

The report, if you look at it, has a slightly different cast. In his report, General McChrystal identified “two fundamental changes”—that is his quote—“two fundamental changes” that are required.

One is this—and I quote—

ISAF must focus on getting the basics right.

ISAF is International Security Assistance Force. It is the international force that America leads in Afghanistan. Here is one: “ISAF must focus on getting the basics right.”

Two:

ISAF must also adopt a new strategy.

Those are his one and two points—“getting the basics right” and “adopt a new strategy.”

To continue quoting General McChrystal’s report:

The key take away from this assessment is the major need for a systematic change to our strategy and the way we think and operate.

Let me quote that again:

The key—

This is the McChrystal report quoted verbatim—

The key take away from this assessment is the major need for a systematic change to our strategy and the way we think and operate.

That is the task on which the President has embarked, and after years of muddling, I think he is entitled to a reasonable time to get it right.

I would like to highlight three of the areas that General McChrystal emphasized in his report.

I will quote again. One:

Four lengths should be long enough to build continuity and ownership of success.

Afghan society is deeply complex, personal, and it is governed by codes of conduct and honor. Our decisionmakers on the ground need to know the social terrain to be effective. That message has been loud and clear from my trips to that country. But the conclusion from the general is that “Four lengths should be long enough to build continuity and ownership of success.” This will be hard on our troops and their families, and it will also be hard on the back-office bureaucracies that have to accommodate this. But that is what he said. There it is.

This is another quote. Two:

ISAF must operate differently. Preoccupied with force protection, ISAF has operated in a manner that distances itself, both physically and psychologically, from the people they seek to protect.

An example of this is that the reconstruction of a bridge or a school is good and important and valuable, but if the convoy of MRAPs ran everybody off the road in all the villages that they went through on the way to that school or bridge, the signal that we are there to help is lost.

This is a hard point that General McChrystal has made: reducing the cocoon of force protection around our civilian and military personnel creates greater exposure to casualties. General

McChrystal has faced this point squarely.

Third, and somewhat amazingly—I will quote again—

Major insurgent groups outperform GIROA and ISAF at information operations.

Again, ISAF is the International Security Assistance Force. GIROA is the acronym for the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. So I plug that into the quote and it says: Major insurgent groups outperform the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the International Security Assistance Force at information operations.

I will tell you, for a country that invented Madison Avenue advertising and public relations, this is a bitter pill. And this was confirmed during our trip. Although we saw a few areas that gave us hope, overall, officials acknowledged that information operations appear to be operating with far less sophistication and energy than tactical military operations.

I have the impression that for too long this function has been seen really as information supply rather than information combat. Everybody in this Chamber has gotten here—or at least almost everybody has gotten here—after having won an election in which they had to engage in prolonged information combat against the other side to get their message across. Our information operations do need to be improved in Afghanistan, and it is commendable that General McChrystal has recognized it.

Let me be clear. This is not propaganda. This is not making up a lot of spin. This is getting the facts out faster and better. As General McChrystal noted in his report—and I quote again—“this is ‘a deeds-based’ information environment,” but we do have the deeds. We have villages peaceful. We have markets opened. We have Taliban fighters turning in their guns to seek reconciliation.

We have, on the negative side, horrific Taliban atrocities that offend Afghan culture as well as our own—so that we can tell a winning and truthful story to the Afghan people, but, as General McChrystal has acknowledged, we have to get better at this.

I will conclude with an expression of gratitude and a final observation. We should be extraordinarily grateful to our Americans serving in Afghanistan, not just for their courage and sacrifice, which are remarkable in themselves, but also for their skill to fight an enemy of lunatics, criminals, and fanatics for whom no brutality is too offensive, while, at the same time, protecting the civilian population within which the enemy operates—all while protecting the values we Americans hold dear. That is no small trick.

