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AL-QAEDA IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN: AN ENDURING THREAT

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BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, NONPROLIFERATION, AND TRADE

OF THE

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AL-QAEDA IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN: AN ENDURING THREAT

TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2014

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, NONPROLIFERATION, AND TRADE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:32 p.m., in room 2200, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Adam Kinzinger presiding.

Mr. KINZINGER. The subcommittee will come to order. Without objection, all members may have 5 days to submit statements, questions, and extraneous materials for the record, subject to the length limitation in the rules. I want to say on behalf of all of us, thank you to our witnesses for being here to talk about what I think is an extremely important issue, the issue of the future of what we are seeing with regards to al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. As we actually look forward right now at a post-2014 plan in Afghanistan, we see that the threat of al-Qaeda, in my mind, has not diminished really at all from what we saw pre-9/11. We continue to see a country that is overridden by al-Qaeda. It is no secret that I support a strong, robust, residual force to protect the significant strides that we have made in Afghanistan.

I recently had the privilege of leading a CODEL to Afghanistan and Pakistan this past November with the hope of getting an objective view of what is needed on the ground by our troops, our commanders, and our State Department personnel serving in the region. I came away with renewed sense of optimism on happenings on the ground. The Afghan forces have been improving. The green on blue killings that was strategized by our enemy to try to undermine the sense of trust that exists have been on the decline. Infiltrators have been sharply cut down, and we are no longer conducting unilateral missions except for counterterrorism operations. With that said, al-Qaeda remains very strong.

Reducing our footprint in Afghanistan will inevitably curtail our ability to directly confront al-Qaeda in the region. When making post-2014 troop level determinations, we must fully evaluate the risk that comes with a too aggressive drawdown. To arbitrarily pick a number based on political expediency, diminishes the sacrifice that our brave men and women continue to make in Afghanistan.

You know, I remember in 2001, I was actually driving to work, and I had just graduated from Illinois State University, and I remember hearing that a plane hit the World Trade Center and it

went through my mind as a newly minted private pilot, I said, well, how in the world can a plane hit a building on a beautiful morning? And then I heard a second plane hit the World Trade Center, and then the field in Pennsylvania, and the Pentagon not far from here.

And at that point, I think American life changed completely. Up through the 1990s, we were under this impression that America was a country that was protected by two oceans, the idea of any kind of a terrorist attack was always for over there, and not necessarily for here with the exception of the occasional domestic terrorist. And that whole reality was changed.

And as a country, we mobilized to this idea of defeating al-Qaeda where they exist. This idea of finding America's enemies that would seek to destroy us, and, in essence, destroying them first and depriving them of their ability to recruit more people and more fighters. And I think when you look at the history of both Iraq and Afghanistan, we can judge the last 10 to 13 years and say there were things we could have done better. I think there are things we could have done worse. When I look into Afghanistan today and I see girls going to school, I see women with rights that they didn't have prior to 9/11, I see al-Qaeda with the fear that there is going to be a missile that strikes them at any moment, I think we have made a lot of gains.

And my big concern, and one of the things I look forward to hearing from the witnesses about, my big concern is that for the hope of political expediency, as I briefly touched on, we are going to end what President Obama called "the Good War," the war in Afghanistan, that we are going to end this prematurely simply to follow a campaign promise.

So I do look forward to hearing from the witnesses and at this point I will turn over to the ranking member, Mr. Sherman from California, for 5 minutes for his opening comments.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be in and out of this room because for me, today is a festival of subcommittees. We have not only this, but the Asia Subcommittee and the Insurance Subcommittee all meeting simultaneously. I thank the witnesses for being here. I was hoping to see my old friend, Husain Haqqani who I know cannot be here for medical reasons. This hearing will help us understand al-Qaeda's evolving structure and hopefully help us craft a more effective counterterrorism policy. Al-Qaeda has failed to carry out a major attack on the United States' homeland, however, the danger still remains. Al-Qaeda's structure, of course, has become more decentralized with most terrorist activity now conducted by its regional and local affiliates.

Over the past few years, al-Qaeda's core in Pakistan has been weakened by the loss of key leaders, most notably, a truly heroic attack that netted bin Laden, one that took incredible courage from our special forces to carry out, and also took very substantial political courage to order. I am sure that the efforts by President Carter to rescue our hostages came to mind when political leaders had to make the decision as to whether to go forward with that mission. And of course, that decision was correct.

Congress should work with the administration to reform the Authorization for the Use of Military Force. I was here when that was

passed. It was passed in haste as it should have been with great emotion, which was natural. But it now needs substantial revision to balance our desire to deal with terrorism on the one hand, and defend our privacy and liberties on the other. And now, as we see Boko Haram and other terrorist organizations that may not fall under the ambit of the authorization to use military force, because they may not exactly be linked, may be ideologically linked to al-Qaeda, but such terrorist organizations pose just as great a threat to us as the al-Qaeda franchises. So whether you are—whether you have the al-Qaeda franchise in North Africa, or Yemen, or wherever, or you don't, Islamic extremism poses a threat to the United States.

Our systematic effort to dismantle terrorist organizations must continue as the President himself said. We would like to end this war. It is the longest in our history. But we can't end it until the enemy is vanquished. As to whether we are leaving Afghanistan too quickly and for political reasons, I would have to disagree with our acting chairman. First of all, remember, it was not this administration who picked Karzai and installed him. And it is Karzai who, to this moment, is prohibiting any troops from remaining in Afghanistan through—past the end of this year.

The generals, our military staff has determined what is an appropriate number of forces to leave there with the goal of combating terrorism and training the Afghan Army. This is not a political decision. This is an appropriate military decision, and I think that we ought to unify behind it.

The United States, hopefully with a new President of Afghanistan, will remain active in that country. We continue to offer $25 million reward for Zawahiri. We continue to seek out the other key al-Qaeda leadership.

I would like our witnesses to focus on a number of issues. One of those is the current strength and capacities of Afghan security forces, and their adversaries, the Taliban, the Haqqani network, al-Qaeda itself. The second is the nature of the ISI's relationship with the Afghan Taliban, the Pakistani Taliban, the Haqqani network, and al-Qaeda, and Islamabad's cooperation with the United States. And this is a truly difficult to understand situation. It is clear that there are elements of the Pakistani Government that are cooperating with terrorists, and it is clear that there are terrorists who, given the chance, would murder the entire family of many of the leaders in the Pakistani Government.

It is the politics I don't completely understand. Perhaps the witnesses will shed some light on it. I hope they also focus on how well the Gulf states are in stopping terrorist financing and whether there are any elements of the terrorist organizations that we are talking about here that some of those countries find acceptable as a recipient of charitable dollars. And so we have a lot to hear and I will yield back.

Mr. KINZINGER. Well, thank you, Mr. Sherman. Without objection, all of the witnesses' prepared statements will be made a part of record. I ask that each witness please keep your presentation to no more than 5 minutes and we will begin with our first panel of witnesses.

Mr. David Sedney is the former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs. Mr. Sedney has received the Secretary of Defense medal for Meritorious Civilian Service, Department of State's Superior Honor Award six times, and the Department of State's Meritorious Honor Award twice. It is nice to have you here, sir. Mr. Sedney, we will start with you. You have 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF MR. DAVID SEDNEY (FORMER DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN, AND CENTRAL ASIA, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE)

Mr. SEDNEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, representatives, thank you for holding this hearing, the subject of which I think is vital to national security. As both of you have pointed out in your statement, al-Qaeda remains a threat to the United States. There is a narrative about al-Qaeda that I think is proving to be increasingly wrong, and that narrative is that al-Qaeda is much less of a threat today and is on the way to extinction or to strategic defeat. That narrative, I find is belied by the facts, and I think it is very important for us to look at this and my co-panelists are more experienced in some of the ramifications, but I look at it very much from the perspective of Afghanistan and Pakistan. We went into Afghanistan after 9/11 as you described, Mr. Chairman, with the explicit intention of defeating al-Qaeda and making sure that the Taliban couldn't come back to Afghanistan and make a safe haven for Afghanistan again for themselves and for al-Qaeda or similar terrorist organizations.

We have succeeded for the time being in Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda is virtually not present in Afghanistan except for a small group in Nuristan, which is primarily right now focused on events inside Afghanistan, is not, at least in my judgment, is not a direct threat to the United States now, but could be in the future if pressure was not continued to be placed on them.

However, where did al-Qaeda go? It went to Pakistan. And as the ranking member described, we have kept, as you, Mr. Chairman, have described, we have kept strong pressure on al-Qaeda, but we have not managed to defeat al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda still has a number of leaders there. There are still numbers of adherents for al-Qaeda go to Pakistan seeking training, seeking entry. Al-Qaeda is very choosey about who they let into their ranks, but they continue to have people who want to join. The reason for that is what is important about al-Qaeda is not so much any individual leader, it is the organization. And what is important about the organization is the ideology behind it. And that ideology is based on a belief that it is the destiny of humanity, to live under a caliphate similar to that which ruled in what is now Saudi Arabia almost 1,500 years ago. The al-Qaeda have been very explicit in that that is their goal, the recreation of a caliphate and to have it first in the areas where their religion began, but then to have it spread throughout the entire world.

So this is really an ideological conflict, and the attraction of people who come to join al-Qaeda is an attraction of ideology. They believe in that vision as well. They see the United States and our

western allies as an obstacle to achieving that vision, and they see the country of Afghanistan as a place where they played a major role. This is again their narrative, in defeating one of the two superpowers of the 20th century, the Soviet Union, and that they are now in the process of defeating the second superpower, now the world's only superpower, the United States in Afghanistan. And they do so because they have this narrative because they are less worried about what happened yesterday, what's happening today, or what is happening tomorrow, than what their destiny is, which is to take over, first Afghanistan, and then other areas that they want to have the caliphate in.

The effort in Afghanistan after the United States pushed the Taliban out and pushed al-Qaeda out in 2001, has been an extremely strong and resilient effort on the part of the Taliban with the support of al-Qaeda. When I was in Afghanistan from 2002, 2003, and 2004, we clearly had some initial successes, but we saw the buildup of opposition to the government there, and it was very effective. By 2008, Afghanistan was close to falling to the Taliban, and if they had, they would have brought al-Qaeda back with them.

President Obama announced a surge, and put in place a surge that pushed the Taliban back, but has far from negated the Taliban's ability to threaten the state of Afghanistan. One of the most important successes in response to the ranking member's question about the capability of the Afghan security forces, is success of the Afghan security forces, particularly the Afghan Army, which in the recent elections had not just a lead role, but almost completely exclusive responsibility for protecting those elections against the Taliban's declared intention to prevent those elections from happening. Not only did they not prevent them from happening, but the elections succeeded beyond anyone's expectation, with almost twice as many people voting in this year's election as did 5 years ago.

That is a strategic defeat for the Taliban and a strategic defeat for al-Qaeda. That is the kind of strategic defeat that we need to continue to inflict by having the kind of strong military, civilian, and assistance presence in Afghanistan that you described, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you, Mr. Sedney.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sedney follows:]

Testimony of David Sedney
Independent Commentator/Analyst and
Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
for Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia[1]

For the

House of Representatives' Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade

May 20, 2014 Hearing on

Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan: An Enduring Threat

[1] The opinions and analyses expressed in this testimony are solely those of the author. The description of the author as "Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia" is for identification purposes only and does not imply in any way approval by the Department of Defense or the United States Government of the views herein expressed.

