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VOICE OF VETERANS OF THE AFGHAN WAR

HEARING

BEFORE THE

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UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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CONTENTS

VOICE OF VETERANS OF THE AFGHAN WAR

THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 2009

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:18 a.m., in room SD–419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John F. Kerry (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Kerry, Feingold, Cardin, Shaheen, Kaufman, Lugar, and Corker.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN F. KERRY, U.S. SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS

The CHAIRMAN. This hearing will come to order. Delighted to welcome our witnesses and my colleagues to this important hearing.

Earlier this week, I was invited by a group of Harvard Business School about-to-be graduates and first-year students, but all of whom are veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. And I was struck by what a smart and accomplished, capable, as we used to say, squared-away group of young people I was talking to, with strong opinions, strong views about policies, about life. And they had earned it. And it underscored my personal belief about the degree to which military service instills strong leadership skills.

What also struck me was the fact that we are living the lessons learned over the past 40 years about how we regard veterans. We're all standing on common ground now. We're saying thank you to the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines who have served. We are not confusing a war with the warriors. And I want to thank each and every one of you for your service to our country and for those who are still serving.

Today, we want to hear your views of the conflict in Afghanistan. We are, as you all know, just completing a review. We're going through a process of trying to fine-tune this policy, if it is fine-tunable. And that's something we need to examine. We want to understand the challenges from the perspective of the men and women who have been fighting there, risking their lives, and suffering the losses that come with war.

We want you to help us understand the definition of what is achievable, and perhaps even help us to define the notion of success and victory. We want to honor your service and demonstrate our appreciation for the sacrifices that you and other families have made.

History proves that soldiers on the ground have an intimate knowledge that is vital to their commanders and to us, as policymakers. Most recently, it was soldiers who sounded the early warnings that our mission in Iraq had some problems. It was soldiers in Anbar province who saw the major political opportunity to reconcile with the sheikhs, because they found that on their patrols and in their dealings and interactions on a firsthand basis. Soldiers know the challenges, up close and personal, and we're eager to hear and to learn from the insights of this generation of young warriors who have served with honor and professionalism in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

I made a promise to myself long ago that I would not compare all conflicts to the Vietnam war. And that sort of analogy by history can be very unproductive. More importantly, it can divert us from developing the right policy for a current conflict.

What we need to do, and the reason the witnesses are here today, is address the intricacies and nuances of Afghanistan from every angle. That does not mean, however, that there aren't some parallels between wars. Once again we are fighting an insurgency in a rural country with a weak central government. Our enemy blends in with the local population and easily crosses a long border to find sanctuary in a neighboring country. Our efforts to win the loyalty of the locals are hampered by civilian casualties and an inability to deliver the security that we promised more than 7 years ago. We ignore those similarities at our peril.

There are also fundamental differences. We have a responsibility to the men and women fighting in Afghanistan to understand those differences and to adapt to them. First and foremost, North Vietnamese never posed a direct threat to our country. The extremists we are fighting today, however, in Afghanistan and across the border in Pakistan, do represent, and have, in fact, implemented, a direct threat to the security of the United States. They planned the attacks on New York and Washington that killed 3,000 Americans. They have killed hundreds of other innocents in terrorist attacks worldwide since then, and they are preparing new attacks on the United States and our interests even as we sit here today.

Our original goal in Afghanistan was to go after those individuals. We were determined to capture or kill Osama bin Laden and eliminate al-Qaeda's base of operations so that they could never again attack the United States. Our attention strayed from that goal, and our enemies took advantage of our mistakes. Now the Obama administration is attempting to redefine and narrow the mission, embracing objectives closer to those original goals. We are bolstering the American forces in Afghanistan to protect the citizens and to train the Afghan police and army.

We recognize that no solution is possible without a strong alliance with Pakistan. In some ways, Pakistan represents an even greater threat today, so we will increase aid to Pakistan and support its democratic government. But, obviously we've seen, in recent days, the challenges to that government are growing. And, in the end, the fight there is not ours to determine the outcome; it is theirs. The Pakistanis have to determine how deeply they are committed to their own government; their own country.

We are no longer offering either country a blank check. We will set strict standards for measuring progress against al-Qaeda and the Taliban, and we will do our best to see that they are met.

So, let me be clear, there is much still to be done in Afghanistan and Pakistan. But, our new focus creates a sense of determined optimism for us and for our coalition allies, though—and that is part of the purpose today—that strategy has to be put to the test. And we look forward to your evaluations. Better defined objectives should lead to a better battle plan for our troops, but this remains an immensely complicated task, one that leaves our troops simultaneously on the front lines of the struggle against extremists and in the absolute middle of nowhere.

Sitting on a mountain ledge in a helicopter during a snowstorm in Afghanistan last year with then-Senator Biden and Senator Hagel drove that home to all three of us. We are asking our young men and women to be warriors at one moment, but then mayors, dispute/conflict-resolution experts, anthropologists, and builders, and then warriors again. You and your colleagues have carried out these difficult and contradictory tasks with remarkable competence and courage, and our job this morning is to listen and learn from your perspective.

Senator Lugar.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD G. LUGAR, U.S. SENATOR FROM INDIANA

Senator LUGAR. Well, I join you, Mr. Chairman, in welcoming this distinguished panel of members of the armed services who have served our country in combat.

As President Obama launches a new initiative in Afghanistan and the Congress prepares to consider his request for funding operations in the region, it's important that we hear from many different perspectives about the way forward.

I've benefited enormously from talking to many Hoosiers who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001, both in the regular military and as members of the National Guard and Reserves.

Since September 11, 2001, 13,000 Hoosier National Guard personnel have been deployed in defense of our country. Currently, more than 100 Guardsmen from Indiana are mobilized in Afghanistan alone. Some 20 Hoosiers have lost their lives in that conflict.

President Obama has elevated the priority of the Afghanistan mission, and the September 11 attacks were planned in Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda still operates there. The fate of the country remains both strategic and symbolic.

As the Obama administration devotes more resources and troops to Afghanistan, however, many details need to be fleshed out. Eyewitness accounts of battlefield conditions may be very valuable in evaluating the administration's plans. Equally important are insights about the views and capabilities of the Afghan people, who ultimately will have to rebuild their country and provide for political stability.

I think that Americans across the political spectrum agree that the situation in Afghanistan cannot be solved by military means alone. Multiple reviews of our policy have concluded that up to 80 percent of the activities necessary in post-conflict and counterinsur-

gency situations are civilian tasks. Success in Afghanistan may depend on the attitudes of the people, progress of reconstruction, the development of the economy, as much as it depends on battlefield victories. In the end, sustainable peace and progress is dependent upon Afghan determination to achieve for themselves a cohesive society.

I look forward to hearing the testimony of our honored witnesses, and I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for calling this hearing.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you so much, Senator Lugar.

Let us turn now to our witnesses. And again, let me say how much we appreciate your willingness to come here and share your experiences and your insights. Some of you have come a long way; in the case of Rick Reyes, you've come all the way from Los Angeles, and we appreciate that.

The first person to testify will be Genevieve Chase, a staff sergeant in the U.S. Army Reserve, who spent 3 years on Active Duty and received a Purple Heart in Afghanistan. Following Ms. Chase will be Rick Reyes, a former corporal in the Marine Corps, who was one of the first American soldiers into Afghanistan in October 2001, and he also served in Iraq. Mr. Reyes will be followed by Chris McGurk, whose 10 years of service in the Army included tours in Afghanistan and Iraq, and earned him two Bronze Stars and the Combat Infantryman Medal. And Wes Moore is a former paratrooper and Army captain, who served as an information and special operations officer with the 82d Airborne in Afghanistan, and he will round out the veterans of Afghanistan who will testify.

Then, finally, we will hear from one of my constituents, a distinguished student of conflict and war and of the region, and a professor. He is Andrew Bacevich. Andrew is a professor at Boston University. He's a prolific writer on war and issues of foreign policy. He is also a veteran of Vietnam, himself. And I should add that his son, Andrew, gave his life for our country in service in Iraq in 2007.

So, we are deeply grateful for all of you being here today. Thank you.

Genevieve.

STATEMENT OF GENEVIEVE CHASE, VETERAN, STAFF SERGEANT, U.S. ARMY RESERVE, RECIPIENT OF THE PURPLE HEART, AMERICAN WOMEN VETERANS, ALEXANDRIA, VA

Sergeant CHASE. Senator Kerry, Ranking Member Lugar, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share with you my testimony.

My name is Genevieve Chase, and I served with the U.S. Army in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom in 2006 as a Pashto-language-trained soldier. During my 40 weeks of cultural and language training, our teacher made it very clear to us what his hopes and goals were for his students; namely, that we utilize our knowledge and skills for the good of the Afghan people.

Afghans remember their history well, and have not forgotten that we left their country without any foundation following the defeat of the Soviet Army. The Afghans fully believe we, the Americans, will do it again.

It is not too difficult to ascertain why, despite our intentions and efforts, fiercely nationalistic Afghans continue to believe that we are an occupying force. We went boldly in their country, planned and carried out our operations, and then retreated to the safety of our fortified and guarded compounds before sundown.

Along with our coalition partners, we threw billions of dollars at civil affairs and reconstruction projects that we thought would win the "hearts and minds" of the Afghans while we empowered a local government in which many local Afghans believed contained nepotistic and corrupt officials.

With the help of these same embezzling officials, we supported, and continue to support, the eradication of their rival tribe's poppies while failing to provide alternative crops to the poorest of farmers. We forced the farmers and drug lords to align with the Taliban and al-Qaeda in order to protect their livelihoods while we surged in and out of volatile areas. We continue to make hollow promises and put those that would assist us, at risk of death by the hands of the enemy, for the very act of agreeing to work with us. We provide them with little, if any, security against those that would oppress them.

The best of the Afghan village elders and leaders have three choices. One, voice and defend the interests of their constituents and face beheading or worse. Two, flee their homes and country in order to live and protect their families. Or, three, play to the interests of whomever is in their village at the moment, hoping to play both sides and not be killed by either.

I will never forget speaking to a respected village elder, one of the few we trusted in the remote area of Helmand province, who felt that there was nothing more he could do to save his people but make the dangerous trip from the mountains, under the fear of Taliban reprisal, to appeal to the Americans and ask for assistance in pushing the Taliban out from his village. He left our Provincial Reconstruction Team, defeated and without hope.

How do we create the stability that will allow for legitimate elders and leaders to govern without fear? The answer to this question lies in yet another: What have we done wrong, and what lessons have we learned from our mistakes? Just as Lieutenant Backsight Forethought in the classic military text, "The Defence of Duffer's Drift," had seven dreams in which he was able to analyze each tactical battle, we have had 8 years in which to do the same.

Unfortunately, due to the strains on our forces, we not only rotate out divisions and brigades, but we piecemeal units that have not trained together and have little to no operational experience in the Afghan theater. Most significantly, in a culture where a man's trust and respect is earned with time, loyalty, and devotion to the cause, we rotate out units every 6 to 12 months. We then ask our Afghan counterparts to give the same hard-won trust we earned and nurtured over time, to perfect strangers.

With each rotation, just as Lieutenant Forethought did with his reoccurring dreams, we have had to start from the beginning to build and cultivate those working relationships again, but not always with the same amount of background experience and knowledge of the complexities and intricacies of the Afghan culture.

The question is not whether an influx of troops will be effective or seen as an occupation, but how do we effectively utilize those additional troops? The way in which we do so will cultivate how the Afghans perceive our intentions. The concept of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams was altruistic, but their application has been hindered by a number of issues, all secondary to the lack of security.

Why build schools, provincial centers, bridges, and wells when there is no support or security provided for the villagers to utilize them? They become little else but targets for the opposition.

My first recommendation is that we push our troops out to an even more local level. Rather than Provincial Reconstruction Teams, we establish District Security and Reconstruction Teams (DSRT) within and among the villages, working in conjunction with village elders. These DSRTs would provide a safe haven for the people, rather than the enemy, and in turn, Afghans would maximize the information operations campaign through the development and sustainment of progressive and prosperous communities.

In order to do this, we start as we did in 2001, supporting the Afghans with centralized strategic victories, then spreading out from there while maintaining our ground and assisting the Afghans in providing their own security by living and serving among them.

Second, we allow individual troops to extend their tours, if requested, so that we may apply expertise and continuity to rotating troops. At the very least, we rotate out cohesive divisions and brigades within, not only the same theater, but the same area of operations.

Furthermore, we cultivate our own organic assets to include our linguists, analysts, and soldiers with Afghanistan, asymmetric, and/or counterinsurgency experience, and engage them in a focused and concentrated force, armed not just with weapons and ammunition, but the power of knowledge, experience, and wisdom.

Third, we support the Afghans in rooting our corruption and establishing secure and stable environments for which they can regain the pride they have for their country rather than supporting corrupt officials as they work their own agendas and line their own pockets. We should encourage our coalition partners to purchase poppy yields, giving the money directly to the farmers rather than to corrupt district government officials, while providing alternative crops to grow and safe markets in which to facilitate commerce.

