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RISKS TO STABILITY IN AFGHANISTAN: POLITICS, SECURITY, AND INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENT

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

HEARING HELD
JULY 30, 2014

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[There were no Documents submitted.]

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[There were no Questions submitted during the hearing.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING:

[There were no Questions submitted post hearing.]

RISKS TO STABILITY IN AFGHANISTAN: POLITICS, SECURITY, AND INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENT

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, Wednesday, July 30, 2014.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:05 a.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon (chairman of the committee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. HOWARD P. "BUCK" MCKEON, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM CALIFORNIA, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will come to order. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. The committee meets to receive testimony on the risk to stability in Afghanistan as we transition to a post-2014 residual presence there.

Our witnesses include Dr. Catherine Dale, Dr. Michael O'Hanlon, Mr. Anthony Cordesman, and Ambassador Ronald Neumann. Thank you all for joining us today. I know you have been here before, but it is important for us to find out the latest.

The United States and its coalition partners have made significant achievements in Afghanistan, from building the Afghan National Security Forces [ANSF] to advancing growth in civil society, to achieving significant counterterrorism successes against our enemies. All of these efforts have served our national security interest. However, these gains are fragile and reversible.

Afghanistan has entered a period of transition, one that carries significant risk in my view to its stability and security because the critical elements of that transition have not yet been achieved.

Politically, the Afghan presidential elections remain unresolved. Diplomatically, the Bilateral Security Agreement remains unsigned. And from a security perspective, sustainment of an adequately sized and capable ANSF remains uncertain.

We are witnessing an uptick in violence not only because of the summer fighting season, but also because the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani Network are testing the ANSF and their ability to secure the country.

If we don't get this transition right, do what is necessary to provide U.S. and international commitment to a long-term sustainable strategy for Afghanistan, then we risk a similar future for Afghanistan as we are seeing today in Iraq, where there are few good options and sizeable limits on our ability to affect the situation even though the risks to our security are clear and present.

Our security interests in Afghanistan are clear and we have sacrificed too much to focus solely on short-term exit strategies. Now

is the time when we have more options to consider, when we have an opportunity to shape and influence the situation and when the President must engage and engage often.

However, I fear that the totality of the President's interest on Afghanistan is simply to do what is necessary to finish the job and withdraw. And I worry that the 9,800 U.S. troops, which will be halved within a year, are not going to be sufficient to provide the necessary support to the ANSF given the threat from Al Qaeda, the Haqqani Network, and other jihadist groups in Afghanistan.

On a final note, I hope the President will heed the advice of his military commanders. He has a superb Army General, John Campbell, taking command of ISAF [International Security Assistance Force], following after General Dunford's tremendous leadership there.

I will encourage General Campbell to conduct his own assessment [of] the situation in Afghanistan and to provide that assessment up through the chain of command, as well as to Congress.

Today, we will gain more insights into where we are at and where we need to go along the key lines of effort of the transition that I outlined earlier during this critical phase in Afghanistan. Our panel of experts has a wealth of experience and, again, I thank you for being here today to share them with us.

I look forward to your testimony and your insights.

Mr. Smith.

[The prepared statement of Mr. McKeon can be found in the Appendix on page 37.]

STATEMENT OF HON. ADAM SMITH, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM WASHINGTON, RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thanks to our witnesses for being here today. I look forward to the conversation. And I agree with the chairman's remarks.

Certainly, we have made significant progress in Afghanistan in terms of training their forces, fighting back in the south and elsewhere to regain security and some control. The efforts of the last 3 or 4 years in particular by our service men and women, and all of the supporting folks as well, have borne real fruit and have moved us forward.

However, as the chairman says, those gains are fragile and reversible because the problems with the Afghan Government remain. We are going to the difficult transition, trying to figure out who the next president is going to be. We do not yet have the Bilateral Security Agreement, which would give us some security going forward.

And just, overall, the stability of the Afghan Government, it still is plagued with corruption and plagued with a number of difficulties. While the security forces in Afghanistan have gotten better, they are not as well-equipped as they could be. I am particularly concerned about the lack of close air support going forward and their overall ability to deal with what is still a very robust Taliban insurgency.

That said, we have got to hand off responsibility at some point and I think it is important we have done this in a stairstep man-

ner, that we have sort of slowly gradually handed over responsibility. And hopefully, if we can get the Bilateral Security Agreement signed, we will not be in the same place that we were in in Iraq, where we couldn't get a similar agreement signed, and we had to just go down to nothing in 1 year.

That quick transition, I think, was at least the small part of the problem in Iraq. We would like to see a smoother transition in Afghanistan.

But as these challenges confront us, we are always interested in learning more about how best we can meet them, how best we can deal with them, because we do have national security interest in that region. You know, the violent extremist groups that are present there are obviously closely linked to Al Qaeda and the ideologies that threaten us.

We need to find some way to contain that and hopefully get us to the point where we can have a peaceful and reasonably stable regime in Afghanistan and in Pakistan, as Pakistan is also threatened by many of these terrorist groups.

So I look forward to the testimony. I thank the chairman for having the hearing. And I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Smith can be found in the Appendix on page 38.]

STATEMENT OF DR. CATHERINE DALE, SPECIALIST IN INTERNATIONAL SECURITY, CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Dale.

Is your mic on?

Dr. DALE. It is not. Sorry, but it is now. Chairman McKeon——

The CHAIRMAN. And you have to talk right into it.

Dr. DALE. I have been accused of many things over time, seldom of being too quiet. But I am happy to accommodate. Again, thank you for the invitation to join you today, the CRS [Congressional Research Service] and myself, to testify about risks to stability in Afghanistan.

It is a great time for this discussion, not long after President Obama's announcement in May about the timeline for further U.S. troop drawdowns and changes in their mission and footprint. The U.S. still does face tough choices ahead, choices that will powerfully shape the prospects for stability in Afghanistan, the protection of U.S. interest, and the U.S. reputation and influence on the world stage.

A genuinely strategic approach to those choices would start with the interests we had at stake, what it would take to protect those interests, how long that would take, how much it would cost, and the risks if we don't take those steps, and then given limited resources, the importance of this effort compared to all the other things that we care about.

Afghanistan's future stability is at risk in at least four different arenas. First of all security. In just 5 years, the Afghan National Security Forces have made remarkable progress, with support from the U.S. and other NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] allies and partners. They have grown in capacity, in capabilities, in their unity of effort, their ability to generate effects against the enemy, and they have largely succeeded in providing security for

major events across Afghanistan over this past year, including the two rounds of elections.

But the insurgency has not been defeated. They are able to stage traumatic attacks, to intimidate some Afghans in some communities, and to mount some large-scale assaults. So at issue is how much the insurgency may be further emboldened by the ongoing coalition troop drawdown and how well the ANSF will respond to any increased insurgent pressure.

Security in Afghanistan is fragile. Let me mention three aspects. The ANSF are still in the process of integrating their own organic enablers in arenas such as lift, casualty evacuation, and fires. They will face enabler gaps as coalition forces draw down and before Afghan enablers, which will be more limited in scope and scale, come fully online.

Afghan forces on the ground also need better institutional support from the systems like logistics and personnel and resourcing against requirements. The coalition is working with Afghans both at ministries in Kabul, national level headquarters, and then down on the ground with the army and police to help them vertically integrate those systems.

The current policy calls for pulling advisory efforts back into Kabul by the end of next year, and it is not yet clear how much progress will have been made by that point.

The ANSF feel that the tools they have are insufficient or that their own systems cannot support them. They may choose to retract their reach, to hunker down, to cut local level deals with insurgents, or they may overextend and fail so catastrophically that they lose confidence in themselves.

In addition, U.S. troop drawdowns will sharply curtail our ability to target Al Qaeda and affiliates, which still do pose a threat.

There are three options, essentially, if you choose an option. One is to eliminate the threat beyond prospect of regeneration. Another is to ensure that Afghan and Pakistani forces can handle that threat. Or you could preserve U.S. ability to act directly, more or less indefinitely. We need to be clear about which of these solutions, if any, we intend to pursue.

Second arena is governance. Security in Afghanistan cannot hold without governance that the Afghan people accept. An architecture of responsible governance is needed to direct the ANSF and hold it accountable to provide access to justice in the rule of law, to ensure some minimum foundation of economic viability and opportunity, and to inspire the trust of both regional neighbors and the Afghan people.

But governance in Afghanistan faces two fundamental challenges. One is simply a lack of capacity, the ability to get things done. The other is corruption: pervasive, voracious contestation for political and economic power and influence, backed up by personalized militias, that consistently cannibalizes the Afghan state.

The best long-term solution would be an increasingly inclusive constitutionally grounded Afghan political order. Successful resolution of the current electoral impasse in a way that most Afghans accept could be an important catalyst of that longer-term process.

Now, Afghanistan's increasingly vibrant civil society can also help. That is non-governmental organizations, women's groups,

media outlets, youth organizations, the private sector, traditional local councils. National dialogue in Afghanistan is alive and well. It just needs time to grow.

Third is Pakistan. There is no such thing as a stable Afghanistan in isolation. And the neighbor most crucial to Afghanistan's stability is Pakistan. But that bilateral relationship is marked by a fundamental lack of good faith at the strategic level.

ISAF actively facilitates Afghan-Pakistani mil-to-mil ties, but those opportunities will be more limited as our troops draw down. More fundamentally, it is not clear how well mil-to-mil ties can actually aggregate up to resolve tensions at that political level.

What may make sense for the longer term is sustained strategic-level U.S. engagement, leveraging all the instruments of national power to help shape a stable region. There is some danger that without a continued significant U.S. force presence in Afghanistan, this region will simply disappear from our strategic radar screen amidst the panoply of competing demands.

Fourth, and finally, economics. The biggest elephant in the room is this—who will pay for future security in Afghanistan. Afghanistan itself simply will not be able to foot the bill anytime soon. And without funding, Afghanistan security architecture would almost certainly collapse quickly and perhaps with it the Afghan state.

The international community has pledged support, but the bill is large and it faces competing exigencies in each national capital. As the international presence in Afghanistan diminishes and with it, the ability to monitor implementation, donors would want concrete reassurance that any funding they provide would be utilized accountably. And would-be donors are hardly likely to sign up for a 10-year commitment if there is no prospect that Afghans at the end of that time will be able to assume responsibility.

The step that could come next is a real dialogue about future funding requirements over time, including Afghanistan's ability to contribute. It would also be helpful for the international community to pool its efforts more concertedly and leverage tools like the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework.

One final word. One of the greatest risks looking ahead is that in the mad rush of competing global crises, the U.S. Government will not be able to find any more time to think about Afghanistan. It will effectively decide not to decide. Far better to approach the way forward strategically with due consideration of the interests the U.S. has at stake, what it would take to protect them, and the consequences for the United States should stability in Afghanistan collapse.

Thank you for this opportunity, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Dale can be found in the Appendix on page 40.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Dr. O'Hanlon.

STATEMENT OF DR. MICHAEL O'HANLON, DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH FOR THE FOREIGN POLICY PROGRAM, BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

Dr. O'HANLON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is an honor to be before the committee that I have admired for so long, and I want

to say a special word of gratitude and admiration to your service as chairman, as you think about a next stage in life in the coming months.

I really want to just focus on one point. I know we have a lot of subjects before us on Afghanistan, and I am here with my distinguished colleagues and frequent travelling companions to Afghanistan who are, like Catherine, going to add so much.

So I just want to focus on the proposal to pull all of our main combat units out by 2016 or by the end of that year, which of course is part of the drawdown plan the President has now put on the table in his May remarks.

And, Mr. Chairman, you alluded to the 9,800 goal, the total number of American men and women in uniform that will start next year in Afghanistan according to the current plan if we get the Bilateral Security Agreement. And like you, I have some concerns about that number, but I have even greater concerns about the plan to go to zero by the end of 2016.

And I think it is actually based on a paradigm or on a set of assumptions that I would disagree with. And let me begin by saying I think the President has been very patient, as has this committee, as have the American people in supporting a long, frustrating, ugly mission.

And it hasn't gone nearly as well as most of us would have liked, and yet, I think it has done better than many realized, and the importance of the mission remains. And the President and the Congress deserve a lot of credit for sticking with it.

But I fear there is a little bit now of a loss of patience, that there is a narrative that says we somehow have to end this. And maybe the President feels that he is doing his successor a favor by getting out by the end of 2016. But I actually worry the President will be taking away tools that his successor needs.

And so the way I would suggest we think about 2017 or the end of 2016, this is not a period where we need to pursue an exit strategy. It is a period where we need to establish a new partnership with Afghanistan.

We have core American interests above and beyond the development of the Afghan National Security Forces, and those interests are important themselves. But we have a counterterrorism interest in staying in Afghanistan with a limited military capability of perhaps a few thousand total forces, anywhere between one and four bases.

For the indefinite future, I see no reason that exit strategy or a declaration of the end of America's role should be our guiding principle. We have an enduring plan for forces in Djibouti. We are probably going to have to do more in Iraq. We have forces in and out of the Persian Gulf all the time. We had forces in Korea for many decades and still have them today. I don't see why exit strategy should be the defining objective.

And the reason I say this fundamentally is because I cannot rule out in my own mind that Al Qaeda is still going to be a threat in Pakistan after 2016. And to be blunt, we need places nearby from which to attack Al Qaeda even after 2016.

Now, I would hope very much we don't have to do this nearly as much as we did in the past. I am glad to see the number of drone

attacks and the frequency has gone down. I would hope it could continue to go down. But we have seen Al Qaeda and its affiliates move and take advantage of new opportunities, again, in recent months in the Levant and in Iraq. There is no reason to rule out that they might do that again in Pakistan or Afghanistan.

We need tools, especially drones, intelligence, and special forces, to be able to address the possibility of Al Qaeda, starting with Mr. Zawahiri and working down, using Pakistan or Eastern Afghanistan as sanctuary, as planning centers, training bases, operational headquarters in the future.

And to me there is simply no reason that we should think that this has to stop or should stop by the end of 2016. Our threat assessments are not precise enough and even if Al Qaeda and affiliates are stronger now in the broader Middle East and maybe a little less worrisome in Pakistan and Afghanistan compared to how the tables were different 5 years ago, they could change again.

Al Qaeda as a global movement is a very adaptive, very opportunistic, set of organizations. And if they sense an opportunity in the tribal areas of Pakistan or Eastern Afghanistan again, I believe they could use those kinds of geographic locations to do much of what they have done in the past. And this includes, of course, the Haqqani Network, a number of other groups that are affiliated with Al Qaeda, whether or not we describe them by that formal Al Qaeda central construct or name.

And so, just one last point as I make this overall argument. When I think about the President's overall approach towards Afghanistan during his 5½ years in office, again, I think he has been remarkably patient. He has always felt the need to talk about getting out. And it seems that we have always been working towards an exit strategy and yet he has taken his time to actually make the cuts.

They have been, as Congressman Smith said, in a staircase manner with the support of the committee and others in Congress, and I think that has been very prudent. And I think that should continue.

If I look back at 2011—and this committee remembers very well the debate from that period of time—in June 2011, as General Petraeus was here for CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] Director confirmation hearings and John Allen was about to take over in Afghanistan, at that time the President announced a plan to cut our forces by one-third, from roughly 100,000 down to 68,000 by the end of the summer of 2012. So it was going to be over about a 16-month period.

As you will recall, General Petraeus voiced some concerns that was a little too quick in his mind, but he thought it was reasonable. Some of his friends were encouraging him to resign in protest or what have you, but he said, no, you know, President Obama has to take a little broader perspective than I do as commander. And he said, if it is a little faster than I would like, so be it, we can still work within that kind of approach.

We got down to 68,000 troops by the end of September 2012. And then, the President made no further declarations of any drawdowns until after he had been reelected and gave his State of the Union

address in February of 2013. At which point, he said he would take a full 12 months to get down to 34,000 troops.

In other words, there was a certain amount of patience and a conditions-based approach. And even if it was a little faster of a drawdown than I might have preferred myself, at least it had that kind of a logic to it.

Now I fear that we are lumping everything altogether in one plan. So we are getting from our current 30,000 down to about 10,000 by the end of the year, then we are going to cut it again in half by the end of 2015, and then we are going to be virtually all the way out by the end of 2016.

I think it is piling too much on top of competing plans or overlapping plans. We would be better off going one step at a time and probably planning to keep several thousand forces even after 2016, fundamentally, for counterterrorism purposes, even if the Afghan forces may not need us as much at that point.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Dr. O'Hanlon can be found in the Appendix on page 57.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Mr. Cordesman.

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

Mr. CORDESMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Congressman Smith, members of the committee.

This is the third war in my lifetime where I have seen us headed out of a war where we are denying or understating the risks in what we are doing, where the United States Government is systematically spinning the facts to try to justify a structure which is not supported by outside forms of analysis, and where we have little real public debate over the strategic impact of our actions.

To be blunt, I think we already have transitioned wrong. As was raised by both Dr. Dale and Dr. O'Hanlon, I think we are repeating a mistake that I saw us make in Vietnam, that has been clearly demonstrated in Iraq. We are rushing advisory groups out too quickly, setting levels too low. We are not integrating a civil-military plan and we are creating metrics which basically are not supported by looking at the facts.

The problem I have always seen in our approach to counterinsurgency is we face three threats. One is the enemy. The other is the government and allies that we have to work with, and the third is our ability to adapt with some degree of transparency and realism to the actual nature of the war we are fighting.

Now, people have mentioned already the accomplishments or the gains we have made in Afghanistan. Well, I think the problem is, that when you shift from the reporting that comes in the 1230 report or USAID [United States Agency for International Development] or the State Department and you look at the IMF [International Monetary Fund], the World Bank, the U.N. [United Nations] and other sources, you get a completely different picture of the risks and problems we face.

You also find something that is totally lacking in U.S. Government reporting, which are assessments of uncertainty, definitions

of where our data come from, and frankly, timeliness, because so much of our reporting lags 3 to 6 months, in some cases even a year behind the current status inside of Afghanistan.

I think that one of the key issues you see almost immediately, and this is in the 1230 report, but even clearer in the U.N. report. The surge in Afghanistan had none of the effects it had inside Iraq. You have not seen a decline in violence. You have not seen a decline in casualties. You have seen a steady rise in all of these metrics, including acts of violence as measured by people outside the ISAF structure, like the U.N. and other sources.

You have seen a rise in civilian casualties that is very significant. And you have not seen a decline in the areas of conflict. You have seen just the opposite. In the U.N. reporting in every area except the south, you have seen a major expansion of insurgent activity in terms of acts of violence, in terms of casualties, in terms of IEDs [improvised explosive devices], and the other measurements involved.

I think as SIGAR [Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction] reporting has shown, you have seen very serious problems emerge in the training and support effort and transition of the Afghan National Security Forces. I don't think that these are fatal, but they are real.

And one of the lessons in both Vietnam and Iraq is precisely the issue that Dr. O'Hanlon raised. You need to have sufficient advisors long enough to make the transition from generating forces to creating effective combat forces.

If you look at the official U.S. Army history of what happened in Vietnam, you will see measured in detail the cost of following the course of action we plan to follow in Afghanistan. If you look at reports on what happened in Iraq, units began basically to collapse, became corrupt, failed to support maintenance within a matter of months of the departure of U.S. advisers in the field.

And these were forces considerably better developed than the ones in Afghanistan and far less dependent on a police force which is roughly half of the Afghan National Forces and is rated by every source as ineffective, corrupt, and not tied to an effective rule of law structure.

I think that we are looking at numbers which this committee really needs to examine. The public data on the number of Afghan-led operations ignored desertion rates, absentee rates, in the units involved. They do not characterize who is leading what and the definition of Afghan-led even in elite forces like Afghan Special Forces is a little amazing because when you go to the latest 1230 report, you will see there are 488 Afghan Special Forces units or led operations.

The problem is, if you read into the fine print, 378 of those actually have U.S. participation and strong U.S. involvement. And defining data is a critical issue even within the military in terms of police effectiveness, the effectiveness of the ALP [Afghan Local Police]. There is a very serious risk.

But the problem, I think, that is equally critical is the civil dimension. One of the things that is stunning is the gap between World Bank assessments of the quality and movements in governance, the U.N. indications of basic human development measures,

and the reporting that has come out of USAID and the U.S. Government.

You see a major set of improvements through about 2005, 2006 in international reporting by the World Bank, the IMF, the U.N. You do not see that as being sustained. You see a major drop as the level of violence rise. You do not see claims as you saw in a White House factsheet that the GNP [gross national product] is improving. And the reason, as the World Bank explains, is that has been an improvement almost completely dependent since 2005 on rainfall.

So when the White House quoted 2012 for an average improvement, that was a great year for the rains. The problem was, in 2013, the GDP [gross domestic product] growth radically dropped. And I think, frankly, in politics, taking credit for the weather may be a little ambitious on the part of anyone.

The World Bank does not show rising income. The World Bank presents just the opposite argument. It is that you have had a serious increase in poverty, largely for population pressures, largely because of hyper-urbanization, problems with water and agriculture.

All of these are laid out in detail in terms of World Bank and IMF reporting. They are laid out by reporting by the Afghans. You see a level of dependence on outside aid and military spending, which is, again, well-presented in the World Bank data and the IMF data.

All of our aid programs, to the extent we have any plan, ignore that economic risk; they are essentially program or project aid plans. And let me note, this is now 2014. We became actively involved in war and aid programs in 2002.

We have, in two wars, never had the State Department or USAID present any meaningful effectiveness measures of what aid has actually accomplished on the civil side. The one document in two wars we have is this one, and not one of the statistical areas listed can be sustained by an examination of where the data came from.

I think that we face critical problems that we have ignored in terms of the infrastructure. We have talked about the ring road, we have talked about the improvement we have made, but these are not being sustained or maintained. Security is an issue, but basically we are watching a lot of that infrastructure deteriorate before we even leave.

We see that we have not done anything to remove critical barriers by World Bank or IMF or U.N. estimates to industrial development. And again, these are all laid out in detail in a formal statement that I would like to have entered in the record. All of the data are taken from sources other than the U.S. Government to illustrate the issues involved.

Finally, we are not even coming to grip with the issue of dependence on narcotics and power brokers. We are watching a steady increase in production, we are watching an increase in the area of cultivation, and one of the key problems is that, as we pull down on aid and military spending, the percentage of Afghan dependence on narcotics has to go up because there is no other area of development which the World Bank or the IMF has been able to identify.