The men and women who have developed this to an unprecedented level of competence—even mastery—deserve our commendation: the Rangers, on long and arduous patrols through harsh terrain; the special operations teams,

working by night to disable enemy leaders; the interrogators, working far from home to develop intelligence about this enemy, well within the bounds of decency and the norms of military conduct, and very successfully; the analysts, at work 24/7, processing that intelligence to maintain nearly immediate situational awareness for our forces; the pilots, delivering goods and personnel wherever and whenever required; and the vast support structure that keeps those aircraft operational in one of the harshest environments on Earth; the marines, clearing and rebuilding villages in Helmand Province, not just rebuilding villages but rebuilding trust and security for those families; our silent services, whose only reward is their success and the respect of their peers; the reconstruction teams, working to bridge barriers of culture and language, and our own bureaucratic barriers, to rebuild the infrastructure of civilized life: schools for girls, roads to market—that is all just a slice of the courage, devotion, and skill that Americans are bringing to this challenge.

My final observation is this: Whenever I have been on three visits now, American soldiers of all ranks have a tangible respect and affection for their Afghan counterparts. The Afghan soldier could be centuries behind us technologically, but he comes from a martial tradition lasting thousands of years, producing men who are brave, resourceful, hardy, principled, and willing to fight.

I remember a bearded special forces officer telling me about the commandoes he was training, that when he went out on patrol with them, he had no hesitation. They called each other brothers. And he said there was not a man in his group who would not lay down his life to protect him. For all the difficulties we will face—and this is not easy—I think this aspect provides a platform for some optimism about growing an effective Afghan national military and police to assume its necessary role protecting Afghanistan’s security and sovereignty and speeding our return home.

I thank the Presiding Officer. I yield the floor, and I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ENGAGEMENT WITH BURMA AND
THE 2010 ELECTIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today on the floor of the Senate to discuss events involving the troubled country of Burma.

Earlier this year, I encouraged Secretary of State Clinton to make Burma a priority and to see how the United States could better achieve its policy objectives toward the regime. Several weeks ago, the administration unveiled its review of existing Burma policy. The result is that the administration has undertaken a diplomatic effort with the State Peace and Development Council, SPDC, in pursuit of the fundamental U.S. goals of peace, democracy and reconciliation in Burma.

Let me say that I wish the administration well with its diplomatic efforts. I am hopeful this policy will meet with some success. In addition, I believe that this interaction should not be limited to talks merely with the SPDC but should also include discussions with the National League for Democracy, NLD, and representatives from Burma's ethnic minorities. That said, I am not sanguine about the prospects for engagement with the regime. The military junta has shown no inclination whatsoever to compromise on any issue that might jeopardize the regime's hold on power. According to news reports, in July of this year, just weeks before the unveiling of the new Burma policy, the State Department at the highest levels offered to drop the U.S. investment ban against Burma if the regime released Aung San Suu Kyi. This was a major test of how the regime would respond to diplomatic engagement, providing a golden opportunity for the SPDC to demonstrate that it had indeed changed its spots. Instead of accepting this offer and freeing Suu Kyi, the regime promptly sentenced her to an additional 18 months of imprisonment. That does not augur well for diplomatic engagement.

As part of its new strategy, the administration indicated that, while it will place a high priority on diplomatic engagement, it will maintain the economic sanctions in place against the regime. It seems to me that, as matters now stand, there are three significant tests of whether or not the junta's relationship with the United States has improved to the degree that we should even consider moving away from a policy of sanctions: No. 1, the release of all political prisoners, including Suu Kyi; No. 2, the free and fair conduct of the 2010 elections; and No. 3, Burma's compliance with its international obligations to end any prohibited military or proliferation related cooperation with North Korea. Short of tangible and concrete progress in these areas, the removal of sanctions seems to make little sense. It is after all the most significant leverage our government has over the SPDC. Sanctions make clear that the military junta has not achieved legitimacy in the eyes of the West.