Chairman Poe and Ranking Member Sherman, and Members of the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade of the House of Representatives' Committee on Foreign Affairs, thank you for holding this hearing today on a subject of vital national importance for the safety and security of the American people - the future threat to our country from Al-Qaeda and its affiliates in Afghanistan and Pakistan as we and our NATO allies draw down our forces in Afghanistan in 2014.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the many Americans, military and civilian, who have served our country in Afghanistan and Pakistan over the twelve-plus years since our country was attacked on September 11, 2001. Most importantly, I want to pay tribute to the over 2,000 Americans who have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country in this conflict and the nearly 20,000 who have been wounded. Their commitment to defending us is a debt we must honor, but can never fully repay. I also want to express my respect and admiration for the family members of the hundreds of thousands who have served our country in this conflict. Their sacrifices, often little recognized and poorly understood, are the foundation that makes possible the extraordinary efforts on the ground in Afghanistan and Pakistan that have made our country safer over the years since 9/11. At the same time, I want to stress my admiration for the efforts and sacrifices on the part of our Allies and partners and, very importantly, I honor the people and security forces of Afghanistan and Pakistan who have suffered and continue to suffer in such large numbers from the attacks of terrorists and their supporters.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member and Members of the Committee I would also like to thank you and your colleagues in the Congress for your support for our troops and civilians in Afghanistan and Pakistan and for your attention to the needs of their families. I thank you for your commitment to the security of our nation through providing the resources for our efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan and, through hearings such as this, for your attention to and oversight of the strategies and policies that determine the success or failure of these efforts.

In response to the request from the Subcommittee to "discuss the threat to stability in Afghanistan and Pakistan from Al-Qaeda and their affiliates, and describe likely future security challenges given the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan over the course of 2014," I will focus on three areas. First, I will examine where we stand in Afghanistan regarding the present and future threat from Al-Qaeda and its affiliates; second, I will look at Pakistan from the same perspectives; and finally I will make recommendations on courses of action that I believe will make the United States, our Allies and partners, and Afghanistan and Pakistan more secure and better able to deal with the Al Qaida threat.

However, I will begin with a look at the overall strategic threat that Al-Qaeda and other terrorists groups pose and present a view that differs from what I would call "tactical analysis" of Al-Qaeda.

Much recent commentary, both from U.S. officials[2] and in the media, describes a "core Al-Qaeda" that is somewhere on a spectrum from "on the road to defeat" to "degraded." These analyses generally rely on evidence such as, the number of Al-Qaeda leaders who have been killed, the number of Al-Qaeda fighters in one place or another, the amount of Al-Qaeda funds, whether other terrorist organizations "formally" recognize Al-Qaeda's leadership, if Al-Qaeda's directives are followed by other terrorists, the ability of Al-Qaeda to direct specific operations, or other, similar, tactical indicators. Such analyses then take these tactical indicators as evidence that Al-Qaeda is less capable of immediate, coordinated actions and then draw broader conclusions that Al-Qaeda is less of a threat. These analyses[3] then claim that because Al-Qaeda is now more de-centralized, has many regional franchises, and depends more on individuals than on centrally directed operations, it is less of a threat.

But, a focus on the tactical risks misses the bigger, strategic picture and risks following policies that may not be effective. When the State Department's annual report on terrorism,[4] released in April, shows an increase from 2012 to 2013 of 43% in worldwide terrorists attacks, it is important to ask whether policy views of Al Qaida as a spent or terminally weakened force are accurate.

It is clear that Al-Qaeda is evolving.[5] However, it is likely that such evolution is making Al Qaida more, not less, of a threat. Therefore, it is important to ask both what this evolution means for the future and what policies we should adopt to reflect this changing landscape.

My view is that Al-Qaeda, despite our tactical counterterrorism successes, continues to be a major strategic threat to the United States and its allies. Tomorrow, Al-Qaeda will be an even greater threat because of its ongoing evolutions. Today, we see Al-Qaeda not only maintaining a core in Pakistan, but also continuing to push forward in Syria, Yemen, Somalia and elsewhere in Africa. Al-Qaeda still maintains its core ideology of an Islamic religious and governing structure that does not permit any others

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[2] U.S. State Department Press Briefing, April 30, 2014

[3] See for example, the U.S. State Department Country Reports on Terrorism, April 2014; http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225050.pdf, and discussion thereof, ibid.

[4] ibid.

[5] See, e.g. the analysis in Seth G. Jones, "Counterterrorism and the Role of Special Operations Forces'" Testimony Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Terrorism, Non-Proliferation, and Trade, April 8, 2014, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/CT400/CT408/RAND_CT408.pdf#page4

to exist, continues its core goal of a caliphate that governs peoples over a vast area (people that in fact reject Al Qaida), and holds to a core belief that the West, particularly the United States, is inimical by its very existence to Al-Qaeda.

I see no change in Al-Qaeda's self-narrative that its success is inevitable if it continues its struggle. Failures along the way do not undercut that Al Qaida narrative, in fact, they see temporary setbacks as challenges that, once overcome, validate the destiny that this narrative claims. A key part of the Al-Qaeda narrative is the conviction that its core beliefs formed the basis of the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s. That same conviction is the bedrock for the coming (in their view) defeat of the United States and NATO in Afghanistan. Increasing Taliban success in Afghanistan, leading to an eventual Taliban takeover would be a major strategic victory for Al-Qaeda and its ideology. An eventual Taliban and Al-Qaeda success in Afghanistan would more than negate all the tactical U.S. counterterrorism successes of recent years and produce a world much less safe for Americans.

There is no timeline for Al-Qaeda in its quests, unlike for many here in Washington. We often see our endeavors through the lens of timelines. We too often measure success or failure of national endeavors, no matter how complex, through whether deadlines are met, rather than whether objectives are achieved. There is a real danger that we may allow a focus on the tactical to lead to strategic error. A determination to hold to deadlines, rather than being adaptive and flexible, could well lead us into strategic errors that damage greatly our long-term national security.

Seizing Success in Afghanistan

Mr. Chairman, we have had major successes in Afghanistan, a fact poorly understood by most in the general public and actively denied by many, primarily those invested in a narrative of American failure. Our goal, since September 11, 2001 and over two administrations, has been to defeat Al Qaida and ensure that Afghanistan is never again a safe haven from which terrorists threaten Afghanistan, the region or the world. Despite huge obstacles and many bad policy choices on our part, we are on the way to achieving this goal in Afghanistan. And if we make the serious, sustained commitment that the threat to our country demands, we can not only achieve this goal, but also sustain it. The successes we are having and can continue to have validate the sacrifices that so many have made and must be a matter of pride to those who have served in Afghanistan and for all Americans.

Why do I say something that directly contradicts the belief, according to USA TODAY, of 52% of Americans that the U.S. has failed to achieve its goals in Afghanistan[6] and the report from CNN that of 82% of Americans oppose the war in Afghanistan[7]?

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[6] USA TODAY/Pew Research Center Poll; USA TODAY, 1/31/2014
[7] CNN/ORC International survey; CNN, 12.30/2013

Quite simply, the facts prove success. Here are the facts:

- Al-Qaeda is no longer active in Afghanistan, except for a small group in remote eastern Afghanistan that poses no threat to the U.S.[8]
- Afghan Security Forces, which took the lead for security in Afghanistan last year have the capability, if they receive necessary continued support from the U.S. and the international community, to keep Afghanistan secure from a Taliban takeover and a return of Al-Qaeda.[9]
- Afghanistan has made major progress in development indicators such as increased life expectancy, improved health and education services, and media freedom,[10] key areas that underpin the long-term survivability of an Afghan state that will reject Al-Qaeda. (Note: this progress has occurred despite the opposition to "nation building" by successive US administrations.)
- The Afghan people demonstrated their support for a future that is democratic and free and rejects the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in the elections of April 5, where over 60% of Afghans, twice as many as in previous elections turned out, despite Taliban threats to prevent the elections and despite serious attacks by the Taliban on the elections process.

This is not to say that Afghanistan does not have serious problems and vexing challenges. Corruption, narcotics trafficking and addiction, a fragile, aid-dependent economy, weak rule of law, are among many problems that Afghanistan, like other poor, conflict ridden states faces. One only has to follow the failure-centric international media to get a full dose of the negative. But, the real story, one that is hardly ever reported by the media, is the great achievements of the Afghan people over the past 12 years and the fact that this positive trajectory continues. The United Nations reports that over the past decade, Afghanistan has made more progress as a society than any other place in the world.[11] This progress in so many areas is basis for a sustainable victory over Al-Qaeda and its narrative that the best fate for Afghanistan is a return to the rule of the Taliban.

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[8] CNS Study, "Independent Assessment of the Afghan National Security Forces", http://www.cna.org/sites/default/files/research/CNA%20Independent%20Assessment%20of%20the%20ANSF.pdf

[9] Ibid, and International Crisis Group Report, "Afghanistan's Insurgency After the Transition," May 12, 2014, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/256-afghanistan-s-insurgency-after-the-transition.pdf

[10] USAID Fact Sheet. http://www.usaid.gov/news-information/fact-sheets/usaid-engagement-afghanistan-2014-and-beyond , and, Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index 2013, http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2013,1054.html

[11] http://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Sampler.pdf

The people of Afghanistan recognize the progress they have made and want more. Almost 60% of Afghans believe their country is headed in the right direction,[12] a figure far higher than most countries in the region or the world, and they have high hopes for the future. Afghans also give high positives to their army and police.[13] After the April elections, some Afghans even demonstrated in favor of their security forces, thanking them for protecting the polls[14]. These sentiments are a direct rebuttal of the Al-Qaeda narrative.

Perhaps most challenging to the Al-Qaeda narrative in Afghanistan is Afghanistan's free media, a media that is the object of Taliban attacks. From a time when television was non-existent and radio tightly controlled, Afghanistan's media today is full of political talk shows, soap operas, anti-crime dramas and even music. All areas that the Taliban detests and which would disappear under a Taliban return.

Is an Al-Qaeda return possible? It certainly is in the Al-Qaeda narrative, which has a victory in Afghanistan over the U.S. and the West as a key element. The Al-Qaeda leadership, while under pressure in Pakistan remains viable, but constricted. A return to Afghanistan would free Al-Qaeda of such constraints, giving it the space to re-open training camps and return to the coordinated, large-scale attacks that so damaged the U.S. and our allies in the past. Even more importantly, an Al-Qaeda return to Afghanistan would strengthen its narrative of inevitable victory, impel recruits to flock to its banner and lead to destabilization of other countries in the region and beyond.

Some question whether Taliban resurgence would include the return of Al-Qaeda to Afghanistan after a peace deal. A recent poll asked Afghans whether they thought the Taliban would respect any peace deal. Afghan doubt the Taliban would respect any such deal – in fact in a recent poll four times more Afghans thought the Taliban would not respect such a deal as thought they would (49% to 11%).[15]

We have the opportunity now, in Afghanistan, to deal the Taliban an even stronger blow than the death of Osama bin Laden. That blow would be the emergence of Afghanistan, Al-Qaeda's former base and the location of its earliest successes, as an independent, successful, progressive Islamic democracy, a full

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[12] The Asia Foundation poll. http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/2013AfghanSurvey.pdf

[13] ibid

[14] http://www.afghanistannewscenter.com/news/2014/february/feb272014.html#a8

[15] ATR Consulting Poll, p.6: http://atr-consulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Perception-Survey-Report-Final.pdf

member of the community of nations and a country able to defend itself. We need to seize the success we have achieved, continue to help Afghanistan deal with the many serious long-term problems it faces, and help Afghanistan be a model, like South Korea, of a country that faced near extinction from outside forces, but through the determination of its people and outside assistance becomes the antithesis of the forces that almost destroyed it. This is not a process that will take just a few years; it will take a continuing, serious, very long-term commitment. But, the dangers we face without such a commitment merit our taking on this task.