So let me close by saying, I do not believe in looking at what is a poor developing country, virtually at the bottom of the world in terms of rankings of governance and corruption. Transparency International ranks Afghanistan as 93 percent of the worst country in the world in terms of corruption and the ineffectiveness of government after all of our aid and other efforts.

But, if we are going to leave Afghanistan and we want it to work, we need to keep the advisers in, we need to keep the military spending up, and we need an honest and realistic assessment of economic and governance risks that takes account of the fact that the only source I can think of that is talking about these accomplishments of all the rating groups is the United States Government.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Cordesman can be found in the Appendix on page 78.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Ambassador Neumann.

STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR RONALD E. NEUMANN, PRESIDENT, AMERICAN ACADEMY OF DIPLOMACY

Ambassador NEUMANN. Thank you, Chairman McKeon, Representative Smith. Thank you for your invitation to appear today.

Far too much has been accomplished to say that Afghanistan is without hope and far too little is finished to claim that we have accomplished our purpose. We are ending our active combat participation in a bloody continuing war. We retain a strong interest in supporting stability. As we consider how to confront the new Islamic caliphate, we should not start by losing the war with its Al Qaeda parent.

There are some positive aspects. Despite white-knuckle confrontations, it appears Afghanistan will emerge with a peaceful transition of power to a legitimately elected president. That individual will have a stronger hand to govern and to negotiate because he is broadly legitimate.

Afghan political leaders, albeit with international help, are able to compromise. The Afghan Security Forces, with 100,000 fewer foreign troops in the country than in 2009, credibly managed security through the election.

I want to focus particularly on those areas where U.S. policy and actions can make a difference. My colleagues have discussed economic security and politics. There is a psychological element that links all three. Afghans and neighbors, friends and enemies alike, pay a great deal of attention to what they think the U.S. will do.

When they are unclear, they make policy based on assumptions. Our recent policy decisions need to be reviewed in that light.

I support the decision to leave just under 10,000 troops in Afghanistan in 2015, although like my colleagues, I wish it had been a few more. However, many problems are occasioned by the President's having already decided without reference to what will or won't happen on the ground that our presence will be reduced by half in 2016 and ended by 2017, except for forces under embassy control.

These decisions raise doubts about our effectiveness, about what Afghans think they may expect from us, and about the future of NATO. The change in configurations will diminish our effective-

ness. In the next 6 months, our forces will consolidate one posture, only to radically change it 12 months later, when we shrink to a Kabul base.

Physically, a lot of work is going to be taken away from advising and go into shifting locations and organizations. We will become more ignorant of what is going on in the war and in governance in the provinces. Most important, these decisions radiate doubts about our commitment, since we are going to end our mission on the same timetable no matter what.

Uncertainty gives hope to our enemies, it leads Afghans to fight or govern with one eye watching to see what they can do to protect themselves if we bail out faster than we now claim will be the case, and these considerations affect stability and performance.

U.S. troop decisions need to be integrated with NATO planning. We have a double interest in extending the NATO mission beyond 2016. First, we will continue to have an important training mission that should be shared with our NATO allies. That is what the people that are going to stay under embassy control are going to be doing. Second, when nations have troops engaged, they are far more likely to maintain financial support and share the burden of stabilizing Afghanistan.

Therefore, we need to decide how to coordinate the NATO mission with U.S. forces under embassy control. Otherwise, we will end up with separate parallel and probably duplicatory functions, or no NATO.

We know that many NATO nations are prepared to extend their stay beyond 2016, but to stay, they will need support from us and that apparently is not decided.

Finally, I want to stress the interrelationship of force, money, and diplomacy. In the recent electoral crisis, our diplomacy was undergirded by the very real threat to reduce assistance if the crisis worsened.

The lesson here is really important. Threats alone, which was sort of where we started, you work it out or we are going home, were not sufficient to resolve the crisis. Diplomacy was essential. But it is because of the weight of our commitments of military and financial aid that we had real influence to use in brokering a process.

We are not out of the woods. Whatever level of Afghan political cooperation has been agreed, will be carried out with one eye constantly on future political advantage and power politics, as they maneuver against each other. That shouldn't surprise us, it isn't terribly unfamiliar.

The resulting political maneuvers will strongly affect the next Afghan president's ability to improve internal governance, a critical issue for future stability, women's advancement, and economic and justice sector development. There will be a continuing need for careful diplomacy to help the next Afghan president work through these challenges.

Maintaining our aid and our presence are vital to providing the tools with which successful diplomatic outcomes can be built.

Thank you for your attention and I await your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Neumann can be found in the Appendix on page 88.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Ambassador Neumann, it appears there is going to be—that there will be negotiations between Ghani and Abdullah campaigns or some type of power-sharing arrangement.

Could you provide more detail on what options there may be for a power-sharing arrangement? Also, can you describe any risks to security in Afghanistan in rushing a political deal among the candidates?

Ambassador NEUMANN. I want to be careful not to exceed my actual knowledge at the moment in an area which is pretty opaque. I think there are several different kinds of negotiations going on.

First of all, power needs to be shared no matter who wins. That was clear even before the election. I was in Afghanistan in March and both Ghani and Dr. Abdullah, and for that matter, Sayyaf and Rassul, all said to me that if they won, they understood they would have to govern with a broader coalition than that that elected them, because the country is still riven by political factions at the moment, although not nearly as brutally so as Iraq.

So there is a need to spread out. What you have got now is a kind of double-balancing, where on the one hand, you have the negotiations over how you are going to count ballots—that might remind us of certain Florida events—and at the same time, you are using the tension there to play for how you are going to get more positions.

I think there are two risks, but they are manageable. One risk is that so much is given away to power brokers in this balancing that the next president has a constrained ability to actually govern any better than President Karzai has been able to do.

The other is that this process is probably going to break down after the election. I am not so worried that you will have—can't resolve it. Afghans have shown an incredible ability to resolve issues, people who were shooting at each other in the ruins of Kabul have managed to be holding hands and drinking tea together in the parliament for some years.

So I don't think at the end of the day that they are going to let this go over the edge. They understand how serious it is. But I don't think you will get a stable situation out of it, because you will continue to see a maneuvering for power.

And that is where I think our role is really critical, to keep reminding them of the dangers of letting this get out of control and keep the boundaries in place, which I think we could do creatively. We have good diplomats who have done a good job. But you have to have assets.

When you take all the assets out, then you look like Iraq, where you are not even jawboning, you are just doing toothless gumming.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Dr. O'Hanlon, in my opening statement, I made the parallel between the situation currently unfolding in Iraq and the potential for something familiar in Afghanistan should we pull out too hastily on an arbitrary timeline.

I am concerned that the 9,800 troops are not robust enough to support the mission in Afghanistan post-2014, that there is a risk associated with the President's decision to go to zero on an arbitrary timeline by the end of 2016.

Could you describe in detail the nature of the risk of leaving on an arbitrary timeline? What needs to be achieved in Afghanistan before the United States departs with its residual presence in your view?

Dr. O'HANLON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A couple of things. First, Tony made, I thought, the very good point that we need to stay in the field with Afghan forces. And that gets to the question of what the numbers are.

Of course, commanders have been discrete about their public statements, but I think if we read the tea leaves and read between the lines, we can tell the commanders would prefer to be a little higher than 9,800, but it is not out of the realm of at least what you can debate or consider.

So I think that number is probably low for the reasons, again, that Tony is getting at and the reasons that Congressman Smith was alluding to with air support, as well as a couple of other specific needs. But I am less worried about that, putting that aside for the moment.

What I am more worried about is that, as soon as we get to that number, we immediately need to start making plans to cut it in half. As Ron points out, that is going to distract us from the actual job at hand in 2015, because by the end of that very next calendar year, we have to be down to 4,900, which means we will be implementing that drawdown in the late summer and fall, which means we will be planning it in the spring.

So there will be no period during which we are actually just using that number of 9,800 to do whatever we can do with it. We will almost immediately be figuring out how to cut it.

And then, even worse yet in my eyes is the plan to go to essentially zero operational units in the field by the end of 2016. And there I have my concerns about how we nurture and steward the Afghan forces. But I also have my concerns, as I mentioned earlier, about the Al Qaeda threat.

We don't know how to predict where Al Qaeda is going to be strongest in 2 to 3 years globally, but I think we can all be fairly sure of one thing. It is not going away. And I think this committee has been very good at getting that message out.

We all—a lot of us were hopeful that Al Qaeda was maybe not on the ropes, but at least diminishing in overall influence 2 or 3 years ago. That became a partisan issue. Leave aside the partisan issue.

Empirically speaking, there was a serious debate in 2011/2012 about whether the global threat was getting a little bit less. I don't think there is any such debate anymore. Empirically speaking, the threat is very serious and the only thing we don't really know is where it is going to be most serious come 2016, 2017.

So, taking away tools to deal with it in South Asia, to my mind, is not a logical thing for American counterterrorism purposes.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

One question in terms of Taliban and Al Qaeda, you know, back when the Taliban was in power, they made the deal to allow Al Qaeda to be there and they have had an alliance of some sorts ever

since. As the Taliban are ascended, to what extent do you see Al Qaeda being intricately linked with them?

Let's say that the worst happens and the Taliban take over at least some portion of Afghanistan, are able to govern it, how would any of you assess the risk that Al Qaeda will again be able to enjoy safe havens or that whatever that group of violent extremists looks like that the threat would then become external, that they would try to attack Western targets, that they would try to sort of recapture what Al Qaeda used to do in terms of plotting, you know, wars, terrorist attacks against Western interests outside of Afghanistan?

What is that link? It doesn't seem to be as strong as it was prior to 2001, but I am interested in your assessment.

Mr. CORDESMAN. Mr. Smith, I think that we need to be very careful because the Al Qaeda has a sanctuary in Pakistan, and that has not been challenged and none of the fighting that is taking place in the FATA [Federally Administered Tribal Areas] area will be affected, because that sanctuary is in the——

Mr. SMITH. Well, it has been challenged. I mean, witness the drone strikes and some other things. It is not——

Mr. CORDESMAN. Well——

Mr. SMITH. Yes.

Mr. CORDESMAN. Well, the strikes have been essentially not on Al Qaeda, however. We have had a challenge in the raid, we have gotten bin Laden. But I think the real issue here is Al Qaeda was never a controlling force in the Taliban government. Al Qaeda central has now been replaced by more influential centers of operational activity by Al Qaeda in Yemen, North Africa.

Mr. SMITH. Absolutely.

Mr. CORDESMAN. It has been displaced by groups like ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria] and ISIL [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant]. I think that quite frankly our concern really is not Al Qaeda as much as the fact that, when you look at the Haqqani Network, if you look at what is happening in the Taliban, there are significant numbers of foreign fighters in those groups. They interact with people moving in and out of areas like Syria, now Iraq and elsewhere.

It is not Al Qaeda anymore that is probably the primary threat, at least Al Qaeda central, of terrorist attacks outside of Afghanistan. It is the flow and interaction of activity through the Haqqani Network and the Taliban.

Mr. SMITH. And the foreign fighters as well. The other question I had is in——

Ambassador NEUMANN. Could I just make a short addition to that?

Mr. SMITH. Sure.

Ambassador NEUMANN. I think we want to be careful because you could get lost in the technical definitions and miss the threat, and we also have the problem as we have with the expanding threats that we can end up doing policy a little like small children playing soccer, where everybody runs to the current ball.

Intellectually, these groups that Tony was talking about, the foreign fighters, old Al Qaeda, new Islamic caliphate, have a very strong intellectual link. And I think it is a mistake to try to be too

precise and say that one is a threat and this one isn't. I think that begins to exceed our knowledge.

I think it is also important to remember that there were a lot of writings that said, we will get the United States in, they will lose the war because they will be exhausted, and we will come back. It doesn't mean that they will be back as a huge presence, but I think there is a psychological element also, which will invigorate the general movement. And we need to be careful about that.

I cannot imagine them not coming back to some extent because I don't see any pressure on the Taliban sufficient to keep them out when they are useful linkage and ally.

Mr. SMITH. And as Mr. Cordesman mentioned, they are beginning to sort of cross-pollinate there. It is not just a matter of Al Qaeda; the Haqqani Network or other groups that aren't even affiliated with Al Qaeda can still present a threat to us.

I guess, you know, one of the things we really struggle with is—and I think, Mr. Cordesman, you did a decent job of explaining the limitation in Afghanistan—but how long would we have to stay there before those limitations would change?

It seems to me that we are on sort of a perpetual motion machine here. We could go back up to 100,000 troops and stay for 20 years and somehow I feel that 20 years from now, hopefully a different group of people would be having this same conversation about, you know, a corrupt, incompetent government, we can't leave because they are not going to be able to stand.

And if that is true, what does that mean in terms of how we adopt our policy? I mean, isn't there some sort of containment policy that is short of well, we just have to try to stay there forever to hopefully keep the lid on this.

Mr. CORDESMAN. Mr. Smith, we are already in many ways out. And when we talk about advisers, you are talking about advisers, not combat forces.

Mr. SMITH. Right, but that dodges the question to some extent. Okay, so take us back a couple of years to where we were in.

Mr. CORDESMAN. Let me just say though that I think the honest answer to your question is, until there is some resolution of what is a set of religious, demographic, economic, and political tensions that now extends, really, from North Africa in some ways to the Philippines, we can contain, we can limit area by area according to how serious the issue is, but this threat is going to remain.

Mr. SMITH. Absolutely.

Mr. CORDESMAN. There is no way we can physically defeat it.

Mr. SMITH. But if that is the case, isn't that an argument for doing it in more containments. Instead of putting all of our eggs, a 100,000 troops in Afghanistan when the threat could be in a whole bunch of different places, isn't it an argument for coming up with a broader containment strategy where you don't try to, you know, put 100,000 in Iraq or 100,000 troops in Afghanistan, because in no place can you actually eliminate it.

Mr. CORDESMAN. Well, I think you are absolutely correct, but it—to the extent that talking to people in the special forces or the Joint Staff and elsewhere, I think that really is their strategy.

Mr. SMITH. Yes.

Mr. CORDESMAN. It is to find areas where we do not abandon security partners, as Ambassador Neumann, Dr. Dale, and Dr. O'Hanlon have mentioned. We create the kind of presence and role which is both affordable and sustainable. And we will find ourselves with new areas emerging.

I don't think anyone a year ago would have said that we would face a proto-state in eastern Syria and western Iraq. People have talked about our progress in Yemen quite frankly as optimistically as they have our presence in Iraq—or rather Afghanistan. But we are at the point where we can't provide sufficient forces to control that threat, we may be able to limit it.

Mr. SMITH. Yes, thank you. I want to let somebody else, and I yield back. I appreciate the answer. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Mr. Wilson.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank each of you for being here today. And my hopes for the people of Afghanistan are very personal. My youngest son served as an engineer there last year with the South Carolina Army National Guard. And he was really inspired by the people of Afghanistan.

My former National Guard unit, the 218th Brigade, served for a year in Afghanistan, led by our Adjutant General Bob Livingston, and they developed a real identity and bond with the people of Afghanistan as Afghan brothers. So I am hopeful.

Additionally, though, I am so concerned. We certainly should remember that it was from the caves of Afghanistan that Osama bin Laden directed the attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001. Somehow we—the American people have forgotten that. They need to remember.

And, Mr. Cordesman, as you are indicating the spread of Al Qaeda across the globe from North Africa through the Middle East, Central Asia, and you added to it, the Philippines, too. We have people who are dedicated, according to this diagram by Dr. Fred Kagan of the American Enterprise Institute, of death to Israel and death to America. That is their plan.

At the same time, again, it is personal, I have had an opportunity to visit with our troops 12 times in Afghanistan, but something that was, again, very uplifting to me is to visit with our diplomatic corps led by Ambassador Neumann. And so, I know we have extraordinary people.

As we face this, I would like to know—the President has correctly identified that there was a direct relationship between the stability of Afghanistan and the stability of nuclear Pakistan. If what—what would be—how could this be missed that the President was very clear that this is—the instability there could result in extraordinary threat to the American people.

Each of you, if you would comment in regard to the importance of the interrelation with Pakistan.

Dr. DALE. Sir, thank you for your question, and thanks to your sons as well for their terrific service. You raised a terrific issue. Stability in Afghanistan, many would say, is important from a U.S. national security interest perspective for multiple reasons. One is the threat of violent extremism, violent extremists, who as my colleagues were just discussing have found a genial home in Afghanistan in the past and currently.

But in addition, the South Asia region raises other concerns for us. One is the prospect, and a very scary one, of nuclear proliferation in Pakistan which could be triggered by state instability or collapse.

A stable Afghanistan could go a long way to lowering the temperatures and the tensions in the Afghan-Pakistani relationship and perhaps bolster state stability in Pakistan. And that is something worth thinking about as we make future decisions.

One more facet is the Pakistani-Indian relationship and the prospect there of a potential nuclear standoff. Afghanistan has traditionally served as grounds for proxy contestation between those two states. Again, a stable Afghanistan could go a long way to lowering those temperatures and reducing that tension.

Thank you.

Dr. O'HANLON. Congressman, I will just make one brief point, which is a scenario that I worry about somewhat if Afghanistan were to fall apart, and whether the Taliban itself would invite a group like Lashkar-e-Taiba into part of eastern Afghanistan or not, I don't know. But if the state collapsed, a group like Lashkar-e-Taiba, which of course was behind the Mumbai terrorist attack of 2008 in India, could have another place from which it could do planning.

At the moment, it may not need that because, historically, of course, the Pakistani security forces have tolerated and even helped Lashkar-e-Taiba. But there hasn't been another attack like Mumbai in the last 6 years and there could come a point where Lashkar-e-Taiba wants more freedom of maneuver to operate beyond the controls of the Pakistani state.

So I would worry that an Afghanistan in chaos could provide the sanctuary not only for the groups that might threaten us directly, but for groups that might want to start Indo-Pakistani conflict, and specifically Lashkar-e-Taiba.

Mr. CORDESMAN. I think that Mike has raised a key issue, as has Dr. Dale. There is something to remember about Pakistan. The United States State Department Report on Terrorism ranks it as having the highest level of terrorist incidents of any country in the world. Almost all of those incidents are not related to any aspect of Afghanistan.

Many of them take place in areas that have nothing to do with the FATA area. It is an economy which basically faces a crisis because of demographic pressures, because this is a country that spends less on education than virtually every country in the world. It is a country which is always on the edge, in many ways, of being a failed state.

It is also a country where we don't seem to tie our strategy to Pakistan to our strategy in Afghanistan. It virtually went unmentioned in the Quadrennial Defense Review, there is no mention of it in the West Point speech, and we are cutting aid very seriously.

Most of that military aid never went to counterinsurgency. It went to buying equipment to fight India. And as is the case in Afghanistan on the economic side, in spite of efforts by the Congress over the last 10 years, we have never had a single report from USAID to explain what the benefits or impact of the economic aid

to Pakistan has been. And quite frankly, it is not quite clear what the program did.

The questions you raised are very serious, but we have a Pakistan problem, and not just an Afghanistan-Pakistan problem.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time expired. Ms. Sanchez.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you all for being before us today. I just want to try to understand whoever or as many of you who want to answer this question, what do you think—what is the real assessment of the capability of the Afghan National Security Force?

Where are their gaps in capability? What key resources do they need? What is it that the international community needs to do in order to get them to a point where they can really do things on their own?

Ambassador NEUMANN. I want to make a couple quick comments, but Catherine is the one who runs around the most out in the boonies. But I think first of all, as Tony was talking about with the police, you have got considerable variation in forces.

It is important to remember how little time we have actually been at this. When I left Afghanistan in 2007, my official departure, but I keep going back, we were building less than 200,000 forces for the total of Afghan security forces. We had 600,000 in Iraq already under arms.

We didn't raise our level of building until the decisions of 2009. And given our budget processes and our political processes, that means those people start coming on line in 2010 being recruited. For your advanced equipment, your logistics, that doesn't even start arriving until 2010 because you all have to appropriate money, contracts have to be signed, stuff has to be built.

So you are actually looking at a force generation process that is about 4 years old for the majority of the force. And we tend to forget that because we think, well, we have been at this 13 years, why is this so screwed up.

Secondly, I remember very clearly when I visited in 2010, I was getting a lot of briefings that we were not even beginning the development of most of the—what we call the enablers, the logistics, the medevac, the artillery, because we were using every inch of space in basing to create infantry so we can get them into the fight.

But there was no big neon sign in 2010 that said, hey, we are going to quit this in 2014, you are done, or 2016.

Ms. SANCHEZ. But, Ambassador, the capacity.

Ambassador NEUMANN. Okay.

Ms. SANCHEZ. What is our current capacity?

Ambassador NEUMANN. Their capacity—okay, their capacity is——

Ms. SANCHEZ. That is really my question, because I got news for you.

Ambassador NEUMANN. Yes.

Ms. SANCHEZ. I have talked to plenty people, plenty of people who told me that, you know, all these numbers that we saw over the years, hundreds of thousands of people recruited, we were recruiting 63-year-olds, we were recruiting people who were illiterate.

You know, I would really want to know what is their capability and what do we have to do to get them into place so that we can get out of there.

Ambassador NEUMANN. Tony will tell you in great detail that our statistics are rotten, with which I agree. The overall ability to fight has been fairly high. The variance is extreme so that we have a huge amount of anecdotal evidence—you know, Afghanistan is a place where if you have your mind made up, you can find the anecdotes that fit your belief.

What we don't have is the air support that we have had. What we don't have yet developed is casualty evacuation. We don't have well-developed targeting and intelligence processes, all of which are things we started very late.

We have a lot of willingness to fight when you contrast—and you can—we can debate this pretty long because it will be different with different stories. But the point I would make is, when you look at the falling apart of the Iraqi army in the last year, you are not yet seeing anything equivalent to that with Afghan units in the fight. That is a fairly high degree of willingness to carry out the battle.

But the competence question and the effectiveness question are much, much harder to get at and we are still, I think, in fairly early days to measure that.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Thank you. Does anybody else on the panel have—before I lose all my time here?

Mr. CORDESMAN. Very quickly, in two wars, Iraq and Vietnam, we discovered the hard way that all of the metrics we had in generating forces, as Ambassador Neumann, did not give us a measure what happened when we left and they went into combat.

The truth is, we can't answer your question until we actually watch them seriously fight on their own. And if we don't have advisers or presence that is with those units, the historical case is, the chance of their collapsing, or a significant amount of the order of battle collapsing, is very high.