These thoughts are just the beginning of what must a multifaceted and enduring effort on the behalf of all involved. As I stated previously, Afghanistan's diversity in culture and geography demand that we embrace a comprehensive and intimate understanding of the nation's issues. Broad and generalized tactics, as we have applied in the past, will not work in every village of Afghanistan. Cultivating our homegrown experts by allowing them to provide continuity and confluence of operations through their learned knowledge, and, moreover, in-depth network of interpersonal relationships, are tantamount to mutual respect and eventual success.

Just as the enemy has adapted to our tactics, we must get away from the big-army mentality and do the same. In time and within

an environment in which schools will not be burned and bridges blown up, the Afghans will have safe access to employment and education. When this happens, we will begin to see the possibilities of a country free from radical and rampant extremism, where adults will be able to provide for their children, and their children will be free to attend schools.

One day, this generation of children in Afghanistan will be better prepared to take the reins of their country from their parents, and will grow with the memory of war rather than the daily reality of it.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify here before the committee today, and look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Sergeant Chase follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GENEVIEVE CHASE, STAFF SERGEANT, U.S. ARMY RESERVE, RECIPIENT OF THE PURPLE HEART, AMERICAN WOMEN VETERANS, ALEXANDRIA, VA

Senator Kerry, Ranking Member Lugar, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share with you my testimony. My name is Genevieve Chase and I served with the U.S. Army in Afghanistan during Combined Joint Task Force–76, Operation Enduring Freedom, 2006. I deployed as a member of a military intelligence team and was trained in the Pashto language. Forty weeks of Pashto language training was not merely about learning the language but involved gaining an understanding of the history, culture, and the people of Afghanistan. Our teacher made it very clear to us what his hopes and goals were for his students; namely that we would utilize our knowledge and skills for the good of the Afghan people. He believed in the mission that we had set out to accomplish in Afghanistan and he hoped for a peace in his former homeland. He not only taught us language and history, he provided a window into the heart of one Afghan man. Afghans remember their history well and have not forgotten that we left their country without any foundation in which to rebuild their devastated land following the defeat of the Soviet Army. When I had the unique opportunity to speak with the Afghans in their language, they were grave in telling me that we, the Americans, would do it again.

I had great hopes when I left for Afghanistan, some of which were entrusted to me by my Afghan teacher. Of these was the possibility that one day I would see the children of Afghanistan live without knowing suffering, fear, and death. What I saw, heard, and felt when I got there was a palpable desperation of a people living in abject poverty and indescribable fear. I returned home with memories that will haunt my dreams for a lifetime and with the harsh and sobering realization that to the Afghan people and their children, my nightmares are their daily reality. It is because of my unwavering hope for the Afghan people that I feel compelled to ask some very important questions of the leaders in my country, questions that were asked of me, an American soldier, by the Afghans with which I had the honor to serve with.

If we say that we are there to help the Afghans and we want them to believe us, why do we not truly listen to them? Afghan culture is by far one of the most complex that I have ever been exposed to. Understanding it requires more than a 45-minute briefing from someone who may have read about it. Even a 40-week, full-time language course taught by a native Afghan is not going to give one a comprehensive understanding of what it means to work among and with Afghans, especially when considering the vast differences in tribal cultures. In my opinion, this is one area in which I believe that we have wavered in our commitment to the Afghans and to the future of their country. In so doing, we have also failed every American and coalition soldier that has given his/her life in Operation Enduring Freedom. By not honoring the Afghan culture and acknowledging their history, we have not only failed in laying the foundations for a secure and stable environment but we have failed in building sustainable economic growth, both ideal end-states necessary so that we may bring all of our troops home. In nearly 8 years of this conflict, we have failed to fully assess and evaluate the culture of the Afghans which will prevent us from winning this conflict.

It is not too difficult to ascertain why, despite our intentions and efforts, that some Afghans continue to believe that we are an "occupying force." We went boldly into their country, planned and carried out our operations and then retreated to the safety of our fortified and guarded compounds before sundown. The very basics of

all human needs, according to unadulterated common sense and supported by the theory of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, consists of the physiological needs that all humans must fulfill in order to survive: Food, water, and shelter. On the next level exists the need for security and community, a sense of safety. A society cannot flourish without those basic foundations with which to build structural supports that encourage the growth of a stable and viable economy. Along with our coalition partners, we threw billions of dollars at civil affairs and reconstruction projects that we thought would win their "hearts and minds" while we empowered, supported, and protected a government in which many local Afghans believed contained nepotistic officials and corrupt provincial governments. With the help of these same embezzling officials we supported and continue to support the eradication of their rival tribe's poppies while failing to provide alternative crops to the poorest farmers.

We forced the farmers and "drug lords" to align with the Taliban and al-Qaeda in order to protect their livelihoods while we surge in and out of volatile areas. We have continued in making promises, asking and sometimes demanding cooperation only to leave those that would assist us to the fate of death by the hands of the enemy for the very act of agreeing to work with us.

The best of the Afghan village elders and leaders have three choices:

1. Voice and defend the interests of their constituents but face beheading or worse;
2. Flee their homes and country in order to live and protect their families; or
3. Play to the interests of whomever is in their town at the moment hoping to play both sides and not be killed by either.

I am not speculating about what may occur in Afghanistan; these assessments are based on my firsthand observations and those of my comrades. I will never forget speaking to a respected village elder, one of the few we trusted in the remote area of Helmand province, who felt that there was nothing more he could do to save his people but make the dangerous trip from the mountains under fear of Taliban reprisal, to appeal to the Americans and ask for assistance in pushing the Taliban out from his village. However, he left our Provincial Reconstruction Team defeated and without hope.

How do we create this stability that will allow for legitimate elders and leaders to govern without fear? The answer to this question lies in yet another, "What have we done wrong and what lessons have we learned from our mistakes?" Just as LT Backsight Forethought, in the classic military text—"The Defense of Duffer's Drift" had seven dreams in which he was able to analyze each tactical battle, we have had 8 years in which to do the same. Currently, we not only rotate out units but divisions and brigades. In Vietnam, we rotated in smaller replacement troops which at least gave a bit more continuity to the battlefield. Unfortunately, due to the strains on our forces, we piecemeal units that have not trained together and have little to no operational experience in the Afghan theater but most significantly, in a culture where a man's trust and respect is earned with time, loyalty, and a devotion to the cause, we rotate out units every 6 to 12 months. We ask our Afghan comrades and leaders to place the same trust in perfect strangers, that we spend priceless time earning. With each rotation, just as Lieutenant Forethought did with his reoccurring dreams, we have had to start from the beginning to build and cultivate those working relationships again.

In addition, we put ourselves at a serious disadvantage when we send trained Pashto, Dari, and Farsi linguists to units going to Arabic speaking Iraq or put them into nondeploying units in Germany or Korea. These are our linguistic experts—they should deploy to their respective theaters. Likewise, we often send troops with two previous tours in one area of operations in which they are "subject matter experts" to work in areas of the world with which they are unfamiliar, and thus we lose not only their mentorship and training for junior soldiers, but their relevant and pertinent knowledge of the enemy.

The question is not whether an influx of troops will be effective or be seen as an "occupation" but how do we effectively utilize those additional troops. The way in which we do so will cultivate how the Afghans perceive our intentions. Adding another 17,000 boots on the ground or even doubling that number has the potential to be as one fellow comrade put it, "like applying a Band-Aid to a sucking chest wound." It is not how many more troops we add, but how we utilize those troops effectively. Afghanistan's population of over 33 million is dispersed throughout the country with concentrated areas in which International Security Assistance Forces and coalition troops hold large bases. In the more remote areas, we have established small Forward Operating Bases and even smaller Provincial Reconstruction Team compounds and firebases. Although the concept of the PRTs was altruistic, their ap-

plication has been hindered by a number of issues, all secondary to the lack of security. What good sense does it make to build schools, provincial centers, bridges and wells when there is no support or security provided for villagers to utilize them?

My first recommendations are that we push our troops out to an even more local level. Rather than Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT), we establish, at the minimum, District Security and Reconstruction Teams (DSRT) within and among the villages, working in conjunction with the village elders. These DSRTs would provide a safe haven for the people rather than the enemy and in turn, Afghans would maximize the information operations campaigns through the development of progressive and prosperous communities. In order to do this, we start as we did in 2001, supporting the Afghans with small, strategic victories and from there spread out while maintaining our ground and assisting the Afghans in providing their own security by living and serving alongside them.

Second, we allow individual troops and units to extend their tours if requested so that we may apply expertise and continuity to rotating troops. At the very least, we rotate out cohesive divisions and brigades within not only the same theater, but the same area of operations. Furthermore, we cultivate our own organic assets to include our linguists, analysts, and soldiers with Afghanistan, asymmetric and/or counterinsurgency experience and engage them in a focused and concentrated force armed not just with weapons and ammunition, but the power of knowledge, experience, and wisdom.

Third, we support the Afghans in rooting out corruption and establishing secure and stable environments for which they can regain the pride they have for their country rather than supporting corrupt officials as they work their own agendas and line their own pockets. We should encourage our coalition partners to purchase poppy yields giving the money directly to the farmers rather than to corrupt district and government officials, while providing alternative crops to grow and safe markets in which to facilitate commerce.

These are not all of the answers but merely an evaluation of how we can leverage our assets, experiences, and capabilities in the theater. These thoughts are just the beginning of what must be a multifaceted and enduring effort on the behalf of all involved. As I stated previously, Afghanistan's diversity in culture and geography demand that we embrace a comprehensive and intimate understanding of the nation's issues. Broad and generalized tactics as we have applied in the past will not work in every corner of Afghanistan. Cultivating our "homegrown experts" by allowing them to provide continuity and confluence of operations through their learned knowledge and moreover in depth network of interpersonal relationships are tantamount to mutual trust, respect, and eventual success. In addition, keeping subject matter experts and experienced commanders within the same area of operations while applying a flexible methodology will allow for a more tailored and applicable mission. Just as the enemy has adapted to our tactics, we must get away from the "Big Army" mentality and do the same.

In time and within an environment in which schools will not be burned or bridges blown up, the Afghans will have safe access to employment and education. When this happens, we will begin to see the possibilities of a country free from radical and rampant extremism where adults will be able to provide for their children and their children will be free to attend schools. One day, this generation of children in Afghanistan will be better prepared to take the reigns of their country from their parents and will grow with the memory of war rather than the daily reality of it and they will carry within themselves the hope for enduring prosperity and peace for the future of Afghanistan.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify here before the committee today and look forward to your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you so much for your thoughtful testimony.

Next is Rick.

STATEMENT OF RICK REYES, CORPORAL, U.S. MARINES (RET.), LOS ANGELES, CA

Corporal REYES. First off, I want to thank Senator Kerry for giving me the inspiration of being here today. I sit here, 38 years after you were expressing your opinions on the Vietnam war, and, similarly, want to express my opinions about this occupation.

I also want to thank the members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for having me here.

I also want to say that I love my country, and that is why I'm here today.

My name is Rick Reyes. I am a veteran of both Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. I served with the United States Marine Corps as an infantry rifleman. We took an oath to defend this country, and that doesn't stop when we check in our rifles into the armory. We keep our country safe by telling people the truth. And doing that is just as scary as any ambush or mortar attack.

I come from very humble beginnings. I am a son to both an immigrant father and mother from Mexico. I grew up in East Los Angeles in one of the roughest parts of town, known as Boyle Heights. Later, my family moved to southeast Los Angeles to escape the violence, but that wasn't far enough. As a kid, I always envisioned myself of one day fighting for my country and ensuring justice.

Like most of my peers, when I was younger I got involved with the wrong crowd. After escaping a serious tragedy in my life, I knew the Marine Corps could provide me the opportunity to, not only serve my country, but to also straighten out my life by doing something honorable.

On the night of the September 11 attacks, my battalion sat in port in Australia. It was sometime around midnight, and we were enjoying our off time at the local bars, when all of a sudden the music stopped and, over the PR systems, an announcement, heard that the United States was being under attack. We were all ordered to head back and aboard the ships. That night, we were told we were going to war with the Taliban and al-Qaeda forces.

The next morning, we pulled out of port and for the next month, while the administration formulated a plan, we prepared to go to war, with the conviction of fighting for justice and the American way.

Our mission was to locate and capture suspected members of the Taliban and al-Qaeda forces. Through my experience as an infantry rifleman, implemented past and current policy had found almost impossible to locate and capture the Taliban because there isn't any effective way to separate them from the innocent civilian population. Patrols were conducted through populated neighborhoods. The populations on those neighborhood streets weren't any different from the population on my street. There were kids running around and playing while we occupied their streets, mothers running behind after those kids, making sure they stay out of trouble and out of our way, and fathers trying to make a living for the little that they have.