Cautious Pragmatism on Pakistan

Pakistan faces perhaps even more challenges than Afghanistan. In addition to a multi-faceted insurgency that has killed over 5000 Pakistani security forces and over 30,000 Pakistani civilians over the past decade[16], Pakistan faces massive economic and social challenges.

Pakistan is where the Al Qaida leadership has resided since being evicted from Afghanistan in 2001. Pakistan's leaders denied for years that Al-Qaeda's leadership was in Pakistan, claiming that Al-Qaeda's leaders, if they were anywhere, were in Afghanistan.[17] Following the operation that killed Osama Bin Laden, and the public revelations about the length of time and locations in Pakistan where Bin Laden lived, the U.S. government urged Pakistani authorities to take action against the remaining Al-Qaeda leadership. However, most media reports of actions against Al-Qaeda leaders since 2012 have attributed those actions to outside powers.

Al-Qaeda's current leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, apparently continues to reside in Pakistan (despite Pakistani denials[18]) from where he is currently carrying on a dispute with the leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sabah (ISIS) over the extent of Al-Qaeda's leadership in the global jihadist struggle.[19] Unfortunately, it appears that as long as there are areas of Pakistan that the Pakistani government does not fully control, such Al Qaida activism will continue.

As U.S. and NATO troops draw down in Afghanistan, the Taliban are expanding their military actions in Afghanistan[20]. While the Taliban lack the ability to threaten the survival of the Afghan state and Afghan forces are likely to be able to repulse Taliban

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[16] http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/casualties.htm
[17] Interview, John Stewart-President Pervez Musharraff; Sept. 6, 2006, http://thedailyshow.cc.com/videos/9078tw/pervez-musharraf-pt--1
[18] http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/hina-rabbani-khar-denies-hillary-clinton-s-claim-that-zawahiri-is-in-pakistan-207586

[19] CNN, http://www.cnn.com/2014/05/03/world/meast/ayman-al-zawahiri-message-syria/
[20] ICG report, opcit.

efforts to seize any important ground in Afghanistan, it is clear that the fact that the Taliban sanctuaries in Pakistan are vital to the Taliban's ability to carry out this increased pace of attacks.

Pakistan, facing its own insurgency, as well as dealing with a perceived threat from India is in a difficult position vis-à-vis the Afghan Taliban. If Pakistan were to attempt to take action against the Afghan Taliban it would risk adding another violent actor to its internal threats. Additionally, Pakistan appears to have some interest in maintaining existing links to the Taliban as a hedge against the U.S. and NATO leaving Afghanistan. In the case of a withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces, Pakistan would likely fear increased Indian activity in Afghanistan. These fears about India likely provide additional incentives for Pakistan to use the Taliban as a hedge.

At the same time, it is clear that Al Qaida, which like Pakistan, sees advantages from Taliban activism, seeks a Pakistan that adopts Al-Qaeda's ideology and preferred "caliphate" style of governance. Al Qaida has been connected in some media reports to efforts to attack Pakistani security forces. That might lead one to conclude that Pakistan should see Al-Qaeda as an existential threat. However, the situation is more complicated than that. Al Qaida has also been linked with some terrorist groups that in the past have been seen as linked to Pakistani security forces, such as Lashkar-e-Taiba. The Taliban share an interest with these groups in actions against India, particularly related to Kashmir.

It is beyond the scope of this testimony to explore in depth the many interconnections among these groups and the competing motivations that exist among the various groups and within the Pakistani government, which still faces severe civilian-military tensions, continues to experience both sectarian violence and acts such as successful (and attempted) assassinations of journalists that undercut the fabric of civil society. However, with regard to Al-Qaeda, it does appear that it should be in Pakistan's interests to take steps to remove Al-Qaeda leadership and support structures in order to reduce the overall threat level that Pakistan faces. But, in the end it is the state and people of Pakistan that must make that decision for themselves. Of course, that decision will have a major impact on the level and kind of threat that Al-Qaeda poses to the United States.

Policy recommendations:

Afghanistan: Given the importance that Al-Qaeda places on victory in Afghanistan and the advantages Al Qaida would achieve from a Taliban resurgence in Afghanistan, the United States should immediately make clear that it intends to retain a sufficient level of military forces to provide effective training, advising, and assisting Afghan forces, including key enablers such as air support, intelligence support, and logistical support. A public affirmation that the U.S. will not abandon Afghanistan, but rather will invest in a long-term relationship that includes both sufficient military and civilian assistance will provide certainty to actors from Pakistan and the Taliban to Al-Qaeda itself that Afghanistan will continue its positive evolution.

Pakistan: For Pakistan as well, a clear U.S. and NAO commitment to Afghanistan's future will help that countries leaders make choices that will both improve their own security and the safety of the U.S. and our allies and partners. Such a commitment would make more likely Pakistani action against the Taliban. Once Pakistan sees that the Taliban do not have a reasonable chance of succeeding militarily in Afghanistan, Pakistan will have a reduced interest in using the Taliban as a hedge against future install instability. An additional recommendation would be for the U.S. to seek to work with India to reduce Pakistani fears about the direction Afghanistan will take after 2014. With a sure commitment from the U.S. and NATO, Pakistan may see less of a threat from Indian policies in Afghanistan.

Mr. KINZINGER. The Honorable Michael Sheehan is the distinguished chair of the Combating Terrorism Center at the West Point Military Academy. Ambassador Sheehan has held positions at the New York Police Department, United Nations, U.S. Department of State, and was appointed by President Clinton as Ambassador-at-Large for Counterterrorism. Honored to have you here, sir. You have 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE MICHAEL A. SHEEHAN, DISTINGUISHED CHAIR, COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER, UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY AT WEST POINT

Mr. SHEEHAN. Thank you, sir. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member. I will keep my remarks short. My general theme is that we need to be a little bit more optimistic in what we are going to be able to achieve in Afghanistan and in fighting al-Qaeda and its affiliates around the world because sometimes our pessimism undermines our will to persevere in a war that I think is very winnable if we maintain certain tracks of action.

Let me highlight five key points from my written testimony, if I could, Mr. Chairman. First, that our CT policy in the AFPAK region for the last 13 years, actually has been an enormous success by the most important metric, and that is to prevent al-Qaeda from coming to our homeland and attacking again. It is very important to recognize this. We can push these guys back when we are determined.

Number two, the AFPAK area, both sides of the border is a unique place on the planet that breeds international terrorism and a brand of international terrorism with a history of targeting the United States' homeland.

Number 3, Afghanistan is a winnable war, but we must narrow our objectives, be a little bit more optimistic, and we are going to need to stay the course a little bit longer, but it is winnable. We should not despair. There is too much pessimism coming out of the news every day that the Pakistani Government is hopelessly corrupt, the Afghan Government is corrupt, the Pakistani Government is helping the Taliban, that things are horrible. We need to remain a little bit optimistic in order to persevere.

Fourth, a U.S. military and intelligence presence is absolutely essential to be in Afghanistan in order for us to continue our war against al-Qaeda central, which currently resides in Western Pakistan primarily in the FATA, as you know, the Federally Administered Tribal Area.

Fifth, we need to guarantee our mission in Afghanistan. If required, in my view, with U.S. air power, directed by our SOF elements that are on the ground there, if the Kabul government is threatened to be toppled by the Taliban. And if you recall that combination of U.S. air power and U.S. special forces after 9/11, they routed the Taliban within a few months. That is a very lethal combination. Of course, that type of authorization will only be provided by the President of the United States and the highest levels in Afghanistan. Let me quickly elaborate on these five points.

First, about our counterterrorism policy's enormous success. We have to remember that prior to 9/11 when al-Qaeda was not under pressure, they attacked us three times strategically in 37 months.

That is a strategic attack every year. They attacked our Embassies in East Africa, the USS Cole, and the 9/11 attacks from 1998 to 2001. If you leave al-Qaeda alone, they will have the capability to attack us strategically either at home or in core assets that are abroad. That is a clear lesson of that time. But when we are able to put pressure on them, as we have in the FATA primarily over the last 3 years, we prevented them from being able to organize those types of strategic attacks, and they have tried to do so. I will go into some of those examples if I have time later.

Secondly, the AFPAK area is unique. It is the heart of al-Qaeda that attacked the U.S. historically. It is a unique place, a stew of foreign fighters, wannabe terrorists and numerous violent jihadi groups with agendas against Afghanistan, United States, India, Pakistan. Many of them are supported by the Pakistani Government for different agendas. They mix together, in a very lethal combination of organizations that sometimes work together, sometimes independently, but they are very problematic.

We should recall my nightmare from when I was at NYPD someone like Faisal Shahzad, the Times Square bomber, lived in Connecticut, smart guy, married, Wall Street guy, traveled to Pakistan four times, wanted to get to al-Qaeda, but couldn't and was trained by the TTP. Fortunately, his training was bad and the bomb in Times Square fizzled out. In my view, that was not an accident. His failure was a direct result of the pressure we put on those groups in the FATA. If we removed the pressure, they will reconstitute the safehouses, training areas, lines of communication, indoctrination places that existed prior to 9/11 when I was Ambassador-at-Large for Counterterrorism and I was looking through different aerial images of bin Laden in his camps and we weren't able to get to him. They were not under pressure and they were able to attack us. We can never allow that to happen again.

Third point, the U.S. presence in Afghanistan is essential to continue providing, to continue pounding al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. There is simply no other viable alternative than Afghanistan, especially now after Ukraine, the countries up in the north, it is very unlikely we are going to be able to do anything there, and it is too far away. The seaborne area where we conducted operations, launched missiles from the Indian Ocean in 1998 and 1999, that doesn't work very well either. We need to be in Afghanistan not only because it is close, but to continue our human intelligence, our other intelligence operations that enable us to pound al-Qaeda in the FATA, or in Afghanistan if they try to get back in there.

Number four. This is a winnable war. Too often we despair. The Taliban are not 10 feet tall. They do have sanctuary in Pakistan, however, which is extremely problematic. An insurgency always needs sanctuary, either in a—ideally, across a border which gives them some protection, or in some remote area within the country. The Taliban used both, but the border area of Pakistan, the support they get from them is extremely problematic, and we should understand while that happens, and I don't see it stopping any time soon, the Taliban is going to be around for a long time. They will likely control areas in Afghanistan for a long time. And they will be able to conduct the periodic terrorist attacks in Kabul that

we see. But I hope that the Afghan Government can persevere through that.

The conditions of the 1990s when the Taliban took over Afghanistan do not exist now and their prospects are dim for repeating that. One of it has to do with the security forces that are in Afghanistan that David Sedney talked to. This is a serious army. We also, I have been out many times with their special forces units that were trained by our special forces units about 14,000 or 15,000 of them. These are tough fighters committed to action, multiethnic, and a serious fighting force. So it is a very different situation in the 1990s.

Fifth and finally, I believe we must guarantee our commitment to Afghanistan with our U.S. Air Force there supported by SOF on the ground, just in case the Taliban try to run of the ring highway like they did in 1995 and 1996. If they were to do that with a major offensive, we can pound them, route them into submission and keep the government secure.

So in sum, the area of Afghanistan and Pakistan is a vital interest to U.S. security. It is uniquely a terrorist threat to our homeland. We must remain in Afghanistan in order to deal with the threat in Pakistan. Perhaps 10,000 or some other number that is kicked around may be enough. But we need to have the right forces there in order to sustain that operation. And we should be optimistic that we can do that. And my final point——

Mr. KINZINGER. I will have to ask you to wrap it up very briefly, sir.

Mr. SHEEHAN. My final point, Mr. Chairman, is that al-Qaeda, unique among other organizations, seeks WMD and would use it tomorrow to kill us in mass numbers. Thank you.