Dr. DALE. Ma'am, thanks for the question. Just two words: my colleagues are kind; I've spent a lot of time on the ground with Afghan army and police commanders over 5 years in a lot of different parts of the country. They are capable, they are confident, they integrate their efforts much better than they did, and they have been successful operationally, in particular over the last year, but they do lack some key enablers.

As we draw down and stop providing our enablers for their use, there will be a gap before their own enablers are fully online. And then more fundamentally, they need institutional systems that can support them, and those are not fully in place.

That is a key focus of the campaign, including beyond this year, going into Resolute Support, helping Afghans build those systems that my friends and colleagues here have talked about. But it takes work both in Kabul and out on the ground for end-to-end integration, and there is a question about how long we are going to be able to sustain that; current policy calls for us to pull back to Kabul by the end of next year.

It is a great question. As Tony points out, how will we know how much is enough, but also how much time we will have.

Thank you.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Mr. Nugent.

Mr. NUGENT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And really to build on what you were just testifying to, you know, I had a son in Afghanistan for 15 months in—I think around the 2006, 2007 time period. And then I had two in Iraq right at the drawdown.

And my concern is, we don't want to create the same situation that we currently have in Iraq. And I know that you have struggled to try to explain what we think the capacity is of the Afghan national forces, and I think you do have different motivation on the fight level, I will tell you.

But what do you think—and I have heard you, you have all talked about this. You know, we are drawing down to 9,800 and then we are drawing down to half of that. It seems like all the planning that is going to take place is going to be not planning about how we sustain, but planning on how we get out.

How does that put us in a sustainable position? And I would like to hear from any of you what you think that causes us to do or not do.

Ambassador NEUMANN. Real quickly. It does not put us in a sustainable position. And the doubts it creates about us directly undercut effectiveness. When people look over their shoulder to think are they about to be let down, then they are not putting their back into the fight.

So there is not one answer to how good they are, because the answer is partly a reciprocal of how much confidence and faith they have in support. Just as troops going into battle think a lot about whether they are going to be inside or outside artillery range or air cover or the other things. That is a reciprocal.

Mr. CORDESMAN. If I could just say from Vietnam and Iraq, one of the key lessons we should have learned and haven't is, once you generate forces, you have to keep advisers with them in the field long enough for them to actually become a fully functioning force.

Under the current plan, we will not come close to that. With 9,800 people, we can advise at the core level. We cannot put people into the field. If we cut it down to half that at the end of 2015, we will have rushed forward through a plan which originally was supposed to have advisers through 2018.

And as Ambassador Neumann pointed out, this really started in 2009. And if you go back to testimony before this committee, you were only at about 60 percent of the required advisers even in 2010.

Mr. NUGENT. So let me ask you this. At the 4,800 level, what exactly can they do? What can those U.S. troops provide?

Mr. CORDESMAN. Pack.

Mr. NUGENT. Pack.

Dr. O'HANLON. Yes, I don't like that number. I think it is good that you are honing in on that aspect of the plan, because it strikes me as a somewhat meaningless number. It is in the rough range of what I think should be our enduring force past 2016 for counterterrorism purposes, maybe a little bit bigger than would be absolutely required, but roughly in the range that I probably want to see the next American President sustain.

But as a halfway point between 2014 and 2016, it seems to me that it is really just, you know, a packing-up force, because it hasn't yet had a clear mission defined. And presumably, we need that 9,800 force for something. In 2015, they are not going to have time to do whatever they are being asked to do.

Mr. NUGENT. But doesn't all this really relate back to what our foreign policy is or the lack of, I think, a cohesive foreign policy? Doesn't this kind of speak to that and particularly to our friends and to our enemies as to what our true, I guess, where we come from as to what we are willing to do to help our friends and to sustain a relationship?

Dr. O'HANLON. Can I just add one point on that. Thank you for putting it that way. I feel like collectively as a nation, we have shown a lot of patience in Afghanistan.

Mr. NUGENT. I agree.

Dr. O'HANLON. And it is—and we should keep it going. And it feels to me like we are losing our—the patience we have had. And people like to say America is not a strategically patient country. I see a lot of patience in our country. We stuck with Korea for many decades when it was still essentially a dictatorship.

We stuck with a lot of messy friends in the Middle East because we had no better alternative. In Afghanistan, we have been at it for now two Presidencies and several terms, and that has been, I think, to our credit, because we haven't figured out a strategy that has really given us a resounding success, but we kept at it. Now we are losing our patience and I don't think that is smart.

Mr. NUGENT. Well, and one of the things and, lastly, that I am concerned about is, as a parent of those that actually have to go out and project that force is I want to make sure that they have the ability to protect themselves.

You know, when my kids were over there in Iraq leaving—and one of my sons, you know, they lost five members of that unit from an IRAM [improvised rocket-assisted munition] attack the night I was there. And they knew where the bad guys were laying their heads and the Iraqi Government had to okay the ability to go out and get those folks and they were stopped from doing that, from protecting their own forces because Iraq, as corrupt as they are, were protecting those particular minorities.

I yield back. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Mrs. Davis.

Mrs. DAVIS. Excuse me. Thanks to you all for being here. In response to the last question, I think trying to understand sometimes what really was different in those countries, I wonder—and particularly having this, Ambassador Neumann here—was there a real difference in how we saw the role of civil society?

I think one of the frustrations that Americans have is they didn't see a functioning government. They didn't see the ability of governance throughout the country, even where you might have a kind of remarkable governor, you didn't have the support for that governor, you certainly didn't have the role of women put on any kind of—not even an equal footing, but at least some acknowledgment of.

And I—you know, we just talked about South Korea and sticking with South Korea. Do you think that there—what role does the,

our perception of civil society in Afghanistan play in all this? And do you see any changes?

What should our embassy look like there if we sustain the level of support that we are talking about? We obviously need the ability for some kind of counterterrorism activities, but, you know, what role does the embassy play on that? Where do we anticipate that we will have a different kind of outlook because we hopefully have had—maybe even a perception of a transition in terms of the election.

Where does that play and what can we do about that? What should we be doing about that? How should we see that and how should it be different and not normal, as I think the President has said?

Ambassador NEUMANN. Thank you. It is an important question. I think actually we have had more integration of effort. We tend to talk about and be focused on the military so much that there is very little understanding of what we are doing in the other places.

Having said that, though, we are flighty and impatient and we want to—often we want to see change in civil society and governance, which is important. But we demand a rate that is probably impossible, that has never happened in any country developing from similar circumstances, and then when we don't get it, we get disgusted and we throw up our hands.

So the first thing we need is a longer term plan with a longer term basis of understanding that when you are talking about societal change, you are talking about something that takes a long time. And in fact, a lot of your training and education doesn't produce immediate effect, but it builds up, and then the effects come in if they come, and you can't be certain, later.

In the civil society area particularly, there has been a huge amount of development. But we have by our project approach created a project-driven civil society groups which tend to ebb and flow depending on the dollars and where the projects are, rather than sort of working out their own priorities. We need to help stabilize that.

There is a big development in women's programs. It is very uneven. It is strongest in the urban areas, weakest in the rural. We have tended to be too dominant in trying to lead it rather than support what they lead, and I think not always very effective.

In the NATO planning, it tends to——

Mrs. DAVIS. Excuse me, Mr. Ambassador, if I could interrupt for a second.

Ambassador NEUMANN. Yes, please.

Mrs. DAVIS. Because I think one of the other issues that clearly has been a problem is accountability in terms of many of those programs, as you say, sort of the target.

Ambassador NEUMANN. I am sorry. When you say accountability, you mean political accountability of Afghans or dollar accountability in our programs, as I want to make sure I am speaking to your question.

Mrs. DAVIS. It is probably both. I mean, I think that we have not developed very good tools for evaluating whether or not anything is working. And so, that complicates whether we actually can be more aggressive in how we proceed.

Ambassador NEUMANN. Our tools are not good. Tony has talked about that. And if you will give a chance he will talk a lot more.

But I also think that we sometimes demand tools that are unrealistic, that we—you know, we can measure how many schools are built but it is very hard to measure the quality of education coming out of them which is actually the only thing that really matters. And I don't think we are—I think we have a lot of trouble developing that, but some of that is legitimate trouble.

Mrs. DAVIS. I was going to try and ask Mr. Cordesman but I—unfortunately my time is up, to respond and I know you are frustrated about that issue as well.

Thank you.

Mr. CONAWAY [presiding]. Mr. Coffman, 5 minutes.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

You know, obviously, we can't—one mistake we made in Afghanistan, we have made—but, you know, it is—but I have a question about how realistic is our policy there, how realistic is our objectives given the political culture of the country.

You know, it seemed to me that what the Bush administration did first was brilliant. That we were attacked in 9/11. That the Taliban who controlled much of the country gave safe harbor to Al Qaeda that planned their attack and operation from that area.

We then, after 9/11, we supported the anti-Taliban forces, the Northern Alliance, who pushed the Taliban out of most of the country, I think. And then I think we made a big mistake. Instead of saying to the Northern Alliance, the victors on the ground, you are in charge now, and you ought to probably expand out your governance to make sure all of the factions in the country are included. I think we pushed them aside and superimposed a political process that gave the people of Afghanistan the government that we wanted them to have.

But it is what it is.

And one question I have for you, after the Soviets pulled out, and I think the Government of Afghanistan that they established failed. After they ceased supporting the government, after the Soviet Union dissolved, what, how dependent—after 2016, assuming that U.S. forces are out there, how dependent will the Afghan Government be on continued U.S. support in order to sustain itself? And what happens if we don't?

Dr. Dale, we will start with you.

Dr. DALE. So thank you for the question.

Right now Afghanistan is extraordinarily dependent on the international community, not only to sustain the Afghan National Security Forces, but for most everything else that the government does.

The international community has pledged support for an additional 10 years, the decade of transformation out to 2024. But those pledges face competing exigencies in national capitals. And in any case, quite frankly, that is not a permanent solution.

What the ideal would be a way for Afghanistan to pay, more or less, for its own security, and that requires an Afghan economy that can generate revenues, collect those revenues, execute budgets in a reasonably accountable way with, ideally, diminishing international community assistance over time.

I think—I call it the elephant in the room because I think that it is, without international community funding for some period over the next years, security in Afghanistan is likely to fall apart and perhaps with it the Afghan state.

And so, I think what we urgently need is a real dialogue about what those costs actually look like, what international community commitment might be, and what the plan is to help Afghans cultivate their own and grow an economy that can eventually sustain security there. Our decision in any case may be not to engage. But that is the conversation, I think, that we need to have.

Mr. COFFMAN. Dr. O'Hanlon.

Dr. O'HANLON. Just one brief word, if I could, Congressman.

I think Afghanistan will crucially need our continued help. And I actually think the committee and the Congress have played a very constructive role therefore in empowering Secretary Kerry to do what he just appears to have done, at least temporarily averting electoral crisis, because I think Afghans understand the message, that they need our help, and that you are not going to provide if there is a hijacking of the election process or a breakdown of the state.

And I think this is understood by people like Dr. Abdullah and Dr. Ghani, which is part of why Kerry has leverage when he goes and demands some kind of a compromise.

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Cordesman.

Mr. CORDESMAN. I think that the World Bank estimates that the Afghan Government under a much tighter funding profile than the Tokyo Conference called for would be at least 70 percent dependent on outside aid and money through at least 2020.

I think that the other problem we have seen is that where we expected the Afghan Government to improve its fundraising and ability to manage assets it has actually declined significantly in the last year and a half, according to World Bank and other estimates.

We either provide them with continuing support or on the military and civil level this structure collapses. That doesn't mean they aren't improving. It doesn't mean they can't make this work. But you can't go from a plan that extended to 2020 to one that doesn't have a plan at all for the future and really expect success.

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. CONAWAY. The gentleman's time has expired.

Ms. Speier, for 5 minutes.

Ms. SPEIER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I thank you all for your astute comments. One of you, I think it was you, Mr. Neumann, Ambassador Neumann, had indicated that power must be shared. And it appears that they are moving in that direction with Mr. Abdullah and Mr. Ghani.

But there is no reference to the Taliban. And as we move forward in this new world order in Afghanistan, does not the Taliban have to be part of the shared power within the country?

Ambassador NEUMANN. This question of negotiations obviously has a two-part piece. Ideally, you need a political solution. You only get a political solution though in this kind of war when both sides reach the point of believing that they can't achieve their maximal positions through force, and then they get to negotiations.

Whether you can have successful negotiations with the Taliban is a big question but it is actually it is an umbrella term for multiple groups which are within it and with some you can probably get negotiations. But there needs to be a clarity of process. That will have to be addressed by the next government because the current one is out of time.

I think a key piece of that is going to be our own consistency of support. If the insurgents think they have an easy job waiting us out, you have a very different dialogue inside the insurgency about whether to engage in negotiations from one that happens if they think that they don't even have that luxury because we are staying around. So we lose a lot of our pressure on them by the lack of clarity about our long-term intentions.

The second question of course is whether they are prepared in fact to make any kind of a deal; whether you could have a shared relationship with a Mullah Omar, I think, is pretty questionable, no matter how necessary it is.

But there is room for opening. That of course is something that interested President Karzai a lot. It is one about which I think Dr. Abdullah and the northerners are particularly sensitive and question whether it can be done. But it can only be explored if there is a sense of firmness.

You have got to have the position that I think late Prime Minister Rabin expressed once when he was asked how can you negotiate with terrorists, and he said, I have to negotiate as though there is no terrorism and I have to fight terrorism as though there are no negotiations.

You have got to be able to go full bore on both tracks without letting one handicap you or cripple you on the other.

Ms. SPEIER. Do any of you have additional comments on that?

Dr. DALE. Ma'am, thank you for the question.

It is important for Afghans, first of all, to think about how this conflict genuinely comes to an end. It is not with our unilateral withdrawal and it is not with a great victory on the battlefield. It is in some form of reconciliation over time.

What I would suggest though, that it may be worth thinking about, is that the first requirement is for reconciliation within Afghan society. That is first of all a resolution of the current political impasse. But an increasingly inclusive, dynamic, vibrant Afghan national dialogue about what that state is and what it becomes, together with checks and balances that can hold the system accountable, is a better foundation for reintegrating Taliban and other insurgents than a fractious, torn polity like the one that we currently have. It might make sense to think of this then as a longer term process over time rather than a deal that ought to be cut tomorrow. Thank you.

Mr. CORDESMAN. If I could add just one quick point. We really need to start thinking of what happens if beginning in 2015 the central government runs out of the money that has preserved political unity and kept the structure together. And that is a very real prospect at this point.

Dr. O'HANLON. And my one quick point if I could is that because of uncertainty about money, uncertainty about the battlefield as we draw down, I don't think the Taliban, at least not Taliban Central,

is likely to be interested in a negotiation for 1 to 2 years at a minimum. So I think that is one more argument in favor of strategic patience in my book.

Ms. SPEIER. All right, my time is expired.

Mr. CONAWAY. The gentlelady yields back.

Dr. Wenstrup, for 5 minutes.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Cordesman, you, I think, answered one of my questions already which referred to aid to Pakistan, but not only Pakistan, wherever we are giving aid. I have always wondered where we can go to find the information that tells us what the goal of that aid would be and what the results of our aid have produced. If I understood you correctly we really don't have that information. Would that be correct?

Mr. CORDESMAN. We were supposed to, under Secretary Clinton's QDDR [Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review], have USAID and the State Department develop and report on effectiveness measures. That commitment was made by both agencies. They have produced no product and no results.

Worse than that, if you go back to 2009, 2010 in areas like governance, in some aspects of aid we were providing maps by district to progress. When that progress did not continue because of the fighting we stopped publishing the maps.

And if you look at the reporting of SIGAR and the GAO [Government Accountability Office] they have, again and again, raised specific areas we could do this. The problem basically is not that it is impossible, as Ambassador Neumann points out, it is not precise, you have to make judgments. The real problem is that people seem to be much more interested in reporting success that doesn't exist than making success actually happen.

Dr. WENSTRUP. When was the last time we had an actual report?

Mr. CORDESMAN. The only report that aside from the President's fact sheet, which came out when he gave his speech on Vietnam, was this color comic that was provided by USAID which creates all of the usual nonsensical data about GDP, education, and the rest. Other than that, the 1230 report does not have any report on the effectiveness of aid. USAID doesn't report, the State Department doesn't report, and the U.N. organization, which is supposed to report on aid effectiveness, has never issued any report on aid, even in dollar terms.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Thank you. You know, we were talking about role of Taliban. And I look back at the first election that occurred in April. And Secretary Hagel was here and he mentioned how well things went and how the Taliban was virtually ineffective in trying to foil that election.

And, you know, what occurred to me as a military person with some idea of strategy, if I am the Taliban I lay down because if that—if the idea that we say that everything is okay here, we are more likely to leave, and not press having a greater presence. And that was what he was saying at that time, that basically things are pretty good. They had that election, it is okay.

You know, understanding this enemy a little bit, that would be the approach that I would take, and from what I am hearing today

is that we really don't know what the Taliban is still capable of or where they might go. Does anyone care to comment on that?

Mr. CORDESMAN. If I can make just a quick—the U.N. casualty report, IED reports, show that today's level of violence in every part of Afghanistan, broken out into nine different areas, is higher than it was in 2011, sometimes by a factor of five. Now these numbers are not that high. But, yes, we have a lot of data on the level of violence and it doesn't show we are winning.

What we don't have, and this gets back to your military question, insurgency and counterinsurgency is essentially a political struggle. Every metric we have is a tactical metric without any metric of government influence, or Taliban and insurgent influence by district.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Anybody else?

Dr. O'HANLON. If I could add one point, Congressman. The way I would generalize the overall situation on violence is first of all to agree with Tony's point, there is a lot we don't know and there are some negative trends.

And also I would emphasize the Afghan forces have taken tremendous losses in the last couple of years, 4,700 fatalities last year. It is not a number that ISAF has wanted to publicize, although they don't classify it either.

I actually think we should talk about it more, because to me it proves they are willing to fight for their country, with all the caveats and concerns that they may or may not hold together as we draw down.

But I also would say and Tony may disagree, but I think I am saying something consistent with his point because he did say the overall absolute levels of violence are not that high statistically compared with certain other combat zones. But even though some of the trends are worrisome, Afghanistan cities and major roads are actually not that bad, certainly by the standards of war zones, even by the standards to some of the more crime-ridden societies in Latin America today, for example, or in certain parts of Africa.

So there is a basis for hope if that Afghan force can hold together and sustain those high casualty levels and keep finding recruits and not fracture because of political disunity.

Ambassador NEUMANN. Could I just add a couple of things quickly.

I have seen over the years us speculate that the Taliban will, at this or that point, lay back and wait for us to leave. I have never seen them do it. And frankly I think they have a lot of trouble doing it because they can't concede the ground for the development of authority.

In the election they made a quite concerted effort to prevent the election. They had a difficult issue they had to manage which is doing it without so far alienating Afghans at a kick-back. But there were actually a lot of attacks on the—especially on the first day of the election.

And one of the interesting things was to the degree to which the Afghan press refused to publicize it, in part because they were angry at the killing of a journalist in the Serena Hotel, and they simply said we are not going to help you discourage our election.

And they really put practically a news blackout which really frustrated the Taliban.

What you are seeing now, I think, is pulling out as many stops as they can to have as many attacks as possible in as many parts of the country, both high profile and taking on the Afghan army. And I think it—we are really going to have to wait out this fighting season and then do some kind of serious analysis rather than trying to do an incident by incident and anecdote by anecdote discussion.

I think you are probably looking at something that is going to be called the Battle of Helmand, that is a 3- or 4-month engagement in various places. And we are going to have to assess on that basis at the end of time, both in terms of competence in forces, as well as competence in leadership, as well as fighting will.

So far I would say we are doing moderately—Afghans are doing moderately well, but we are a long way from where we should even be trying to make that judgment, frustrating as that is, I think, for people who would like an instant answer.

Mr. CONAWAY. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. Barber, 5 minutes.

Mr. BARBER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you all for being here today.

Recently with my colleague and others we spent some time in Afghanistan and I have to say I, you have to be there on the ground to realize how challenging the situation is for our troops and for the diplomatic corps.

I remember being rushed from the airport to the embassy in armored vehicles, and once we got there realized that the embassy is essentially a fortress. You work there, you live there, you rarely go off—one young man who escorted us said he has been off once in 8 months and that was because he had a bad tooth that needed to be taken out.

So that is the situation now with, you know, there was a pretty substantial number of our troops still there. We went out to Camp Leatherneck where a Marine Corps and British Army are training the Afghan Army to protect their country.

And I must say I was impressed with that, as well as the way in which they essentially protected their election process. I was quite skeptical when I saw what was happening out there, but I think they acquitted themselves fairly well.

So that is what I saw just in my brief visit. And I think it is affirmed by many other observations about the current situation where we have an essentially, you know, a pretty substantial number of troops on the ground.

And I am concerned about, obviously, as we all are of what happens with the election process and where we end up. And then I want to also focus my question on the relationship with Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Two questions. First of all, would you comment on where you think this election process is going? I mean, Secretary Kerry apparently forged an agreement which may or may not last between the two presidential candidates. The audit is going on. Comment, if you will, on where you think we end up. We have an agreement that

was worked up by Secretary Kerry to have the president and the loser, if you will, share power in a sense.

And then secondly—and this is really the more important question for me. It has to do with the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Obviously there will be some changes when the new President takes office. And we have seen over the course of the last decade that security at the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan has been interdependent on both countries' efforts of fighting terrorism in the border regions. However, the relationship between the two countries has ebbed and flowed over time.

And as Pakistan continues to depend on U.S. military, economic support, as we draw down our forces in Afghanistan, how can we work with, how can we encourage more Pakistani involvement in security at the border, and how do you see Pakistan engaging with the new Afghan Government? I think this is an essential question going forward once we leave. Can they work together to make the area more secure?

Could you respond, any or all of you, please, to those two questions?

Dr. DALE. Sir, thank you for the questions and to comment on your second.

The relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan is clearly very critical. The good news is that both states in theory have strong vested interest in the same thing, right, regional stability that is to everyone's benefit, economic growth and opportunity—so that is a good starting point.

But in practice there is a fundamental lack of good faith up at the strategic level and what we see, that exacerbates every time there is a tactical level dispute at the border, for example, it very rapidly escalates and runs the risk of something much greater.