U.S.-hired translators would tell us where suspected Taliban or al-Qaeda would be found. We would follow their lead, often planning attacks and breaking into people's homes. Due to our training in fighting wars and killing enemy, we wouldn't enter these homes or situations quietly, but instead trained to fight with the vigilance of encountering death at every turn.

Although we were on the hunt for suspected Taliban forces, at the end—at the end of it, we found that these dangerous missions

resulted with very poor consequences by destroying innocent lives. We weren't fulfilling our objective of capturing terrorists, but instead creating enemies out of civilians.

As a Marine trying to ensure justice, I began losing sight of why I was there, and the conviction began to fade. Because our mission was to capture suspected Taliban, and had no successful way of being able to distinguish them, we had no other choice but to suspect the entire civilian population, innocent or not.

One day, we stopped at gunpoint, detained, beating and nearly killing an innocent man, only to find out he was just traveling down the road to deliver milk to his children. Because of that, that day those kids went without a father. There were hundreds of incidents like this one. Almost 100 percent of the time, we would find that suspected terrorists turned out to be innocent civilians. We began to feel we were chasing ghosts, fighting an enemy that we could not see or that didn't allow itself to be seen. How can you tell the difference between the Taliban and Afghan civilians? The answer is that you can't. It all stopped making sense.

Later, I found out that these translators were being compensated on the amount of intelligence they were able to provide. So, it was their incentive to provide as much intelligence as possible, without any way to know if the information being provided was false. It was such a flat system, but who was I to question authority?

When I returned home, I felt that occupying Afghanistan and Iraq was a mistake. I strongly feel that the military occupation and intervention is not the answer. If it didn't work back in 2001, when we had all the energy, all our resources, but, most important, a very high troop morale, I asked myself, How could it work now?

A lot of these men and women serving our country in the Armed Forces have been desperately worn and stretched out too thin by having them serve up to four tours overseas. If we aren't killing them on the ground due to a flat policy, we are definitely killing them in spirit, and that is—and that also has a very serious indirect consequence, when the fight is brought back home.

I love my country. I never once, while I—while serving, did I feel I was protecting America. But, instead, we were harboring the worst of sentiments in these foreign Middle Eastern countries. We were creating more enemies.

As a kid, I envisioned myself serving my country and fighting for freedom. But, when the opportunity presented itself, it was stripped from me, and, instead, I was forced to become a tyrant. I have—as I have experienced, our troops are also experiencing a very low morale, which oftentimes translates into high suicide rates.

These are just a few of the issues. There is just a huge array of reasons why, at the minimum, this occupation needs to be rethought. We should not be sending any more troops into Afghanistan. As a combat troop, we are trained to isolate and destroy the enemy, cut off its resources. As an indirect consequence, we impose our Western views and alienate their culture and traditions. In some respects, this entire occupation has become counterproductive. As a Marine, I was willing to give my life for my country, and still am. But, invading and occupying Afghanistan, sending more troops to stop what is a political problem, is not the answer.

I urge the Senators to rethink Afghanistan while there is still time. I can almost guarantee that sending more troops will mean more civilian and U.S. troop casualties, not for war, but for occupation. Sending more troops will not make the U.S. safer, it will only build more opposition against us.

I urge you, on behalf of truth and patriotism, to consider carefully and rethink Afghanistan. More troops, more occupation is not the answer.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Corporal Reyes follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RICK REYES, CORPORAL, U.S. MARINES (RET.), LOS ANGELES, CA

First, I want to begin by thanking the members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for having me here today. Second, I want to say that I love my country and that is why I am here today. My name is Rick Reyes. I was a corporal in the U.S. Marines and served both in Afghanstan and Iraq. I grew up in east Los Angeles, in rough part of town. As a young man like many of my friends at the time, I got involved with gangs. Signing up for the military seemed a logical step for me to help straighten out my life, so I enlisted in the Marines.

On the day of the U.S. attacks, September 11, I was stationed in Australia. That night my fellow marines and I were at the bars. All of a sudden the music stopped and over the PR system we heard the announcement that the U.S. was under attack. We were all ordered to get back on the ship. We were told a couple of days later that we were going to Afghanstan to fight the Taliban. All the marines, including myself were totally ready to fight the enemy.

Our mission was to locate and capture suspected members of Taliban. Missions were all done at night. U.S.-hired translators would tell us where suspect Taliban or al-Qaeda would be found. We would follow their lead, often by breaking into people's homes. Because we were so pumped to find Taliban we would often rough up suspected terrorists. Sometimes we would break their hands, arms, legs, and mess up people's homes scaring women and children. Those missions were very dangerous because at times, family members would shoot us from the back. We lost several marines because they were shot in the back by scared Afghans. At the end, we found out that suspected terrorists were innocent civilians who were protecting their families, their homes—from us. In retrospect, if someone was breaking into my home, I would probably fire at us as well. We began creating enemies out of innocent civilians. I saw how Afghans began hating us. As a marine, I began loosing sight of why I was there.

I remember one day, we stopped an Afghani civilian who was taking milk to his kids because he was suspected of being a terrorist. We beat him to submission to where he dropped his milk. God only knows if that was the first or last time his kids had milk in a long time or if his children were all hungry and waiting for him. Later we released him after finding out he was innocent. That day his kids went without milk—because of us. There were hundreds of incidents like this one. And they all tore at me over time.

Almost 100 percent of the time, we would find that suspected terrorists turned out to be innocent civilians. I started to feel like we were chasing ghosts. How can you tell the difference between members of the Taliban from an Afghan civilian? The answer is that you can't. No one can. As marines, we did not know who was a civilian or a terrorist. It all stopped making sense. We were destroying people's homes and hurting Afghan civilians for no reason. Later I found out that translators were paid on the number of tips they provided, so it was their incentive to give us as many tips as possible, even if they were false. It was such a flawed system. This was not the American way. We were not fighting for justice. This was not the freedom I signed up for.

By the time I left Afghanistan, I felt that the U.S. being there was a big mistake. I joined the military because I wanted to be a hero, and I feel that I was stripped of that opportunity and instead was sent to fight an enemy that we could never see. The entire time we were there, we were chasing ghosts. I feel strongly that military intervention is not the answer. I love my country and never once while serving duty in Afghanistan did I feel that we were protecting America. Instead we were harboring the worst of sentiments in a foreign country, we were creating more enemies. This is why I strongly believe that we should not be sending more troops to Afghanistan.

As a marine, I was willing to give my life for this country; I still am. But invading Afghanistan, sending more troops to solve what is a political problem is not the answer: I urge the senators to rethink Afghanistan while there is still time. I can almost guarantee that sending more troops will mean more civilian and U.S. troop casualties, more homes being broken into, more children without food, more women without husbands. I encourage you to think of the cost of war on their country as well as ours. We have to rethink our mission. Sending more troops will not make the U.S. safer, it will only build more opposition against us. I urge you on behalf of truth and patriotism to consider carefully and rethink Afghanistan. More troops, more war, is not the answer.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Reyes. I appreciate it.

[Applause.]

The CHAIRMAN. Please, everybody.

Mr. McGurk.

STATEMENT OF CHRISTOPHER MCGURK, STAFF SERGEANT, U.S. ARMY (RET.), RECIPIENT OF COMBAT INFANTRYMAN'S BADGE, TWO BRONZE STARS, AND THE PURPLE HEART, NEW YORK, NY

Sergeant MCGURK. I want to thank Chairman Kerry, Senator Lugar, and members of the committee, for inviting me here today and testify on behalf of my fellow veterans. I'm both honored and humbled.

I'd like to say, first and foremost, that I believe, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the United States should renew its commitment to Afghanistan and its people. I believed in this mission in 2004, and I firmly believe in it as I sit here today.

Some pundits will argue that we may no longer be able to achieve any real measure of success in Afghanistan. I say to those critics that we must try and help stabilize a country that has been, for the most part, ignored ever since combat operations began in Iraq in 2003. Our continued inattention to Afghanistan, our drifting foreign policy in the region, and the fact that we have done little to stop the reemergence of the Taliban may very well solidify the resentment that the Afghan people have for the United States and the central Government of Afghanistan.

We have one chance to get this right or face those—a real possibility of more terrorist attacks that rival those of 9/11 on U.S. soil.

I realize that many of the goals that we set forth for ourselves at the onset of the war may no longer be fully achievable, but we must try to stabilize and secure Afghanistan before it slips further into violence. My experience in these matters does not come from writing foreign policy; rather, the firsthand experience I gained while leading men in combat in two different countries and the interactions I had on a daily basis with those people of those countries.

I'd like to illustrate, through personal experience, the two main reasons I believe that we should continue our mission in Afghanistan. These reasons are very different, but they serve to capture the complexity of issues taking place on the ground.

The first reason was an interaction that took place while my platoon was conducting security operations for a Provincial Reconstruction Team. The PTR operated out of a firebase in Gardez, in Paktia province, and helped to build several schools in the areas. They were encouraging many of the local villagers to attend the opening ceremonies of all the different schools. On one particular

mission, my squad was in charge of manning a checkpoint on the main road leading up to one school. The morning went by without incident, and were in the process of getting ready to return to the firebase when a village elder came up to me with a serious expression on his face. I prepared myself for potentially antagonist conversation, but was surprised when he began speaking softly in English.

The conversation I had with him was short, but it was one that I will never forget. The man was a commander in the Mujahadeen and was wounded several times fighting the Russians. He lost both of his brothers to Soviet helicopter gunship raids and walked with a severe limp. He told me that he was worried, at first, when the Americans came to Afghanistan, but soon realized that we were here to help the Afghan people, not exploit them, and he expressed to me that we would not abandon Afghanistan again. He shook my hand and touched his heart out of respect, and was turning to leave, when he stopped, gave me the thumbs-up, and said America was good and just. He then turned and slowly walked away.

I found myself at a loss for words as I stared at him. Here was a man, hardened by fighting the Soviet Army, who seemed to have lost everything in life, and yet had the faith—excuse me—had faith in a country and a people he did not know. He believed in the mission of the United States and the hope it gave to the Afghan people.

This experience also served to compound the anger I felt when the mission in Afghanistan was neglected in favor of the mission in Iraq. Schools like the one built by the PRT stood empty and idle through what seemed to be a lack of funding for teachers, books, and other supplies. I felt as though the true objective of the mission was forgotten, and that the half-completed school was one giant photo opportunity. The commitment to men like the village elder was forgotten, the promise only half fulfilled.

The second and most personal reason took place on September 29, 2003, while my company was stationed at a firebase in Shkin, in Paktia province, right on the Pakistani border. One mission my platoon had been—one afternoon, my platoon had been sent on a mission to reinforce another platoon currently under enemy small-arms and mortar fire. Upon reaching the platoon in contact, my squad dismounted to locate and destroy the enemy mortar tube. As my squad swept through the area, my lead team triggered a violent ambush that turned into a sustained firefight of more than 10 hours in duration. During the firefight, a 19-year-old, PFC Evan O'Neil of Haverhill, MA, was mortally wounded by an enemy sniper while protecting the squad's exposed flank. As a trained EMT, I moved to assist the medic while continuing to direct the fire of my squad.

Upon reaching PFC O'Neill, he said to me, "Sergeant, is the squad OK?" I told him that the squad was hanging in there, and I told him not to worry, that I was going to get him out of there. He then said to me, "I am sorry for letting you down." I told him that he didn't, and to hold on. The last words O'Neill ever spoke were, "I'm sorry for letting you down." He was only 19 years old, yet he understood the mission was larger than himself. His last

words were entirely selfless. I held Evans' hand and said the "Our Father" as he died.

Excuse me.

As I think back to that day, I understand the memory and courage of men like PFC O'Neill must be honored with a clear and coherent strategy to help the people of Afghanistan. We must defend the original mission, the one that was abandoned in favor of a misled strategy in Iraq, to protect the American people from terrorist threats and to ensure that O'Neill and others like him did not die in vain.

I strongly believe in the mission in Afghanistan, combined with our efforts in Pakistan, was and is the true front on the war on terror, something I did not believe while fighting in Iraq.

Senator Kerry, to this very committee in 1971, you spoke of men who have returned with a sense of anger and a sense of betrayal which no one has yet grasped. My own anger and sense of betrayal comes from the possibility that we may not come to a resolution in Afghanistan and that the blood that has been shed by the victims of 9/11, the Afghan people, and men like PFC O'Neill would be forgotten.

Once again, I'd like to thank you for inviting me here to testify, and I truly am happy to see that troops are finally being listened to.