Mr. KINZINGER. Well said. Thank you Mr. Ambassador.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sheehan follows:]

Testimony for the Record

The Honorable Michael A. Sheehan
For the House Foreign Affairs Committee
May 19, 2014

Sustaining Our Success Against al Qaeda Central

President Obama will deliver a major foreign policy address at the U.S. Military Academy's graduation at West Point on May 28th and I am sure he will address the war in Afghanistan with the cadets. It is unlikely he will make an announcement on the final size of our forces post 2014, but when that decision is made, I hope that he will leave enough capability to sustain the success we have had against al Qaeda Central in protecting our homeland and other strategic targets since September 11, 2001.

Currently, the US military and the CIA continue to withdraw from remote areas of Afghanistan and are consolidating in a smaller number of bases. President Obama has promised that American combat action will end at the end of 2014, and the war is being completely turned over to the Afghan government.

The American people are tired of 13 years of war since 9/11 and the Afghan people are tired of the US military rumbling around their country in combat action. The news flowing from the region is consistently negative: the Taliban is gaining ground all the time, the Pakistani government continues to exacerbate the situation by harboring enemy groups, and the Afghan government is hopelessly corrupt. It is hard to remain optimistic in light of these constant reports. There will a great temptation for the Administration to go to the "zero option" and withdraw all our troops by the end of the President's second term. In my view, this would be a major error and jeopardize our security from future al Qaeda attacks from this region.

As we contemplate our future in Afghanistan, it is important to maintain a proper perspective and a degree of optimism. For the US government, our military and intelligence efforts in Afghanistan and eastern Pakistan have been an *unmitigated success in terms of the single most important metric: preventing al Qaeda from attacking our homeland*. This was incomprehensible in September 2001 when our television networks were flooded with instant terrorism experts predicting dire scenarios of future al Qaeda attacks.

And although some exaggerated the future of the al Qaeda threat, it is real and significant. Prior to 2001, when al Qaeda was under no pressure, they conducted three strategic attacks in three years: the African embassy bombings in August of 1998, the attack against the USS Cole in October of 2000, and the attacks of September 11, 2001. No other terrorist organization has such a record, especially with such a shocking and devastating attack in our homeland. But, al Qaeda has been under relentless pressure since we invaded Afghanistan in November of 2001,

and has been unable to attack our homeland or core assets since. The lesson is clear: if "al Qaeda Central" is left alone they can organize strategic attacks with regularity. Under pressure, they cannot.

The so-called "Af-Pak" border region is the historic center of the most deadly attacks against the U.S. Currently, al Qaeda leadership is predominantly in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of western Pakistan. They remain the leaders of the global jihadi movement and are surrounded by militant organizations and individuals looking to be part of an operation against the U.S. homeland. It is a unique "stew" of foreign fighters, wannabe terrorists and violent jihadi groups with a variety of enemies including India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the United States. If we take the pressure off this traditional safe-haven, they will reconstitute the training camps, safe houses and other networks that enabled their operations prior to 9/11. We have successfully pounded this area with hell fire missiles in the past ten years, denying the jihadi leaders the ability to organize sophisticated attacks. And we have been able to keep al Qaeda in check in Pakistan without U.S. ground forces in their country. In Afghanistan, our Special Operations Forces have crushed al Qaeda elements that have tried to reconstitute safe haven back across the Afghan border. This is an enormous success story.

But the threat remains active. We should remember Faisal Fazad, the Times Square bomber from Connecticut. He was able to travel to western Pakistan multiple times to get training and indoctrination and was not suspected by our Homeland Security apparatus. Fortunately, his training was poor and his bomb fizzled out on Broadway. This was not luck, in my view, but a direct result of our relentless pressure on al Qaeda in the FATA. But our efforts do not guarantee there will be no attacks. The Boston bombing and the Fort Hood shooting by Major Hassan reminds us that the "lone wolf" terrorist can attack our homeland. But these attacks, although tragic for the victims and their families, do not constitute a strategic threat to the United States. "Boston Strong" showed the resiliency of the American people to such attacks.

A U.S. presence in Afghanistan is essential to continue the successful pressure on the terrorists in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. There is no viable way to reach the terrorist basses in Pakistan other than from Afghanistan. The Taliban, who continue to provide sanctuary to al Qaeda, must be prevented from re-taking control of Afghanistan. In determining our future presence in Afghanistan, we must not fall victim to unwarranted pessimism. The Taliban are not ten feet tall. They are a tough, resilient group that enjoys an external sanctuary in Pakistan, a major advantage for their insurgency. As such, the Taliban will be able to conduct periodic terrorist attacks in Kabul and control some remote parts of the country over the next many years. However, its prospects for regaining control of Afghanistan are dim. If the Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, reappeared to lead a major Taliban offensive like he did in 1995, he would be killed within days. The conditions of the 1990s that enabled the Taliban to take power no longer exist, especially in terms of the security equation.

Today, the Afghan Army is a much more formidable institution, consisting of over 300, 000 troops. Within this force are some very serious fighters. For example, 14,000 Afghan special operations forces were trained by some of our most outstanding Special Forces warriors and have developed into a credible and multi-ethnic fighting force. Over 20,000 local police militias have formed to fight the Taliban at the grass roots. And air power, including the future delivery of 30 MI-17 helicopters to the Afghan Air Force, will be a game changer.

With a reduced American presence, our future mission in Afghanistan must be *extremely narrow*, consisting of two objectives: 1) preventing the collapse of the Kabul government and 2) maintaining pressure on terrorist groups on both sides of the Af-Pak border. All other worthy objectives in Afghanistan regarding democracy, economic development, and social justice are a bonus. Our pessimism, to some extent, is of our own making -- in that we continuously raised the bar of success from defeating al Qaeda to transforming Afghanistan into a modern state.

Pentagon and CIA officials informally have agreed with White House staff that they can accomplish this mission with a force of some 10,000 U.S. troops post 2014. They will be assigned primarily at Bagram Air Base north of Kabul, but also at other installations to support our counter terrorism missions. In addition, the force would include Special Forces advisors that will continue to train, advise and assist the Afghan Army in their long-term counter insurgency fight against the Taliban.

To guarantee we meet the first objective of protecting the Kabul Government from collapse, we should agree to provide U.S. air power, directed by our Special Forces personnel, if a major Taliban offensive threatens the collapse of the Kabul government. This combat action would look like the U.S. effort in 2001, when the combination of the U.S. Air Force, directed by our Special Forces on the ground, routed the Taliban.

The decision to enable this type of action would require approval by the highest level in Afghanistan and the President of the United States. If we do our training and advisory role well, and the Afghan government steps up to the task, this authority should never be needed. However, the guarantee of U.S. support would send a strong message to our friends and enemies about our commitment to Afghanistan.

The second objective – pounding al Qaeda relentlessly -- is founded upon our aerial campaign (mostly drones). The US military and intelligence community have developed outstanding technologies for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance from both aerial and ground platforms. Coupled with the skill of our intelligence and military operators, we have become extraordinarily proficient at finding and killing terrorist leaders and destroying their infrastructure. Some claim this "wack-a-mole" approach does not work, as terrorists immediately regenerate their personnel and capability. But our enemies are not made of plastic. When hit, they die and a replacement does not immediately reappear. More often, terrorist

leaders "go to ground" when the pressure is hot, avoiding communicating and meeting in large groups. It is difficult to organize a terrorist plot when you are just trying to survive the next predator attack.

The strategy is working, and must not be abandoned prematurely.

Finally, al Qaeda still seeks weapons of mass destruction. If acquired, they will attempt to use them immediately to mass murder American civilians. This underscores the overriding importance of supporting a U.S. military presence in Afghanistan post 2014 – one that will guarantee our ability to crush al Qaeda Central.

Until then, we must not allow unwarranted pessimism to drive an unwise decision to withdraw entirely at the end of this year. We have been very successful so far, and we can remain successful with a modest military force in Afghanistan for a few more years, or until the al Qaeda movement lands in its inevitable place; the ash heap of history.

Michael A. Sheehan, a career Special Forces officer, is the Distinguished Chair of the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. He recently served as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict at the Department of Defense. He previously served as the Deputy Commissioner for Counter Terrorism at NYPD and as the Ambassador at Large for Counter Terrorism at the Department of State. The testimony represents his personal view, not that of the United States Military Academy or the Combating Terrorism Center.

Mr. KINZINGER. Mr. Tom Joscelyn, is that correct?

Mr. JOSCELYN. That is correct.

Mr. KINZINGER. All right—is a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, and Senior Editor of The Long War Journal, a publication dealing with counterterrorism and related issues. Much of his research focuses on how al-Qaeda and its affiliates operate around the globe, and sir, you have 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF MR. THOMAS JOSCELYN, SENIOR FELLOW, FOUNDATION FOR DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACIES

Mr. JOSCELYN. Thank you, Congressman, and thank you to this committee for inviting me to testify again before you. It is a great honor. I am just going to make five quick points. I am the counterterrorism nerd, and I tend to delve in the weeds and I promise not to do that here very quickly. My five quick points are, one of the big things really sort of was eye-opening for me, I think, for The Long War Journal was that most of al-Qaeda's assets since its existence, since its founding in 1988, have actually not been focused on attacking us. That is somewhat of a stark revelation.

Actually, most of their assets have been focused on other things, mainly waging insurgencies against "local governments," trying to seize power for themselves throughout the Muslim world and throughout South Asia all the way through the Middle East, and into North Africa. That is important because I think that it is not by any accident that what is going on around the world where al-Qaeda groups, al-Qaeda-style groups start popping up throughout this whole wide area.

The second point I would like to make is that there is still a lot of confusion about how to define al-Qaeda. You hear a lot of talk about al-Qaeda core and everything else as affiliates. I think what is really meant by al-Qaeda core is actually what is known as the general command of al-Qaeda, and this is actually an organization to Mr. Sedney's point, that still exists. If you go back to the 9/11 Commission Report, there were several committees in the al-Qaeda prior to 9/11. These committees still exist. They have been reorganized, they have been restaffed, but there is still an infrastructure of bureaucracy that al-Qaeda exists. So despite all the successes we have had in killing and capturing top al-Qaeda leaders, they still have this organization.

And if you go back to my testimony before this committee last July, I pointed out that this organization is not confined to South Asia, that some of its leadership in the general command is actually elsewhere. And my big point was that al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is headed by the protege and former aide-de-camp to Osama bin Laden. And in fact, a couple of weeks after my testimony, that same guy, Nasser al-Wuhayshi, was actually appointed to be the general manager of al-Qaeda globally.

Okay, now this is a core function. So we talk about core here, core al-Qaeda and these terms are very loosely defined. They don't make a lot of sense to me. I think what you really have is an international network organization that has what they call their general command which makes decisions for the organization.

And on the third point is, what is this organization actually doing in the Afghanistan and Pakistan region? Well, one of the

main things they have been doing, yes, they have been plotting attacks against us unsuccessfully and trying to have mass casualty attacks in the West. They have absolutely been trying to do that. But one of the other things they have been doing, and primarily where their focus has been, is what they call their shadow army, which sounds kind of spooky and conspiratorial and it kind of is. But what they have done is they built this, basically a force multiplier for the insurgents in the region to try and make their attacks more efficient and effective against Afghan forces, coalition forces, and those type of things.