ISAF under NATO has played a terrific role in facilitating mil-to-mil ties at the tactical level at the border, at the operational level in terms of combined planning, and also up at the strategic level in terms of contacts between Afghans and Pakistanis and that is a great start.

It is hopeful. And those conversations can yield practical progress that may be a helpful foundation for the future, but it still leaves out the lack of confidence and good faith up at the strategic level which is fundamentally a political problem. And so it is worth thinking about, from a U.S. Government perspective, if we are concerned how we continue to engage not only from a military perspective, but with the other instruments of national power to help shape that relationship in the interests of stability.

Thank you.

Mr. BARBER. Thank you, Doctor.

Mr. CORDESMAN. The problem I would say is that start is purely political at the top. In the field you—actually in the FATA area have a significant number of people fleeing Pakistan because of a Pakistani operation in the border, going back into Afghanistan, and at this point making our problems worse.

The history of how the Pakistani army also fights is basically drive out the civilian population, arrest or kill whoever is left, some of which is probably innocent civilians. And then as in the case of

the Swat you end up going back to pretty much the problems you had at a lower scale.

At this point too Pakistan is competing actively with India for influence over Afghanistan on terms, for example, that the Afghan Government sees as a major threat. So we have to be very careful. What Dr. Dale points out is the world that should be, the world that exists in the middle of transition is moving in exactly the opposite direction.

Ambassador NEUMANN. I am not sure——

Mr. CONAWAY. The gentleman's time has expired. If the other witnesses would like to submit a written response that would be great.

Mr. BARBER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Jones, for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. And I thank the panel for being here today. And I went to Walter Reed about 4 weeks ago to visit the wounded and I saw three Army soldiers who had lost one leg each from Fort Bragg, not my district. I represent Camp Lejeune, Cherry Point Marine Air Station.

Then I visited the two Marines from my district in addition to the soldiers and one had lost both legs and an arm, 23 years of age. The other Marine I saw was 24, very proud of his 8-month-old little baby girl who was not there obviously. She was home with her mother. He had lost both legs and is going to have to have his rectum rebuilt. I wonder what it is all about.

I listen to you very carefully. I know you have different views but to think that we have accomplished any great success is absolutely ridiculous based on history. I am looking today in the Washington Post where it says, "Afghanistan may have lost track of more than 200,000 weapons"; 200,000 weapons, that is the security force. They say in the article we have no idea what the police force has lost. I doubt if those weapons are going to anywhere but our enemies within Afghanistan, maybe a few outside.

And then Mr. Ambassador, I appreciate your patience on Afghanistan. Obviously you have got the experience I don't have. But let me give you another title. "Is the Pentagon Wasting Taxpayer's Money in Afghanistan?" Then another title is, "The United States Military Was No Match for Afghan Corruption." Then the last one I want to read to you the title is, "Money Pit, the Monstrous Failure of U.S. Aid to Afghanistan."

These are all articles this year, 2014. And then we hear today, you are the experts. You are with think tanks, some of you, you have had experience being as the ambassador. And yet we continue to play the game we are changing Afghanistan. Am I worried about the terrorists, the jihadists? Absolutely I am. That is why if Saddam was still sitting in Iraq we wouldn't have the problem that we got there now.

Yes, was he an evil man? Absolutely. But the world we live in is not like America. It is not going to be like America. And when I look at the history of Afghanistan and going back to Alexander the Great and all the great nations that tried to influence and to occupy Afghanistan, they all failed. And we can play this game with the taxpayers, spending all their money, and quite frankly, we all know it is not our money anyway.

We are a debtor nation. We are borrowing from China, Japan, the UAE [United Arab Emirates], to pay our bills. That is why we have these debates about raising the debt ceiling every year so we can borrow more money to pay the bills from last year.

This brings me to my point. What in the world are we trying to do when other countries and this is from your report, Mr. Cordesman, and I read the subtitle, "The second threat is the mix of weakness and failures in the host country and a lack of commitment from our key allies."

Why is Uncle Sam, meaning the taxpayers of America, taking this burden on and continue a 10-year agreement known as the Bilateral Strategic Agreement to keep a commitment going and you would sit here—I might not be here. You will sit here 3 or 4 years from now and tell the same story.

Where is the honesty in an evaluation of the policy when some people like you would come and say, you know, we need to take what we take, cut our losses and let's take a different view. I am all for the statesmanship. I am all for working with other countries and let them share the lead and the burden, and the pain of our country.

But, Mr. Cordesman, I will let you start this because this was your subtitle. Apparently they are not doing their part either, by the way. Thank you.

Mr. CORDESMAN. Congressman, in context that referred to generic problems in counterinsurgency.

I think that as Ambassador Neumann mentioned, we, I think, are planning on a significant, continued amount of military support from Germany and Italy in terms of providing support for the training effort. But the fact is that, yes, we should have an integrated plan, we should have integrated military assistance and aid.

But that is an area, quite frankly, where to have that, you need U.S. leadership, as Ambassador Neumann pointed out. And you do have to decide what your strategic objectives are and limit them. And at this point, quite frankly, we have had allied support in Afghanistan. What we have not had is a great deal of leadership in shaping this transition process.

Mr. CONAWAY. The gentleman's time has expired.

I want to thank our witnesses for being here today. Dr. Dale and Dr. O'Hanlon and Mr. Cordesman and Ambassador Neumann, thank you very much.

This is a tough subject and it is one that where we can't just simply ignore or do away with, or wish it was going to be something different, as some have intimated on the panel this morning. But it is just tough stuff.

Lives are at stake. Millions of young ladies or young women are in schools, however affected those might or might not be, they are at least learning something they wouldn't have learned otherwise. And so, this is tough stuff and to take a cavalier approach to simply tossing in the towel and leaving I think is irresponsible and extreme.

Thank you very much for your patience this morning and we are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:49 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

JULY 30, 2014

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

JULY 30, 2014

Opening Statement of Chairman Howard P. "Buck" McKeon

HEARING ON

Risks to Stability in Afghanistan: Politics, Security, and International Commitment

July 30, 2014

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. The committee meets to receive testimony on the risks to stability in Afghanistan as we transition to a post-2014 residual presence there. Our witnesses include: Dr. Catherine Dale, Dr. Michael O'Hanlon, Mr. Anthony Cordesman, and Ambassador Ronald Neumann. Thank you for joining us today.

The United States and its Coalition partners have made significant achievements in Afghanistan – from building the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), to advancing growth in civil society, to achieving significant counterterrorism successes against our enemies. All of these efforts have served our national security interests. However, these gains are fragile and reversible.

Afghanistan has entered a period of transition – one that carries significant risk, in my view, to its stability and security because the critical elements of that transition have not yet been achieved. Politically, the Afghan presidential elections remain unresolved; diplomatically, the Bilateral Security Agreement remains unsigned; and from a security perspective, sustainment of an adequately sized and capable ANSF remains uncertain. We are witnessing an uptick in violence – not only because of the summer fighting season but also because the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani Network are testing the ANSF and their ability to secure the country.

If we don't get this transition right and do what is necessary to provide U.S. and international commitment to a long-term, sustainable strategy for Afghanistan, then we risk a similar future for Afghanistan as we are seeing today in Iraq. Where there are few good options and sizeable limits on our ability to affect the situation – even though the risks to our security are clear and present.

Our security interests in Afghanistan are clear, and we have sacrificed too much to focus solely on short-term exit strategies. Now is the time when we have more options to consider, when we have an opportunity to shape and influence the situation, and when the President must engage, and engage often.

However, I fear that the totality of the President's interest on Afghanistan is to simply do what is necessary to finish the job and withdraw. And I worry that the 9,800 U.S. troops – which will be halved in less than a year – are not going to be sufficient to provide the necessary support to the ANSF given the threat from al-Qaeda, the Haqqani Network, and other jihadist groups in Afghanistan.

On a final note, I hope the President will heed the advice of his military commanders. He has a superb Army General, John Campbell, taking command of ISAF, following after General Dunford's tremendous leadership there. I will encourage General Campbell to conduct his own assessment of the situation in Afghanistan and to provide that assessment up through his chain-of-command as well as to Congress.

Today, we will gain more insights into where we are at, and where we need to go, along the key lines of effort of the transition that I outlined earlier – during this critical phase in Afghanistan. Our panel of experts has a wealth of experience. I thank you for being here today. I look forward to your testimony and insights.

Statement of Ranking Member Adam Smith

HEARING ON

Risks to Stability in Afghanistan: Politics, Security, and International Commitment

July 30, 2014

Thank you Mr. Chairman, and I would like to thank our witnesses for appearing here today.

We have made significant progress in achieving our goal in Afghanistan to disrupt, dismantle, and eventually defeat al Qaeda and to prevent its return to Afghanistan. The death of Osama bin Laden and the decimation of al Qaeda's senior leadership over the last few years at the hands of our brave men and women of our military and intelligence services have made America safer. On the ground in Afghanistan, our military, with our ISAF and Afghan partners, has done tremendous work, particularly over the last couple of years, to push the Taliban out of the south and southwest of Afghanistan and to vastly increase the capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Those forces are now conducting 95% of all conventional operations and the vast majority of all special operations. The progress made to date has gone a long way to better position the Afghan government, and the Afghan people, for success.

That is not to say that the road has not, especially recently, been difficult. Many of us have been frustrated over the years by the criticism and intransigence of the outgoing Karzai government, by the current political crisis over the election, by the delays in signing a Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA), and by the actions of the Pakistanis, to pick a few examples. But frustrated as we might be, we are in Afghanistan, assisting the Afghans to fight the Taliban and rebuild a stable and secure Afghanistan, for the benefit of our national security interests, and we should keep those paramount in our mind as we consider the way forward.

We should not underestimate the challenges we and the Afghan people face as we attempt to secure those interests. Afghanistan is, and will be for some time to come, a poor country, with a largely uneducated population, plagued by groups that use violence to achieve their goals, and with a government that is often both incompetent and corrupt. In the immediate future, the Afghan people are facing the fallout of a bitterly contested presidential election where it is unclear that a political deal will be reached allowing for a peaceful transition of power; the drawdown of ISAF forces and what seems to be some increase in Taliban attacks; and economic challenges that will almost certainly accompany that drawdown.

Fortunately, our mission is not to build a perfect Afghanistan, but solely to help build an Afghanistan that is capable of denying the Taliban and their al Qaeda allies a safe place to operate. In the short term, that means providing the Afghans with assistance in solving their election crisis. It means helping as we can to ensure that the transition of power is as smooth as possible. Hopefully, that new president will sign the BSA to provide a stable, legal basis for the future presence of our troops and our NATO partners in Afghanistan so that those troops can help the Afghan people in their pursuit of a stable, secure Afghanistan.

I support a limited, residual United States military presence in Afghanistan after December 31, 2014, to train, advise, and assist the Afghan National Security Forces and conduct counter-terrorism missions against al Qaeda and other potential threats as necessary. I believe such a presence, limited in size initially and declining over time, to be the best way to secure our national security interests in that region. It is also the best way to oversee the provision of assistance that the Afghans will certainly require if the ANSF is to remain a viable force and the country is to not descend once again into civil war.

I am hoping our witnesses can help us flesh this out a little. Assuming the election crisis is resolved and the BSA is signed, what do the Afghans need to do to secure their country, prevent the return of the Taliban, and ensure that Afghanistan cannot become a safe haven for terrorism? What assistance do they require from the United States to build that security going forward? What part of that assistance would be provided by the Department of Defense, and specifically by the U.S. and international troops comprising a residual presence? How big or small would that residual force have to be to carry out that assistance, conduct counter terrorism

missions, provide for force protection, and finish the retrograde of U.S. equipment? What are the trade-offs when we consider the geographic scope of such a presence? How long do you think we would have to maintain such a presence and what force levels and mission sets would be required over time?

If, due to a failure in reaching a deal to solve the election crisis, a failure to sign the BSA, or something else, such a presence becomes impossible, we will need to rethink our approach, but our interests in the region will not change and will have to be pursued through other means. I hope you can help us think that through as well. Our primary mission in that region is completing the elimination of core al Qaeda, so what would we have to do to finish that job? What are the risks to Afghanistan, to the region, and to our security interests if we cannot maintain a residual force in Afghanistan and how can we compensate for that?

Again, thank you for appearing here today. I hope you can help us think through how we finish this job as soon and effectively as we can, so we can bring to a close our war in Afghanistan and bring our brave servicemen and women home

Statement of
Catherine Dale
Specialist in International Security, Congressional Research Service
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Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith, Distinguished Members of the House Armed Services Committee,

It is an honor to be invited to testify before this Committee about risks to stability in Afghanistan. It is a particular privilege to appear with my three fellow panelists – Dr. Cordesman, Ambassador Neumann, and Dr. O'Hanlon – all of whom I have spent time with in Afghanistan, and all of whom have sharpened my own thinking about these important issues.

I appear here today in my capacity as an analyst with the Congressional Research Service. But my testimony also draws on my experience serving as an advisor to a number of our military commanders in Afghanistan as part of NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and also on extended visits as an outside expert, most recently late this spring.

Today's discussion is timely. In May, President Obama announced plans for U.S. military engagement in Afghanistan after 2014. Pending the signing of a U.S.-Afghan Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA), establishing the terms of reference for future U.S. troop presence in Afghanistan, some U.S. troops are to serve under U.S. command and others are to serve as part of NATO's follow-on mission, Resolute Support. By the end of 2014, U.S. troop levels are to be reduced to 9,800; by the end of 2015, they are to be drawn down further to 5,500 troops consolidated in Kabul and at Bagram Airfield; and by the end of 2016, the U.S. military presence is to be reduced to an Office of Security Cooperation at the U.S. Embassy. In addition, as of 2015, the focus of the effort is to shift to "two narrow missions" – "training Afghan forces and supporting counterterrorism operations against the remnants of al Qaeda."[1]

[1] See President Barack Obama, Statement by the President on Afghanistan, Washington, DC, May 27, 2014, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/05/27/statement-president-afghanistan. Current U.S. force presence in Afghanistan is legally based on a bilateral exchange of diplomatic notes in 2002 and 2003. While those notes specified no timelines, both states have committed themselves publicly to basing any post-2014 U.S. troop presence on a new agreement. See Embassy of the United States of America, Diplomatic Note, September 26, 2002; and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan, Note, May 28, 2003.

Despite the relative clarity of those specific decisions, and the broad commitments articulated in the 2012 U.S.-Afghan Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA),[2] the way ahead for Afghanistan itself, and for U.S. engagement there, remains uncertain. Transition of full responsibility for security to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) is underway but incomplete, and the ANSF still face significant challenges. Afghanistan's political path remains mired in a highly contested electoral process that may or may not produce a viable new political leadership accepted by the Afghan people. Afghanistan's relations with its neighbor Pakistan remain contentious and non-conducive to stability. And Afghanistan's future economic viability remains indeterminate at best. Further U.S. decision-making in these arenas – or the lack thereof – is likely to have a marked impact on the prospects for future stability in Afghanistan.

Strategy

For the U.S. Government, fundamental components of strategy-making for Afghanistan include:

- U.S. national security interests in Afghanistan and the region;
- the minimum essential conditions – political, economic, security – that would need to pertain in Afghanistan and the region in order to protect U.S. interests over the long run;
- current and projected U.S. approaches, including how they intersect with efforts by other Allies and partners, for helping Afghans establish those conditions;
- the timeline by which, and extent to which, Afghans are likely to be able to sustain those conditions with relatively limited support from the international community;
- risks to U.S. national security interests if Afghans are unable to do so; and
- the importance of this overall effort – given its likely timeline, risks, and costs – compared to other U.S. priorities.

U.S. Interests

U.S. interests are by definition a matter of judgment, not fact. U.S. national security concerns in Afghanistan and the region might include the spread of violent extremism, nuclear proliferation from Pakistan, and nuclear confrontation between Pakistan and India. A stable Afghanistan might help quell these concerns by making sanctuary less available to violent extremists; by encouraging state stability in Pakistan by lowering the temperature between Pakistan and Afghanistan; and by making Afghanistan less available as a space for proxy contestation between Pakistan and India.

By most measures, these concerns are serious ones. At issue is how highly they ought to be prioritized, given limited resources, compared with competing national security concerns and domestic exigencies.

[2] Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, May 2, 2012.

U.S. Strategy in Practice

The Obama Administration has reasonably consistently articulated two "core goals" for the war – to defeat al Qaeda and to prevent future safe havens in Afghanistan and Pakistan – but with some significant modification over time.[3] The goal of defeating al Qaeda became, in President Obama's 2013 State of the Union address, "defeating *the core of* al Qaeda," a new and apparently narrower formulation.[4]

In turn, the goal of preventing future safe havens in the region has long been open to interpretation concerning what exactly such prevention would require. Over time, observers and practitioners have proposed various ideas including strong Afghan security forces; a firm economic and governance foundation; a formal political settlement to the conflict; and/or full cooperation from neighboring states. Yet as a rule, U.S. efforts have not been supported by universal internal agreement about what the minimum essential conditions for preventing future safe havens ought to be.

In practice, U.S. efforts on the ground in Afghanistan have included a military campaign, in conjunction with Afghan and international counterparts; support to an Afghan political reconciliation process designed to bring the war to a close; development assistance designed to create some economic opportunity; encouragement of a more constructive Afghan-Pakistani relationship; and at least tacit support for a constitutionally-based Afghan political process. What many observers wonder is how coherently all these facets of U.S. engagement in Afghanistan fit together as part of a single strategy aimed at bringing the war to an acceptable conclusion that protects U.S. interests over the longer term.

State of the Campaign

Overall evaluations of the state of the campaign in Afghanistan vary widely, not least because looking across Afghanistan, it is easy to find sterling examples of both tremendous success and abject failure.

The basic campaign logic dates back to 2009, when General Stanley McChrystal took command of NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and was tasked to conduct an initial strategic assessment.[5] That assessment, and the subsequent ISAF campaign design it informed, were based on the Obama Administration's two core goals as well as on the novel prospect of

[3] See for example President Barack Obama, Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Washington, DC, March 27, 2009, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-a-New-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan/; and President Obama, Remarks, May 1, 2012.
[4] See President Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President in the State of the Union Address," Washington, DC, February 12, 2013, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/12/remarks-president-state-union-address, emphasis added. President Obama's May 2014 Afghanistan policy speech did not mention "goals".
[5] The war in Afghanistan began in late 2001 with a U.S.-led coalition military operation designed to remove Afghanistan's Taliban-led regime and to prevent future terrorist safe havens, in the wake of the terrorist attacks launched by al Qaeda from Afghanistan on September 11, 2001. Today, most U.S. forces in Afghanistan serve in the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), while some others, including some Special Operations Forces, serve under direct U.S. command. The U.S. four-star commander in Afghanistan has dual-hatted responsibility for U.S. efforts and the NATO mission.

more troops, more civilian expertise, more resources, more high-level leadership attention, and relatively unlimited time.[6]

Over time, the campaign has been both updated and constrained. One major addition was the introduction of the formal "Transition" process, in which responsibility for security has been shifted, in discrete stages, from coalition to Afghan forces. Afghans formally assumed lead responsibility for security on June 18, 2013, a marker known as Milestone 2013; and they are scheduled to formally assume full responsibility by December 31, 2014.[7]

One major set of constraints on the campaign, in turn, has been the announcement, and then execution, of successive U.S. troop drawdowns. In December 2009, in a speech at West Point announcing the U.S. troop surge, President Obama also announced that those surge troops would begin to draw down in July 2011. In a June 2011 speech, President Obama announced plans for the drawdown of those surge forces: by 10,000 troops by the end of 2011, and by a further 23,000 by the end of September 2012, declining to a total of 68,000 by that date. And in February 2013, President Obama announced that the U.S. troop commitment in Afghanistan would draw down by 34,000 more troops by February 2014, leaving approximately 33,000 troops in Afghanistan.[8] Broadly, all of these drawdown targets were met.

Against the backdrop of those significant adjustments, the campaign has focused throughout on building up the ANSF while working with the ANSF to reduce the scale of the insurgent threat to proportions that Afghan forces could manage in the future with very limited support from the international community. The campaign has also included U.S. efforts to maintain direct pressure on al Qaeda and affiliates.

Many observers contend that if the campaign were not working, it should be discontinued immediately – not gradually – given its high cost in terms of lives and resources. But by most Afghan and coalition accounts, the basic logic of the campaign on the ground has proven to be sound, based on the overall improvement of Afghan forces, degradation of the insurgency, and adaptation by coalition forces.[9]

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[6] See General Stanley McChrystal, COMISAF's Initial Assessment, August 30, 2009, available in redacted form from the Washington Post, at http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment_Redacted_092109.pdf. The author was part of the McChrystal Assessment team.

[7] These steps follow joint Afghan-NATO decisions that were affirmed by the 2010 NATO Summit in Lisbon, and the 2012 NATO Summit in Chicago. See NATO Lisbon Summit Declaration, Lisbon, Portugal, November 20, 2010, available at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68828.htm?mode=pressrelease; and Chicago Summit Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Chicago, May 20, 2012, available at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87593.htm?mode=pressrelease.

[8] See President Barack Obama, Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan, West Point, NY, December 1, 2009, available at available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan; President Barack Obama, Remarks by the President on the Way Forward in Afghanistan, Washington, DC, June 22, 2011, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/06/22/remarks-president-way-forward-afghanistan.; President Obama, State of the Union, 2013, see http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/12/remarks-president-state-union-address.

[9] Interviews with U.S., other coalition, and Afghan officials, 2009-2014.

Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)

U.S strategic thinking has consistently assigned a considerable future role to the ANSF in providing security in Afghanistan and thus helping to protect U.S. interests.