[The prepared statement of Sergeant McGurk follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHRISTOPHER MCGURK, STAFF SERGEANT, U.S. ARMY (RET.), RECIPIENT OF COMBAT INFANTRYMAN'S BADGE, TWO BRONZE STARS AND THE PURPLE HEART, NEW YORK, NY

I want to thank Chairman Kerry, Senator Lugar, and the members of the committee for inviting me here today to testify on behalf of my fellow Veterans; I am both honored and humbled. I would like to say first and foremost that I believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that the United States should renew its commitment to Afghanistan and its people. I believed in my mission then and I firmly believe in it as I sit here today. Some pundits will argue that we may no longer be able to achieve any real measure of success in Afghanistan. I say to those critics that we must try and help stabilize a country that has been, for the most part, ignored ever since combat operations began in Iraq in 2003. Our continued inattention to Afghanistan, our drifting foreign policy in the region, and the fact that we have done little to stop the reemergence of the Taliban may very well solidify the resentment that the Afghan people have for the United States and the central government of Afghanistan. We have one chance to get this right or face the real possibility of more terrorist attacks that rival those of 9/11 on U.S. soil.

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I strongly believe that the mission in Afghanistan was and is the true front in the war on terror, something I did not believe while fighting in Iraq. Senator Kerry—to this very committee in 1971, you spoke of "men who have returned with a sense of anger and a sense of betrayal which no one has yet grasped." My own anger and sense of betrayal comes from the possibility that we may not come to a resolution in Afghanistan, and that the blood that has been shed by the victims of 9/11, the Afghan people, and men like PFC O'Neill would be in vain.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you so much. I appreciate your testimony very, very much.

Mr. Moore.

STATEMENT OF WESTLEY MOORE, CAPTAIN, U.S. ARMY (RET.), BALTIMORE, MD

Captain MOORE. Thank you very much. And I'd like to thank the entire committee for this time. And, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to specifically thank you for acknowledging the importance of hearing from junior officers and NCOs. I believe I speak for everyone on the panel, and the soldiers with whom we served, when I say that we appreciate the audience.

In early 2005, I was working as a banker in London, and, less than a year later, I was deployed with the 1st Brigade of the 82d Airborne Division in Eastern Afghanistan. My good friend and a hero of mine, LTC Michael Fenzel, deputy brigade commander of

a unit that I later joined, asked me if I'd be willing to leave the world of finance and to serve. A sense of duty to my oath as an officer, a sense of commitment to the troops I would lead, and a sense of loyalty to my friend who asked me to join him propelled me to leave my comfortable existence and spend 9 months in the border region of Afghanistan.

Now, before deploying, I read extensively about the history of the region and sought counsel from those who I thought had any insight on the area. And within days of arriving in our area of operations, I realized nothing could have prepared me for some of the most trying, exhilarating, and heartbreaking days of my life.

Iraq dominated the news cycle at the time. However, what I immediately learned was that the fight in Afghanistan was just as crucial and precarious, if not more, than Iraq. The terrain, the economic and educational conditions, its neighbors, two of which are nuclear-armed, the tribalism and Pashtunwali law that reigned supreme over any inclination of nationalism, the lack of basic services, such as electricity and clean water resources, and a plethora of other realities, make this conflict more complex than I could have ever imagined. But, my time in Afghanistan also made this war very real to me, and made getting it right very personal.

The fighting was tough, and the kinetic operations are all-encompassing. But, the main reason I was asked to serve as the director of information operations was to address the American strategic support plan for Program Takhim e Sol, which is the Afghan reconciliation program, which is also known as PTS. The Afghans, followed by the lessons of South Africa and Chile before them, aim to create a reconciliation program that allowed Afghans who were involved with al-Qaeda, HIG, the Haqqani network, and the Taliban, to turn in their weapons, pledge allegiance to the new Afghan Government, and return home to their families without fear of retribution or imprisonment.

When my team arrived, eight people had PTS'd, or reconciled. Lieutenant Colonel Fenzel and the other senior leaders of my unit got it. They understood the basic premise that the more insurgents that we can convince to peacefully reconcile meant the fewer that we needed to make submit via force. We reevaluated our strategies and techniques to support the Afghans in this initiative. We created a program called the Afghan Public Relations Officers, or APROs, who are Afghans who worked with us to better tailor our messages and our reaction to the day's events. We stopped using broadcasts written by United States solders and simply read by translators, and altered, not only the messages, but the messengers, and recruited respected leaders, such as President—former President Mujadidi to better reach our targets. We stopped using leaflet drops in order to spread the word, because, with a population that has a literacy rate in the single digits, written materials were utterly ineffective. We broadcasted PTS success stories so that people who were on the fence knew that a safe alternative awaited them, and that the option of waiting for our forces to find them was a losing proposition. By the time we redeployed, 533 people had PTS'd and rejoined Afghan society, and the initiative still runs, to this day.

Now, I say that, not just to pat our team on the back about the work that they did, because our effects were not perfect and there were some significant flaws to that initiative, but to say that many important lessons were learned during that experience, and I'll highlight three.

The first. Unlike Iraq, Afghanistan is a very rural fight and cannot be fought out of Kandahar or Kabul. The reason we were effective is because we spent time out in the field, days at a time. We were talking to locals, building trust, and gaining insight. But, we need more, and it needs to be with a distinct local focus. In Iraq, the saying was, "As goes Baghdad, so goes the rest of the country." This is not the case in Afghanistan, and, in many ways, it's the antithesis of the truth.

No. 2. We are underfunded and undermanned in Afghanistan. We have fought this war on the cheap. And I say that, not only in a military side, but particularly on the civilian support side and the reconstruction side. But, in the military angle, specifically, we have asked two brigades to cover over a 1,600-mile area that is known as Eastern Afghanistan, much of it in the most dangerous terrain in the world. Now, we've just announced that we're adding another 17,000 troops. But, even when those troops come online this summer, it is still a paltry number needed to fulfill the troop-to-task demands required for persistent engagement with people in the rural areas.

And No. 3. Many of the attacks we sustained were not conducted by ideologues, they were conducted by people who simply had no economic options and felt the pull of a monetary reward for supporting insurgents. I personally dealt with insurgents who told me that they were not Taliban for cause, but essentially Taliban for hire. This number is now smaller, and that dynamic is now changing, but we need to help—we need to help provide jobs, education, security, and a viable future for the Afghans and their families in order to avoid the Taliban's campaign of ruthless intimidation and their significant information operations platform.

Right now an American soldier is ending another long day patrolling the mountain ranges of Kunar province. And under sweat-soaked Kevlar and burdened by the 40-pound rucksack he's been carrying for the past 12 hours, he looks over his shoulder and he sees a group of Afghan children playing in the distance. And at that very moment, he's again reminded of what's at stake. And that same soldier's thinking about his own family and loved ones back at home, constantly being reminded of why he's there.

Let me be clear, I, like many of my fellow soldiers and citizens, want this war to end, and we want this war to end, badly. I've lost friends, I've lost colleagues, both Afghan and American. And I understand the burden that sits on your shoulders, as decision-makers, because it is similar to the burden that sat on mine as an officer who led troops in combat. But, the Taliban is executing a doctrine based on exhaustion, where their entire strategy depends on our political and national will faltering. Many of them are fond of saying, "The Americans have the wristwatches, but we have the time." You have the wherewithal in this committee to make that an illusion by committing the resources, support, and political will to ensure this war is brought to an effective close.

Thank you for your time and commitment to getting this right. I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Captain Moore follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WESTLEY MOORE, CAPTAIN, U.S. ARMY (RET.), BALTIMORE, MD

Thank you all for this opportunity and your service.

Mr Chairman, I want to specifically thank you for acknowledging the importance of hearing from junior officers and NCOs. I believe I speak for everyone on the panel and the soldiers with whom we served when I say we appreciate the audience.

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The fighting was tough, and the kinetic operations are all-encompassing, but the main reason I was asked to serve as the director of Information Operations was to address the American strategic support plan for Program-Takhim e Sol, or the Afghan Reconciliation Program. The Afghans, following the lessons of South Africa and Chile before them, aimed to create a reconciliation program that allowed Afghans who were involved with al-Qaeda, HIG, the Haqqani Network, and the Taliban to turn in their weapons, pledge allegiance to the new Afghan Government, and return home to their families without fear of retribution or imprisonment. When my team arrived, 8 people had PTS'd, or reconciled. LTC Fenzel and the other senior leaders of my unit "got it." They understood the basic premise that the more insurgents we can convince to peacefully reconcile, meant the fewer we needed to make submit via force. We reevaluated our strategies and techniques to support the Afghans in this initiative. We created a program called "Afghan Public Relations Officers, or APROs," who were Afghans we worked with us to better tailor our messages and reaction to events. We stopped using broadcasts written by U.S. soldiers and simply read by translators, and altered not only the messages but the messengers, and recruited respected leaders like former President Mujadidi, to better reach our targets. We stopped using leaflet drops in order to spread the word because with a population that has a literacy rate in the single digits, written materials were utterly ineffective. We broadcasted PTS success stories so that people who were on the fence knew that a safe alternative awaited them, and that the option of waiting for our forces to find them was a losing proposition.

By the time we redeployed, 533 people had PTS'd and rejoined Afghan society. The initiative still runs to this day. I say that not to pat our team on the back, or to say the effects were perfect, because there were some significant flaws in the initiative, but to say many important lessons were learned during that experience.

(1) Unlike Iraq, Afghanistan is a rural fight, and cannot be fought out of Kandahar or Kabul. The reason we were effective is because we spent time out in the field. Days at a time, we were talking to locals, building trust, gaining insight. But we need more, and it needs to be with a local focus. In Iraq, the saying was "As goes Baghdad, so goes the rest of the country." This is not the case in Afghanistan, and in many ways that is the antithesis of the truth.

(2) We are underfunded and undermanned in Afghanistan. We have fought this war on the cheap and I say that not only on the military side, but on the civilian support side as well. But on the military angle specifically, we asked two brigades to have coverage over a 1,600-mile area that is known as Eastern Afghanistan,

much of it in the most dangerous terrain in the world. We just announced we are adding 17,000 troops but even when those troops come online, it is still a paltry number needed fulfill the troop-to-task demands required for a persistent engagement with the people in rural areas.

(3) Many of the attacks we sustained were not conducted by ideologues. They were conducted by people who simply had no economic options and felt that pull of monetary reward for supporting insurgents. I personally dealt with insurgents who told me they were not Taliban for cause, but Taliban for hire. This number is now smaller, and the dynamic is now changing, but we need to help provide means to jobs, education, security, and a viable future for the Afghans and their families in order to avoid the Taliban's campaign of intimidation and their significant information operations platform.

Right now, an American soldier is ending another long day of patrolling the mountain ranges in the Kunar region. Under his sweat-soaked Kevlar, and burdened by the 40-pound rucksack he has been carrying for the past 12 hours, he looks over his shoulder and sees a group of Afghan children playing in the distance. And at that very moment, he's again reminded what's at stake. And that same soldier is thinking about his own family and loved ones back at home, constantly being reminded why he's there. Let me be clear; I, like many of my fellow soldiers and citizens, want this war to end. I have lost friends and colleagues, both American and Afghan. I understand the burden that sits on your shoulders as decisionmakers because it is similar to the burden that sat on mine as an officer who led troops in combat. But the Taliban is executing a doctrine based on exhaustion, where their entire strategy depends on our political and national will faltering. Many of them are fond of saying, "The Americans have the wristwatches, but we have the time." You have the wherewithal to make that an illusion by committing the resources, support, and political will to ensure that this war is brought to an effective close.

Thank you all for your time and commitment to getting this right. l welcome your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Captain. Very important testimony.

Colonel Bacevich, you get to be the wrap-up.

STATEMENT OF ANDREW BACEVICH, COLONEL, U.S. ARMY (RET.), PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND HISTORY, BOSTON UNIVERSITY, BOSTON, MA

Colonel BACEVICH. Well, thank you for the privilege of presenting my views to this committee. And I am particularly honored to do so alongside these veterans of the Afghanistan war.

Members of this generation have come to know war well, and I certainly would not presume to comment on their experience. My own generation had its own intimate relationship with a different war; one that has now become a distant memory. As with many who served in Vietnam, my own views, even today, are perhaps too colored by that experienced. Still, in getting some perspective on the predicament we currently face, Vietnam may retain some lingering relevance.

In one of the most thoughtful Vietnam-era accounts written by a senior military officer, GEN Bruce Palmer once observed that, "With respect to Vietnam, our leaders should have known that the American people would not stand still for a protracted war of an indeterminate nature and with no foreseeable end to the U.S. commitment." General Palmer thereby distilled, in a single sentence, the central lesson of Vietnam. To embark upon an open-ended war lacking clearly defined and achievable objectives was to forfeit public support, thereby courting disaster. And his implication was clear: Never again.

General Palmer's book, which he titled "The 25-Year War" appeared in 1984. Today, exactly 25 years later, we once again find

ourselves mired in a protracted war of an indeterminate nature with no foreseeable end to the U.S. commitment. How did this happen?

In the wake of Vietnam, the United States military set out, quite consciously, to develop a new way of war intended to preclude any recurrence of protracted indeterminate conflict. Yet, events since 9/11, in both Iraq and Afghanistan, have now demolished such expectations. Once again, as in Vietnam, the enemy calls the tune, obliging us to fight on his terms. Once again, decision has become elusive; and, as fighting drags on, its purpose becomes increasingly difficult to discern.