Now, why is this important? Well, a lot of times we can't actually detect al-Qaeda's hand. They don't announce exactly what they are doing a lot of times, but we can see it if you do very careful analysis. And so al-Qaeda is still very much in the region, still very much in the fight in Afghanistan. Everybody knows about their hub in Kunar and Nuristan where they have a very prominent al-Qaeda leader leading the charge. But we detect them elsewhere in other provinces. And in fact, one of the few documents released from bin Laden's compound reveals that Osama bin laden told his minions basically to disperse out of Northern Pakistan to several provinces in Afghanistan, and we have been able to track operatives who took him up on that.

The fourth point is that one of the reasons why al-Qaeda is still alive or still in the game is they have developed what we call strategic depth in Afghanistan and Pakistan. And so what former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates called the syndicate model. Now, I wish I had come up with this phrase, syndicate, to describe it, because it is actually better than anything I have got. But Gates is right. And what it is, is they have these close relationships with all of these other groups in the area, and a lot of these other groups, to Ranking Member Sherman's point, actually are sponsored by the ISI. And so what al-Qaeda has been able to do, as we kill or capture senior al-Qaeda leaders, a lot of times they have been able to replace those leaders with guys from other groups in the syndicate. And that is what makes them so effective and sort of keeps them going.

And finally, when we talk about just a final point about the international network of al-Qaeda and what it really is, this general command, as I said, doesn't just exist in South Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, actually it stretches across several countries. And some of these groups in these countries, these, what we call affiliates or something along those lines, I don't actually like the word "affiliates." Some of these are actually regional branches of al-Qaeda that have sworn allegiance to bayat to Ayman al-Zawahiri, the head of al-Qaeda. They answer up the command in the chain to senior leadership in Pakistan, and elsewhere, and the best example of that is today is Syria, where we see this traffic going back and forth between Pakistan and Afghanistan and Syria.

And it shows, to my mind, that we are not dealing with this sort of discrete core entity in Pakistan and Afghanistan that can be droned to death, but in fact, an international network that poses a lot graver challenges. And I will leave it there. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Joscelyn follows:]

Congressional Testimony

Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan: An Enduring Threat

Thomas Joscelyn
Senior Fellow
Foundation for Defense of Democracies

Hearing before the
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade

Washington, DC
May 20, 2014

1726 M Street NW • Suite 700 • Washington, DC 20036

Thomas Joscelyn May 20, 2014

Chairman Poe, Ranking Member Sherman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me here today to discuss the enduring threat posed by al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is widely assumed that al Qaeda's presence in South Asia does not, in fact, pose an enduring threat to American interests. The slaying of top al Qaeda leaders, including Osama bin Laden, and more than a decade of war and other counterterrorism operations have supposedly hobbled the organization. However, while I have no doubt that al Qaeda has sustained heavy losses, I do not think that bin Laden's heirs are a spent force. On the contrary, al Qaeda lives.

In the hearing today I am going to build on my previous testimony before this subcommittee last July.[1] During that hearing ("Global Al Qaeda: Affiliates, Objectives, and Future Challenges"), we discussed the structure of al Qaeda and the challenges we face in the future. Today, I wish to emphasize five main points:

1. Al Qaeda is an international network that is comprised of a "general command," regional branches, as well as various other organizations and personalities.

It may seem odd, but more than a dozen years after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, there is no commonly accepted definition of al Qaeda. The term "core" al Qaeda is often used, but this concept is a Western invention and imprecisely defined. And the way it is employed does not accurately convey how al Qaeda is structured. When analysts and officials speak of the "core" of al Qaeda, they are generally referring to Ayman al Zawahiri and the lieutenants who surround him in South Asia. Some go even further, arguing that Zawahiri is the only "core" al Qaeda leader left. Such arguments are not based on evidence.

Al Qaeda operates what it calls a "general command," which consists of the organization's senior leadership and their lieutenants, several committees, a *Shura* (advisory) council of the group's most trusted advisers, as well as a supporting staff that includes, for example, couriers. We regularly see statements issued by al Qaeda's "general command," but few stop to ask what al Qaeda means by this. The "general command" performs various administrative functions, in addition to overseeing the organization's international operations. For instance, al Qaeda's *amniyat* is part of the group's internal security and counterintelligence apparatus. The *amniyat* in northern Pakistan is notorious for hunting down suspected spies.

This cohesive organization is not confined to South Asia. Jihadists who are, by any reasonable definition, "core" al Qaeda members are dispersed throughout the world. For example, Nasir al Wuhayshi, who heads al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), is as "core" as they come, having served as Osama bin Laden's protégé and aide-de-camp. In addition to serving as the emir of AQAP, Wuhayshi is the general manager of al Qaeda, which is a "core" function in al Qaeda's hierarchy, that is, within the "general

[1] Thomas Joscelyn, "Global al Qaeda: Affiliates, Objectives, and Future Challenges," Testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, July 13, 2013. http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA18/20130718/101155/HHRG-113-FA18-Wstate-JoscelynT-20130718.pdf

command." The general manager of al Qaeda is given broad powers to oversee the organization's operations.

The "general command" of al Qaeda has designated several regions for waging jihad, and an emir is appointed to oversee the organization's efforts in each of these regions. The emir of each region has much latitude in deciding how to organize his group's day-to-day efforts, but he swears *bayat*, an oath of allegiance, to al Qaeda's overall emir (currently Zawahiri). The emirs of each region report to al Qaeda's senior leadership, including the general manager. What many refer to as al Qaeda's formal "affiliates" are really branches of al Qaeda that have been assigned to fight in these regions. The formal branches of al Qaeda, each designated its own region, are: al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), AQAP, the Al Nusrah Front in Syria, and Al Shabaab. All of them have sworn loyalty to Ayman al Zawahiri. In addition to these regions, al Qaeda also maintains facilitation networks in countries such as Iran.

Thus, the brief sketch of al Qaeda I have drawn here is one of a much more cohesive international organization than is often assumed. Like all other human organizations, however, al Qaeda has faced obstacles in trying to hold this network together. For instance, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) was al Qaeda's branch inside Iraq, but the group's emir had repeatedly disobeyed orders from the "general command." This led to ISIS being disowned by the group. ISIS is currently fighting the Al Nusrah Front and its allies in Syria.

In addition to the formal branches of al Qaeda, there are other organizations that are part of al Qaeda's international network even though they have not publicly sworn *bayat* to the leadership. Indeed, al Qaeda has often hidden its precise organizational relationship with groups that are being groomed for an alliance. Both the Al Nusrah Front and Al Shabaab, now formal branches of al Qaeda, did not make their operational connections to al Qaeda's senior leadership known at first. Al Qaeda also employs multiple brands so as to obfuscate the extent of its influence. In Yemen, for instance, AQAP adopted the name "Ansar al Sharia." This brand name was intended to convey the idea that the group is the true protector and enforcer of sharia law. Other groups calling themselves Ansar al Sharia have been established in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. There are still other groups that have adopted al Qaeda's ideology, but are probably not operationally connected to the "general command" or al Qaeda's branches.

I begin with this overview because the enduring threat of al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan extends far outside of the region.

2. Al Qaeda is, at its heart, a clandestine organization, but careful analysis reveals that it has a deep bench of talent from which it draws.

Since its founding in 1988, the organization has attempted to conceal its operations. This has made it difficult to assess some very basic aspects of al Qaeda. The group does not, for instance, publish an organizational chart or make its total roster known. If you watch al Qaeda carefully enough, however, you can see that the group has consistently replaced

top leaders lost in the 9/11 wars. In some cases these replacements are not as competent, while in other cases they may even surpass their fallen comrades.

Nasir al Wuhayshi, the aforementioned general manager of al Qaeda, is a seasoned veteran who replaced others in that role after they were killed or captured. Wuhayshi is, by all appearances, an all too competent leader. Still, the American-led counterterrorism effort has certainly disrupted al Qaeda's international network, delivering severe setbacks in some areas. Al Qaeda's problems with ISIS stem, to a large degree, from the fact that the U.S. and its allies took out its predecessor organization's top leadership in 2010. The leaders of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) were loyal to al Qaeda's "general command" but were replaced with leaders who had not been vetted by al Qaeda's senior leaders.

One of the interesting things about the infighting between the ISIS and Al Nusrah is that it has led al Qaeda to identify several leaders who were previously unknown to the public. The leaders were identified because they were called as witnesses against ISIS, relying on their established jihadist pedigrees to give them credibility. Some of these leaders have dossiers that stretch back decades, but no one was talking about them until they appeared on screen. This same phenomenon happens all the time. Al Qaeda leaders who were previously unknown are identified in either the "general command" or the regional branches.

This dynamic leads to a significant epistemological problem. U.S. officials, under both the Bush and Obama administrations, have repeatedly claimed to have decimated al Qaeda after a certain number of leaders of the organization were either killed or captured. Part of the reason these assessments have been flawed is that al Qaeda has a "deep bench" to draw from, both from within its own organization and allied groups. Al Qaeda is constantly in the process of recruiting new talent as well.

In Pakistan and Afghanistan today, al Qaeda likely has a significant cadre of leaders who have not been publicly identified. The roles played by other, publicly identified operatives are not widely understood either. For instance, a cursory review of Vanguards of Khorasan, an al Qaeda publication, reveals numerous leaders who are not regularly discussed.

3. Al Qaeda has always been, first and foremost, an insurgency organization focused on overturning the existing political order in the Muslim world. Al Qaeda's jihadists are terrorists, but they are more than that. They are political revolutionaries who seek power for themselves and their ideology.

As such, most of al Qaeda's efforts since its founding have been focused on fighting "over there," that is, contesting for power in faraway lands. Their early efforts in this regard ended in failure. But today, formal branches of al Qaeda are fighting throughout much of Africa and the Middle East. Consistent with al Qaeda's original vision, these groups are all seeking to win territory, establish Islamic states, and govern according to their radical version of sharia law. They pose a threat to U.S. interests abroad, and part of each of these organizations has either already been devoted to plotting attacks in the West

or likely will be. Luckily, most of their attempts to attack the West have thus far failed. But it is always worth remembering that attacking the West has not been al Qaeda's strategic goal. Attacking the U.S. on 9/11, and various plots thereafter, was seen as a tactical step. Al Qaeda believes that by attacking the U.S. and the West, it can lessen Western influence in the Muslim world, thereby destabilizing the existing political order and freeing up the opportunity to wage insurgencies against governments al Qaeda deems un-Islamic. Only a small fraction of al Qaeda's resources throughout its entire history have been devoted to mass casualty attacks in the West. A far greater amount of the organization's resources have been dedicated to fighting "over there."

This basic point reveals another epistemological problem. Some claim that al Qaeda's failure to launch another 9/11-style attack on the U.S. homeland (putting aside smaller attacks that were, at a minimum, inspired by al Qaeda's ideology) means that the group has been strategically defeated. Counterterrorism and intelligence officials deserve a great deal of credit for stopping the next attack. We've gotten lucky on some occasions, too. But, most importantly, al Qaeda is spending far more of its resources fighting "over there" than it is grooming new 9/11-style terrorists. Thus, a word of caution: As al Qaeda has expanded its geographic footprint, it has also increased its pool of potential recruits for attacks in the West. Most the jihadists fighting abroad will remain insurgents, as was the case prior to 9/11. As new talent comes in, however, this opens new possibilities for al Qaeda's attacks on the West. The best, but not the only, example of this today is in Syria. Most of al Qaeda's resources are spent battling Bashar al Assad's forces, as well as fighting the rogue ISIS faction (which could also lash out at the West). But Western counterterrorism officials are rightly concerned that some individuals recruited to fight in Syria will be repurposed for attacks back at home.