ANSF Progress

By almost any standard, the progress of the ANSF, over a relatively short span of time, has been remarkable in some respects. It was only five years ago that Afghan force generation began in earnest. Since that time, the ANSF have increased significantly in capacity; grown markedly in capabilities, from basic "move, shoot, and communicate" skills toward combined arms; and deepened their confidence in their own abilities, as evidenced by the ways that Afghan commanders describe their recent and future operations. In turn, according to both ISAF and Afghan officials, that overall growth in ANSF competence is increasingly manifested in effects on the enemy.[10]

Also striking, particularly in the last couple years, is the extent of integration among various Afghan military and police forces at the tactical level. Five years ago, it was not uncommon for units of different forces to get into firefights with each other. More recently, while the Army and police still may not trust each other, combined Army/police planning and operating has become the norm, further catalyzed by the imperative to work together to provide security for the elections earlier this year. Weekly or bi-weekly provincial-level security meetings (or "shuras") also seem to have had a powerful catalytic effect on Afghan unity of effort. Increasingly common across the country, they bring together, under the chairmanship of the Provincial Governor, the leaders of the various Afghan forces operating in a province to agree on the security challenges they face and how best to meet them.[11]

ANSF Challenges

Most coalition and Afghan commanders contend that the ANSF are far from "done" – that further gains are required, and that gains to date are not yet sustainable.[12]

In general, ANSF progress is uneven, in part the result of choices made by the coalition about where and how to concentrate effort, in the face of scarce resources. As a rule, the ANA remains more capable and more responsible than the Afghan police. The Afghan Border Police (ABP) in particular – long the "economy-of-force force" for the coalition – benefitted least from unit partnering and lags well behind other Afghan forces in development. Some ABP commanders describe feeling abandoned and overlooked, at their remote locations, with little support from the ANA or even top cover from their own Ministry of Interior-led chain of command. Coalition and

[10] Interviews with Afghan and coalition officials, 2012, 2013, 2014. That new Afghan confidence was also, in part, the product of necessity. The drawdown of 33,000 U.S. troops in 2012, to "pre-surge" levels, and the very visible coalition base consolidations and closures that accompanied it, galvanized the conviction of Afghan security leaders at all levels that coalition forces were, indeed, going home, and led many to take on greater responsibility. Many ANSF commanders have described taking on missions they were initially not sure they could handle, then being convinced by their success to take on even more.
[11] Interviews with Afghan Provincial Governors, ANSF officials, coalition officials, 2013, 2014.
[12] Interviews with Afghan and ISAF officials, 2014.

other ANSF officials simply seem to assume that the default for those ABP posted out along Afghanistan's borders is to readily accept bribes, and to cut deals with insurgents and criminals.[13]

In turn, unity of effort is a work in progress. Coalition forces sometimes describe ANSF "layered security" as a neat, orderly, and consistent distribution of roles and responsibilities among Afghan forces, glued together in close collaboration. In practice, the patterns of ANSF cooperation vary greatly from place to place, depending in part on the security challenges and the developmental state of each Afghan force, in each area. The roles of particular forces may also be driven by bold, persuasive personalities – strong, nationally-inclined Commanders of some Afghan National Army (ANA) Corps or cult-of-personality police chiefs. Most observers suggest that ultimately, the ANSF will need a systematized division of labor, in order to size and resource the total force efficiently and effectively. Yet for the near-term, many suggest, it may be sufficient that Afghan security leaders in any given place share a vision of what security should look like there, and of who should do what to provide it.[14]

Also still a work in progress is ANSF reliance on their own organic enablers – capabilities used in support of combat. Most observers agree that Afghan forces will do things differently, and with different tools, than coalition forces have done, and that Afghan forces may simply decide not to do some things altogether. Yet the ANSF must have sufficient, workable tools in place in order to maintain their confidence and to support effective operations.

In the intelligence arena, for example, Afghan reliance on their own organic enablers means less access to the scope and scale of signals intelligence (SIGINT) than Afghans have seen coalition forces employ. But it also means access to much more finely-tuned human intelligence (HUMINT) due to their far closer cultural ties with local populations. While the ANSF may not be able to pinpoint insurgent presence in a particular compound, they can typically identify the relevant village, and then use door-to-door techniques to narrow their search.

Some observers and practitioners suggest that these changes in the mix of intel the ANSF rely on are reducing the impact the ANSF is having against the enemy. Others suggest, even more fundamentally, that as their engagement with coalition advisors diminishes, the ANSF are less inclined altogether to conduct genuinely intel-driven operations – that is, basing their operations squarely on the understandings provided by intelligence, rather than simply "leaping into the back of a pick-up truck and going off to fight."[15]

Of even more concern to Afghan and coalition commanders is the enabler arena of "air." The Afghan Air Force (AAF) is not expected to be fully fielded and mission-capable for several more years, and even when it is, both its capacity and its capabilities will be relatively limited. Air is a critical component of the ability to conduct casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) – essential for saving lives, preserving morale, and protecting future recruitment. The development timeline and capacity limitations of the AAF make the prospect of a CASEVAC system that relies wholly on air assets unrealistic. By early 2014, some ANA Corps Commanders had made great strides compared to one year earlier, and were able to conduct the vast majority of their own CASEVAC through a combination of air and ground. Doing so requires a system that includes functioning

[13] Interviews with ANSF and coalition officials, 2012, 2013, 2014.
[14] Interviews with ANSF officials, Afghan civilian officials, and ISAF officials, 2012, 2013, 2014.
[15] Interviews with ISAF officials, 2013, 2014.

ground and air transportation; finely honed point-of-injury skills; and available trauma care, whether military or civilian. However, in areas with limited air and limited trauma care, the ANSF cannot yet solve this problem themselves.[16]

Air is also a critical component of fires – the use of weapons and other systems to create a specific lethal or nonlethal effect on a target. To date, the ANSF have relied significantly on coalition close air support (CAS) and close combat attack (CCA) – from fixed-wing and rotary-wing, respectively – and the ANSF is eager to have their own fires capability. The most realistic solution to the ANSF requirement to be able to deliver fires is some combination of air-based and ground-based systems. In many locations the ANA has indeed made significant progress integrating and employing D-30 Howitzers and mortars.[17] But in 2014, a top requirement named by several ANA Corps Commanders was for rotary-wing gunships, a capability they will not be able to provide for themselves for a long time.

U.S. and Other Coalition Forces

No less important an aspect of the status of the campaign than the ANSF is the role – and effectiveness – of U.S. and other coalition forces, who have frequently been called on to adjust their thinking and focus. In theory, if coalition forces are not able to adapt to new and significantly different roles, then no NATO post-2014 advisory mission should be contemplated.

In practice, coalition adaptation over time, while uneven, has often been both rapid and effective – depending in part on the abilities of each commander, on the sophistication of the vocabulary in use in theater, and on communications practices among commanders, at any given time.[18] Just a few years ago, coalition forces fought largely unilaterally, dragging along with them a handful or two of Afghan forces when available. Then the coalition troop surge, and Afghan force generation, allowed full, *shona ba shona* ("shoulder to shoulder") unit-partnering – coalition and Afghan units living, planning, and executing together, 24/7. But partnering was never an end in itself, and when Afghan capabilities permitted, coalition forces generally began stepping back and shifting into unequal partnerships in which Afghan forces increasingly played leading roles. For at least a year or more, coalition forces have been refocusing on tailored advisory roles: mentoring Afghan leaders and commanders at all levels, strengthening headquarters staffs, encouraging Afghan unity of effort, and providing some enablers when truly needed.

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[16] Last year, Afghan and ISAF officials illustrated the challenge of making sure enabler bridges are in place, with a cautionary tale from Jagatu, Wardak province just south of Kabul. There, some Afghan police took enemy fire, and one was wounded. The police reached up their own chain of command to make a request to the Ministry of Defense (MoD) for rotary wing CASEVAC support. The MoD was unable to provide assets right away, and as the day progressed, it ran into the obstacle that most Afghan Mi-17 helicopters do not fly at night. Meanwhile, a request for support was passed to ISAF. But ISAF had no forces anywhere nearby on the ground, and could not send helicopters into the apparent middle of nowhere; so ISAF declined to support. The wounded Afghan police officer bled out and died. Some of the Afghan police were reportedly furious...not with ISAF, but with their own system. The story highlighted the need for realistic but sufficient bridges from coalition to Afghan enablers that protect the Afghan force and help it maintain its confidence.

[17] ISAF, and even Afghan, commanders report that "clearing fires," that is, first making sure that nothing is in the way, remains more of a challenge. Interviews with ISAF and Afghan commanders, 2013 and 2014.

[18] Interviews and participant observation with U.S. and ISAF officials, 2012, 2013, 2014. Some observers point out that just as coalition troop drawdowns, and in particular the 2012 surge recovery, catalyzed greater ANSF confidence, those drawdowns also prompted coalition force adaptation, since lower troop numbers and footprint consolidation made it impossible to continue doing business in the same way.

To be clear, a broad shift to a supporting role has not yet meant disengagement. In the first half of 2014, U.S. and other coalition forces still played some tailored supporting roles at the tactical level, if less robustly than in the past. That engagement included, for example, directly providing some key enablers for particularly tough fights – especially air fires. It included continued "partnering", in the sense of participating in some operations, by U.S. Special Forces with Afghan commandos. And it included helping trouble-shoot Afghan "unity of effort" in more serious disputes.[19] These activities have generally been compatible with – indeed, supportive of – growing coalition efforts to help Afghans make their security architecture sustainable.

Insurgency

For many observers, the state of the insurgency is a critical factor in gauging campaign progress to date. Changes in the insurgency tend to be neither linear over time, nor evenly distributed geographically. Insurgent activity tends to follow a cyclical pattern: an annual fighting season, which runs roughly from the end of the poppy harvest in the spring until the weather turns cold in the fall, followed by a lull in activity during the winter typically used for rest and recuperation. Geographically, insurgent activities have been concentrated, though not exclusively, in the largely Pashtun-populated eastern and southern areas of Afghanistan, which offer easy access across the border to safe havens in Pakistan, and on the approaches to Kabul.

By most accounts, including their own, by a year ago or more, insurgent networks had been degraded and their costs of doing business inside Afghanistan had risen substantially. Some insurgents, for example, had been forced to use longer and more treacherous transit routes, and it had grown more expensive for them to pay lower-level fighters. In addition, the insurgency had been pushed back from population centers and commerce routes – the long-standing geographical focus of the campaign. Further, by many accounts, the insurgency as a whole had grown increasingly fractured – divided politically in its views regarding political settlement efforts, and divided operationally regarding targeting.[20] Over the past year, as coalition forces drew down, the ANSF largely held steady against the insurgency, including preventing the disruption of major events such as the November 2013 Loya Jirga, and the two rounds of elections held in April and June 2014.

But as of mid-2014, the insurgency has certainly not been defeated – insurgents remain capable of staging dramatic attacks designed for impact, such as the recent suicide attacks in Kabul, and

[19] An incident that took place earlier this year, at an Afghan Border Police (ABP) border post in Chergotai, in Khowst province, along the border with Pakistan, helps illustrate. Only 20 of the required 40 ABP were present for duty. They got attacked...and they ran away. At some point as they fled, they called for help from an ANA check point located not too far away, but the ANA took their own sweet time in responding. That meant there were two problems for the Afghan system to solve. The Afghan Ministry of Interior solved its internal problem by relieving the ABP kandak (battalion) and tolay (company) commander responsible for that border post. But to help restore unity of effort among Afghan forces, the second problem, coalition commanders brought together the relevant ANA Corps Commander and ABP Zone Commander and took them to visit Chergotai to forge a shared solution with their teams on the ground. Interviews with ISAF and ANSF officials, 2014.

[20] For example, some insurgent leaders might view targeting international organizations as the priority because it might draw more support from the insurgency's international "donors," while other insurgent leaders might view targeting local Afghan security forces as the priority because such forces most directly challenge the insurgency's influence and ability to operate. Interviews with ISAF and Afghan officials, 2013, 2014.

of mounting some larger-scale assaults, including the recent insurgent activity in Helmand province. The insurgency also continues to enjoy the ability to recruit, and the luxury of safe havens in Pakistan. As coalition forces have drawn down, the insurgency has increasingly targeted those Afghans who might pose the greatest existential threat to insurgent success: the Afghan Local Police (ALP); the ground-up, local anti-Taliban movements born of frustration with Taliban intimidation; and Afghan civilian officials at the national, provincial, and local levels. At issue is to what extent the insurgency may be further emboldened by the ongoing coalition force drawdown, and how well the ANSF will be able to withstand any increases in insurgent pressure.

Risks to Stability

Most observers agree that no matter how remarkable campaign progress to date may be, the longer-term sustainability of any security gains it has generated will depend on key facets of the broader strategic landscape. Given current conditions and stated policy, stability in Afghanistan faces significant risks in at least four arenas: security, governance, Pakistan, and economics. At issue is what it would take in each of these arenas, at a minimum, to protect security gains and make them sustainable, and what exactly the consequences might be of any risks that Afghans, the United States, and other major stakeholders choose to assume.

Security

Security in Afghanistan is still by any measure fragile, and it is at risk in at least three significant ways.

First, the ANSF still face critical enabler gaps including CASEVAC, air fires, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR). Current planning suggests that after 2014, the international community will no longer use such enablers to support the ANSF. For their part, the ANSF need more time to fully integrate and employ their own enablers, and even then their capacity and capabilities will be quite limited.

Risks, in the face of such gaps, include that the ANSF may choose to limit their reach because they do not have confidence in their ability to take or hold ground; or that the ANSF may cut local-level deals with insurgents. Or – quite differently – the ANSF may over-reach, beyond their capabilities, and suffer setbacks that shake their confidence in their ability to provide security, or the confidence of the Afghan people in them. Mitigating the risks posed by such enabler gaps might include extending the ability of coalition forces to use their own enablers to support the ANSF beyond 2014; or further expediting the integration of enablers by the ANSF.

Second, the ANSF, despite sometimes marked progress at the tactical level, still suffer from institutional weaknesses. They lack effective top-to-bottom systems able to respond sufficiently to requirements in arenas ranging from logistics, to intelligence, to personnel among others.

The risk, if insufficient progress is made in establishing workable systems, is that Afghan Army and police commanders on the ground may grow fatally frustrated by the system's failure to pay salaries in a timely way, or by its inability to provide spare parts, or by its foot-dragging in promoting or removing personnel. That frustration, already manifestly present, has been

tempered to date by interventions from the coalition, and by a general Afghan hope that their system will improve over time. If Afghan commanders' expectations for future improvement diminish, they might simply decide that the fight is not worth it. In turn, if Afghan soldiers and police do not receive their salaries in a timely way, or if they feel that their system is not taking care of them, then they are not likely to continue to be willing to serve, and their brothers and cousins are not likely to sign up to replace them.

To mitigate these systemic risks, ISAF is increasingly focusing its advisory efforts on "functionally-based security force assistance" – the vertical integration of Afghan systems, ensuring that national-level institutions are responsive to operational- and tactical-level requirements in a timely fashion.[21] The coalition role is helping Afghans make their own systems work, through "end-to-end" advisory support – in Kabul with Ministries and national-level commands, and on the ground with Corps and Zone Commanders and their headquarters. This so-called "regional approach" is the premise for the start of NATO's Resolute Support effort. If coalition advisory efforts were based exclusively in Kabul, that would leave advisors operating blind – without direct visibility on the systems, at both the user and the provider ends, that they are helping Afghans shape.

At issue is how much advisory support from coalition forces will be required to help Afghans make their own systems work, and how long that might take. Current U.S. policy establishes an *a priori* deadline: an end to the regional approach by the end of 2015. But some practitioners and observers suggest it would be worth taking another conditions-based look after the 2015 fighting season, before final decisions are made.

Third and finally, the overall U.S. effort in Afghanistan and the region also includes an explicit counter-terrorism (CT) component directly targeting al Qaeda and affiliates, reportedly conducted not only by DoD but also by other U.S. Government agencies. President Obama recently summarized the impact of these efforts: "We have struck significant blows against al Qaeda's leadership, we have eliminated Osama bin Laden, and we have prevented Afghanistan from being used to launch attacks against our homeland."[22] Most observers would agree with these claims, and also with the view that these extremists continue to pose some threat to the United States. But there is less agreement about the nature and future trajectory of that threat – whether al Qaeda and affiliates will be able to continue to recruit and regenerate; and whether they will continue to favor South Asia as a safe haven when paths of less resistance may be available in other regions of the world.

Looking ahead, experts generally agree that U.S. troop drawdowns, shrinking footprint, and reductions in assets including ISR in Afghanistan, will significantly limit U.S. ability to prosecute the CT fight in the region directly, potentially introducing the risk of a continued, or even enhanced, terrorist threat to the U.S. or its Allies and partners.

The debates about possible risk mitigation sometimes seem to be at cross purposes. Some stress that the best possible mitigation would be eliminating the terrorist presence in the region completely, on our watch, beyond hope of regeneration. Others, perhaps deeming elimination a bridge too far, or believing that regeneration is likely in any case, stress the need to retain

[21] Interviews with ISAF officials, 2014.
[22] President Obama, Statement, May 27, 2014.

indefinitely a U.S. ability to directly target terrorists in the region. Others, stressing that the more of the CT fight that Afghan and Pakistani forces can handle, the less the U.S. might need to do, and also recognizing that that there are few indications yet that regional forces can handle the fight, argue for bolstering Afghan and Pakistani capabilities and political will. These three ways of looking at the problem are not necessarily mutually incompatible, but unless reconciled, they tend to lead to different policy prescriptions.

Governance

Many Afghans and outside observers suggest that sustaining security gains in Afghanistan requires an architecture of responsive governance to direct the ANSF and hold them accountable; to provide access to justice and the rule of law; to ensure some minimum foundation of economic viability and opportunity; to inspire the trust of regional neighbors; and to earn at least the tacit confidence of the Afghan people. Yet the practice of governance in Afghanistan is more accurately characterized as personalized rule: not everyone loses, and indeed many benefit, but the exercise of governance, in general, is neither predictable nor based on the rule of law. One fundamental challenge to the practice of responsible governance in Afghanistan is simply capacity. Afghan officials and international practitioners generally agree that Afghanistan's highly centralized system of budgeting, decision-making and distribution functions in fits and starts. In practice, some of Afghanistan's 34 provinces have become expert in shaking resources loose from Kabul – through what amounts to lobbying with Kabul-based ministries, based on personal relationships. Yet such lobbying is not always effective, even when the case is urgent.[23]

Another even more pernicious challenge to responsive governance is corruption, not only in the sense of individual rent-seeking behaviors, but more broadly in the sense of the pervasive, voracious contestation for political and economic power and influence, sometimes backed by personalized militias, which consistently cannibalizes the formal Afghan state. Major players within the formal system – from Provincial Governors including Atta Mohammad Noor of Balkh, to Police Chiefs Matiullah Khan of Uruzgan and Abdul Raziq of Kandahar – draw on that system to distribute patronage.[24]

[23] For example, Panjwayi district, a key approach to Kandahar city, a focal point of the campaign, was long an insurgent sanctuary. In early 2013, elders in Zangabad, Panjwayi – emboldened in part by the appointment of a new District Chief of Police (DCoP) originally from their own area, whom they trusted enough to ask for help – decided to stand up to persistent Taliban intimidation. The DCoP helped rally a broader ANSF response, including the recruitment of many more Afghan local police (ALP). In the wake of the uprising, Kandahar Provincial Governor Toryalai Wesa visited Panjwayi, called for greater access to schools and clinics to help solidify the security gains, and pledged to seek support from the relevant ministries in Kabul. While Kandaharis themselves were able to build or repair a number of schools and clinics, Kabul was slow to provide operations and maintenance funds, or personnel to staff the facilities. So as part of the solution, ANA soldiers were assigned to teach school in Panjwayi – a creative solution but not a sustainable one. Interviews with ISAF, Afghan civilian, and ANSF officials, 2013.

[24] For example, northern Helmand province in southern Afghanistan features multiple tribes striving for ascendancy, untold potential poppy profits at stake, the deeply vested interests of the Akundzada family with its close ties to the Presidential Palace in Kabul and its former political leadership roles in the province, the use of district-level governorships and police chief posts as pawns in the power struggle at the expense of local order, and a Taliban all too eager to take advantage of any local-level political vacuums. In 2013, relatively new Helmand Provincial Governor Naeem Baluch was eager to broker a big-tent solution in northern Helmand if only President Karzai would give him significantly expanded gubernatorial authorities – effectively an extra-systemic solution. As one coalition commander, and probably more than one, has wryly but somewhat heart-breakingly observed, "It's Helmand—it will always be corrupt!" Interviews with ISAF, Afghan civilian, and ANSF officials, 2012, 2013, 2014.

Some observers argue that this multi-faceted struggle for power is simply the Afghan way of doing business, and that one of the best prospects for stability would be a series of local-level deals in which local power-brokers divvy up pieces of the pie, to their mutual satisfaction. The problem with that argument, others assert, is that local-level deals hold only as long as all stakeholders are stakeholders are satisfied with their share of the pie – one failed poppy harvest, or one surge of personal ambition, destabilizes the accord.

The international community has struggled for years with the tension between Afghanistan's need for some reasonable foundation of governance, and the inherent challenges of helping construct such a foundation as outsiders. One of the main conclusions of the 2009 McChrystal Assessment was that governance needed to be on par with security as a focus of the campaign, in order for the campaign to succeed. The basic theory was that the primary arbiter of lasting stability in Afghanistan is the Afghan people – the extent to which they accept the system and are able to hold it accountable. But subsequent efforts by the international community were distinctly uneven in both intent and effects. They included attempts to ensure that each district-level government filled its *tashkil* (personnel roster); to create positive and negative incentive structures to shape the activities of key powerbrokers; to build capacity in key ministries, all too often by doing the work directly; and to nudge the Afghan system into replacing local officials deemed by local residents to be truly up to no good.

Meanwhile, many influential Afghans have pointed to a potentially powerful remedy to help correct perceived power imbalances and the lack of accountability – the growing, and increasingly organized and powerful, voices of Afghan civil society organizations, women's groups, media outlets, private sector pioneers, religious authorities, and traditional local councils. Many Afghans suggest that these voices have great potential to help hold governance in check – if they are given time to develop. Some caution that Afghanistan's civil society is fragile, and that some of its components are dependent on Western funding and support. But many Afghans suggest that while some support from the international community would be welcome – including technical and advisory support, and continued guarantees of basic security – it is Afghans who would do, indeed are doing, the lion's share of the work.[25]

Against that backdrop, many Afghans as well as outside observers regard the 2014 Afghan presidential elections as an opportunity to introduce constructive changes into Afghan governance. By any measure, successful and timely resolution of the contested presidential election results, and general acceptance by Afghans of the outcome – two points that are not yet givens – would seem to be prerequisites for future stability. As necessary as they are, however, they are unlikely to be sufficient. As many Afghans stress, Afghanistan's capacity and corruption challenges cannot be solved overnight. So the elections might more appropriately be thought of as a catalyst of a longer-term, constitutionally-based political process.