American soldiers are now said to face the prospect of perpetual conflict. We find ourselves in the midst of what the Pentagon calls "The Long War," a conflict global in scope, if largely concentrated in the Greater Middle East, and expected to last even longer than General Palmer's 25-year war.

Yet, there's one notable difference today between today and the day 38 years ago, when the chairman of this committee testified against the then-seemingly endless Vietnam war. At that time, when the young John Kerry spoke, many of his contemporaries had angrily turned against their generation's war. Today, most of the contemporaries of those fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan have simply tuned out the long war. The predominant mood of the country is not one of anger or anxiety, but of dull acceptance.

In other words, Americans today do appear willing to stand still, to use General Palmer's phrase, when considering the prospect of endless war.

Now, there are many explanations for why Americans are so disengaged from the long war, but the most important, in my view, is that few of us have any personal stake in that conflict.

When the citizen-soldier tradition collapsed under the weight of Vietnam, the post-Vietnam military rebuilt itself as a professional force. The creation of this all-volunteer military was widely hailed as a great success. Only now are we beginning to glimpse its shortcomings; chief among them the fact that it exists at some remove from American society.

The upshot is that, with the eighth anniversary of the long war now approaching, fundamental questions about this enterprise continue to be ignored. My purpose today is to suggest that members of this committee have a profound duty to take these questions on.

In his testimony before this committee, the young John Kerry, famously, or infamously, in the eyes of some, asked, "How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?" What exactly was that mistake? Well, there were many, but the most fundamental lay in President Johnson's erroneous conviction that the Republic of Vietnam constituted a vital United States national security interest, and that ensuring that country's survival required a direct United States military intervention. Johnson erred in his estimation of South Vietnam's importance, and he compounded that error with a tragic failure of imagination, persuading himself that there existed no alternative to a massive United States troop commitment and that, once in, there was no way out.

My own view is that today we are, in our own way, repeating LBJ's errors. Recall that in his testimony before this committee,

speaking on behalf of other antiwar veterans, the young John Kerry remarked that "We are probably angriest about all that we were told about Vietnam and about the mystical war against communism." The mystical war against communism finds its counterpart in the mystical war on terrorism. As in the 1960s, so, too, today. Mystification breeds misunderstanding and misjudgment. It prevents us from seeing things as they are.

As a direct result, it leads us to exaggerate the importance of places like Afghanistan, and, indeed, to exaggerate the jihadist threat, which falls well short of being existential. It induces flights of fancy so that, for example, otherwise sensible people conjure up visions of providing clean water, functioning schools, and good governance to Afghanistan's 40,000 villages, with expectations of thereby winning Afghan hearts and minds. It causes people to ignore the consideration of cost. With the long war already, this Nation's second most expensive conflict, trailing only World War II, and with the Federal Government projecting trillion-dollar deficits for years to come, how much can we afford, and where is the money coming from?

Now, for political reasons, the Obama administration may have banished the phrase "Global War on Terror," yet even today the conviction exists that the United States is called upon to dominate or liberate or transform the Greater Middle East. Methods may be shifting, but the emphasis on pacification giving way to militarized nation-building, priorities may be changing, AfPak now supplanting Iraq as the main effort.

The urgent need is to demystify this project, which, from the outset, was a misguided one. Just as in the 1960s, we possessed neither the wisdom nor the means needed to determine the fate of Southeast Asia, so today we possess neither the wisdom, nor the means necessary, to determine the fate of the Greater Middle East. To persist in efforts to do so will simply replicate, on an even greater scale, mistakes and misjudgments comparable to those that young John Kerry once rightly decried.

Thank you.

[Applause.]

The CHAIRMAN. Please, folks, we will have no demonstrations of any kind—for, against, in the middle, either way.

[The prepared statement of Colonel Bacevich follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ANDREW J. BACEVICH, COLONEL, U.S. ARMY (RET.), PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND HISTORY, BOSTON UNIVERSITY, BOSTON, MA

Thank you for the privilege of presenting my views to this committee. I am particularly honored to do so alongside these veterans of the Afghanistan war.

Members of this generation have come to know war well and I would not presume to comment on their experience. My own generation had its own intimate relationship with a different war, one that has now become a distant memory. As with many who served in Vietnam, my own views even today are perhaps too colored by that experience. Still, in gaining some perspective on the predicament that we currently face, Vietnam may retain some lingering relevance.

What strikes me most about that war is the extent to which its lessons have been forgotten and in some cases even inverted.

In one of the most thoughtful Vietnam-era accounts written by a senior military officer, GEN Bruce Palmer once observed that "With respect to Vietnam, our leaders should have known that the American people would not stand still for a protracted war of an indeterminate nature with no foreseeable end to the U.S. commitment."

General Palmer thereby distilled into a single sentence the central lesson of Vietnam: To embark upon an open-ended war lacking clearly defined and achievable objectives was to forfeit public support, thereby courting disaster. The implications were clear: Never again.

General Palmer's book, which he titled "The Twenty-Five Year War," appeared in 1984. Today, exactly 25 years later we once again find ourselves mired in a "protracted war of an indeterminate nature with no foreseeable end to the U.S. commitment."

How did this happen?

In the wake of Vietnam, the United States military set out to develop a new way of war intended to preclude any recurrence of protracted, indeterminate conflict. The expectation was that by emphasizing technology and superior skill U.S. forces would achieve victory quickly and at acceptable costs, thereby protecting themselves from the possibility of public abandonment. In 1991 Operation Desert Storm seemingly validated this new paradigm.

Yet events since 9/11, in both Iraq and Afghanistan, have now demolished such expectations. Once again, as in Vietnam, the enemy calls the tune, obliging us to fight on his terms. Decision has become elusive. As fighting drags on, its purpose becomes increasingly difficult to discern.

American soldiers are now said to face the prospect of perpetual conflict. We find ourselves in the midst of what the Pentagon calls "The Long War," a conflict global in scope (if largely concentrated in the Greater Middle East) and expected to last even longer than General Palmer's "Twenty-Five Year War."

To apply to the Long War the plaintive query that GEN David Petraeus once posed with regard to Iraq—"Tell me how this ends"—the answer is clear: No one has the foggiest idea. War has become like the changing phases of the moon: It's part of everyday existence. For American soldiers there is quite literally no end in sight.

Yet there is one notable difference between today and the day 38 years ago when the chairman of this committee testified against the then seemingly endless war in Vietnam. At that time, when the young John Kerry spoke, many of his contemporaries had angrily turned against their generation's war. Today, most of the contemporaries of those fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan have simply tuned out the Long War. The predominant mood of the country is not one of anger or anxiety, but of dull acceptance.

In other words, Americans today do appear willing to "stand still" when considering the prospect of endless war. There are many explanations for why Americans are so disengaged from the Long War, but the most important, in my view, is that few of us have any personal stake in that conflict.

When the citizen-soldier tradition collapsed under the weight of Vietnam, the post-Vietnam military rebuilt itself as a professional force. The creation of this all-volunteer military was widely hailed as a great success. Only now are we beginning to glimpse its shortcomings, chief among them the fact that it exists at some remove from American society. Americans today profess to "support the troops" but that support is a mile wide and an inch deep. It rarely translates into serious public concern for whether the troops are being used wisely or well.

The upshot is that with the eighth anniversary of the Long War now approaching, fundamental questions about this enterprise continue to be ignored.

My purpose today is to suggest that the members of this committee have a profound duty to take those questions on.

In his testimony before this committee, the young John Kerry famously—or infamously, in the eyes of some—asked: "How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?"

What exactly was that mistake? Well, there were many, but the most fundamental lay in President Johnson's erroneous conviction that the Republic of Vietnam constituted a vital U.S. security interest and that ensuring that country's survival required direct U.S. military intervention.

Johnson erred in his estimation of South Vietnam's importance. He compounded that error with a tragic failure of imagination, persuading himself that there existed no alternative to a massive U.S. troop commitment and that once in there was no way out.

My own view is that we are, in our own day, repeating LBJ's errors. Recall that in his testimony before this committee, speaking on behalf of other antiwar veterans, the young John Kerry derisively remarked that "we are probably angriest about all that we were told about Vietnam and about the mystical war against communism."

The mystical war against communism finds its counterpart in the mystical war on terrorism. As in the 1960s so too today: Mystification breeds misunderstanding and misjudgment. It prevents us from seeing things as they are.

As a direct result, it leads us to exaggerate the importance of places like Afghanistan and indeed to exaggerate the jihadist threat, which falls well short of being existential. It induces flights of fancy, so that, for example, otherwise sensible people conjure up visions of providing clean water, functioning schools, and good governance to Afghanistan's 40,000 villages, with expectations of thereby winning Afghan hearts and minds. It causes people to ignore considerations of cost. With the Long War already this Nation's second most expensive conflict, trailing only World War II, and with the Federal Government projecting trillion dollar deficits for years to come, how much can we afford and where is the money coming from?

For political reasons the Obama administration may have banished the phrase "Global War on Terror," yet even today the conviction persists that the United States is called upon to dominate or liberate or transform the Greater Middle East. Methods may be shifting, with the emphasis on pacification giving way to militarized nation-building. Priorities may be changing, AfPak now supplanting Iraq as the main effort. Yet by whatever name the larger enterprise continues. The President who vows to "change the way Washington works" has not yet exhibited the imagination needed to conceive of an alternative to the project that his predecessor began.

The urgent need is to demystify that project, which was from the outset a misguided one. Just as in the 1960s we possessed neither the wisdom nor the means needed to determine the fate of Southeast Asia, so too today we possess neither the wisdom nor the means necessary to determinate the fate of the Greater Middle East. To persist in efforts to do so—as the Obama administration appears intent on doing in Afghanistan—will simply replicate on an even greater scale mistakes and misjudgments comparable to those that young John Kerry once rightly decried.

The CHAIRMAN. But, thank you for the testimony. Very, very important statement, and, I think, a wonderful mix of views here that really pose to the committee the heart of this dilemma. And I'm grateful to each and every one of you for the testimonies that you've given here today. And our job now is to sort of probe and see if we can figure out the answers to some very provocative questions that have been posed in the testimonies that we've heard today.

I'm very grateful to you, Colonel Bacevich, for posing this fundamental dilemma about resources and strategy, though I'm not sure if I'm grateful for the reminders that I'm now the "older John Kerry."

But, the—sort of cutting to the rub of this, I guess—you talked about the tragic failure of imagination. Each of you, I think, in your own way—Sergeant McGurk, Captain Moore—you've each talked about the shift of resources to Iraq and the fact that we haven't had resources. And I'm very sympathetic to what I heard from you about when I was up in Kunar province, I saw the outstanding work of one of the PRTs, and their extraordinary ability to have forged very personal relationships with people in that particular village, where they clearly made a difference. But, as Colonel Bacevich is mentioning, there are 40,000 such villages and countless numbers of people. And the question, to some degree, is posed in your own statements about the support—about the task as you saw it, to try to have a more engaged kind of personal relationship—and really, Mr. Reyes, it sort of plays off your sense of frustration at what you were trying to do, because you've articulated the frustration of going out there and not being able to discern who's Taliban, who isn't, and being able to figure out how you put the pieces together. In other places, where they had a different set of resources or maybe a better definition of the mission, they

were able to put those pieces together. But, in the end, the question is, Do all the pieces add up to putting it together in the way that Colonel Bacevich is asking?

So, I think the review process that's gone on, where General Petraeus and others have tried to measure, How do you recalibrate this?—the question now that we have to ask is, Is this calibration accurate? Is it sufficient? Is it going to be able to undo the negatives that you ran into, Mr. Reyes? Is it going to be able to reinforce the positives that you both talked about, and you talked about, Genevieve? But, are they, in the end, going to be adequate to meet the challenge that Colonel Bacevich talks about, which is the sufficiency overall of this larger strategy to actually work? And that's what we've got to figure out. I think that's a fair statement of the challenge.

It seems to me that the administration is trying to narrow that mission, Colonel, and they're trying not to get into a place where they are talking about an internal rebuilding, but, rather, defining the mission in its original terms, which was to get al-Qaeda and prevent al-Qaeda from using it as a base to be able to attack the United States.

Now, is that, or is that not, in your judgment, Colonel, a sufficient recalibration of the strategy—an achievable calibration of the strategy, maybe I should say?

Colonel BACEVICH. You know, my preliminary report card of the Obama administration would give the administration very high marks, in the sense that some of the, bluntly speaking, ideological fantasies that seemed to inform thinking during the Bush era have now been set aside, and the approach now seems much more grounded in reality, and pragmatic. And, you know, one would have to applaud them. And I think that that statement does apply to this administration's perspective on Afghanistan, that, to a degree, the expectations and objectives are being ratcheted down. I would still say those objectives are not clearly defined.

But, my complaint with regard to the administration is that, at least as best I can tell, I haven't heard a clear statement of how Afghanistan fits in this larger context of "the long war."