4. Al Qaeda operates as part of a "syndicate" in Central and South Asia. In 2010, former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates described al Qaeda as being part of a "syndicate" in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and elsewhere in the region. This is an excellent description of how al Qaeda operates. "A victory for one [member of the syndicate] is a victory for all," Gates cautioned.[2] He is right. Gates mentioned groups such as the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, or TTP), as well as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), as belonging to this "syndicate." To this we can add: the Haqqani Network (HQN), the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and its offshoot the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI), Harakat-ul-Mujahideen (HUM), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), among other groups.

I will not recount here how each of these groups is tied to al Qaeda. The archives of *The Long War Journal*[3] are filled with examples, including those showing how al Qaeda has replenished its ranks from these organizations. However, the Haqqani Network (HQN) deserves a further, albeit brief, mention. The HQN is part of the Taliban alliance and also closely tied to al Qaeda. The relationship between the HQN and al Qaeda at the most

[2] Craig Whitlock, "Gates: Al-Qaeda has assembled a 'syndicate' of terror groups," *Washington Post*, January 20, 2010. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/20/AR2010012001575.html

[3] *The Long War Journal* is available online at http://www.longwarjournal.org/.

senior levels of each organization goes back decades. The HQN has provided safe haven for al Qaeda in northern Pakistan and Afghanistan, even allowing al Qaeda to plot attacks against the West from HQN-controlled territory. Al Qaeda has developed strategic depth in South Asia by partnering with groups such as the HQN.

5. Al Qaeda is still operating in Afghanistan today. Al Qaeda's leader in the Kunar and Nuristan provinces is Farouq al Qahtani. It is well-known that al Qahtani leads al Qaeda's forces and works with the group's allies in these remote areas. But al Qaeda operates outside of Kunar and Nuristan as well. Indeed, one of the documents captured in Osama bin Laden's compound and released to the public shows that the al Qaeda master ordered some of his subordinates to relocate from northern Pakistan to Ghazni and Zabul, as well as Kunar and Nuristan.

One way al Qaeda operates in Afghanistan today is through the Lashkar al Zil, or Shadow Army, which is al Qaeda's primary paramilitary force in the region. As the name implies, al Qaeda is trying to hide the extent of its influence over this group as well as over other allied groups. This makes it difficult to assess the full scope of al Qaeda's operations inside Afghanistan today. Still, consistent reporting shows that al Qaeda's commanders and fighters are pooling their resources with other organizations. Al Qaeda also operates an electronics workshop, headquartered in Pakistan, that develops improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and other weapons for use in Afghanistan.

Thank you for inviting me to testify today. I look forward to answering your questions.

Mr. KINZINGER. Well, thank you. And again, thank you to the witnesses for being here and providing us with your fantastic insight. I will go ahead and start with my questions. You know, I have always been amazed America has had this, and I guess it is a testimony to how, in essence, opposed to war we are at our base, at the heart, but any time we get engaged somewhere, we immediately start talking about the withdrawal strategy and how to leave and how to get out, and I will say that Afghanistan has been a very long war. We understand that, but I will remind people that America has not yet been defeated on the battlefield. When we engage with Taliban or al-Qaeda, we win.

So the only way we will ever been defeated in Afghanistan is if our willpower is defeated, not necessarily our military might. And so my concern, and my questions will somewhat center around the fact of, you know, in 10 or 20 years the history is going to write the decisions that we made today. And we have two options: We can either have the history books read that, you know, the Afghan people had victory, and the Afghan people were able to secure their own country, and women still have freedom, and they can go to school, and they can be successful, or we can read the thing that said America at a time when we were pressing the fight against al-Qaeda and the Taliban decided that we had had enough. I guess 1 percent of America actually serves in the military. I served and still continue to serve in the military, but yet, somehow we have a war fatigue despite 99 percent of Americans having never served.

I also would like to remind Mr. Sherman—he is not here. I am not talking bad about him, but Mr. Karzai will be gone shortly, and we will have a new President of Afghanistan, I think, which will be a positive development. Let me ask the entire panel and try to keep it as brief as you can. How many us troops do you believe are required to remain in Afghanistan post-2014, to combat al-Qaeda and al-Qaeda's allies? And let's keep it as short you can. We will just start this way.

Mr. SEDNEY. I believe a total force of around 16,000, that would be about 10,000 U.S., and about 6,000 NATO is the minimum necessary to carry out those dual goals of having the capability to carry out counterterrorism operations and train, advise, and assist and equip the Afghan Army. A smaller number than that becomes purely a self-defense force. They are only there defending themselves and don't accomplish anything.

Mr. KINZINGER. It is just cooking food and protecting the fences, basically. Mr. Ambassador.

Mr. SHEEHAN. I would agree with that number, sir. That is the number that is kicked around interagency, the Department of Defense and CIA primarily. My concern is that if we go below that, that the CIA will have to withdraw even further back, and that we are going to lose our insight into the FATA. Also, the military needs to be there to protect the counterterrorism assets that conduct the attacks against al-Qaeda. So I agree that number is a minimum.

Mr. KINZINGER. I just remind everybody what we see in Iraq today, right, the western—the place where the Marines fought the hardest they have fought since Khe Sanh, is now controlled by ISIS, because the administration, I believe for a political reason, so

they could follow through on a political promise, pulled all of the troops out of Iraq and we find ourselves today with a lawless Western Iraq, also based out of Syria. Mr. Joscelyn, in terms of the number of troops.

Mr. JOSCELYN. I am actually not a military expert so I will defer to these gentlemen, but I think 10,000 to 20,000 sounds about right in terms of the numbers to protect our forces and actually keep in the fight there in the region. One of the big things that you have to keep your eye on is the ability for the drone air strike campaign to keep going, and the bottom line is, unless we have the proper forces in place to protect those assets and protect those bases, in addition to taking the fight to the enemies in Afghanistan, then that is going to necessarily impact our ability to strike in Pakistan and elsewhere.

Mr. KINZINGER. How would you all rate the administration's current counterterrorism strategy? Does it have one, and if so, is it successful? I guess we can start with you, sir, again, and then right to left. My right to left.

Mr. JOSCELYN. Well, I think the administration has had success in taking out certain key senior al-Qaeda leaders, obviously, including Osama bin Laden. I think the Bush administration had success in that regard before them. I think the problem, again, is I think both administrations early on made the same mistake, which is, they define al-Qaeda as this sort of this top-down pyramid with a hierarchical structure, that if you sort of lop off the top of the pyramid, the whole thing crumbles. They had that debate, that discussion about how to organize themselves about 20 years ago, and they decided against that organizational structure. And, you know, we still fight them a lot of times like they are structured that way and so they are growing in other ways.

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you. Mr. Ambassador, how would you rate the current administration's——

Mr. SHEEHAN. I should mention, Mr. Chairman, I was the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict. I just left that job last year, so I was part of the administration. So do I think they have good strategy? I do. Their strategy is to conduct kinetic and direct action strikes against those organizations that directly threaten the United States or U.S. personnel. For other groups that have not yet directly threatened the U.S., the strategy is more to assist the host country for them defeating them. So far they have been successful. I think they need to stay the course. The bottom line metric is protecting the homeland. That has been done. But there are a lot of problems out there. I think they need to stay the course like they have done the last few years and I hope they will.

Mr. KINZINGER. Mr. Sedney.

Mr. SEDNEY. I agree with my former colleague. We served together at the Pentagon, Ambassador Sheehan, that the administration has had a lot of successes in—on the counterterrorism field. However, it is not just—you can't distinguish counterterrorism from all of the other aspects of our state and governmental policy. And I think, for example, the long debate over the last 2 years about whether there should be a zero option in Afghanistan has led to improved morale for al-Qaeda and others, has led other states

such as Pakistan to hedge their policies against the possibility of a zero option in the United States.

So while the counterterrorism policy, which I would say is sort of a subset of the overall policy, I think has a lot of successes, I think the overall ability to counter that has been undercut by the fact we have not made that definitive commitment to Afghanistan that you mentioned before.

Mr. KINZINGER. And I think if we exercise the zero option, I think we will double or triple the size of al-Qaeda overnight, because we will hand them the strongest moral victory that they have had in decades. And let me just finally say, because I want to live by example, as someone that has to bring the gavel down on people, 5,000, 10,000, 15,000 troops are kind of a high-risk option, medium risk, and low risk option. In my mind, I think we need to put the number of troops in theater to provide the low-risk option, both to protect our men and women in the field and also to protect the victory for the Afghan people.

So I appreciate all you all answering my questions. At this point I would like to recognize Mr. Schneider of Illinois, another from the same great State for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank the witnesses for your testimony and insight, but also for your service long before this.

Ambassador, I would like to touch on something you said. You talked about Afghanistan or AFPAK being unique and distinctive. As you were saying, though, I was thinking about what is taking place in Syria, in Yemen, in Sinai, and thinking that while each of these are unique, there seems to be a lot of commonality. And so I guess I will start with a series of questions. Is what makes Afghanistan Pakistan so unique from the others? What lessons apply across the others? What coordination do we see with the affiliates of al-Qaeda in these other regions? And what happens, A, if we win, and as I will throw out to the whole group, if we are able to win, as you say, in Afghanistan, does that just push the balloon out to bulging in these other areas?

Mr. SHEEHAN. Thank you, sir. Let me try to answer a few of those questions. First of all, why is it unique, because of their track record. They actually have killed people and blown things up in the U.S. and against our other targets, them and AQAP. So it is the al-Qaeda central in AFPAK that is my number one concern for attacking the homeland, secondly the AQAP, which also has a track record. The other organizations right now, though potentially very, very problematic, are currently focused on the local fight. Whether eventually they shift to Europe first and then the U.S., we will see. Certainly, the potential is there. They are the same type of folks that are committed to attack us, so we have to be prepared for them to be able to shift their focus now which is local, to the local enemy as they called it, the near enemy, to the far enemy which is the United States and Europe. It remains to be seen when and if they will do that. But that's why they are unique. Pakistan is also unique because of the various groups that are there that have been supported by the Pakistani state, groups like the Lashkar-e-Toiba that have attacked in India, directed by the Pakistani intelligence, murdering people in a hotel in Mumbai. This is a unique

situation, where a state is actually involved in these organizations that are part of the stew I talked about earlier that directly threaten us.

And so these are very serious organizations like the Haqqani network, the Pakistani Taliban. They are very well funded. They are ideologically determined, and they have capability and they have a track record. That is why I worry about that area. That is why I believe we have to stay there and continue pounding these people relentlessly for quite a while.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Sedney?

Mr. SEDNEY. I agree entirely with the Ambassador's analysis and leave that to the others.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Joscelyn, thoughts?

Mr. JOSCELYN. My caveat there is that while other parts of the al-Qaeda network have not yet been successful or attempted a mass casualty attack on the U.S., there is always a potential there for that. The problem is that many of the senior al-Qaeda leaders, or some of the senior al-Qaeda leaders who were part of that general command in Afghanistan and Pakistan have relocated elsewhere. For example, in Syria just last week, the Treasury Department highlighted a very senior al-Qaeda operative, a guy who was on the military committee for al-Qaeda, he is involved, according to the Treasury Department, with a group in Syria that is plotting attacks against Western targets. So these are—their leadership is sprinkled amongst several different countries, not just Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Maybe the question, coming back to Ambassador Sheehan, you talk about victory or winning in Afghanistan. Does, however you define a victory in Afghanistan, just shift the battlefield, shift the front to one of these other areas?