It is that search for international legitimacy that has apparently driven the SPDC to hold elections next year. But the 2010 elections are fraught with problems. As a preliminary matter, for these elections to be meaningful, the new "constitution" should be amended to provide for truly open electoral competition and democratic governance. As it stands now under the junta's charter, if Suu Kyi's party the NLD won 100 percent of the contestable parliamentary seats in next year's election it would still not control the key government ministries: Defence and Home Affairs. No matter what they will remain firmly under military control. Moreover, the NLD cannot amend the constitution to improve the charter because the military is guaranteed a quarter of the parliament's seats. That means the junta can block any constitutional change. Finally, Suu Kyi may not even hold a position in the government; she is excluded from office by the charter. I would say to my Senate colleagues, this is hardly a prescription for democratic governance.

But putting the flaws in the constitution to one side, there would need to be a profound change in the political environment in Burma for next year's elections to be meaningful. For example, candidates would need to be permitted to freely speak, assemble, and organize. So far as I can tell, none of that has occurred. There would also need to be international election monitors allowed in the country well in advance of election day. This was not permitted during the 2008 "referendum." Simply holding an election is not enough; the elections must pass muster.

With respect to next year's balloting, the NLD, the clear winner of the 1990 elections which the regime abrogated, faces a Hobson's choice. It can either participate in the elections which are almost certain to be unfair and thereby legitimize the flawed constitution or boycott the elections and be treated as a member of an unlawful organization. Participation means casting aside its 1990 victory; nonparticipation means becoming outlaws. I am likely to support the NLD in whatever decision the party makes in this regard though I am not blind to the profound dilemma it faces.

I would just close by paying special tribute to Aung San Suu Kyi. Her grace and courage are an inspiration not only to the people of Burma but to us all. Her imprisonment is a reminder of the paramount importance of the need for freedom and justice in her homeland. I want her to know that I stand with her in her efforts to bring freedom and reconciliation to the people of Burma.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO DR. PAIGE BAKER

• Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, today I pay tribute to Dr. Paige Baker, super-

intendent of Badlands National Park. Dr. Baker is retiring from the National Park Service at the end of this year, and his leadership at the park will be greatly missed. I have enjoyed working with Dr. Baker in his capacity as superintendent and want to take this opportunity to recognize his dedication to public service.

Dr. Baker grew up on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation in western North Dakota. Education has been a strong theme throughout his life, and his commitment to educating others is evident in his work at the Badlands. He attended college at the University of Mary in Bismarck and went on to earn both his master's and doctorate in education administration at Pennsylvania State University. Prior to joining the National Park Service, he worked at several universities and for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In 2004, he became superintendent of the Casa Grande Ruins National Monument in Arizona. In late 2005, Dr. Baker came to southwestern South Dakota to serve as superintendent of the Badlands National Park. The Baker family has been kind to the National Park Service and South Dakota; his brother Gerard Baker serves as superintendent of Mount Rushmore National Memorial.

At the Badlands, Dr. Baker has overseen the management of a unique and treasured landscape visited by more than a million people each year. Badlands National Park encompasses 244,000 acres of some of the most spectacular scenery in the world. The Badlands formations contain rich geology and paleontological resources, and the mixed-grass prairie within the park offers visitors from around the world the chance to view bison, bighorn sheep, and other wildlife. Dr. Baker's charismatic and respected leadership has no doubt had a positive impact on the experience of each visitor to the park.

The Badlands also have strong historical and spiritual significance to the Lakota people. Dr. Baker has expanded visitors' understanding of the Badlands through interpretation programs that recognize the cultural significance of the area. Among his most significant contributions, Dr. Baker has helped to improve relationships with tribes and bridge cultural divides. He has brought Native and non-Native students to the Badlands to learn from one another and find common ground. He has also fostered greater communication with tribes, particularly with regard to the South Unit of the Badlands that is currently comanaged with the Oglala Sioux Tribe. Dr. Baker has brought a level of understanding and respect to these multi-faceted issues that deserves recognition.

In closing, I thank Dr. Baker for his service at Badlands National Park and wish him all the best in his retirement. Dr. Baker's work at the Badlands will leave a lasting legacy, and I congratulate him on his accomplishments. •