Now, the administration has abandoned, best I can tell, the phrase "Global War on Terror," but what is the larger enterprise, and how does Afghanistan relate to that larger enterprise? And if you focus on the larger enterprise rather than strictly on Afghanistan, it seems to me you confront questions of purpose and duration and resource requirements that demand attention. Otherwise, the long war—and I emphasize that phrase, because it seems to me that it's very—it is descriptive, in the sense that the only thing we can say about this war is that it's going to go on for a long, long time. It seems to me we need—we just urgently need to ask ourselves whether or not the purposes of the long war are achievable, necessary, and affordable. And Afghanistan is a subset of that larger set of questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I understand that. I agree with that. And the question then becomes, Do you define the challenge today, not just in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but in other places, as a kind of global counterinsurgency effort that we have to wage—not a global war on terror, but a counterinsurgency? And, as you know better

than anybody, there's a distinction between counterterrorism and counterinsurgency. Is it fair to say that you could have a footprint that is calibrated to the task of protecting the United States from what we already know, by 2001 September experience, is the ability of this group of people to organize and plot against us, some other attack from an open territory? In other words, if we're not there in some way preventing them from the freedom to do that, isn't it pretty clear they're going to do that?

Colonel BACEVICH. I think this is one of the areas where Vietnam—the Vietnam comparison is relevant, because those who—the architects of that war insisted that, once we made the commitment of Americanizing the war, that there really was no alternative except to follow through. That's the tragic failure of imagination. And I would want to argue that we needn't—we should not fall into that trap again. We should at least be willing to consider the possibility—examine the possibility—of alternatives to the long war.

If the long war—this effort to reduce the jihadist threat to the level in which it would be tolerable, if you will—to do that by invading and occupying and transforming countries—that's, in essence, what U.S. strategy has been since 9/11, focused on Iraq and Afghanistan—is there another fundamentally different approach? And I think there is. I mean, it seems to me there are workings of an alternative approach, an approach that does not require us to invade and occupy countries in the establishment of very robust defenses. I mean, 9/11 happened, not because al-Qaeda was so smart, it happened primarily because we were so stupid and we allowed it to happen.

So, an alternative strategy begins with the creation of robust defenses. It includes an effort to deny to the jihadists the resources, and primarily the financial resources, that they need to plot against us. And we provide those resources, in large part because of our dependence upon oil, that comes from the Persian Gulf, which funnels billions of dollars, some portion of which gets diverted to the jihadists.

What that says is, a serious alternative strategy makes an energy policy an urgent priority. It's—an alternative strategy is one that says—that views the terrorist threat, not as the equivalent of Nazi Germany, but, in a sense, as an international criminal conspiracy, a religiously motivated mafia, and that the way you deal with that is through a sustained, well-resourced, multilateral police effort to identify and root out terrorist networks—again, something that is accomplished, not through invading and occupying countries.

Now, I'm not trying to sell you, at this particular moment, on every aspect of this alternative strategy; I'm simply trying to—I am trying to sell you on the idea that perhaps it is possible to conceive of an alternative to the long war which will enable us to accomplish our national security objectives more effectively and more cheaply.

The CHAIRMAN. What do you, as the troops who are on the ground trying to implement this strategy, feel about what you've just heard? But also, is there time, in your judgment, given the shift that you've heard articulated in this recalibration of our policy—do you believe that that is adequate to be able to allow you to do the things that you were talking about and make sufficient

progress, or do you get trapped in the place that Colonel Bacevich was talking about?

Captain Moore, Sergeant, and Corporal.

Captain MOORE. Thanks, sir. And actually, in listening to the comments, I actually wholeheartedly agree that there needs to be—we need to holistically approach how we're going to look at this. We need to look at alternative energy resources. We need to look at economic resources and all the other factors that play into this, that play into the conflict. But, we can't do it to the exclusion of providing security to Afghanistan, and we can't do it to the exclusion of providing an opportunity for the NGOs and the State Department and USAID to be able to go in and do the work, because the challenge of them being able to do the work in Afghanistan has not—in some cases, has been the lack of resources that have been—has been targeted toward them, but, in many cases, it's been security. They haven't had the security measures in place that would allow them to actually further the advancement of development causes and development cures.

But, going back to something that you mentioned earlier, I think, is a very important point——

The CHAIRMAN. My question is, Captain, can we ever provide adequate security without the kind of commitment that digs you into the hole that takes you beyond your resources, beyond your capacity? That's the balance.

Captain MOORE. Yes, sir. Well, it's not the, "Can we provide the adequate security." It's that, Can we put together the resources to help the Afghans provide adequate security? And the answer to that is "Yes."

The CHAIRMAN. You believe we can.

Captain MOORE. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. So, on the ground, you sense that with an adequate amount of focus now on the tribal level, more local anticorruption and other kinds of efforts, you have confidence in the ability to make progress.

Captain MOORE. Sir, when you look at the progress that the ANP and the ANAs, or the Afghan National Police and the Afghan National Army, has made, even just over the process of the past 3 to 4 years, it's quite significant. They have more people on rolls, they're more competent, they're more efficient. So, I think—and especially if we can tailor our—not only development funds, but then also our training, in terms of looking at a more local level, better understanding Pashtunwali and the Pashtun understanding of the eastern border of Afghanistan, then I think we absolutely can build those forces.

The CHAIRMAN. Sergeant Chase.

Sergeant CHASE. Sir, I just would like to back up what Wes said, and also, I do agree with some things that the Colonel has said, except I would like to take us back a minute to the Soviet invasion and when they left, and the point that was made to me several times by Afghans who lived during that time period: Nobody provided them with infrastructure, with security, or with a stable government. That's where the issues were. That's how al-Qaeda was able to get into Afghanistan and use it as a safe haven, because that country was so volatile and so desperate. Al-Qaeda did attack

us on our soil and were harbored by the Taliban and now that we've gone in and essentially, for the most part, have worked to get rid of the al-Qaeda in—I'm sorry, I'm so nervous——

The CHAIRMAN. No, you're doing great.

Sergeant CHASE. In the beginning, we focused so much of our efforts on getting rid of the al-Qaeda and this idea of getting rid of Osama bin Laden—as far as we know, he hasn't been in Afghanistan for quite some time; however, we are now dealing with homegrown and very much internally developed Taliban, supported and facilitated by al-Qaeda. The local Afghans I spoke to were only concerned with issues like losing their livelihoods and other things I've mentioned. However, if we leave without providing security, propping up a stable government, and giving the local villages and the people that are there some sense of structure and some sense of safety and security, we'll be back. If we don't do this now, we'll be back. We belong to an all-volunteer military, and the three of us are sitting here before you, telling you that we need to do this right and we need to do it now. I have many friends who have said that they would go back to Afghanistan—many of us will do what needs to be done now because we don't want to have to go back in the future—we don't want our children to have to go back.

Afghanistan's a very different country, it's a very different fight. And to say that we have invaded Afghanistan is highly inaccurate. In fact, we haven't done enough, effectively, to help them. Understanding their culture more intimately and working with Pashtunwali code, as well as the culture of the Afghans, we would be better able to assist them in taking care of themselves, as opposed to where in an invasion as we go in, very much like the Russians did, and tell them how to live.

Essentially, yes, if we worked smarter and allocated our resources more appropriately, as well as truly worked with and among the Afghans. I have every confidence that we can accomplish what we need to in order for Afghanistan to be safe and viable without external and internal influence from extremists.

The CHAIRMAN. I've exceeded my time. Sergeant McGurk and Mr. Reyes, why don't you come in, with an answer to Senator Lugar perhaps, so that we can get around the dais here, and you answer that. Is that fair enough, Senator Lugar?

Senator LUGAR. Why don't they go ahead.

The CHAIRMAN. All right.

Would each of you, then, respond to that? And as you do, remember that when we went in, in 2001, in the aftermath of that we had 100-percent of the Afghan people behind us, supportive, ready to roll. And obviously that has now dropped. I've seen some numbers that are perilously low at this point in time. So, part of the question is, Do we have time to turn that around, and the capacity at the same time?

Sergeant McGurk. And then Mr. Reyes.

Sergeant MCGURK. Sir, I'd have to say we don't have any choice but to make the time. I think we made our bed, and now we have to lie in it. We went into Afghanistan to try to defeat the Taliban, try to prevent al-Qaeda from reemerging within Afghanistan and building more bases. And then we just left. We left the Afghan people to themselves. We half propped up a government and then left.

We started building trust, we started building really good rapport with the local Afghan people, and we just left. It's as plain as that, sir.

I'm not a policy wonk, I'm not an expert when it comes to foreign policy. I can tell you, the sense on the ground when I was there was, they were happy we were there.

I also served in Iraq, and I can tell you, I never got that sense, once, when I was in Iraq. I was in Baghdad, Al Shualah, and different areas on the western fringes of Baghdad. I was out even by Abu Ghraib Prison. I never once saw the same support from the Iraqis that I saw from the Afghan people.

And as I said in my testimony, when that—the village elder came up—and here's a man who was fighting the Russian Army—was basically thanking me. You know, I'm not the entire mission in Afghanistan at the time, but I am representative of the Army, and they were happy that—he was happy, and I know that many of the people we dealt with were extremely happy that we were there, and they asked us not to leave. I mean, it's no big secret that, you know, when the Russians were defeated in Afghanistan, we took our funding and left. And a lot of the resentments were carried over until then. And there were some older generation of Afghan that were kind of a little leery of us. And I think that if we don't make the effort, we don't take—make the time, we're going to be facing more terrorist attacks.

To say that, you know, Afghanistan was an invaded country—kind of what Genevieve said, it wasn't an invaded country. And unlike Vietnam, the Vietnamese didn't attack us on United States soil.

So, to answer your question, sir, in a general term, is, we have to make the time to at least try and stabilize, as best we can.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Never let anybody tell you you're not an expert. You are. That's why you're here.

Corporal Reyes.

Corporal REYES. The way we defeat these terrorist networks is by seizing recruitment. We need to remove the motive of why these terrorist organizations are growing. Once we remove that motive, we need stronger intelligence. With that stronger intelligence, we create a more isolated situation, versus taking a shot in the dark by sending 17,000 more troops sweeping the landscape, leaving a lot of destruction behind, and just giving them more motive to have these—the Taliban grow.

The CHAIRMAN. There's really a difference of opinion here, obviously, between those who feel that, given the right strategy, given the right resources and mission definition, you can avoid the negative effect that you're talking about, Corporal, and wind up actually creating a positive response. Certainly, we've seen that in PRTs and other places where we've had that adequate ability. But, I understand what you're saying, also, that where we have collateral damage, where you have civilian destruction, where you have those other things, you have recruitment. I don't disagree with that at all. It's a dilemma.

Senator Lugar.

Senator LUGAR. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Now, let me just say—and I suspect each one of us has similar feelings—that we were deeply moved by your testimony this morning. This was important to hear.

And I appreciate, having testified as you have, that now you've engaged and been stimulated by the chairman in vigorous debate of sorts about what our policy ought to be.

I have come to this hearing from an equally vigorous debate, over breakfast. We had GEN Brent Scowcroft, and I will not ascribe to him any particular views, but there were 16 Members of Congress sitting around the table with as diverse a set of opinions as we've heard in this hearing, but they really come down to a fundamental problem that you've illustrated so well, and that is, in terms of your own feelings, the emotions generated by the service you've given, the people that you have worked with in Afghanistan, at least some of you feel that, in fact, we must take the time, we must, in fact, rebuild, or build, from the beginning, a country that is very complex, that some would say has really almost only been a semi-country made up of tribes, various divisions, various cross-currents in life.

And many people, whether they are for or against that policy, evaluate that this is likely to be very expensive; maybe not in terms of American lives perpetually, or Afghan lives, maybe just in terms of the resources. As we've already said, this is in the context of a country presently that is running a trillion-dollar deficit, may have that sort of predicament for several years to come, in a world that is similarly troubled.

Now, you could make the case that life is unfair in this respect. The Afghans, after all, didn't create the world economic crisis, nor our trillion-dollar deficit, nor our problem, really, in recruiting Armed Forces, or even in building our own capacity. But, this is one set of facts.

Another, however, more constructive thought is that al-Qaeda is not just an Afghan-Pakistani problem, that there are currently al-Qaeda in Yemen, in Somalia, in various other countries where attacks have occurred on our Embassies in Africa in the past. And therefore, in fact, the configuration of our response, in terms of the Armed Forces or the intelligence forces that we have, ought to be our objective. In other words, be on the ground in a whole host of countries, not simply Afghanistan and Pakistan, ferreting out where the trouble is, informing ourselves, either working with resident governments or, where there isn't much of a government, to take action to make certain that we are not attacked or that these folks are not effective. Not an impossible task. And when General Petraeus visited with our committee, at the chairman's direction, we discussed, really, a number of things which are occurring which I found reassuring, and are not a part of the Afghan-Pakistan situation, but are a part of the al-Qaeda predicament, as we see it, as a group of organized terrorist cells.