Mr. SHEEHAN. It will to certain extent, sir, they will move, I think. But by the way, I don't think there will ever be a definitive victory in Western Pakistan for decades. These people, this is at least a multigenerational fight. They are not going away. They are burrowed into the mountains up there. They are committed. We are going to be there a long, long time. But as Tom said earlier, they are already dispersing. And they already are starting to direct these—taking advantages of countries that have lost their rule of law, or have ungovernmental places now we are seeing in Northern Nigeria. They take advantage of those places, Mali, Libya, et cetera, and are stirring up a very fertile ground to recruit radical jihadis of the same ideology. So they are already doing that, but having said that, I still don't think they are going away in Pakistan.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. I know I have a time limit. I turn to Mr. Sedney. As you talk, where you are going to see these lines, I think, is where there seams, whether it is in Nigeria, or in Syria, where you have failed states, and there are gaps and seams that these groups can operate within. The challenge ultimately becomes, as you talked about it, Mr. Sedney, a sense of ideology, or destiny. Is there any path, any strategy we can put together that will address the ideology as opposed to just the tactics of terrorism?

Mr. SEDNEY. Yes, there is, and I think it is emerging sometimes despite our lack of a coordinated effort on that, and that is what

is happening in Afghanistan right now because, yes, al-Qaeda has been trying to support the Taliban. The Taliban have been trying very actively, but in the elections that took place last month in Afghanistan, young people turned out. And the message from these young people across all ethnic lines, the message for women was that the vision of the future—that the al-Qaeda and Taliban put out of a return to the caliphate of an inward-looking, backward-looking, oppressive regime, they rejected that. In the Afghan media, the number one headline after the elections was, we said no to the Taliban. By saying no to the Taliban, they said no to al-Qaeda. That is a competing vision for the future that can be applicable in other societies as well. Every one of the other societies you mentioned, every other place that al-Qaeda can go also has young people.

That is the battleground. And if Afghanistan, despite all of the problems it has had, can be a success, then those other states can be a success, too. But I agree entirely with Ambassador Sheehan. This is not something that is going to happen by a certain date or time. It is a multigenerational struggle, and it is one that it is going to be very hard for us to have the commitment that is needed.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Well, thank you. I wish we could spend more time. I am out of time but, again, thank you for your time and service.

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you, Mr. Schneider. I now recognize the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Perry, for 5 minutes.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Joscelyn, let me direct it, I am sorry, to Mr. Sedney. Do the Afghan national security forces currently have the capabilities and equipment to combat, or have the skills to combat al-Qaeda?

Mr. SEDNEY. They have some of them. They have the basic fighting ability. They have the fighting spirit. They have the on-the-ground organization tactically. What they lack, are key enablers. The most important one is the one that Mr. Sheehan already highlighted is air power, both transport and attack aircraft as well as helicopters. They lack advanced capabilities in intelligence, which is really key to the kind of struggle they are fighting. And in areas of logistics and organization, they still need to make a great deal of progress.

So, those are the kind of capabilities that require years more for them to be successfully acquired, and without that, they risk degrading in the future. So they have a good start, but we need to stay the course.

Mr. PERRY. I would concur with that. I just wanted to hear your assessment. I would turn the good Ambassador here, regarding a report that we have in our reading here, that in October 2013, there was a police raid in Islamabad regarding a house that was purpose built as it is described with a lab in the basement dedicated to the research and development of explosives-laden drone aircraft. If I couple that with your comment regarding al-Qaeda's specific, and very particular interest in WMD, can you put those two together for me and describe the threat as you see it if there is a nexus between the two? And then who are the enablers to that threat?

Mr. SHEEHAN. Yes, sir. Everybody wants drones now and actually you can buy a drone in a store here in the United States. You can buy a helicopter with a camera on it. Putting a weapon on it is much more difficult. So I don't think they are ever going to have that capability in the near term to put a weapon on a drone. Will they be able to have the capability to perhaps purchase some kind of rudimentary drone, perhaps. But I don't see it.

On WMD, this is something that I focused on for about 15 years, al-Qaeda's ability to get it. Right now, you know, they had a ricin program. They might have had anthrax program. They have looked around for dirty nuclear bombs, radiological bombs, a little bit on the chemical side, but they really kind of given up on that right now. They would like to go back to it, but quite frankly, it is too hard for them. The reason it is too hard for them, because they are under enormous pressure. They are under enormous pressure in their headquarters and they are under enormous pressure also in Europe and the United States. Prior to 9/11, and I was Ambassador prior to 9/11. I was doing al-Qaeda before 9/11. There was no pressure on this organization, overseas, or in the U.S. They moved around, 19 people came into the United States, blow up our Trade Center with impunity. That has dramatically changed.

They are still here in the United States, but they are under pressure. It is difficult for them to obtain those type of weapons. And when I was at NYPD, we worked very hard to protect a radiological chemical and other sources that they might be able to tap to conduct that type of attack. So right now I think they are years away from coming up with that kind of capability.

Mr. PERRY. So who would be, you know, their enablers in that regard? If you talk about weaponizing a crude drone, not a drone, with VX, or something of that nature. Are we looking at Syria? Are we looking at friends in Pakistan in the government, in the intelligence services? Who are we looking at?

Mr. SHEEHAN. Yes, sir, it is a good question. I think it is a—you are right, that it would probably require a state to give them real capability for a WMD. It is just too hard to weaponize these things. I have spent a lot of time trying to figure those—how to weaponize them and it really comes down to a state, otherwise, it is going to be a very small attack. Certainly, Syria won't help al-Qaeda. They are fighting them. The Pakistanis helping al-Qaeda, that is our worst nightmare. We hope that never happens.

Mr. PERRY. And is there evidence to support the theory that there are members of the Pakistani Government, whether it is the intelligence services or otherwise, that are willing to be very helpful in that regard? How much of a concern do we have, should we have? When I talk about Syria, I just meant the environment where the opportunity exists to receive the contraband, so to speak.

Mr. SHEEHAN. Right, sir. I believe that perhaps this is one of our most important intelligence requirements is to keep our eye on the Pakistani intelligence and other people as to their relationship with some of these groups. Because certainly, they have had long, long relationships, decades of relationships with some of these families, people, and groups, and would it be impossible for some of these, either rogue or directed people, to provide dangerous weapon systems to some of these organizations? It is possible. Especially the

organizations that they might arm to attack in Kashmir or in India. Those same type of weapon systems can then be turned against us. But I don't believe the Pakistani army, Pakistani Government would count on such an activity. It would come from below, perhaps, from a rogue, and I don't see any evidence of that happening right now. It is something we have to keep an eye on.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you, Mr. Perry. At this point, seeing now that it is—we will go into a quick round two, and then we will let you all go, because I think we have a few more questions, still. Let me just ask to whoever can answer this question. I recently saw an article in The Daily Beast. It was entitled, "CIA falls back in Afghanistan." Describe the CIA efforts to dismantle their operations in Afghanistan, and how is this going to be harmful to the effect to combat al-Qaeda in Afghanistan? I will just throw that out to whoever can answer that.

Mr. SEDNEY. To a large degree, I know I am really not in a position to comment on that issue in an open hearing, Mr. Chairman. I would have to be in a closed hearing to make a—to give you my views on that issue. One thing that I will say, that I did travel to Afghanistan in December and a number of Afghans raised concerns to me about that issue. That is something that I learned in an unclassified setting. But aside from that, I apologize, I am not able to answer that question in this setting.

Mr. KINZINGER. Understood. Go ahead, sir.

Mr. JOSCELYN. The key commander who figures in those press reports is Farouq al-Qahtani and to your point, Congressman, about al-Qaeda and the Taliban not having a lot of success against us historically in a direct fight against American forces, that is absolutely right. Unfortunately, Farouq al-Qahtani is one of the few guys who actually did have some success against American forces in a head-to-head fight. And he is the head of the organization in Kunar and Nuristan.

Now, those are remote regions of Afghanistan. That is a good thing. However, I think if you look at al-Qaeda more wholistically, you realize that we need that ongoing CIA help to fight them beyond Kunar and Nuristan.

Mr. KINZINGER. And does core al-Qaeda still matter? I mean, I still get confused with the idea of core al-Qaeda, and you did a good job of explaining it, but to me, I think core al-Qaeda kind of seems like a way of hedging this idea that we have al-Qaeda on the run. We have got core al-Qaeda on the run even though we have these huge offshoots. So does core al-Qaeda still matter? I will start with you.

Mr. JOSCELYN. I think the hedging point is right. I mean, that was the only way to argue that al-Qaeda was being decimated or defeated, because if you look at their expansion elsewhere, it is kind of hard to argue that. But on a day-to-day basis at our Web site, you can see us document communications to and from al-Qaeda senior leadership including Zawahiri and others in the core "al-Qaeda" with their regional branches, and that includes in Yemen, or Syria, or else elsewhere.

So, yeah, they do still matter. They are providing—and it is not just ideological Shahidi guidance. We find them providing, on occasion, tactical guidance in the day-to-day fight.

In fact, I will point back to that Treasury Department designation last week, a senior al-Qaeda member in that designation relocated from Pakistan to Syria, and one of the reasons he did was to help the al-Qaeda affiliate groups acquire heavy weapons from different sources and throughout the Gulf.

Mr. KINZINGER. I am going to go ahead and yield back my time, and I am going to recognize Mr. Sherman for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you. It is clear that Islamic extremism hasn't been defeated. We have won some important victories. I want to get away from the partisanship of, oh, well, al-Qaeda—all Islamic extremism hasn't been destroyed, therefore this President is bad, that President is good. Al-Qaeda happened during this administration. Bin Laden was killed during that administration. It is one effort. And Truman and Eisenhower weren't bad Presidents just because at the end of their terms the Soviet Union had not been defeated.

We are engaged in a long war. We don't like long wars. We are going to have to win this long war. And I just got out of a hearing called Pivot to Asia. Well, what is that pivoting away from? I mean, I watched some basketball games. You can't pivot and then pivot. The fact is that a few rocks in the Pacific that remain uninhabited even though they are off the coast of the most teaming continent, remain totally useless and uninhabited throughout history, which is why nobody knows who owns them, should not be our focus at a time when, as the gentlemen have testified, there are forces that would pull off another 9/11 if not confronted every single day.

I am trying to understand the Pakistani Government. As far as I understand, those in Islamabad would not kill each other. That is to say, you don't have an ISI general who would kill another ISI general or a regular Pakistani army general or even one of the elected leaders. Okay, there is one former unelected leader who is in prison now. But aside from that.

And yet, correct me if I am wrong, there are elements of the Pakistani Government waging effective war on the terrorists and there are elements of the Pakistani Government cooperating with the terrorists. I see some nodding heads, but perhaps I could get an oral response.

Mr. JOSCELYN. Well, I think that's right. I think there are two issues: One is the direct relationship between parts of the military intelligence establishment in Pakistan and al-Qaeda. And I think those relationships do exist. Carlotta Gall from The New York Times reported about the ISI's bin Laden's death. I think the best way to fact-check that and get into what the actual relationship is, and how that works, is probably to have a more complete discussion about bin Laden's documents, the extensive files that were found in his compound and what they say. There has been reporting about what is in those files, but they haven't been released. And there has been no sort of systematic accounting for what is in them in this regard publicly. I mean, from your perspective.

The second thing is——

Mr. SHERMAN. Then maybe Congress should get a classified briefing as to what is in those documents, at least our subcommittee, since that is the heart of what we do.

Mr. JOSCELYN. I think that, Congressman, that is a great idea. I think all congressmen should get a full briefing on the bin Laden documents, and I mean the full contents of the documents, and exactly asking how many files were captured, how many have been exploited and translated and what they say in totality about the——

Mr. SHERMAN. The idea that the administration or any administration would actually tell Members of Congress anything, is a wonderful fantasy.