The risks posed by a lack of resolution to Afghanistan's current electoral crisis, or even by a markedly protracted resolution process, are potentially quite severe: a paralyzed government apparatus unable to take care of its citizens, pressure on loyalties within the security forces, and mounting disenchantment among the Afghan people coupled with a growing tendency to hedge, that is, to make sure they are on the team of one or another influential individual, with all the

[25] Interviews with Afghans active in civil society, 2012, 2013, 2014.

mutual exclusivity that such dynamics suggest. At best, if the election fails, Afghanistan might muddle through for some time; at worst, it might dissolve into patches of violence or worse. Either scenario would give ample opportunity to the insurgency, to violent extremists, and to self-interested powerbrokers of all stripes, to capitalize on the disarray for their own benefit.

Opportunities for risk mitigation in the arena of governance may be somewhat limited. Significant recent diplomatic efforts may have helped encourage a more credible presidential election process or at least helped avert a crisis. Yet whatever the efficacy of those recent interventions, future U.S. leverage and influence are likely to diminish markedly, as U.S. forces draw down and tangible U.S. assistance decreases.

Pakistan

Most observers agree that it is difficult to imagine a stable Afghanistan in isolation, without taking into consideration the broader region.

The country most intimately intertwined with Afghanistan's future is Pakistan. The relationship is necessarily an intimate one – the international border between them, the British-drawn Durand Line, cuts through territory inhabited, on both sides, by sizable ethnic Pashtun populations. Yet the relationship is also fraught – Afghan insurgents have long taken advantage of the largely porous border to enjoy safe haven and other forms of support inside Pakistan; and Afghanistan has frequently served as an arena for proxy contestation between the nuclear-armed states of Pakistan and India.

Many practitioners point to great potential for a mutually beneficial Afghan-Pakistani future strategic partnership, based on mutual recognition of sovereignty and shared interests in economic opportunity and security. Yet to date, observers note, a fundamental lack of good faith persists. That gap at the strategic level, many point out, increases the volatility of tactical-level border disputes; frustrates efforts to reduce or eliminate safe havens that directly support insurgent activities in Afghanistan; and complicates Pakistan's involvement in efforts to broker a political settlement in Afghanistan.

U.S. government policy has long recognized the central importance of Pakistan to Afghanistan's future, but has struggled to formulate an effective, strategically-grounded approach for shaping regional dynamics. One major premise of the 2009 Assessment was that Pakistan would need to take some action to help curb the use of safe havens in Pakistan by Afghan insurgents, in order for the campaign to succeed. Based on that premise – and with greater force density and a more robust command architecture – ISAF intensified its efforts to foster trilateral (Afghan-Pakistani-ISAF) mil-to-mil contacts at the tactical level, including border coordination meetings, and at the operational level, including planning conferences. Those outreach efforts experienced major setbacks in the wake of the May 2011 U.S. operation that targeted Osama bin Laden, and the November 2011 border incident at Salala, Pakistan, in which a number of Pakistani soldiers were killed or wounded. Mil-to-mil ties have since been rejuvenated. Some observers and practitioners have been encouraged by Pakistan's recent and long-awaited launching of military operations in North Waziristan, in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which has long provided refuge for the leadership of the Afghan Taliban-affiliated Haqqani network.

Yet both tactical-level challenges such as cross-border fires, and strategic-level challenges including a fundamental lack of good faith, persist.[26] And some observers question the extent to which tactical-level mil-to-mil ties can "aggregate up" to constructively re-shape political relationships; they suggest that political-level engagement may also be essential to genuinely change the calculus and approach of either state.

The U.S. troop drawdown from Afghanistan introduces additional risk into these already volatile dynamics, by reducing opportunities for the U.S. to broker Afghan-Pakistani mil-to-mil relationships at both the tactical and strategic levels. More broadly, diminished U.S. military engagement in the region may reduce the time and attention in Washington dedicated to thinking strategically about Pakistan – a far-greater long-term security concern for the United States than Afghanistan, by almost any measure – amidst the panoply of competing U.S. national security priorities.

One approach to mitigating risk might be further raising the relative priority of facilitating the Afghan-Pakistani mil-to-mil relationship, while the United States still has a four-star commander on the ground in Kabul. Yet that effort has long been high among the priorities of the ISAF Commander – it is not obvious that any stones have been left unturned. Another possible mitigation would be a clear U.S. policy decision to give relatively high priority to the South Asia region even after the U.S. troop drawdown from Afghanistan, including crafting rigorous strategy that leverages all instruments of U.S. national power to help shape a stable region.

Economics

The biggest elephant in the room, in terms of Afghanistan's future, may be this: who will pay for Afghanistan's security? Sustaining security gains will require some combination of international contributions and Afghan economic viability. Economic viability is also critical in a broader way – to provide the Afghan people with the prospect of future opportunity and thus help secure their participation in building Afghanistan's future.

Few believe that Afghanistan will be able to generate revenue, collect that revenue, and execute budgets, sufficiently to cover the costs of its own security, any time soon. Afghanistan is blessed with substantial natural resources – as well as human capital – but realizing gains will require sustained security, further development of infrastructure, and the establishment of a legal architecture sufficiently reassuring to would-be foreign investors.

Efforts by the international community to help Afghans foster a working economy have been decidedly mixed. Years of relatively indiscriminate spending by the international community led to an array of unproductive or counterproductive results, including an inability to track money spent; the flow of assistance funds out of the country; the distortion of labor markets; investment in systems or components that Afghans did not want or could not sustain; and the empowerment of "thugs."[27]

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[26] See McChrystal Assessment, 2009. Interviews with ISAF officials, 2009-2014. See Investigation into the Incident in Vicinity of the Salala Checkpoint on the Night of 25-26 Nov 2011, redacted, a report by Brigadier General Stephen A. Clark, U.S. Central Command, December 26, 2011, available at http://www.centcom.mil/images/stories/Crossborder/report%20exsum%20further%20redacted.pdf.

[27] Interviews with ISAF and U.S. officials, 2009-2014.

Recent years have witnessed somewhat stronger collaboration between the international community and the Afghan Government, and within the international community, aimed at crafting and pursuing a single approach toward further economic development. The so-called Kabul process encouraged a shared focus on prioritized Afghan systems including infrastructure, transportation, financial mechanisms, the judicial sector, and human capital. At the July 2012 Tokyo Conference, participants pledged support through the Decade of Transformation and affirmed their commitment to the Kabul Process principles.[28] Yet even a ten-year timeline, to establish a functioning economy, seems distinctly ambitious.

For the international community, in turn, despite its pledges of long-term support, Afghanistan is but one of many foreign assistance imperatives, all of which face competition from domestic exigencies, putting in some doubt whether international pledges to date are likely to be fully realized. Potential donors are likely to be eager for reassurance that any further funding they provide would be wisely and accountably utilized by the Afghan Government. Providing such reassurance grows more difficult as the international presence in Afghanistan diminishes – and with it, the ability not only to shape but also simply to monitor. Potential donors are also likely to want to know for how long international support would be necessary, and when the Afghan Government might realistically assume an increasing share of the financial burden.

The risks posed by a lack of funding for the ANSF are profound: without it, Afghanistan's security architecture would almost certainly collapse – quickly – and perhaps with it the Afghan state. The risks posed by the lack of good prospects for future economic viability are sobering: the loss of the confidence of the Afghan people in the future and unwillingness to invest in it with their work and their lives; donor unwillingness to contribute; and, again, a resulting collapse of the Afghan state.

The risk of international disengagement might be mitigated in part by a robust conversation with national capitals about future funding requirements over time, including realistic assessments of Afghanistan's own ability to contribute. It might also be mitigated by more concerted attempts by the international community to pool their efforts and leverage the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF) and other tools in support of Afghan-led economic development efforts. These two steps, in turn, could help boost the prospects for the genuine economic opportunity that most Afghans hope to see.

A Final Word about Risk

"Risks" are not foreordained circumstances unfolding before our eyes. They are the potential hazards that result from deliberate choices not to plan or resource against certain concerns. We choose to assume risks...they are the chinks in our armor that we know are there.

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[28] Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Towards a Self-Sustaining Afghanistan: An Economic Transition Strategy, November 29, 2011; Afghanistan and the International Community: From Transition to the Transformation Decade, Conference Conclusions, the International Afghanistan Conference in Bonn, December 5, 2011; and Tokyo Declaration: Partnership for Self-Reliance in Afghanistan, from Transition to Transformation, from the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan, July 8, 2012.

Stability in Afghanistan is distinctly fragile, and unsustainable without progress in a number of discrete arenas. It is subject to risks that are in part the direct results of U.S. choices. One of the greatest risks looking ahead is that, in the mad rush of competing global crises, the U.S. Government will not be able to find time to think about Afghanistan – it will effectively decide not to decide. This time of political change and security transition in Afghanistan affords an opportunity to ensure that further decision-making – about troop levels, timelines, assistance in all guises, and about how much this effort matters – is driven as much as possible by rigorous, reflective strategic thought.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify about these issues, and I look forward to your questions.

CATHERINE DALE

Dr. Dale is a practitioner and scholar of U.S. national and international security issues. As Specialist in International Security at the Congressional Research Service (CRS) – the Congress's "in-house think tank" – Dr. Dale provides analytical support to Members and staff to help frame critical national security debates. She is the lead CRS analyst on strategy and military operations in Afghanistan, and on defense strategy writ large. She also spearheads CRS's analytical focus on national security reform.

Dr. Dale has a long and robust history as a strategic advisor to senior military leaders. From 2009 to 2010, on leave from CRS, as the Senior Civilian Advisor to General Rodriguez, then the Commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Joint Command (IJC), the operational-level NATO headquarters in Afghanistan, she helped to shape and communicate strategy and policy for the force; and to integrate tactical, operational and strategic-level efforts. In 2009 she served as a member of ISAF Commander General McChrystal's "60-day Initial Assessment Team"; in 2010 she served as a "Directed Telescope" for ISAF Commander General Petraeus for two months; in 2011 she conducted a month-long assessment for ISAF Commander General Allen; in 2012 she conducted another month-long campaign assessment for IJC Commander Lieutenant General Terry; in 2013 she spent two and a half months in Afghanistan as an advisor to COMISAF General Dunford; and in 2014 she spent another month conducting a campaign assessment for IJC Commander Lieutenant General Anderson. Also in 2011, she conducted the "initial strategic assessment" at U.S. Africa Command for General Ham. She is serving now as an outside Senior Advisor for Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Breedlove, and continues to play adjunct strategic advisory roles – "helping us see ourselves" – for many other senior military leaders.

Prior to CRS, as a Special Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Dr. Dale helped to shape and communicate the broad strategic vision of the Department of Defense. She came to Washington from Iraq, where she served as the Political Advisor to the Commanding General of the Combined Joint Task Force-7 (and later, the Multi-National Force-Iraq). As POLAD in Iraq, she helped to integrate international civilian and military efforts. Earlier, serving for four years as the Special Assistant to the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Georgia, she helped craft a UN shuttle diplomacy effort aimed at achieving the political settlement of the conflict in Georgia's break-away region, Abkhazia.

As an academic, Dr. Dale's work has focused on politics and security issues in the former Soviet Union and on the problems of long-term internal displacement. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the Initiative to Educate Afghan Women, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and an active participant in the Team Red White and Blue community. She holds a Ph.D. and an M.A. in Political Science from the University of California, Berkeley; an M.S. in National Security Strategy from the National War College; and a B.A. in Slavic Studies from Harvard University.

TESTIMONY—THE CASE AGAINST THE 2016 ZERO OPTION FOR AFGHANISTAN

By Michael O'Hanlon (senior fellow, Brookings Institution)

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and Other Distinguished Members of the Committee for the honor of testifying today on the important subject of future American policy in Afghanistan. Despite the many frustrations, high costs and casualties, occasional partisan acrimony, and imperfect results, our nation has shown remarkable patience and staying power in what has become, far and away, America's longest war. I hope that we will not lose our patience and persistence at this late but still crucial stage.

My central argument is that the United States should not make, as its top priority, removing all combat units from Afghanistan in 2016, as President Obama now intends and much of the country appears to wish. It should seek to stay in Afghanistan indefinitely, largely for counterterrorism purposes that pertain directly to the national security of the United States. Threats from al Qaeda central and the Haqqani network (and perhaps even groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba that carried out the Mumbai attacks in 2008 and thus drove the region close to Indo-Pakistani war) are serious enough that the United States and its partners need a broad range of possible tools to counter them. Removing all combat forces would deprive us of important tools, including drones and bases for special forces, with no obvious alternatives.

Rather than emphasizing an exit strategy, we should be pursuing an enduring strategic partnership with Afghanistan. It is admittedly somewhat unconvincing to talk of victory in this war. But we should, as former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Michele Flournoy and former Afghanistan commander General John Allen argued with me last year, be seeking to lock in, and solidify, our gains.

In 2011, when U.S. troop totals in Afghanistan were 100,000—three times the current level—President Obama announced a plan to draw them down by one third by the end of the summer of 2012. That plan was seen by many as rushed, and General Petraeus, then outgoing commander in Afghanistan, publicly acknowledged that he would have preferred a slower pace. But at least the pace of change was careful enough that, under General John Allen, the United States could execute that reduction without announcing another subsequent drawdown in the process. Not until February of 2013, after his reelection and five months after the completion of the previous troop reduction, did the president announce his next planned cuts—which were not initiated in large numbers until the fall of 2013.

Alas, in this case, while we are still drawing down current forces towards an endstate of 9,800 GIs by December, we have already announced plans for the next two rounds of cutbacks. My concern is less with that 9,800 figure than with the plan for what comes next. That total of 9,800 U.S. military personnel that will begin 2015 in Afghanistan is, as the Committee knows well, to be cut in half by year's end, and then brought to nearly zero by the end of 2016 as Mr. Obama completes his term in office. We risk piling too many planned cuts on top of each other—even as Afghanistan's uncertain politics and presidential transition process inject more uncertainty into the political-military situation in the country.

Thankfully it does not appear the case that the Afghan security forces will be rapidly downsized from their current strength of just over 350,000 anytime soon, as had once been proposed. The Taliban threat remains real. And the ability of Afghan auxiliary forces such as the Afghan Local Police to replace regular Afghan army and police forces is limited. (The figure of 30,000 ALP personnel, as currently envisioned by American and Afghan plans, seems a good number. But anything more is probably unrealistic given the difficulty of vetting and supervising these forces.)

Still, there are elements of administration thinking that seem harried and hurried. Instead, we need to keep our strategic patience as a nation.

A WAR TO END, OR A PARTNERSHIP TO PRESERVE?

Some may find it incredulous that President Obama's new policy, to have all operational U.S. military forces out of Afghanistan by the end of his presidency, could be a mistake—or constitute too hasty a planned departure. Obama will have presided over eight years of American military engagement there, after President Bush's seven and a half. The effort will be far and away America's longest war, whether one defines the endpoint as this December's termination of NATO's current combat operation, or as the 2016 completion of the Enduring Force mission that will begin immediately thereafter.

The problem with this way of thinking is in the premise. We should not think about Afghanistan, at this point, as a war to end, but as a partnership to preserve. For that large majority of Americans tired of this war, and uninterested in further nation building efforts in the Hindu Kush, the best motivator might not be the modest help in airpower or intelligence that Afghan forces--already doing 95 percent of the fighting and dying in defense of their country--might still need after 2016. Rather, the best argument is a more nationalistic one about U.S. national security. Without bases in Afghanistan, from where are we going to fly drones (or stage commando raids) to monitor, target, and occasionally kill any al Qaeda that could still take sanctuary in eastern Afghanistan or western Pakistan?

Talk of U.S.-Afghan partnership may sound bizarre to many American ears. To be sure, it has been an asymmetric partnership to date, with America and its allies pumping in billions of dollars, suffering thousands of fatalities, and often being rewarded by seeming insolence from President Hamid Karzai as well as a culture of corruption within Afghanistan, high levels of poppy production, and an enduring resilience from our enemy the Taliban.

While all of these failings of the Afghanistan project are real, and serious, there are many positives to report as well, as this Committee knows. They begin, in my mind, with the above-noted tenacity and toughness of the Afghan security forces. There are enormous problems with the ANSF, to be sure, beginning with a high rate of desertion, corruption among certain commanders, and high loss rates—some 4,700 Afghan army and police forces gave their lives in defense of their nation in 2013, a tragically high figure. But that figure also demonstrates the degree to which Afghans will fight and die in defense of their country. And most Afghan cities today are relatively safe in statistical terms—compared with what they were like half a decade ago, compared with other war zones, compared even with a number of high-crime societies in places like Latin America that are supposedly at peace.

We also need to keep in mind the dramatic increases in the numbers of children in school (perhaps a tenfold increase from Taliban days, with 35 to 40 percent of today's total girls), the growing economy (with real per capita growth rates averaging more than 5 percent a year over the last dozen years, albeit from a very low baseline), the substantial improvements in life expectancy (at least 10 years, relative to levels at the turn of the century), and the much-improved infrastructure highlighted by a nearly-complete "ring road" as well as several major arteries near key cities.

THE KOREA ANALOGY

Moreover, we have been here before in modern U.S. national security policy. Although no two cases are identical, the best analogy to where we stand now in Afghanistan may be Korea. After three years of a very frustrating conflict in the early 1950s, we secured a mediocre outcome in the form of a ceasefire that left the North Korean regime intact. And our partner in the effort was a highly corrupt, nondemocratic South Korean state that did not hold elections until the 1980s. By comparison, for all its flaws, Afghanistan is a better polity, with an electoral process underway that by later this summer is likely to

replace President Karzai with a new leader via the ballot box. The two possible winners, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Dr. Ashraf Ghani, are both gifted men superior in integrity and competence to most early leaders of the Republic of Korea.

Yet for all of South Korea's flaws, in 1953 we did not think of an exit strategy as the key metric of success. American national security was the crucial goal. U.S. forces settled down to a long, patient, generally nonviolent mission in helping ensure the attainment of this objective, even as South Korea remained economically and militarily weaker than its neighbor for the next two to three decades. We deployed initially more than 50,000 troops to do so, and gradually reduced that to around 40,000 in the latter Cold War decades and just under 30,000 today.

In Afghanistan, thankfully, no one is clamoring for an enduring force totaling anything close to these numbers. For all the Taliban's resilience, it is much weaker than the North Korean regime ever was. And any al Qaeda targets we may develop in future years will likely be modest in size and number.

THE ENDURING THREAT

But as President Obama rightly observed in his West Point speech in May, global terrorism does indeed still represent the most serious acute threat to American security. Even if al Qaeda affiliates in places like Syria and Iraq and Yemen and Nigeria are now serious concerns too, the terrorist syndicate's potential to use sanctuaries in South Asia remains considerable. Affiliates like the Haqqani network in North Waziristan (and perhaps also the Pakistani group Lashkar-e-Taiba with its ambitions of provoking Indo-Pakistani war) remain very serious worries.

Against such threats, drones remain America's main tool for monitoring and in some cases targeting the organization. This is a group that just last fall nearly snuck a 60,000 pound bomb up to the gates of the main American military base in Khost, Afghanistan which could have killed hundreds of GIs if successfully detonated there. It also continues to send assassination teams into Kabul and will surely try to destabilize the future Afghan government. Ideologically and operationally, it is close to al Qaeda central, so any victory for the Haqqanis would be a success and a potential enabler for Zawahiri and other al Qaeda leaders who still probably live in Pakistan and who still seek sanctuaries and partners with which to attack the west.

Against this threat, there is no alternative but to have bases in eastern and southern Afghanistan--certainly at least one, ideally two or three. These facilities can be located within 50 to 200 miles of the locations we need to monitor, within practical operational range of modern unmanned systems. The plausible alternatives are not realistic alternatives at all--to operate manned or unmanned aircraft from carriers in the Indian Ocean, more than five hundred miles away.

For all our successes against al Qaeda in recent years and the associated decline in the recent rate of drone strikes, there is no way to predict that this threat will simply disappear in 2016 to fit with Mr. Obama's preferred storyline that he will have ended two wars on his watch in the White House. And while Americans say they would like this war to be over, the intensity of that sentiment is muted—probably because they want even more to be safe. As such, policymakers can and should do what is right for American national security, without worrying excessively about political pressure.

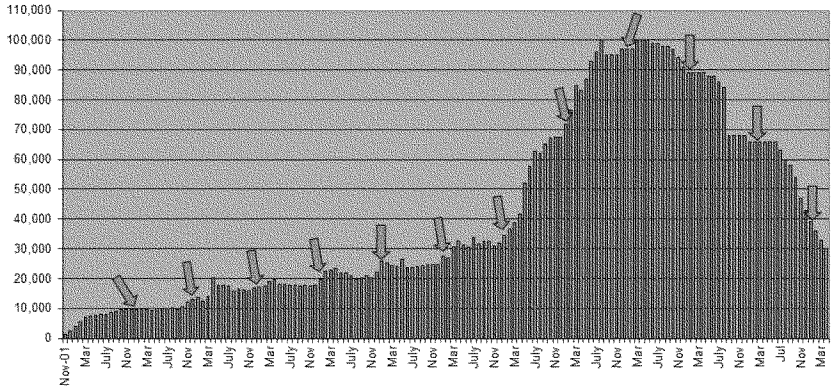
CONCLUSION

Yes, retaining perhaps 3,000 U.S. personnel in Afghanistan for five or ten or even twenty years after 2016 could cost DoD some $5 billion a year, on top of the $3 billion to $4 billion in U.S. economic and security assistance to Afghanistan that is also needed. An enduring presence could occasionally involve modest numbers of American casualties, too. But that is perhaps an unavoidable cost in the age of terror—or, to be more exact, it is a lower cost than the country could suffer in terms of a future attack, if we do not remain vigilant and engaged. And compared with our recent mission costs of more than $100 billion a year and several hundred fatalities, or the overall defense budget exceeding $500 billion annually, it is not an extremely high price. Even if sustained for another full decade, it would add some 10 percent to our total financial cost of this war, for example.

America has shown strategic patience in this conflict. Congress has contributed to this patience, for which it deserves considerable credit. I believe we should all keep it up. The stakes are still high, and the threat is still real—but so is the opportunity to lock in important gains that we, together with many allies and our Afghan partners, have achieved over the last thirteen years, and to retain counterterrorism tools that we may still need for years to come.