I, finally, would just say that I found at least the Professor's thoughts important with regard to the oil import business. This is an issue that's come before the committee perennially. The fact is, we have financed, in a great way, not just the Afghan-Pakistan problem, but other sources of grave foreign policy difficulty.

Now, you can say, "Well, after all, supply and demand works. The American motorists wanted SUVs, wanted vans. Why all the worry about economy with regard to oil? First things first back here." But, our inability, I think, in the leadership of the country, to illustrate the predicament we've had is, in large part, our fault, and we all have to do better. We will have to be thinking together, because the energy situation—not just the oil, but in other facets in which we have seen cutoffs to NATO allies and problems of this sort—are very real, and will remain that way.

Likewise, the multilateral police situation has been difficult, thus far, to sell to Europeans, who are loyal to NATO, some loyal to us, but never really believed in the conflict and have a good number of other views, even now, in their Parliaments, as expressed in their low defense budgets, their lack of available transportation for their forces anywhere.

So, we have work to do if we're going to go that route, but it's not an improbable task for the future. If we're talking about whether it's a short war or a long war, the threat of al-Qaeda or other terrorists probably is going to exist for us and for others in alliances that we have.

So I don't really have questions of the panel; I just express appreciation that you've brought forward dilemmas that we've got to wrestle with. And I appreciate the thoughts about the President, about the fact that he and his advisers are strenuously debating these issues. In my judgment, although I'm not a part of the inner circle, they've not come to conclusions. They are proceeding pragmatically, sort of working day by day.

And as the chairman just visited Pakistan, and others likewise, returned from that country, they find a very troubled state, that, leaving aside whatever has been occurring with regard to the war or the conflict thus far, may create enormous dilemmas for the world, quite apart from the United States, vis-a-vis India or surrounding countries, leaving aside where we started, with Afghanistan. And that's going to require, on the part of our President, the Secretaries of State, Defense, and maybe others of us who have supported and advised on this, some extraordinary dilemmas.

But, thank you for coming, thank you for your testimony.

I thank you, again, Mr. Chairman, for calling us together.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you so much, Senator Lugar.

Senator Feingold.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this historic hearing.

It's very important, as we chart our way forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan, we talk to those who have served on the ground and who will live with the aftereffects of this war for the rest of their lives. We must also recognize the family members, including Colonel Bacevich, who have lost their loved ones during these difficult times. I also want to thank all the witnesses for being here today and for their selfless service to our country. We are indebted to all of you.

I voted in favor of the authorization to use military force in Afghanistan, because that was where al-Qaeda, which had planned and carried out the attacks of September 11, was based. The pre-

vious administration's mismanagement of that war, however, was tragic, and it has left us in a very difficult position.

The situation in the region remains explosive, and the current administration's decision to increase the United States military presence in Afghanistan may have no lasting positive impact, so long as there are safe havens for militants in Pakistan. Indeed, the escalation may further destabilize the situation in Pakistan, to the detriment of United States national security. So, while the President is certainly right to focus on this region, I am somewhat concerned that we may be sending our troops right into the eye of the storm with an insufficient strategy for addressing the greatest threat to our national security, which, of course, lies on the Pakistan side of the border.

As to some questions, General McKiernan requested additional troops in Afghanistan for the purpose of providing security for the Afghan population, yet recent polling indicates that the overwhelming majority of Afghans oppose an increase in troop levels. My sense is that there are mixed feelings among the Afghan population and that our status as a party to the conflict can make it difficult, if not impossible, for our troops to serve a peacemaking function. What was your experience, Corporal Reyes, on this matter?

Corporal REYES. The troop escalation is very unnecessary. With better intelligence, we can create a more isolated situation, where we're not going to risk innocent civilian lives and create more resentment toward us. With that, you create a motive for these terrorist groups to become larger. So, it's counterproductive to escalate the troops right now in——

Senator FEINGOLD. But—so, your first sentence was what, again? It is not necessary?

Corporal REYES. A troop escalation isn't necessary, no.

Senator FEINGOLD. Isn't necessary.

Corporal REYES. No.

Senator FEINGOLD. OK.

Corporal REYES. It's not.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you.

Colonel Bacevich, what are the prospects for defeating the insurgency by increasing the number of United States troops in Afghanistan, given some concerns that many, if not most, Afghans in the south oppose the presence of United States troops?

Colonel BACEVICH. Well, several people have made the point that this is not a problem that has a military solution, that, to the degree that there is a solution, the solution in Afghanistan is going to be found in what is going to be a massive and protracted and tremendously costly exercise in nation-building. I think that the likelihood of that exercise producing success, 10 or 15 years downstream, is not great.

But, I think the larger point to be made—and, I mean, you made it in your introductory remarks, and Senator Lugar, I think, alluded to the same thing—is, even if we could magically wave our wand and, tomorrow, have the Afghanistan problem be solved—the country would be stable, that the government would be legitimate—what exactly would we have achieved, in a strategic sense? And, I think, in a strategic sense, the gains would be very limited,

because, as you suggested, and as this—as this administration, I think, has acknowledged in its creation of this term "AfPak"—it is a mistake to view Afghanistan in isolation, and, in many respects, the larger problem is in neighboring Pakistan. So——

Senator FEINGOLD. And——

Colonel BACEVICH. So, to invest enormous resources in Afghanistan, I think, is allowing tactical considerations to take precedence over strategic thinking.

Senator FEINGOLD. Well, this is precisely what's been bothering me since I spent 4 or 5 days in Pakistan in this region less than a year ago and after the thoughtful remarks of the chairman, after his recent visit there. I want to follow on this interrelationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan. What about the possibility that an escalation in Afghanistan could actually be more destabilizing to Pakistan? In other words, in terms of militants spilling back over into that border—is that a fair concern, or not?

Colonel BACEVICH. I think it's a very real concern. You know, there's a—it's a wonder—there's a very interesting—I think, flawed—new book out by David Kilcullen, the counterinsurgency specialist, called "The Accidental Guerrilla." There's a lot about that book I disagree with, but there's one core truth, I think, that he gives us, and that is the notion that most of the people who fight against us in places like Afghanistan are fighting against us because we're there. Now, we may not believe that we are invading and occupying countries, but the people on the other end viewed—view themselves as being invaded and occupied. So, to some degree, to some measurable degree, in places like Afghanistan, increasing the United States presence actually increases the dimensions of the problem.

Senator FEINGOLD. And, Colonel, Admiral Mullen has acknowledged that the Pakistani Security Services maintain relations with militants in Pakistan. There are reports that—press reports that this includes the provision of fuel and ammunition for Taliban operations against United States forces in Afghanistan. If these allegations are correct, what is the likelihood that we can stabilize the region or deny al-Qaeda safe havens there, so long as these sorts of activities continue?

Colonel BACEVICH. Next to none.

Senator FEINGOLD. All right.

And then, Sergeant Chase, in your experience, can we trust the Afghan Army and police? Are they motivated or do they have a different perception of what is needed in Afghanistan?

Sergeant CHASE. Well, sir, I was in Afghanistan in 2006, and my experience in working with the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police is limited, but I will say that, having been there and spoken to Embedded Training Teams that do work amongst these units, the Afghan National Police, because of the tribal affiliations and preexisting familial rivalries that they have, because of their locality in their districts, and the fact that they come from those areas, tend to be a little less effective than, say, the Afghan National Army, where the people come from all over Afghanistan. The ANA have less local tribal ties and are able to make more objective decisions within the areas where they operate.

In my experience, my observation and what I've heard from other people, the ANA is a bit more effective than the ANP. The locals don't trust the ANP, a lot of times, in their own districts.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you all.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator Feingold. Good questions.

Senator Corker.

Senator CORKER. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

And, while I value what I do here in the public arena, and think that it's important, I want all of you to know that I think our service pales to what each of you have done, and do, and I thank you so much for being here. I thank you for your sincere presentations and for everything that you've done on behalf of our country, and will do. I thank you very much for this presentation.

So, as I listened to the presentation, on the heels of presentations by Mr. Holbrooke and others regarding what our mission is, I'm confused. I have heard—first of all, let me say that I think that we have fought Afghanistan on the cheap. I do think that Iraq affected everything that we did in Afghanistan. I absolutely believe that's true. I said that as soon as I came back from Afghanistan, and I think that goes—I don't think anybody will even debate that. I think that is true, and I think it has led us into a very complex situation.

On the other hand, as I hear, especially when someone speaks with such assuredness—and I'm speaking of Mr. Holbrooke—I get nervous when anybody is that sure of themselves. And I hope the other side of that isn't the often-wrong component that sometimes comes with that phrase. OK?

So, I listened. I thought Colonel Bacevich's presentation was most interesting. The fact is that al-Qaeda exists in many countries—many, many countries around the world. The stated mission is, we're going to, in Afghanistan, make sure that it's not a safe haven for al-Qaeda. And yet, in Pakistan we use drones and Hellfire missiles and intelligence to counter that, not troops on the ground.

I hear each of you speak about the relationships that you've developed, and I absolutely understand fully why a sense of a lack of commitment or followthrough, to you, would be failure and letting people down that you've gotten to know, and certainly people who have died in your presence. I understand that.

But, let me just ask Captain Moore and Sergeant McGurk, Do you think that the mission of making Afghanistan—which has been stated, and hopefully not stated just to win stripes for people, thinking that, you know, our administration is willing to be strong on defense—but, the stated mission to make it so that it's not a safe haven for al-Qaeda—is that the right stated mission? Because it doesn't seem that that so much is what is driving the two of you in your testimony. It seems to me to be more that we shouldn't let the Afghanistan people down again, like we did when Russia was there. I'd just like to understand what motivates much of your testimony.

Sergeant MCGURK. Sir, I just want to clarify one point. When I say "renewing a commitment," I'm not saying to send 60,000 com-

bat troops into Afghanistan. What I mean is more of a civil component.

And this holistic approach, you need to get—or, we need to get human intelligence within Yemen, within Egypt, Syria, all the places where the madrassas are that these people are actually, you know, learning this hatred for the West.

I think that Afghanistan, in the terms that I'm referring to as being the front where the war on terror is, this is where everybody is coming to fight. This is the—this is back before 9/11, when Osama bin Laden enacted the planes mission. That's when he decided, with the help of some of his other counterparts and some of the other cells, decided to take down the Twin Towers. He said he wanted to draw the United States into fighting on his home turf, because, "We beat the Russians, we can beat the United States."

I think we need to have more of a civil component within Afghanistan, along with using smart power, diplomatic approaches in addressing issues like the Swat Valley within Pakistan, but, at the same—same sense, like I said, we need to develop more of a robust human intelligence capability, because you're not going to—we could fight it all day long for the next 20 years in Afghanistan, and we're not going to—we're not going to defeat the Taliban or al-Qaeda, because they're being recruited—they're being trained in other places and coming to fight us there.

So, I would say, sir, that it needs to be a mix of a civil/military operation. We need to somehow help the Afghan Government start something like a job corps program. I mean, you have, in the northeastern part of the country, the Afghan—central Afghan Government banned any type of timber operations, because they were afraid of getting rid or stripping the country of its timber resources. And the southern part of the country, that's where you have, you know, 90 percent of the poppy crops being grown. We spend more time, along with the ANA, burning these crops. So, when you take two lifestyles away from a large group of the Afghan population, what's the next thing they're going to do, and what they know how to do? That's fight us.

So, I think we need to get a larger civil component in there, less of a combat-troops component. Maybe they can act as a quick-reaction force or go into certain areas where there are hotbeds, like along the border with Pakistan, and try to root out the insurgency that way.

I just think it needs to be a well-rounded and well-thought-out mission with a mix of civil and military operations.

Senator CORKER. Thank you.

Captain MOORE. Thank you, sir. And I agree with much of what Sergeant McGurk said. And the idea that I also—I also don't feel that it's—these are isolated ideas of providing safety and security for the Afghan people and trying to make sure that Afghanistan is not a hotbed for al-Qaeda. I think those are actually very complementary ideas, because, without the safety and security being provided within Afghanistan, and without safety and security that—not only that we can help provide, but that the Afghans are really going to provide for themselves—not only will that be an area for al-Qaeda, to be able to grow and to flourish, but then, also,

it's never going to provide any type of security or any type of growth for the Afghan people.

I think part of my frustration, which has been throughout—and I'm actually—I'm happy to see that it seems like the administration is really starting to take a new approach to it—is, for a while, we never had a clear mission about Afghanistan. You know, we weren't sure whether it was democracy. We weren't sure whether it was nation-building. We weren't sure if it was stability. We never had a clear belief as to why we were there. And that was also, not only frustrating for the American people, but also very frustrating for the soldiers. And it's very tough to build morale and help to keep morale up when you're not quite sure exactly what the mission is.

I think we're starting to clarify that now. I think there's a much better understanding; whereas, as President Obama has clearly said, we're going to provide security, and then we're going to leave.

