a number of host nation and third country contractor employees. The number of these employees will likely go up as the U.S. presence in Afghanistan increases, further exacerbating challenges related to background screening.

In addition to these long-standing challenges, the unique aspects of Afghanistan along with ongoing efforts regarding the drawdown of forces

in Iraq may present additional challenges regarding the use of contractors to support forces deployed to Afghanistan.

- **Different language needs:** DOD relies on contractors to provide linguist services in Iraq and Afghanistan. As the U.S. presence increases in Afghanistan, so too will demand for contractor personnel able to speak the languages in Afghanistan. The pool of Arabic linguists will not be useful in supporting this requirement, and the department may find it difficult to rapidly acquire sufficient numbers of qualified individuals to support the mission in Afghanistan.

- **Transportation and security concerns:** Operation Iraqi Freedom required the movement of large numbers of personnel and equipment over long distances into a hostile environment involving harsh desert conditions. The collective effort of military, civilian, and contractor personnel in Iraq since then has been complicated by the country's lack of a permissive security environment. Afghanistan presents its own unique transportation and security concerns that will need to be factored into how contractors will be able to support the increased number of U.S. forces and, potentially, bases in Afghanistan.

- **Drawdown will increase demands on contractors and contract oversight personnel in Iraq:** As noted above, the United States is planning for the drawdown of its forces in Iraq. However, our previous work has shown that there is not a one-for-one correlation between the number of troops withdrawn from a contingency and the number of contractors withdrawn. For example in 2003, we noted that when troop levels decreased in the Balkans, contract support increased as additional contractors were needed to continue the missions previously done by service members.[12] There may also be an increase in the overall use of contractors to support the drawdown effort itself. For example it is likely that DOD will need to increase its equipment reset capabilities in theater by adding contractors. These increased requirements will also increase the demands on contract oversight personnel to manage and oversee these contractors. Contract oversight personnel will also face increased requirements due to the need to close out contracts supporting forces in Iraq. As a result, these individuals may not be available to manage and oversee contractors in Afghanistan.

[12]GAO, *Military Operation: Contractors Provide Vital Services to Deployed Forces but Are Not Adequately Addressed in DOD Plans,* GAO-03-695 (Washington, D.C.: June 24, 2003).

Concluding Observations

As I have stated today and as we have previously recommended, in developing a comprehensive strategy for both Iraq and Afghanistan several basic principles apply; that is, both strategies should include clear and actionable near- and long-tem goals and objectives, as well as roles, responsibilities, resources to ensure success, and some means to measure progress. In addition, as DOD considers the diverse but related operational factors such as force availability, training, equipment, transportation, contracting, and related infrastructure and regional issues, these principles can be applied to both the drawdown in Iraq and the buildup in Afghanistan. As the United States develops a strategy for Iraq and Afghanistan, and related plans for adjusting force levels, we believe that increased awareness of significant challenges may improve their ability to successfully develop and execute a strategy.

In addition, transparency of these strategies and operational factors will also assist congressional decision makers with their oversight responsibilities, especially as Congress considers programmatic issues and funding requests.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you or other Members of the Committee may have at this time.

Contacts and Acknowledgements

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FEBRUARY 12, 2009

The Washington Post

The Promise In Iraq's Rebirth

By Samir Sumaida'ie
Saturday, February 7, 2009

When the United States went into Iraq in 2003, Americans had a very limited understanding of the country. Political pundits tended to reduce Iraq to neat categories: an oppressed Shiite majority; a Sunni minority linked to Saddam Hussein's regime; and the Kurds, who had no interest in remaining in Iraq. The strife between these supposedly monolithic communities was often portrayed as permanent and violent.

Much has happened since 2003. Iraq has emerged as a complex and sophisticated society with layers of identity and a diversity of loyalties and interests, all of which are in a dynamic state of change as the country makes an untidy yet fundamental transition from absolute dictatorship, through occupation and violence, to the beginning of a functioning parliamentary democracy.

The significance of the recent local elections must be understood within the context of this transition and change. What these elections reveal is far more than the relative strength or popularity of the various political players -- though this is important and should be studied carefully. These elections have shown that, finally, those who refused to accept the new order and were determined to defeat it by rendering the country ungovernable through violence have come to realize that they have lost; that the political process is the only game in town and that it is in their best interest to play by the new rules.

Those who had descended upon Iraq to defeat the United States through terrorism, initially finding favor and support from the "rejectionists," have themselves been rejected by the Iraqi people. Their strategy to ignite a sectarian civil war has failed. And though they still pose a threat to security, those extremist Islamists were comprehensively and strategically defeated in a Muslim country, a development of profound significance.

The elements in Iraq who thought that they could dominate and create a new form of dictatorship with the trappings of democracy have discovered that they must accept the principles of power sharing.

Furthermore, the elections have proved wrong those who had claimed that Iraqis could not comprehend democracy and therefore could not abide by its rules. The world watched as millions of ordinary Iraqis, proudly displaying their purple forefingers, declared their desire to choose their leaders, and the leaders themselves demonstrated their ability to make adjustments and compromises.

This is not to say that Iraq has finally and irrevocably arrived at a perfect form of democracy. Far from it. Iraq is still beset by daunting external and internal challenges. It does, however, mean that after defeating the extremists and terrorists among its people and demonstrating a repulsion

for sectarianism and a will to stay united, Iraq is set to consolidate all that it has achieved, with considerable help from the United States and others.

At the most critical junctures of this transition, Iraqis have demonstrated their independence and unity. This has given them more confidence in their future. Those who thought that they could dominate Iraq from outside, directly or by proxy, surely have realized that their influence will always be limited.