APPENDIX: GRAPHS FROM BROOKINGS' AFGHANISTAN INDEX (with thanks to Ian Livingston; see www.brookings.edu/afghanistanindex for more).

1) American Troops Deployed To Afghanistan



NOTE: As of end April 2014 there were roughly 30, 000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan. For a full order of battle, please see: http://www.understandingwar.org/reference/afghanistan-order-battle. The start of each year is indicated by an arrow.

2) Troops Committed to NATO's International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) By Country

Albania	72	Germany	2,695	Poland	968
Armenia	121	Greece	10	Portugal	66
Australia	356	Hungary	100	Romania	1,002
Austria	3	Iceland	3	Slovakia	275
Azerbaijan	94	Ireland	7	Slovenia	4
Bahrain	0	Italy	2,000	Spain	247
Belgium	147	Jordan	1,069	Sweden	219
Bosnia & Herzegovina	53	Republic of Korea	50	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia [1]	152
Bulgaria	378	Latvia	31	Tonga	55
Croatia	146	Lithuania	83	Turkey	457
Czech Republic	250	Luxembourg	1	Ukraine	27
Denmark	165	Malaysia	2	United Arab Emirates	35
El Salvador	0	Mongolia	40	United Kingdom	5,200
Estonia	20	Montenegro	25	United States	32,800
Finland	95	Netherlands	200	Total	49,902
France	177	New Zealand	2		
Georgia	805	Norway	67		

AS OF: June 1, 2014

1Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name

2 Snapshot figure that includes overlapping rotations.

3) Size of Afghan Security Forces on Duty, 2003-2013

Month	Ministry of Defense Forces	Ministry of Interior Forces	Total Afghan Security Forces
End 2003	6,000	0	6,000
End 2004	24,000	33,000	57,000
End 2005	26,000	40,000	66,000
End 2006	36,000	49,700	86,000
End 2007	50,000	75,000	125,000
April 2008	57,800	79,910	137,710
October 2008	68,000	79,910	147,910
March 2009	82,780	79,910	162,690
July 2009	91,900	81,020	172,920
November 2009	95,000	95,000	190,000

December 2009	100,131	94,958	195,089
March 2010	113,000	102,000	215,000
April/May 2010	119,388	104,459	223,847
August 2010	134,000	109,000	243,000
September 2010	138,164	120,504	258,668
October 2010	144,638	116,367	261,005
December 2010	149,533	116,856	266,389
Jan/Feb 2011	152,000	118,800	270,800
April 2011	164,003	122,000	286,003
May 2011	168,037	128,622	296,659
August 2011	169,076	134,865	303,941
September 2011	170,781	136,122	306,903
October	173,150	139,070	312,220

2011			
December 2011	179,610	143,800	323,410
January 2012	184,437	145,577	330,014
February 2012	187,874	148,932	336,806
March 2012	194,466	149,642	344,108
October 2012	178,501	148,536	327,037
January 2013	177,579	149,775	327,354
March 2013	177,725	151,766	329,491
September 2013	185,817	152,336	338,153

The goal for ANSF levels is currently 352,000. As of October 2012 the breakdown was as follows:

ANA, 146,339; ANP, 146,339; Afghan Air Force, 6,172. ANP figures do include border police and civil order police but do not include the Afghan Local Police.

4) Afghan Local Police Growth

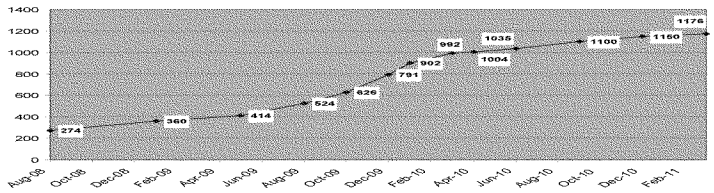
Month	Personnel in program
February 2011	4,343
April 2011	5,360
June 2011	6,696
September 2011	8,137
December 2011	10,551
April 2012	13,139
August 2012	16,380
December 2012	18,496
March 2013	21,958
October 2013	24,000

5) Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police Ethnicity

	Pashtun		Tajik		Hazara		Uzbek		Others	
	ANA	*ANP*	*ANA*	*ANP*	*ANA*	*ANP*	*ANA*	*ANP*	*ANA*	*ANP*
Officer	42.4%	40%	39.1%	49%	7.9%	5%	4.5%	3%	6.1%	3%
NCO	51.8%	32%	38.2%	55%	9.6%	5%	3.2%	4%	1.5%	4%
Soldier / Patrolman	43.0%	47%	29.2%	35%	11.0%	4%	8.5%	7%	8.2%	7%
Total Force	45.7%	42%	33.3%	42%	10.2%	5%	6.3%	6%	5.8%	6%
National Avg	44%		25%		10%		8%		13%	

NOTE: ANA numbers as of March 2013, ANP as of December 2011.

6) U.S. Government Civilians in Afghanistan, August 2008-2011

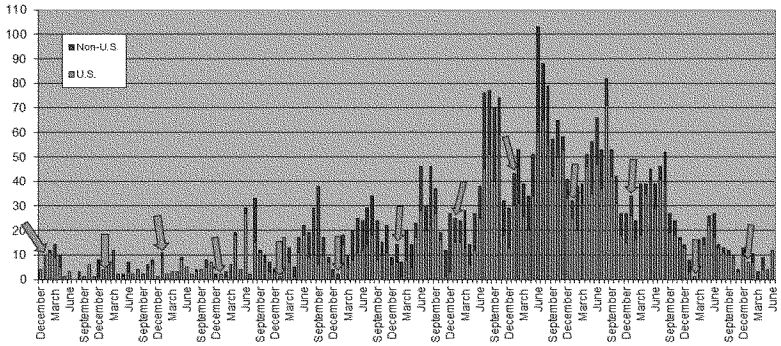


7) Attacks by Afghan Security Forces against Allied Troops

Year	# killed	# of attacks causing death
2003-2009	12	N/A
2010	20	11
2011	35	21
2012*	57	41
2013	14	9
2014**	2	1

NOTE: Attacks from 2007-March 2012 killed 52 American soldiers and wounded 48 more. *An article from the U.S. Army notes that 62 "personnel" were killed, we have left off civilian contractors in the past which may account for the difference. **Through June 30, 2014.

8) U.S. and Coalition Troop Fatalities since October 7, 2001



NOTE: Due to data reporting, this graph and the breakdowns below include some fatalities from outside Afghanistan, mainly in the Philippines, Pakistan, and other countries associated with Operation Enduring Freedom. In most months, there are no fatalities in locations outside Afghanistan. As of March 31, 2013 there have been at least 2,188 U.S. fatalities attributed directly to fighting in or non hostile deaths in Afghanistan.

9) Cause of Death for U.S. Troops by Year

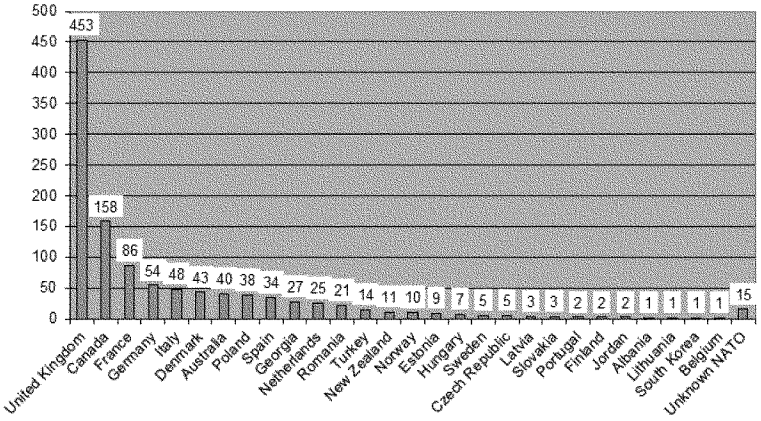
Year	Improvised Explosive Device	Suicide Bombs	Mortars/RPG's / Rockets	Landmine	Helicopter Losses*	Aircraft Losses*	Other Hostile Fire	Non-Hostile Causes*	Total
2001	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (16.7%)	0 (0%)	4 (33.3%)	6 (50.0%)	12
2002	5 (10.2%)	0 (0%)	1 (2.0%)	1 (2.0%)	4 (8.2%)	18 (36.7%)	12 (24.5%)	8 (16.3%)	49
2003	1 (2.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	19 (39.6%)	0 (0%)	12 (25.0%)	16 (33.3%)	48
2004	12 (23.1%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.9%)	1 (1.9%)	2 (3.8%)	3 (5.8%)	10 (19.2%)	23 (44.2%)	52
2005	18 (18.2%)	0 (0%)	2 (2.0%)	5 (5.1%)	36 (36.4%)	1 (1.0%)	20 (20.2%)	17 (17.2%)	99
2006	27 (27.6%)	3 (3.1%)	1 (1.0%)	1 (1.0%)	21 (21.4%)	0 (0%)	33 (33.7%)	12 (12.2%)	98
2007	33 (28.2%)	1 (0.9%)	9 (7.7%)	1 (0.9%)	13 (11.1%)	0 (0%)	35 (29.9%)	25 (21.4%)	117
2008	84 (54.2%)	4 (2.6%)	7 (4.5%)	2 (1.3%)	2 (1.3%)	0 (0%)	36 (23.2%)	20 (12.9%)	155
2009	142 (45.5%)	8 (2.6%)	21 (6.7%)	0 (0%)	13 (4.2%)	2 (0.6%)	91 (29.1%)	35 (11.2%)	312*
2010	257 (51.5%)	8 (1.6%)	16 (3.2%)	0 (0%)	20 (4.0%)	0 (0%)	164 (32.9%)	34 (6.8%)	499
2011	183 (43.8%)	9 (2.2%)	12 (2.9%)	0 (0%)	35 (8.4%)	0 (0%)	132 (31.6%)	47 (11.2%)	418

2012	104 (33.5%)	12 (3.9%)	5 (1.6%)	0 (0%)	21 (6.8%)	1 (0.3%)	116 (37.4%)	51 (16.5%)	310
2013	40 (31.3%)	6 (4.7%)	12 (9.4%)	0 (0%)	20 (15.6%)	4 (3.1%)	28 (21.9%)	18 (14.1%)	128
2014	5 (14.7%)	0 (0%)	2 (5.9%)	0 (0%)	3 (8.8%)	0 (0%)	17 (50.0%)	7 (20.6%)	34
Total	**911 (39.1%)**	**51 (2.2%)**	**89 (3.8%)**	**11 (0.5%)**	**211 (9.1%)**	**29 (1.2%)**	**710 (30.5%)**	**319 (13.7%)**	**2331**

Through June 30, 2014

*Helicopter and aircraft losses include deaths caused by both non-hostile accidents and those downed by hostile fire. The "Non-Hostile Causes" data then does not include non-hostile helicopter or aircraft losses. 2009 numbers do not include U.S. intelligence officials killed in a suicide bombing in December. For detailed demographic information including gender, race and military component, please see Operation Enduring Freedom Military Deaths at:
http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/oefdeaths.pdf

10)Non-U.S. Coalition Troop Fatalities by Country since October 2001



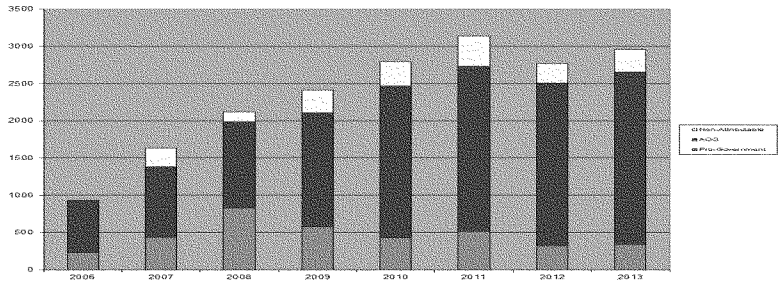
Total through June 30, 2014: **1,119**

11) **Total ANSF Killed (2001-Feb 2014):** 18,000 | **Total ANSF Wounded (2001-Feb 2014):** 20,000

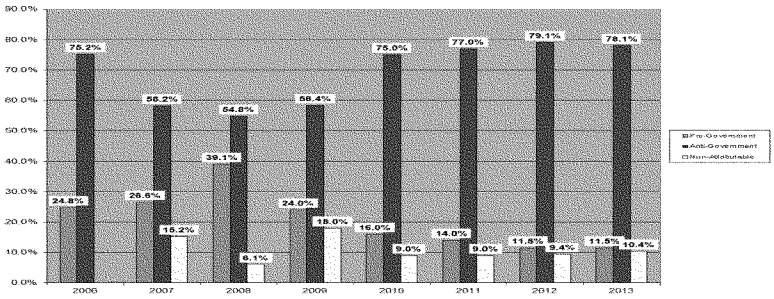
NOTE: Figures from 2007 through mid-2009 provided by NATO-ISAF and differ from those published in a January 2009 report released by the U.S. Department of Defense. This report estimated 332 ANA fatalities and 692 ANP fatalities for 2007, with 2008 figures shown only through October 2008. Numbers for the second half of 2009 are estimated based on information from several sources. **2011 and 2012 (through end November) numbers are estimates based off of shorter reporting periods in each year. 2012 numbers are based off reports of monthly averages through November. An article by Rod Nordland in the New York Times on April 20, 2013 quoted an Afghan Ministry of Defense official noted that 1,183 ANA soldiers were killed in the year ending March 20, 2013 compared to 841 in the year ending the same date prior. ***According to the Afghan Defense Ministry, 276 soldiers were killed March 21 to June 11. We have used the average per day during that period to come up with a yearly estimate through June 20, 2013. War

totals through March 2013 include the entire war as reported by Rod Nordland in the New York Times on March 3, 2014. Subsequent figures from ISAF.

12)Estimated Yearly Civilian Fatalities as Result of Fighting Between Pro-Government Forces and Armed Opposition Groups (AOG), 2006-2013



13) Estimated Percentage of Afghan Civilian Fatalities by Group Which Caused, 2006-2013


90.0%
80.0%
70.0%
60.0%
50.0%
40.0%
30.0%
20.0%
10.0%
0.0%
75.2%
24.8%
56.2%
28.6%
15.2%
54.8%
39.1%
6.1%
58.4%
24.0%
18.0%
75.0%
16.0%
9.0%
77.0%
14.0%
9.0%
79.1%
11.5%
9.4%
78.1%
11.5%
10.4%
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012
2013
Pro-Government
Anti-Government
Non-Attributable

Michael O'Hanlon is a senior fellow with the Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence and director of research for the Foreign Policy program at the Brookings Institution, where he specializes in U.S. defense strategy, the use of military force and American foreign policy. He is a visiting lecturer at Princeton University, an adjunct professor at Johns Hopkins University and a member of the International Institute for Strategic Studies. His most recent book, co-written with James Steinberg, is *Strategic Reassurance and Resolve: U.S.-China Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton University Press, 2014).

O'Hanlon is the author of *Healing the Wounded Giant: Maintaining Military Preeminence while Cutting the Defense Budget* (Brookings Institution Press 2013); *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy with Martin Indyk and Kenneth Lieberthal* (Brookings Institution Press March 2012); *The Wounded Giant: America's Armed Forces in an Age of Austerity* (Penguin Press 2011); *A Skeptic's Case for Nuclear Disarmament* (Brookings Institution Press 2010); *Toughing It Out in Afghanistan* with Hassina Sherjan (Brookings Institution Press 2010); and *The Science of War* (Princeton University Press 2009). He continues to coauthor Brookings's Afghanistan Index. He and Bruce Riedel wrote *A Plan A- for Afghanistan* in the Winter 2010/2011 issue of *The Washington Quarterly* and published a paper on Afghanistan and Pakistan for Brookings's Campaign 2012 project.

His other recent books include *A War Like No Other*, about the U.S.-China relationship and the Taiwan issue, with Richard Bush (Wiley 2007); a multi-author volume, *Protecting the Homeland 2006/2007* (Brookings Institution Press 2006); *Defense Strategy for the Post-Saddam Era*(Brookings Institution Press 2005); *The Future of Arms Control*, co-authored with Michael Levi (Brookings Institution Press 2005); *Neither Star Wars nor Sanctuary: Constraining the Military Uses of Space* (Brookings Institution Press 2004); and *Crisis on the Korean Peninsula* with Mike Mochizuki (McGraw-Hill 2003).

He has written several hundred op-eds in newspapers including *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Times*, *The Financial Times*, *The Japan Times* and Pakistan's *Dawn* paper. O'Hanlon has appeared on television or spoken on the radio about 2,000 times since September 11, 2001.

O'Hanlon was an analyst at the Congressional Budget Office from 1989-1994. He also worked previously at the Institute for Defense Analyses. His Ph.D. from Princeton is in public and international affairs; his bachelor's and master's degrees, also from Princeton, are in the physical sciences. He served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Congo/Kinshasa (the former Zaire) from 1982-1984, where he taught college and high school physics in French.

Affiliations:
Alhurra TV/Middle East Broadcasting, commentator
Columbia University, adjunct assistant professor of international and public affairs
Johns Hopkins University, adjunct professor
Princeton University, visiting lecturer

DISCLOSURE FORM FOR WITNESSES
CONCERNING FEDERAL CONTRACT AND GRANT INFORMATION

INSTRUCTION TO WITNESSES: Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5), of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives for the 113th Congress requires nongovernmental witnesses appearing before House committees to include in their written statements a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source of any federal contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants) received during the current and two previous fiscal years either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness. This form is intended to assist witnesses appearing before the House Committee on Armed Services in complying with the House rule. Please note that a copy of these statements, with appropriate redactions to protect the witness's personal privacy (including home address and phone number) will be made publicly available in electronic form not later than one day after the witness's appearance before the committee.

Witness name: Michael O'Hanlon

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

✓ Individual

___Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the company, association or other entity being represented:

FISCAL YEAR 2014

federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant

FISCAL YEAR 2013

federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant

FISCAL YEAR 2012

Federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant

Federal Contract Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

Number of contracts (including subcontracts) with the federal government:

1 Current fiscal year (2014): Consultant, Alhurra TV;
1 Fiscal year 2013: "";
1 Fiscal year 2012: "".

Federal agencies with which federal contracts are held:

Current fiscal year (2014): Alhurra (Middle East Broadcasting);
Fiscal year 2013: "";
Fiscal year 2012: "".

List of subjects of federal contract(s) (for example, ship construction, aircraft parts manufacturing, software design, force structure consultant, architecture & engineering services, etc.):

Current fiscal year (2014): commentary / analysis;
Fiscal year 2013: "";
Fiscal year 2012: "".

Aggregate dollar value of federal contracts held:

Current fiscal year (2014): $60 k;
Fiscal year 2013: "";
Fiscal year 2012: "".

Federal Grant Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has grants (including subgrants) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

Number of grants (including subgrants) with the federal government:

Current fiscal year (2014):_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

Federal agencies with which federal grants are held:

Current fiscal year (2014):_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

List of subjects of federal grants(s) (for example, materials research, sociological study, software design, etc.):

Current fiscal year (2014):_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

Aggregate dollar value of federal grants held:

Current fiscal year (2014):_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

CSIS | CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Statement before the House Armed Services Committee

"THE FORCES SHAPING TRANSITION IN AFGHANISTAN: 2014-2016"

A Statement by:

Anthony H. Cordesman

Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy
Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)

July 30, 2014

2120 Rayburn House Office Building

WWW.CSIS.ORG

1616 RHODE ISLAND AVENUE NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20036

TEL. (202) 887.0200
FAX (202) 775.3199

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee,

If there is any lesson I have learned during the time between Vietnam and the present, it is that we perpetually seek simplicity and good news in wars that are extraordinarily complex, and we spin the facts into some simple justification of what we are doing rather than face the far more challenging mix of problems and risks that actually shape a conflict.

We have been asked to testify today about the third war in my lifetime where we are headed out of a war while denying or understating many of the risks, spinning the facts to justify a rapid departure, and failing to provide any meaningful public debate over the strategic importance of our actions.

Our latest QDR, strategic guidance, and the President's recent West Point speech on strategy virtually ignore the strategic importance of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia. Our Transition "plans" make no meaningful public mention of the role of Pakistan – which many see as the real strategic center of gravity in the conflict – or of other outside powers.

To the extent we have a public strategy, it is one that involves less than a year of the minimum level of US advisory effort recommended by key officers like General Mattis, General Allen, and General Dunford. It will throw limited amounts of civil and military aid at Afghanistan without any public plan for shaping the future of Afghan forces and governance. It fails to take into account whether Afghanistan can make the reforms necessary for that funding to be effective, and ignores clear warnings from recent data on the trends in the fighting, governance, and economy that our level of commitment will be too limited, too short, and too lacking in structure to be effective.

We are also acting after we have increasingly reduced the amount of data we make public on the course of the fighting and the state of the Afghan economy, and have spun the data we do provide to support our present political goals. We focus on Afghan forces and the military dimension at the tactical level, and understate or ignore massive uncertainties as to Afghanistan's political unity and capacity to govern. We talk about aid levels that are not based on concrete plans and costs, and we are moving forward at a time when the war lacks the support of the American people, and most polls conducted over the last two years show that the war lacks public support from most of our key ISAF allies. **(pp. 26-32** of report)

The war in Afghanistan demonstrates – as do the wars in Vietnam and Iraq – that we actually face three primary threats when we go to war:

- ***The first and most obvious threat is the enemy.*** Although "obvious" is not an accurate word in a war where we have never openly come to grips with the fact that Pakistan has been both a sanctuary for our enemy and maintained ties to key enemy factions throughout the conflict.

- ***The second threat is the mix of weakness and failures in the host country and a lack of commitment from our key allies.***

  Every serious counterinsurgency struggle is to some extent the result of a failed state, and becomes an exercise in armed nation building where the military and tactical outcome is only part of a civil-military struggle for popular support.

- ***The third –and in some ways the most important threat – is ourselves.*** It is our unwillingness to face hard facts, objectively assess the strategic reasons for the fighting, the risks involved, and the cost-benefits of what we are doing.

  We have done more than simply spin the facts. We have focused on the tactical dimensions of insurgency, rather than the political dimension of what is fundamentally a political form of warfare. We have made no public assessments of the relative size of the areas where insurgent groups control territory, challenge the Afghan government, present a current threat, or have growing influence. We have made no effort to make a net assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of insurgent groups versus the central government and local power brokers.