So, I think understanding that, and then helping to kind of fill that in—so, What exactly does that mean? How exactly we're going to bolster development efforts? How are we going to get the State Department and USAID more involved in what's happening, particularly in the eastern and northeastern part of Afghanistan—is the way we're really going to add color to that larger statement.

Senator CORKER. Well, I'm glad you have a—with all due respect, a clear idea of what the strategy is, because I have no idea what it is, other than sending additional troops. So, if you could help me, I'd appreciate it. I have to tell you, I—what I've heard is that Afghanistan is not going to be a safe haven for al-Qaeda, and that's—so, we're going to double down with troops and resources. I don't know, I don't know that that clears up anything for me. So, since you have a clear idea, I'd love for you to expand on that some.

Captain MOORE. With—the clear idea is this, sir, is that, without—security needs to be tantamount to everything, because you cannot implement anything else within that region unless you can provide better security.

Senator CORKER. So, it sounds a lot like Iraq.

Captain MOORE. Well, no, no. It's not like—especially in this case. First of all, the parallels between Iraq and—I mean, sorry—the difference between Iraq and Afghanistan are stark. We're talking very different countries, very different regions, with very different histories.

In Afghanistan, we're talking about a country that has literally been in a constant state of war for decades, and a sporadic state of war for centuries, an area that—and this is where the whole idea of understanding that clarity of mission, because this is an area that we've had Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan and the British Empire and the Russians all being involved. And there's two things that the Afghans believe—firmly believe—about anytime foreign forces will enter their country. The first thing is that they're going to try to convert them and they're going to disrespect Islam. That's one. And the second thing they firmly believe is that soon they will be gone. And regardless of what is left behind, and regardless of what type of power vacuums are left behind, the foreign forces will leave.

The point is this. By showing a commitment to that country, by showing a commitment—and, again, I think Sergeant McGurk made a great point—is that it's not just a military-component commitment; the military-component commitment is important, because providing that security is important, but it needs to be complementary with, What exactly is that going to do? Because if we can increase security aspects and increase security apparatus within the country, and get the extra, not only 17,000 troops, but 4,000 trainers, inside of the area, and allow the ANA and the ANP to build up, then we can actually start allocating other resources to make Afghanistan not a safe haven for al-Qaeda, but then also provide the security and safety and the future for the Afghan people, which will prevent Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for al-Qaeda.

Senator CORKER. I want to thank all of you again.

And, Colonel, I thought your testimony was exceptionally good, and I really didn't have a lot of questions, as a result of that.

And, Mr. Chairman, I thank you for having this hearing. And I hope that—I know that, you know, sometimes partisan issues end up coming into play on major issues like this, but I really appreciate your willingness to look at this issue. I hope we will dig a whole lot deeper. I just have to tell you, I'm—I have a—say, an average intelligence—I'm having difficulty connecting the dots, and I hope that we'll have additional hearings to help us do so more fully.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, Senator Corker, let me just say to you that the testimony has been excellent, and I think the questions have been excellent, and it underscores this dilemma.

I am so sympathetic, more so than many people may understand, because of the experience that many of us had in our generation, Colonel Bacevich, which was torn apart over a war that lacked leadership and definition and clarity and reality and truth and a whole bunch of things. And when I hear Sergeant McGurk say, "We want to make sure that the honor that should be afforded us for our sacrificed service is there in the policy decisions you've made," that is exactly what brought me to that table, years ago.

And when I flew into Iraq, a number of years ago, I won't forget the captain who was a pilot in the aircraft, a C–130, as we were going in, turned to me, and he said, "Look, Senator, no matter what, just one thing I ask you, just make sure that, 20 years from now, all of this was worth it for us." And I understand that sentiment.

But, Colonel Bacevich has raised some very fundamental, larger questions that are almost bigger, in a sense, than your individual ability to want that relationship you built with somebody, that old man you met on the street. I understand that. You want that to be meaningful. And, they thought that we would just leave again, and so forth. Fact is, we are going to leave again, and they do know that—at some point. And the test here is how much can you achieve for them, and do you have to sometimes measure whether or not part of the reason they fight us is that we are there. And so, you have to balance this somehow and find a way to deal with some very tricky issues, including the intelligence piece of this. If you could get a different footprint somehow, so you had good intel,

there are plenty of ways for the United States to prevent al-Qaeda from attacking us. And the question is, Do you have to have this massive expenditure and footprint and input in order to be able to achieve that goal, if that is the limit of your goal? If your goal is larger than that, in terms of nation-building and otherwise, that's a much more expensive and longer term proposition, but it also runs up full score against the propositions the Colonel put to us, appropriately, and others have written about, which is, Is it achievable?

So, we've got some hard work to do, and we've got to do a lot of careful analysis here. And I know the administration is approaching this very carefully. Nobody's suggesting they're offering a guarantee here, but they're trying to make first steps to see if it is possible, needless to say, to transition to an ANP and an ANA that can stand up for themselves and take on that responsibility and sustain your rightful hope that that outcome will honor your sacrifice, which is what we want.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you all for being here.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me just say to everybody, we have a vote that is on; because it just started, we will have time to be able to conclude.

Senator SHAHEEN. I will be very quick.

But, I do want to thank you for being here, for your insights, and for your sacrifices for our country.

You know, I—there's been a lot of discussion about the conduct of the war in Afghanistan, but I guess the real alternative is United States withdrawal. And what I'd like to ask you is what you think the impact of unilateral withdrawal from Afghanistan would be. And I guess I would ask you if you would begin, Colonel Bacevich.

Colonel BACEVICH. I think that the—there are alternatives—there are more alternatives than "more of the same and then abject withdrawal." I think that there are courses that we could follow that would enable us to achieve what Senator Corker said was the purpose of the exercise, make sure that Afghanistan is not a safe haven for al-Qaeda, that would not necessarily entail the kind of investment of troops and resources that we've already undertaken and we're about to expand. There are other ways to achieve our purposes; it's not simply "do what we're doing" or "abandonment."

And I think that the—an example of what might be an alternative would be that we recognize the tribal nature of Afghan politics, acknowledge that their tradition is not one in which authority is effectively exercised from Kabul, but it's effectively exercised, basically, in the outback, and to provide incentives to the tribal chiefs to govern their patch of earth in ways consistent with their interests. In other words, just don't let al-Qaeda in. Provide them incentives to do that. And where those incentives don't work, then perhaps it may be necessary for us to engage in some kind of a punitive action, not unlike what we're doing in Pakistan, to eliminate any elements of al-Qaeda that do find a way, whether working in the seams or not, to establish bases.

So, I don't think the alternative is either "do what we're doing" or "abandon the country."

Senator SHAHEEN. OK. Thank you. If I can ask each of you to respond to that.

Sergeant CHASE. With all due respect, sir, if you have suggestions on what could be done more in-depth, I think that's kind of what we're all here for, is to find out what are our—what are our—what are the alternatives.

Senator SHAHEEN. Right.

Sergeant CHASE. Personally, a blanket withdrawal from Afghanistan would be devastating to Muslim extremism in the world. It would send a message very clearly to the rest of the world and the rest of the extremists that they have not only won and defeated us in Afghanistan, but they've now—they would now gain momentum for their cause. That would be my fear.

I'm not a policy person. I'm also not a scholar. But, pulling out of there would devastate Afghanistan, and, I think, the entire region. And just an example of that was when we left after the Soviets.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Sergeant MCGURK. It's kind of what I've been saying all along and what I said in my initial remarks. I think that, just to not even try, just a unilateral withdrawal, and then say, "Sorry," it's just not going to cut it. I honestly think that the type of vacuum that would be created, you would have more insurgents, more Taliban going across the Pakistan border. I think you'd have—you—to a degree, I think that you would kind of take away any legitimacy that the Pakistan Government has, currently; it would be completely gone. Pakistan is a nuclear state. And I think you would have a people that would be more prone—or, excuse me, more apt to allowing a regime like the Taliban into their country, because at least they provide a measure of security; whereas, we just decided to leave, and leave them to their own devices.

As you can tell, I'm very passionate about this, from my experiences in Afghanistan.

Senator SHAHEEN. I appreciate that.

Sergeant MCGURK. To not at least try—and I understand that many people say that we can't achieve any measure of success, or the type of success that we wanted to achieve when we initially went into Afghanistan, I completely understand that—but, having been on the ground and seen firsthand the people and the culture—and, you know, granted it is a tribal culture that doesn't trust a central government—but, being on the ground, you—they're not a number to me; it's not, "Oh, it's the Afghan people." It's not, "This is just Afghanistan." These are real people I dealt with on a daily basis. And to just leave them and say, "You know, we're really sorry. We screwed up by going into Iraq. We really can't afford to try to at least, to some measure, fix what we did in Afghanistan. We're leaving. Sorry."—to me, that's very unacceptable.

I grew up in a military family. I love this country wholeheartedly. I joined the military, not to become a weapon of war, but to be a deterrent to it. And I really think that we should—and I don't want to keep repeating myself, but I really think we should

at least try to do something to help the Afghan people before we leave.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Captain Moore.

Captain MOORE. I believe that an abrupt withdrawal from Afghanistan would not only be a tactical mistake, but also, more importantly, a strategic mistake. It would be primarily a tactical mistake because, again, you're giving up a primary front to a place that we committed to, to a people that we committed to, to a culture that we committed to. And primarily, on the strategic side, it would also send a message to the rest of the world that the United States can't stick, that, once the wave of any type of political pressure or any type of political will begins to wane, that, regardless of whatever commitments have been made, regardless of whatever intentions have been sought out, regardless of whatever speeches have been done, that the United States is not going to commit to seeing something through.

Now, again, we need to be strategic about how we do that. And, again, I agree with Dr. Bacevich, where he said it's not, you know, "more of the same" or "complete withdrawal." But, at the same time, we need to understand, not only the short-term, but the long-term ramifications of the message that that sends to the rest of the world about where we are as a nation.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Corporal Reyes.

Corporal REYES. I keep going back to my earlier statements. I don't think a complete withdrawal would be the answer, but I know a troop escalation's a huge mistake. You want to talk about a country with that many troops, that's a sign of poor intelligence. With stronger intelligence, there's no reason to occupy the country with that massive amount of troops. So, we need to strengthen our intelligence and then plan and then execute.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, to each of you, for your very compelling testimony.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

I want to thank everybody on this panel enormously. And let me just say, quickly, I completely agree with what Colonel Bacevich just said. As the conclusion of the panel, the option here is not, in my judgment, "throw up your hands" and "complete withdrawal," which would invite all kinds of repercussions and have significant negative consequences on our policy, in any number of ways. But, in addition to that, nor is it "more of the same" for the Obama administration, with whom we've been trying to work very closely.

I completely agree with the observation about the tribalism. This is something that I have become more and more tuned into, the more I'm traveling now in the Middle East and in North Africa and so forth; it is just definitional, in terms of how we need to approach things. And we have not been thoughtful enough and sensitive enough in the past.

We have to remember that the Soviets attacked and destroyed some of that infrastructure. They killed a lot of tribal chiefs. And the strength that used to be there has been somewhat diminished.

But, of this I am convinced, the vast majority of Afghans do not want to be Taliban, and they don't buy into the extremist Taliban.

There are a lot of Taliban for hire right now. And we need to understand that as we think through our approach. But, it has to be very thoughtful, very sensitive. I think the administration is working overtime to tune that in. We've met with General Petraeus, we've met with Ambassador Holbrooke, and others. There's a lot of thinking going on about how you empower entities outside of Kabul, how you deal with corruption, how we get around this and, frankly, heed a lot of the wisdom that was in Colonel Bacevich's testimony.

So, there's a balance here, and that's what we're going to try to strike. I agree with Senator Corker, it has been woefully fought on the cheap, and stupidly in many ways, not from a military point of view, but the civilian leadership guidelines and possibilities were so constrained and predefined that the military folk on the ground have been operating under an unbelievable handicap, and we've lost enormous headway as a consequence of that.

So, we're going to try to be as thoughtful as we can, as smart as we can. This is not the only hearing we're going to have on this, by far. And we have a lot of distance yet to go.

This committee will exercise its oversight authority, and I will certainly do all I can to live up to the responsibility, as chair, to see that we thoroughly vet all of the possibilities and try to come up with the smartest policy possible.

Colonel, I have to run and vote. I wanted to catch you for a moment, but I hope I can sit down with you when we get back to Massachusetts.

Colonel BACEVICH. Yes, sir, I'd enjoy that.

The CHAIRMAN. We really appreciate everybody's testimony, each of you. I know this was not the first thing you trained for, so we're just hugely appreciative of the fact that you came here today. Each of you expressed your candid personal opinions. I know that's not always easy and, particularly in the case of several of you, very difficult on an emotional level. So, we're grateful to you. Thank you for your service, thanks for your testimony, thanks for your continued service. And we look forward to continued relationships with all of you. Thank you.

We stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:03 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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