Looking ahead, the exact speed with which American troops are withdrawn must be determined by joint consultations between the political and military leaders of both countries within the parameters of the status-of-forces agreement. But the continued engagement of the United States in Iraq will be vital to ensuring that what has been achieved is not jeopardized, though the emphasis will inevitably shift from military issues to economic and diplomatic matters.

Our nations have mutual interests in Iraq's future. The success of Iraq would be an outstanding success of American foreign policy. If Iraq succeeds, it has the potential to become one of the most important assets and allies of the United States. This is the beginning of a new era in our relationship, one that opens the way to a flourishing economic, cultural, political and diplomatic partnership that augurs well for the future.

The writer is Iraq's ambassador to the United States.

The Washington Post

Iraq's Winning Vote

Elections strengthen secular moderates who seek to curb Iran's influence. Will President Obama support them?

Wednesday, February 4, 2009

IRAQ'S FIRST postwar election four years ago was mostly a procedural victory: Iraqis sent a message to the world by turning out en masse despite intimidation from al-Qaeda and the pervasive threat of violence. Last weekend's vote, which occurred during one of the calmest periods Iraq has experienced since the U.S. invasion, was a political triumph. Though results are still preliminary, they show that voters strongly rewarded Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki for his forceful action against extremist militias and his secular nationalist agenda -- and punished religious parties perceived as too sectarian or too close to Iran. The nonsectarian alliance of former prime minister Ayad Allawi also appears to have done well, and nationalist Sunnis gained influence in areas where they had lacked it because of previous election boycotts. In short, Iraq appears to have taken a step toward becoming the moderate Arab democracy that the Bush administration long hoped for.

The big winner in Iraq's first elections four years ago was the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, a Shiite movement with its own militia that was backed by Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani and that maintained close links with Iran. The party favored splitting off Iraq's Shiite provinces into a separate region, and some of its leaders were deeply involved in sectarian warfare against Sunnis. That record appears to have been decisively rejected in last weekend's vote: Mr. Maliki's State of Law ticket appears to have finished first in Baghdad, in the southern port of Basra and in every southern province but one. Candidates backed by Moqtada al-Sadr, whose Iranian-backed militia was trounced by the Iraqi army last year, did well in places, but not well enough to restore his former influence.

Some results remain unclear and may bring trouble. Sunni tribesmen who led the fight against al-Qaeda in Anbar province threatened to go to war if the results showed them second to the rival Iraqi Islamic Party, and authorities promised an investigation of possible fraud there. Overall turnout, at 51 percent, was lower than authorities hoped for, perhaps partly because of the displacement of many citizens in Baghdad and Anbar. But in Nineveh province, home of the important city of Mosul, Sunni nationalists will probably take over the local government, which may defuse one of the last centers of the insurgency.

Oddly, the biggest beneficiary of the election other than Mr. Maliki may be President Obama, who has been a skeptic both of progress in Iraq and the value of elections in unstable states. Mr. Obama acknowledged on Monday that "Iraqis just had a very significant election with no significant violence" and called that "good news" -- but only in the sense that it could justify withdrawing "a substantial number" of U.S. troops this year. While such a drawdown is certainly a desirable goal, the president would do well to recognize, value and exploit the very real political progress Iraq has made -- and to be careful not to undercut it by acting too quickly on his exit strategy.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

FEBRUARY 12, 2009

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. ABERCROMBIE

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. I have seen recent initiatives by the Defense Secretary to increase Afghan National Army forces to 122,000 troops and the Afghan National Police to 82,000 troops for a total of 204,000 Afghan National Security Forces. The cost of this force will be approximately $3.5 Billion dollars a year when Afghanistan has an estimated revenue of about $670 Million dollars. If Afghanistan experienced 9% real economic growth per year and revenue extraction doubled to 12%, both completely unrealistic forecasts, it would take ten years for the Afghan Government to take in $2.5 billion dollars; a one billion dollar shortfall after a decade. Is the U.S. proposing an unfeasible strategy for Afghan security?

Dr. CORDESMAN. [The information referred to was not available at the time of printing.]

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Are the original wartime goals we have set for the U.S. in Afghanistan too unrealistic and not achievable? If unachievable, what should the new end state goals be?

Dr. CORDESMAN. [The information referred to was not available at the time of printing.]

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. 1st Lieutenant Jonathan Brostrum, a constituent of mine, and eight other American Soldiers were killed at the battle of Wanat battling over 200 Taliban Insurgents. A force of about 40 Americans were at that remote outpost. A shortage of engineers, Forward Operating Base force protection, ISR assets and long flight times for Attack and MEDEVAC helicopters to get to the scene exposed significant risk to an isolated platoon. The reality is there will be significant shortfalls in these enabling forces in both theatres. Isn't the new strategy to surge 30,000 more troops only going to increase the risk to many more of our Soldiers and Marines?

General KEANE. [The information referred to was not available at the time of printing.]

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. What should be done to attempt to separate Islamist movements like the Taliban from al Qaeda instead of casting them in a monolithic framework?

General KEANE. [The information referred to was not available at the time of printing.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. HEINRICH

Mr. HEINRICH. Many observers believe that there is a critical shortage of enablers, particularly ISR assets. In the short term, how can we balance the need to increase ISR assets in Afghanistan while maintaining a high level in Iraq?

Dr. CORDESMAN. [The information referred to was not available at the time of printing.]

Mr. HEINRICH. What shortfalls, in terms of soft power, are present in Afghanistan and what specific, successful methods do you think can be adopted from Iraq?

Dr. CORDESMAN. [The information referred to was not available at the time of printing.]

Mr. HEINRICH. Quick Reaction Funds have shown to have some success for PRTs in Iraq; do you feel this strategy can be replicated in Afghanistan to increase their effectiveness?

Dr. CORDESMAN. [The information referred to was not available at the time of printing.]

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