These are not issues I can adequately address in a short statement, but I have prepared and provided a comprehensive comparative analysis of the overall mix of trends in the fighting and the Transition effort that I request be entered into the record.

I do not expect any Member to have the time to read through the entire document, but even skimming through it reveals the extent to which we have distorted the facts surrounding the fighting, the desperate need for effective Afghan unity and leadership quality of governance, and the state of the Afghan economy and its inability to deal with the shock of transition.

If you do skim through the data, you will see many other risks and issues we choose to deny or ignore. They include the following key challenges to our present course of action:

- ***As an introduction to these comments, it is important to note that ISAF, the State Department, and USAID – as well as many NGOs and think tanks – fail to verify the data they use***, cherry pick favorable statistics or distort the statistic baseline they use, and fail to make explicit assessments of the gross uncertainties and problems in the timeliness of the data they use. These affect data on patterns of combat, GNP growth, impacts of aid, health statistics, education, women's rights etc. Ignoring uncertainty and competing data is lying by omission and fundamentally dishonest and incompetent.
- ***ISAF and SIGAR data show that the history of military and civil aid efforts and funding has been erratic,*** *has not been tied to clear spending plans or*

measures of effectiveness, and the current plans are based on vague funding goals unrelated to clear assessments of costs and needs (pp. 32-40).

- ***US and ISAF data show that the "surge" in Afghanistan after 2009 achieved some real tactical benefits in the south, but had no overall impact on the intensity of the fighting and none of the major impact of the surge in Iraq (pp. 46-49).*** These are key reasons why ISAF stopped reporting mistaken estimates of Enemy Initiated Attacks and has virtually stopped public reporting on the metrics of the war.
- ***UN data on the trends in casualties show that ISAF and DoD reporting on the course of the fighting spins away the growing intensity of the conflict, and its steady expansion into new areas in Afghanistan (pp. 51 to 61).*** as well as focuses exclusively on the tactical dimension rather than expanding areas of insurgent influence and the wide range of areas where the Afghan government and Afghan forces are not present, nor effective, or are abusive and corrupt.
- ***The data on the development of the ANSF warns that Transition is being rushed forward far too rapidly (pp. 62 to 104).*** There are still real prospects for success if the election produces real Afghan leadership and political unity, but not if a major advisory and enabling presence is not maintained on a "conditions-based" agreement, rather than slashed down to an arbitrary deadline.
- ***Critical problems and uncertainties remain in the development of the MoD and regular military forces, including critical problems with manpower retention, corruption, ethnic differences, and coping with the shift from "force generation" advisory efforts and metrics to acting as a warfighting force where effectiveness is measured in terms of actual combat behavior and not training, manning, and material assets (pp. 105-120).*** The inability to handle this transition without advisors and enablers down to the major combat unit level crippled the Army of the Republic of Vietnam and led Iraqi units to begin to fall apart within months of the departure of US advisors.
- ***The police remain highly corrupt, unsuited for counterinsurgency, and lack effective local governance and courts, detention facilities, and other elements of effective rule of law (pp. 122-131 and 137-141).*** They still make up more than 40% of the total ANSF **(p. 98).** The end result is that the actual total fighting forces is very small compared to the territory that needs to be defended, and the threat forces can cherry pick the weaker elements of the ANSF and police once ISAF forces are gone. Moreover, the combined corruption of Afghan government and police forces has significantly alienated the local population and opened it up to Taliban and insurgent influence.
- ***The Afghan Local Police (ALP) can be a critical local force, but the plans for post-Transition development and support are uncertain*** *and raise*

serious questions about their capability, support, and freedom from corruption and abuses. (pp. 133-135.)

- ***As Russian and other outside studies warn, there is a serious risk the ANSF will fragment or collapse because of ethnic, sectarian, tribal, and regional differences*** *if the election does not produce effective leadership, unity, and governance (pp. 143-154).*
- ***Data from the World Bank, IMF, and UN studies all warn that the State Department, USAID, and various other organizations and NGOs have exaggerated*** *progress in governance and the economy since 2005 (pp. 156-166).*
- ***These same studies warn that the Afghan government is now one of the most corrupt and ineffective governments in the world,*** *and is not ready to manage the security and civil dimensions of Transition at the central government, provincial, or district levels on a nationwide basis (pp. 168-181, 137-141).*
- ***These studies also warn that the government cannot finance itself for the foreseeable future, and is not yet capable of planning and executing a budget that would allow it to control 50% of the necessary flow of aid or implement the reforms called for in the Tokyo Conference (pp. 183-191).*** This creates a significant risk that a major recession could occur once the flow of spending and aid drops sharply, seriously threatening stability along with the pressures of the fighting. There might be a need for major flows of aid to compensate. It also presents a critical problem because US aid seems to be oriented towards peacetime concepts of project aid.
- ***With the exception of the World Bank, reports on progress in the civil sector have largely ignored the massive demographic pressures*** *that have outpaced development and led to an increase in poverty and youth unemployment and under employment (pp. 192-196.)*
- ***The World Bank warns just how serious poverty is as a factor shaping Afghan stability (pp. 198-202).*** It provides a critical warning indicator of what may happen as military spending and aid are cut, although the World Bank indicates that only around 11% of the population has seen any benefits from such spending, and aid has had little overall impact on the Afghan economy. GDP growth depends more on rainfall than development efforts, and officials such as Ashraf Ghani have warned that the massive flow of outside money does as much to distort and corrupt the Afghan economy as it does to develop it.
- ***The World Bank and IMF data warn that the Afghan economy remains far more dependent on narcotics than some US reporting indicates,*** *and many narco-traffickers and power brokers may gain wealth and influence after Transition (pp. 204-211).*

- ***They also warn that – like the myth of the New Silk Road – mines and natural resources offer little prospect of near-term help in supporting Transition. They show that corruption and other barriers seriously limit the private sector's growth and outside investment, and that the Afghan government will face major problems in supporting post-Transition critical infrastructure. (pp. 213-218)***
- ***Finally, the IMF and World Bank data reinforce the overall fragility of the Afghan economy and show the extent to which White House, State Department, and USAID claims about GDP growth have been driven by rainfall and agriculture that has had no relation to aid efforts and spending. (pp. 220-229)*** This again highlights the risk of a post-Transition recession and the need for US aid in the form of a bailout.

Let me close by being very clear about the meaning of even the most negative trends that I have mentioned. I do not believe that this war has to end in failure as our fighting in Vietnam and Iraq did. I am not convinced that even a precipitous and poorly organized US withdrawal, mixed with deep Afghan divisions and failed governance, would allow the Taliban and other insurgents to dominate. A more divided Afghanistan might emerge, but it would still be functional on some level.

I do believe, however, that we should not lose a war because we do not want to face unpleasant truths and cloak our withdrawal in rhetoric and hollow promises. It may well be time to leave. We have many other higher priorities. But this should be an honest decision based on honest assessment and that honestly addresses the risks in our course of action.

Anthony H. Cordesman: Bibliography

Anthony H. Cordesman holds the Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy at CSIS. During his time at CSIS, he has completed a wide variety of studies on U.S. strategy and defense plans, the lessons of modern war, defense programming and budgeting, NATO modernization, Chinese military power, proliferation, counterterrorism, armed nation building, security in the Middle East, and the Afghan and Iraq conflicts.

Cordesman has traveled frequently to Afghanistan and Iraq to consult for MNF-I, ISAF, U.S. commands, and U.S. embassies on the wars in those countries, and he was a member of the Strategic Assessment Group that assisted General Stanley McChrystal in developing a new strategy for Afghanistan in 2009. He frequently acts as a consultant to the U.S. State Department, Defense Department, and intelligence community and has worked with U.S. officials on counterterrorism and security areas in a number of Middle East countries.

Before joining CSIS, Cordesman served as director of intelligence assessment in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and as civilian assistant to the deputy secretary of defense. He directed the analysis of the lessons of the October War for the secretary of defense in 1974, coordinating the U.S. military, intelligence, and civilian analysis of the conflict, and carried out reviews of the reasons for the collapse of ARVN forces for the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

He also served in numerous other government positions, including in the State Department and on NATO International Staff. In addition, he served as director of policy and planning for resource applications in the Energy Department and as national security assistant to Senator John McCain. He had numerous foreign assignments, including posts in the United Kingdom, Lebanon, Egypt, and Iran, as well as with NATO in Brussels and Paris. He has worked extensively in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf. He is a recipient of the Department of Defense Distinguished Service Medal.

Cordesman is the author of numerous studies on energy policy, national security, and the Middle East. Publications include books on the lessons of the Gulf War and Iran-Iraq Wars, the Stablity of Pakistan, and *Iraq in Crisis*, *The Afghan War in 2013*, 3 vols. (Rowman and Littlefield/CSIS, 2013); and *Changing U.S. Strategy: The Search for Stability and the "Non-War" Against "Non-Terrorism"* (Rowman & Littlefield/CSIS, 2013).

DISCLOSURE FORM FOR WITNESSES
CONCERNING FEDERAL CONTRACT AND GRANT INFORMATION

INSTRUCTION TO WITNESSES: Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5), of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives for the 113th Congress requires nongovernmental witnesses appearing before House committees to include in their written statements a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source of any federal contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants) received during the current and two previous fiscal years either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness. This form is intended to assist witnesses appearing before the House Committee on Armed Services in complying with the House rule. Please note that a copy of these statements, with appropriate redactions to protect the witness's personal privacy (including home address and phone number) will be made publicly available in electronic form not later than one day after the witness's appearance before the committee.

Witness name: **Anthony H. Cordesman**

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

__X_Individual

___Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the company, association or other entity being represented:

FISCAL YEAR 2014

federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
N/A			

FISCAL YEAR 2013

federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
N/A			

FISCAL YEAR 2012

Federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
N/A			

Federal Contract Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

Number of contracts (including subcontracts) with the federal government:

Current fiscal year (2014):__ _____ N/A _____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____ N/A _____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____ N/A _____.

Federal agencies with which federal contracts are held:

Current fiscal year (2014):_____ ___ N/A _____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____ N/A _____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____ N/A _____.

List of subjects of federal contract(s) (for example, ship construction, aircraft parts manufacturing, software design, force structure consultant, architecture & engineering services, etc.):

Current fiscal year (2014):____ _____ N/A _____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____ N/A _____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____ N/A _____.

Aggregate dollar value of federal contracts held:

Current fiscal year (2014):_____ _____ N/A _____;
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Number of grants (including subgrants) with the federal government:

Current fiscal year (2014):___ __ N/A _____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____ N/A _____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____ N/A _____.

Federal agencies with which federal grants are held:

Current fiscal year (2014):_____ N/A _____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____ N/A _____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____ N/A _____.

List of subjects of federal grants(s) (for example, materials research, sociological study, software design, etc.):

Current fiscal year (2014):_____ N/A _____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____ N/A _____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____ N/A _____.

Aggregate dollar value of federal grants held:

Current fiscal year (2014):_____ N/A _____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____ N/A _____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____ N/A _____.

Statement of Ronald E. Neumann
Ambassador (ret)
Before the House Armed Services Committee on
Risks to stability in Afghanistan
July 30, 2014

Chairman McKeon, Representative Smith, thank you for your invitation to appear before you today. Stability in Afghanistan is a topic of particular importance to me. I first visited Afghanistan in 1967 when my father was ambassador there and my wife and I traveled by jeep, horse, and yak as well as more conventional means to explore a then largely peaceful land. I have returned regularly since I retired as ambassador to Afghanistan and have made seven trips there, most recently in March of this year.

Stabilizing Afghanistan remains deeply important to our national security. An unstable Afghanistan constantly threatens to draw its neighbors into destabilizing entanglements dangerous to the whole region. It gave rise to the greatest terrorist attack on US soil. If it again descends into chaos it will menace us again.

The basic situation of today is that far too much has been accomplished to say that nothing has been done or that the situation is without hope for success. And far too little is finished to claim that success is inevitable or that we have accomplished our purposes. We are not ending THE war in Afghanistan. Rather we are ending our active combat participation in a vicious and bloody war that will go on. But as we do so we have strong interests in continuing to support a path toward stability.

We have some new and positive aspects to that end. Despite a number of white knuckle confrontations, and the probability of more before the ballot counting is finished, it appears that Afghanistan will emerge with a peaceful transition of power to a legitimately elected president. That individual will have a stronger hand to govern and to negotiate because he is broadly legitimate. Particularly important, because it is so starkly different from Iraq, is that in Afghanistan the political leaders, albeit with international help, are so far able to find a way to compromise and move forward without violence.

In a region as turbulent as Central Asia this is a considerable success. And the Afghan security forces, with 100,000 fewer foreign troops in country than in 2009, have credibly managed security through the election. By no means is success guaranteed. The insurgents are increasing their challenges. We are pushing the pace of withdrawal and cutting the margin of success very fine. Still, these accomplishments are real.

In examining areas of risk to stability I will focus particularly on those about which US policy and actions can make a difference. The major areas of challenge, as my colleagues have discussed, are in economics, security and politics. There is a linking element of psychology that will affect all three and it is particularly on that area of policy and its implications that I will focus my remarks.

Afghans and neighboring countries, friends of ours and enemies alike, pay a great deal of attention to what they think the US will do. When we are unclear they make assumptions, usually worst case, or invent theories on which to base policy. President Obama's recent policy decisions on Afghanistan need to be reviewed in that light, as do the important elements of our policy that have not been decided.

I support the decision to leave just under 10,000 troops in Afghanistan in 2015. Given that war is an uncertain business, I would have preferred a slightly larger number to provide a margin against surprise. Nevertheless, with the help of our NATO allies, other troop contributors and an improving Afghan Army I believe it is sufficient for the tasks of the next year.

However, many problems are occasioned by the President's declaring that he has already decided now—without reference to what will or won't happen on the ground—that our presence will be reduced by half in 2016 and ended by 2017 except for forces staying on under embassy control. This set of decisions raises issues about our effectiveness, about how Afghans should interpret what they may expect from us in the future, about how they impact Pakistan's own policies, and about our relations with our NATO allies and their contribution to stability.

We still need to fill critical gaps in intelligence collection and targeting, fire support, and medical evacuation before we remove our own contributions to these areas. Not to do so would be a critical moral failure on our part.

For our own forces the series of changing configurations will, I believe, take a toll on effectiveness. In the next six months our forces will need to move to consolidate their posture only to radically change it twelve months later when we shrink to a Kabul presence. Physically a lot of work is going to be taken away from advising and go into shifting out locations, functions, size and organizations. We are going to become incredibly ignorant of how the war is going once we are stuck in Kabul. But most importantly, this posture will suggest to those around us that we really have little commitment to the mission since we are going to end it on the same timetable no matter what.

Harkening back to the distant day when I was an infantry officer in another war, I can say that I would have been reluctant to risk my life or that of my men if I had been told my mission was going to end irrespective of whether I succeeded or failed. I believe our highly professional military will do its best but this is a very peculiar way to send men and women into harm's way.

What we radiate with these decisions is doubt about our intentions. Can insurgents believe we will continue to support the Afghan forces, or are further reductions in forces and financial support just around the corner? Should they negotiate or wait for the collapse that may come if the US suddenly cuts off assistance? Similar uncertainty will lead many Afghans to fight or govern with one eye to the rear, watching to see what they have to do to protect themselves if we bail out even faster than we now claim will be the case. These considerations, generated by our pacing and the uncertainty of our commitment affect stability and performance.

How US decisions on troops are to be integrated with NATO planning is unclear. We have a double interest in extending the post 2014 NATO mission—Resolute Support—beyond 2016. First, we recognize that the US troops under Embassy control will continue to have an important training mission. It is in our interest that this mission be shared with our NATO allies.

Secondly, we have recognized the need for continued foreign assistance to Afghanistan for some time to come. We want that to be a shared burden. When nations have their troops engaged in a task they are far more likely to maintain financial support than when that is not the case. So keeping an active NATO mission in place after 2016 will strengthen support for and share the burden of stabilizing Afghanistan.

But if keeping NATO is important then we need to decide on how to coordinate that mission with US forces that are to pass under Embassy control. Can this somehow be done by placing troops under State Department control also within a NATO framework? Do we need liaison officers to work between US military under embassy control and those serving in NATO? Or will we end with separate, parallel and probably duplicatory functions? These decisions are political as much as military. They affect confidence levels among allies and mission performance.

What we do know is that many NATO nations are prepared to extend their stay beyond 2016 and think it would be wise to do so. Senior German diplomats have told me explicitly that they would like to maintain their northern base beyond 2016. I believe the Italians would cooperate as well. So would others if there is a NATO decision to remain. But to stay they will need some support from us and that apparently is not decided. It should be.

Of course, extending the NATO mission requires the signature of their status of forces agreement, the NATO SOFA, modeled on the BSA and, similarly apparently ready for signature by the next Afghan president. I am utterly convinced that both documents will be signed. This will happen because both Dr. Ghani and Dr. Abdullah are men with a realistic understanding of what Afghanistan needs for its security. They have said they will sign. I believe this is so. Hence, getting on with our planning for how to keep NATO involved and work with it should be among our priorities.

I would like now to turn to the inter-relationship of force, money, and diplomacy. We often treat these components of power as separate variables but that is a mistake. In the current electoral crisis in Afghanistan we, along with our donor nation partners and the UN Secretary General's Special Representative to Afghanistan are playing an important political role in helping the Afghans work through a political crisis peacefully. The Afghans, particularly Dr. Ghani, Dr. Abdullah and President Karzai deserve credit for this, so different from the way politics are being played out in Iraq.

But so too does our diplomacy, the steady efforts of Ambassador Cunningham, and the dynamic push of Secretary Kerry backed by calls from President Obama. There is a lot of excellent diplomacy being practiced. Yet it is important to see that the diplomacy is under-girded by the

very real threat to reduce fiscal and military aid if the crisis is not resolved. The lesson here is truly important to stability.

We need effective diplomacy. Threats alone ("you work it out or we're going") were not sufficient to resolve the crisis. Force wasn't useful with our own allies. Diplomacy was essential to crisis resolution. Yet, while we are strongly engaged with diplomatic action it is because of the weight of our commitments of military and financial aid that we have real influence to use in brokering a success. Absent the intertwining of money, military support and diplomacy we would not have the successful demonstration of influence you are seeing .

The lesson is clearly illustrated in Iraq. They don't need our money. They don't have our military support. And we have huge difficulty influencing their (disastrous) politics.

The peaceful transition of power on the basis of an election in Afghanistan is one of the strongest signs of democratic progress in the vast region from Pakistan to Russia's western border. But we are not out of the woods. The election has deepened political suspicions. Political parties are weak. Institutions are fragile. Whatever level of political cooperation has been agreed will be carried out with one eye constantly on future political advantage and power politics.

How the resulting political maneuvers are played out will strongly affect the next Afghan president's ability to improve internal governance, a critical issue for future stability, women's advancement, and economic and justice sector development. All these areas are fraught with consequences for stability and for the long-term success of our own nation's interests.

The more stable the government, the more room it will have for professionalizing its military and civilian institutions. The less stable it is, the more the Afghan leadership will look to political balancing among power brokers to remain in power.

We can be sure that there will be other crises. There will be a large, continuing need for careful diplomacy to help the next Afghan president work through these challenges. If, as I believe it is important to us to help and buttress that process in our own interests then we need to recognize that maintaining our aid and our presence are vital to providing the tools with which successful diplomatic outcomes can be built.

Thank you for your attention. I await your questions.

Curriculum vitae: I was a career diplomat for 37 years during which I was US ambassador to Algeria, Bahrain and Afghanistan; the latter from 2005 to 2007. I have made repeated trips back to Afghanistan since. I write and speak on the subject.

Ambassador Ronald E. Neumann

Formerly a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Ronald E. Neumann served three times as Ambassador; to Algeria, Bahrain and finally to Afghanistan from July 2005 to April 2007. Before Afghanistan, Mr. Neumann, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, served in Baghdad from February 2004 with the Coalition Provisional Authority and then as Embassy Baghdad's principal liaison with the Multinational Command, where he was deeply involved in coordinating the political part of military actions.

Prior to working in Iraq, he was Ambassador in Manama, Bahrain (2001-2004). Before that, Ambassador Neumann served as a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Near East Affairs (1997-2000) with responsibility for North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Before that assignment, he was Ambassador to Algeria (1994 to 1997) and Director of the Office of Northern Gulf Affairs (Iran and Iraq; 1991 to 1994). Earlier in his career, he was Deputy Chief of Mission in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, and in Sanaa in Yemen, Principal Officer in Tabriz, Iran and Economic/Commercial Officer in Dakar, Senegal. His previous Washington assignments include service as Jordan Desk officer, Staff Assistant in the Middle East (NEA) Bureau, and Political Officer in the Office of Southern European Affairs.

Ambassador Neumann is the author of The Other War: Winning and Losing in Afghanistan (Potomac Press, 2009), a book on his time in Afghanistan. He has returned to Afghanistan repeatedly and is the author of a number of monographs, articles, and editorials. His writings have focused most heavily on Afghanistan, stabilization, and Bahrain. At the Academy he has focused particularly on efforts to expand State and USAID personnel and upgrade their professional formation to enable these institutions to carry out their responsibilities. Ambassador Neumann is on the Advisory Committee of two non-profits working in Afghanistan; the Global Partnership for Afghanistan (GPFA) and for the School of Leadership, Afghanistan (SOLA).

Ambassador Neumann speaks some Arabic and Dari as well as French. He received State Department Superior Honor Awards in 1993 and 1990. He was an Army infantry officer in Viet Nam and holds a Bronze Star, Army Commendation Medal and Combat Infantry Badge. In Baghdad, he was awarded the Army Outstanding Civilian Service Medal. He earned a B.A. in history and an M.A. in political science from the University of California at Riverside. He is married to the former M. Elaine Grimm. They have two children.

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Witness name: **Ronald E. Neumann**

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

__X_Individual

___Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the company, association or other entity being represented: N/A

FISCAL YEAR 2014

federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
1	Scitor Inc. (prime contractor)	5,333.00	Consulting

FISCAL YEAR 2013

federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
1	Scitor Inc. (prime contractor)	6,500.00	Consulting

FISCAL YEAR 2012

Federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
1	Scitor (prime contractor)	3,750.00	consulting

Federal Contract Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) with the federal government, please provide the following information: No entity represented.

Number of contracts (including subcontracts) with the federal government:

Current fiscal year (2014):_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

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No grants.

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Fiscal year 2012:_____.

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Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

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