Mr. JOSCELYN. It is a wonderful fantasy. But a quick second point is, there is also the question about the Pakistani establishment as the U.N. calls it, relationship with these other groups that all allied with al-Qaeda. In fact, we have this monograph I contributed a chapter for my think tank where I describe how all these groups, that are sponsored by the ISI that are creatures of the ISI establishment are also allied with al-Qaeda. And that is part of how al-Qaeda gets the strategic depth. And I lay it all out in great detail how that works, from the Afghan Taliban, to Lashkar-e-Toiba——

Mr. SHERMAN. Is there elements of the Pakistani establishment who would be killed by the very people being aided by the Pakistani establishment?

Mr. JOSCELYN. Well, that is right.

Mr. SHERMAN. I see Ambassador Sheehan nodding, but how—you know, those people that want to murder me, I usually don't donate to. Can anybody give us——

Mr. JOSCELYN. Right.

Mr. SHEEHAN. If I could.

Mr. SHERMAN. I do want to bring in one other factor, and that was, our imposition of Karzai in Kabul creating the risk in Pakistani military thinking, to being attacked from both sides, a large Indian Embassy in Kabul, which I am sure is doing wonderful development work, but there are so many other poor countries around the world which could benefit from that. And of course, it rings alarm bills in Islamabad. Why—so I can understand a bit why some in Islamabad say well, we need the Taliban because we can't trust Kabul, you know, why we didn't install somebody who could—who is more acceptable to Pakistan in Kabul, I don't know, but that was a long time ago. Ambassador Sheehan.

Mr. SHEEHAN. One other observation I will try to talk a little bit about Pakistan. In 2002 and 2003, there were three attempts on the life of President Musharraf. At that time he said, wait a second, what is going on here? These are groups that my own organization is supporting and he did turn against them fairly aggressively in that period.

Mr. SHERMAN. So that was with the second or third assassination.

Mr. SHEEHAN. The third attempt.

Mr. SHERMAN. Okay.

Mr. SHEEHAN. But I think in order to understand Pakistan, you have to understand their history and the trauma they have gone

through when Bangladesh broke off, and Balochistan almost broke off, and Pashtunistan, they are always trying to break off. And so Pakistan is paranoid about the break up of its state with good reason, by the way. It is not a state that truly exists. It is a state that is organized ad hoc, after the World War II, and——

Mr. SHERMAN. So they are paranoid not only of India, but also of separatism.

Mr. SHEEHAN. That is right. And so right now what they are trying to do, is control Pashtun's power within their Federal tribal areas and in Afghanistan to make sure they control that so that they will never have a breakup of their state. That is one of the reasons. It is much more complicated than that. But I think you have to understand in terms of their paranoia about a breakup of the state, also they talk about strategic depth about India, which I never really quite understood, but I do understand their desire to control those areas of Pashtunistan, and what they do is they ride the strong horse to control that. And often that strong horse may be a group like the Haqqani network or others that are contrary to their own interest.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Sedney.

Mr. SEDNEY. A couple of points. I agree with what my co-panelists said, but it is even more complicated than that, in response to your point, Representative Sherman. Even sometimes the fact that somebody wants to kill you is outweighed by the fact that they are even more valuable to you because of what they can do to people who are more likely to kill you. In other words, there is a calculation here. If I am really good at killing you, and Mr. Sheehan is less good at killing you, maybe you will support him, even though he wants to kill you, if he will attack me. So that is the kind of complicated equation that the Pakistanis find.

Mr. SHERMAN. But in that analysis, Karzai would have to be wanting to kill Pakistani leaders, and last I checked, that wasn't his objective.

Mr. SEDNEY. Well, President Karzai and a number of other Afghans over the years, have raised the issue of what is called Pashtunistan which is essentially an extension of Afghanistan to the banks of the Indus, which goes right to the heart of that state identity that Ambassador Sheehan was saying. But one final point about Pakistan that is important. Pakistan is not a country. It is not a government. It is—there are a number of systems there. The most important overwhelming one is the military intelligence one. This is a country where last month Hamid Mir, the Larry King, if you will, of Pakistan, the number one journalist interviewer, who had interviewed almost all of the top leaders of Pakistan on his show, was the subject of an assassination attempt. He, before the assassination attempt, had communicated to his family that if such an assassination attempt took place it was ISI that was trying to kill him. So just imagine in the United States, if——

Mr. SHERMAN. There are many in our establishment that would want to kill various journalists, but—so far that hasn't occurred.

Mr. SEDNEY. That is the kind of complicated geography of politics and terrorism that the Pakistanis live under. And this is a country that has some serious structural problems, as Ambassador

Sheehan has mentioned. That is until they are solved which won't be for years, the al-Qaeda threat is going to remain.

Mr. SHERMAN. And how many nuclear weapons do they have in—don't bother answering.

Mr. KINZINGER. All right. The gentleman yields back. And I now recognize the gentleman from Arkansas, Mr. Cotton, for 5 minutes.

Mr. COTTON. Thank you. And thank you all for your time today. I read with interest over the weekend some news reports about FBI Director James Comey who was reflecting on his early tenure at the Bureau saying that when he had entered, he expected to put the FBI back in its traditional footing of law enforcement based on the public statements of the administration and al-Qaeda being on the run.

He now says, and this is a quote from those stories:

> "I didn't have anywhere near the appreciation I got after I came into this job just how virulent those affiliates had become. They are both many more than I appreciated, and they are stronger than I appreciated."

Starting with you, Mr. Joscelyn, and then moving from right to left, my right, your left, do you care to comment on what Mr. Comey as a private citizen might have been missing and now what he might be seeing as a senior official in the administration?

Mr. JOSCELYN. Well, I think the simple fact of the matter is that they are putting the organizational relationships aside for a moment, and that is my specialty, but putting that aside. There are now more groups fighting in al-Qaeda's name or in al-Qaeda's ideology, or espousing al-Qaeda's style of jihad than ever, you know, and that goes from Africa, throughout the Middle East, into South Asia. And so, you know, if you actually delve into that each story is different in each location, but you now have a threat that is much different than the one that existed on 9/11. In some places it is a lesser threat, in some places it is a growing threat and becoming more problematic.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. Ambassador?

Mr. SHEEHAN. I think there is two parts to it, sir. One, he was getting intelligence briefs internationally. As Tom had said, al-Qaeda is spreading and taking advantage of unlawful places all around the world and growing in strength in a very troubling way. But he also was probably briefed domestically. When I was at NYPD, I was part of the Joint Terrorism Task Force in New York City, and he probably found all of these briefings about—within the United States the types of folks that he needs to worry about. That right now, that the ones that I worried about when I was in New York City were the ones that would travel to Pakistan and come back, like Faisal Shahzad, the Times Square bomber, or those that were willing to get support from the outside and conduct an operation, and some like the Boston bombers who did it pretty much on their own.

So I am sure he was getting those briefings, and probably was surprised to find how many people within the United States, given the chance, would be willing to take violence against American citizens.

Mr. COTTON. And Mr. Sedney?

Mr. SEDNEY. I think that the new FBI director went in thinking the way most Americans do, that this is really something that has pretty much passed, this threat from al-Qaeda. And going back to the point that Ambassador Sheehan made, in our military, our intelligence, our law enforcement agencies over the last 12-plus years, have made an incredible effort. They have been hugely successful. A lot of that success is not known. People are safe today. People are alive today because of the many plots that have been stopped, and unless you know all of the things that are coming after us, and unless you know that they have been stopped and most of that can never be told, then you don't appreciate the threat.

And I think that is, in many ways, a core message from all of us here, that those threats are still happening, and the threat of more to come is still happening. And yes, this has been a long war. It is going to continue to be a long war, but if we don't keep fighting it, it won't be just something that we will read about in history books because then there will be a question of whether there is history books to read.

Mr. COTTON. Thank you. The second news report I read with interest recently said that Iran is recruiting Afghan refugees, paying them several hundred dollars a month to fight in Syria, on behalf of Bashar al Assad. I would presume transporting them through Iran, through Herot and Farah Provinces. The reports alluded to them being Shiites. I was wondering if you would care to comment on the report and whether, in fact, this is happening, where they are coming from in Afghanistan, and if they are. But secondarily, do we see much evidence of links between al-Qaeda in the Afghan-Pakistan border region doing the same on the Sunni side in Syria? Again, starting with Mr. Joscelyn.

Mr. JOSCELYN. Well, I will take the latter part. Actually, there is this relationship that I have documented and it is very curious between al-Qaeda and the Iranian regime. And this administration in July 2011, December 2011, February 2012, October 2012, and 2013, and again earlier this year, has repeatedly, through the State Department and the Treasury Department, documented the relationship between the Iranian regime and al-Qaeda the fact that there is this facilitation network on Iranian soil that al-Qaeda uses to move fighters around to Syria and elsewhere.

So this is something that the core, or general command leadership in AFPAK is sort of very interested in doing and is doing through Iranian soil, so it doesn't surprise me.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. Sheehan.

Mr. SHEEHAN. I agree with Tom, and it is interesting we talk about Pakistan's dysfunction. The Iranians do the same thing. Here they are supporting al-Qaeda members coming through their country to join forces that are then fighting against their own surrogates in Syria and against Assad who they are supporting. So they, too, all operate on both sides of the fence, and it is somewhat interesting. I have been out of government. I read the same report, sir, and I believe it to be plausible. And they are probably Shi'as that are being paid, mercenaries. The Iranians are paying people to fight that war, primarily Hezbollah, and others to help the Assad regime fight the opposition.

Mr. COTTON. And Mr. Sedney.

Mr. SEDNEY. I agree. Again, this is another complex issue. The al-Qaeda is clearly anti-Shi'a. Al-Qaeda is clearly anti-Iran, but al-Qaeda has had leadership figures in Iran under the semi-protection of the Iranian Government since certainly 2002. And so Iran has been protecting those whose ideology is to destroy the state. The role of the United States there is important because going back to the point that I made to Mr. Sherman, Iran also sees the United States as an enemy, and certainly elements of the Iranian security forces are ready to use any tool, even those that might threaten themselves, in order to be able to do things that undermine the United States. But this is a complicated thing. It is not just a good guy versus bad guy. There are many varieties of bad guys out there.

Mr. COTTON. Thank you. I see my time, but hopefully not the witness' patience is expired.

Mr. KINZINGER. All right, the gentleman yields back. Seeing no other questions, the chair wishes to thank our witnesses and the subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:41 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Material Submitted for the Record

SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade
Ted Poe (R-TX), Chairman

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held by the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade in Room 2200 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live via the Committee website at http://www.ForeignAffairs.house.gov):

DATE: Tuesday, May 20, 2014

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

SUBJECT: Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan: An Enduring Threat

WITNESSES: Mr. David Sedney
(*Former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia, U.S. Department of Defense*)

The Honorable Michael A. Sheehan
Distinguished Chair
Combating Terrorism Center
United States Military Academy at West Point

Mr. Thomas Joscelyn
Senior Fellow
Foundation for Defense of Democracies

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON *Terrorism Nonproliferation and Trade* HEARING

Day *Tuesday* **Date** *May 20, 2014* **Room** *2200 Rayburn HOB*

Starting Time *2:32 p.m.* **Ending Time** *3:41 p.m.*

Recesses [ ] (to) (to) (to) (to) (to) (to)

Presiding Member(s)

Rep. Kinzinger

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session [✓]
Executive (closed) Session [ ]
Televised [✓]
Electronically Recorded (taped) [✓]
Stenographic Record [✓]

TITLE OF HEARING:

Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan: An Enduring Threat

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Reps. Kinzinger, Cotton, Perry, Sherman, Schneider

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: *(Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)*

Rep. Rohrabacher

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes [✓] **No** [ ]
(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED *3:41 p.m.*

Subcommittee Staff Director